

Now and Then

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[0 : 00] Welcome morning. Good to see you. It's a great song, isn't it? Well, encourage the guy who picked it, would you? I mean, that's a good song, isn't it?

There's so much to say. I think it's true. The last few songs we've sung, thanks for who's choosing the music this morning, has a really good connection with the passage, which is always good, just to have a theme that we can follow through.

Drew, thanks so much for allowing me to come this morning and share in God's Word with you. I forgot to check what time you finish.

That's good for me. That's bad for you. So I'll do my best. I think I know about what kind of time we will. Oh, it's in bright. Not what time we finish, but the clock's nice and bright up there.

So that's good. Okay, grab a Bible. We're in Romans 8. You're in Romans 8. That's where you've been. So if you have a Bible or you've got it on your phone or whatever, it'd be good for you to see the passage.

[1 : 05] I'm bad enough running off on rabbit trails, so you need to see what's there, and you need to know what's a sudden rabbit trail, and you can then take that into consideration.

And when we're just right there in the Word itself, you know what we're looking at. So thanks to Kat for reading that passage of God's Word to us this morning.

This is one of my...Romans 8 is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible. Romans 8, anybody's favorite chapter in the Bible? It's a good chapter in the Bible.

All of the Bible's good. Don't get me wrong. Okay, well, Wayne said Romans 8 is good. The rest is not. You know, don't go away with that kind of a thought. There's just some things that, you know, for whatever reason, I don't know, hit us in certain ways.

And this is just a very, very precious chapter in the Bible for me. In fact, at one point I memorized Romans 8. I wish I'd memorized all of Romans, but at least I've gone for one chapter.

[2 : 05] I remember memorizing Romans 8 years and years ago. I used to share a house with a guy. We worked together. And every day when we came home, we would exercise together.

We had like a weight room downstairs in our house and we would go and exercise together. But we wouldn't allow ourselves to touch the weights until we'd memorize Scripture together.

So we would first sit. And I remember he was memorizing Proverbs 3 and I was memorizing Romans 8. So our mantra was memorize, then exercise. Is that good?

We thought it was good. Memorize, then exercise. Get your priorities right. Get your priorities right. Okay, if you're into exercise or you're into whatever hobby, get your priorities right.

God's Word's more important, isn't it? We so often run off to other things. Day begins. We've got so much to do. And we treat God's Word as though it's second rate.

[3 : 04] Don't do that. It's a big temptation. We probably all fall into that trap at times. But I've loved this passage for years. God's Word is so precious. I think this chapter, Romans 8, is probably one of the greatest passages on sanctification in the Bible.

So, this whole idea of just being separated out for God, being sanctified for God, that the transforming work of God in the life of a man or a woman who would say to God, God, I take you at your Word.

I trust you. I don't understand. There's so much I don't understand. But I just, I am, you know, you're big enough. You're trustworthy enough. So, I trust you with my life.

I rest my life on what Jesus Christ has done for me. And God transforms us. And Romans 8, 6, 7, and 8 in particular, a big part of that in the Bible. Paul, you'll know this now.

You're in Romans 8. I'm sure you'll know this. Paul starts off Romans by talking about how nobody is inherently right with God. Is that right? He starts off, first few chapters are all about that.

[4 : 11] That nobody is inherently right with God because of our sin. It's a level playing ground for everybody. Romans 3, 23, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

That's the first three chapters of Romans. I think we can move on with the slides. I think we're getting into this now. I'm not quite sure if that's up there or whether I put that up there or I'm dreaming or whatever. I don't know. Nobody is inherently right with God.

And then he tells us about how, in the next bit, how anybody can be made right with God. Right? Nobody is right with God inherently, but anybody can be made right with God through faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ.

We've been singing about that all morning. Anybody can do that. Romans 3, 24, being justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

That's the next two chapters of Romans. And then in chapters 6 to 8, where we are towards the end of that now, this morning, Paul talks about God's purpose to constantly transform everybody who does come to him by faith in Jesus Christ.

[5 : 24] This is his promise. This is what he's going to do. This is part of what the cross is for. Romans 6, 6. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with.

And that we should no longer. Things have changed. Something's happened. That we should no longer be slaves to sin.

Is that an incredible thought? It's God's promise for our lives. I'm not the man that I hope I once will. I one day will be. We sang that song about one day we'll see him and be like, I'm not the man that I hope one day I will be, but I am surely not the man that I was.

Because God has been at work in my life. And I would imagine most of you could say that. Is that fair? You're probably not there yet. If you don't believe that, talk to your wife, your husband, or your children, or whatever.

But we're not who we were if we're following Christ and his spirit is within us. And so comes Romans 8, where Paul encourages now believers to live a Christ-like life.

[6 : 36] That's what this is all about here. He's encouraging us to live a Christ-like life. Right now. Don't wait for then when you'll be there and you'll see him like it and everything will change.

Don't wait for that. God's got purposes for you now. A desire for you to live for Christ in this world now. That's kind of where we are here in Romans 8.

By the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within you. Regardless of how broken our lives might be or how tragic the consequences of the fallenness of the world is around us.

God has promised us. Romans 8.28. I think it was to verse 30. I prepared to verse 30. I'm not quite sure whether Kat got it right or I've got it right or we both got it wrong or whatever.

But I think it's through to verse 30. So if it's not, then you guys will see 28 to 30 again next week.

God's promised us, Romans 8.28, that he is working everything together for our good, predestining us to be conformed to the very image of his beloved son.

[7 : 45] Listen, that's sanctification, isn't it? And it's a staggering thing. It's a staggering thing. You know, I try to change myself and it doesn't work. God changes me and I'm changed.

And I've seen it happen in my life and I'm sure you've seen it happen in your life. And yet, and yet, the process of this amazing transformation that we call sanctification or transformation or whatever. The process of this amazing transformation, although I'm sure it is deliriously delightful. From the perspective of the shores of heaven.

It's actually dreadfully difficult for us in the here and now. Is that fair? This transformation, this sanctification process. Anybody find sanctification a bit hard?

Right? Right? Although deliriously delightful because God is seeing us become more like Jesus. That is deliriously delightful from the shores of heaven.

[8 : 50] But from the perspective often that we have right now, it is dreadfully difficult as we just experienced the Holy Spirit's purifying power in our lives day by day.

Which is probably why Paul kicks off this passage in verse 18 by saying, I do consider that our present sufferings, tough stuff.

Prayed about that this morning. We've thought about that this morning. Graham did as he led us in prayer. I do consider, he says, that our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us.

So listen, deliriously delightful from the shores of eternity and yet dreadfully difficult at times for the Spirit to chip away all that stuff in our lives that doesn't look like Jesus.

Right? I came across a great poem years ago. I've used it many, many times. Maybe I've used it here. If I have, then forgive me. It's written by Jill Briscoe, Stuart Briscoe's wife.

[10:03] And it's called Chiseled. Let me just read it to you with this kind of sanctifying work of God in mind. It's called Chiseled. And she writes, Chiseled by the circumstances ministry arranges.

Hammered by the things allowed that made such drastic changes. In my life and fondest dreams I'd hoped to realize.

Chiseled by my circumstances. I'm chiseled down to size. Chiseled by the word of God that happened to my heart. Shattered by the truth I know you want me to impart.

Broken by the word of power that has first broken me. Driven by the force of God to speak and set me free. Chiseled by the people that you bring into my life.

People who are difficult. And cause me stress and strife. Teach me, Lord, to honor them. And help me, Lord, to see.

[11:11] They're not as near as awkward or as difficult as me. Chiseled by my secret pride. I choose not to confess. Sobered by your knowing that my life's so passionless.

Shaped by all my sad regrets that cause you so much grief. Chiseled by my secret sin. And shallow unbelief. Chiseled by my children's choices.

Chiseled by their pain. Feeling I can hardly breathe or ever smile again. Daring not to glance at heaven and see my father frown. Yet looking anyway to see compassion smiling down.

So chisel, Lord, until you see the likeness of your son. Blow by living blow remade the image you've begun. I only want to be like you and lie still in your hand.

So craft this piece of marble me into the pattern plan. That's good, isn't it? That's sanctification. That's sanctification.

[12:22] And that's what chapter 8 here is all about. And that's why I think Paul talks about so many times in this passage. You'll see it. I'm not going to have just like three points here this morning.

I'm just going to kind of run through the passage just in case you're waiting for the first point. That's why I think Paul kind of talks constantly here in this passage about waiting patiently. Right?

Waiting patiently. Fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace. Patience. Paul talks in 1 Corinthians 13 about love.

Love is... Isn't that interesting? It comes up everywhere. It comes up everywhere. Is anybody here this morning patient? Any patient people here this morning?

Isn't that interesting? Isn't that interesting? None of us want to just say... Because you just know somebody is sitting around you that knows you, don't you? And you can't raise your hand. You can't raise your hand.

[13:20] Patience is just one of those things. It's waiting. But it's waiting in a place where you're not comfortable. You don't need patience when you're... You know, we've just got back from Florida. My mother lives over there.

We need to visit her every now and again. Somebody's got to do it. So we go over and we see her. So I wore my white shirt this morning so you can see my tan. Lovely over there. Sunshine.

And when we're laying over there in the sun and, you know, Sarah doesn't say to me, you know, are you being patient? You know, you don't need patience when you're in the south of France and you're just laying out in the sun and everything's fine.

You need patience when you're somewhere you don't want to be. Is that fair? You need patience when you're somewhere you don't want to be. You need to get somewhere on time and there is a traffic jam.

Right? Anybody been on the bypass recently? Edinburgh is growing. When more kids were little, we used to take them down to the Guile on a Friday afternoon and buy them a sandwich and walk around. And I wouldn't go anywhere near the bypass on a Friday now.

[14:19] Anyway, you need patience. You need patience. And he talks about... Those are just little things compared to probably what Paul's talking about here. But he talks so often in verse 25.

He says, for the things that we don't yet have. You see that? With the Spirit helping us in our weakness, we are patient. We need to wait patiently. This is good stuff, but it's tough stuff.

And so just with the time that we have left, let me show you a bit of what I would call the now and then. Okay? The now and then of this passage or the now and then of the Christian life. There's a now, there's a then. Right? And they're connected, but they're not exactly the same. There's a now and there's a then. And I think that's what Paul is talking about here. The now and then of this passage.

Because it's absolutely chock full of examples, this little section here, of the struggles that we face now. Did you see that? The struggles that we face now, as well as.

[15:17] He doesn't stop there, but he gets on to talking also about the glory that we see then. The struggles that we face now, the glory that we see then. In fact, we probably should have started in verse 17.

Because that's where Paul sets the stage by saying that if we're children of God now, then there's an inheritance that we're going to receive then. You see that there? We're heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

Isn't that good? If indeed, or as indeed, he says, we suffer with him now, so that we may also be glorified with him then.

Isn't that amazing? Verse 19, waiting in eager expectation, he says, along with the whole of creation is waiting for the children of God to be revealed.

But the point is, we're not there yet. Right? The glory of the children of God will be revealed. God's promised that it's going to be revealed. The problem is, we're not there yet.

[16:25] We're not there yet. Right? You know, I don't know if anybody here this morning is satisfied with how Christ-like you look right now.

Are you? Anybody satisfied with how Christ-like they look right now? Say, I've arrived. I'm there. I'm satisfied. I don't need any more Christ-likeness. Anybody?

Right? So no hands in this church this morning are going up. You can raise them when we sing, but not on these questions. Right? Nobody's going to raise you. Of course we're not.

We're not satisfied. That tells us something. That tells us something. That's why I think Paul talks about the frustration. Right? Because there's so much in my life that I don't like.

I don't. It's not just my wife doesn't like it. I don't like it. So much in my life I don't like. I'm frustrated. I'm frustrated. See it in verse 20. I'm frustrated. Paul talks about the frustration that the whole creation experiences because of its brokenness.

[17:27] Doesn't it? It's frustrating. It's a frustration. It's not what it should be. You ever feel a frustration of your brokenness? Do you? You ever feel a frustration of your brokenness?

Your own sin. Your own humanness. Your own fallenness. Isn't it frustrating? Our humanness. Our brokenness. It's frustrating. If we love God. And we want to be like Jesus.

Then our brokenness is frustrating. We can feel it. You ever watch the 10 o'clock news and get frustrated? Because of the brokenness of the world. You ever get frustrated with other people?

Who are broken? Not everybody can raise their hands now. Right? We all get frustrated with other people. Don't we? No, no. You're just a nice church.

We get frustrated with other people. Because of their brokenness. It's just. It's in. You know. God's just so realistic in his word. Isn't he? It's frustrating. We know it's frustrating. We feel it. But this is the now.

[18:27] This is the now. And yet. He says. Verse 21. It's in hope. We're feeling this now. But it's in hope. It's not the end of the story. It's in hope. In hope. That the creation itself will be liberated.

From its bondage to decay. And brought into the freedom. Of the glory. Of the children of God. He says. Wow. It's amazing.

What an incredible thought. That the frustration isn't in vain. Doesn't make it disappear. But it does perhaps make it a bit more bearable. That it's in hope.

Most of us are usually prepared to go through the frustration of the airport experience. Anybody been on holiday yet?

Or no. It's probably the beginning of the holiday season. Some of you have holidays planned. Some of you are going to fly. Some of you are going to drive. Some of you are smart.

[19:23] And you're not going to go anywhere. You know. But usually we're prepared. Aren't we? We're prepared. We know there's going to be traffic. We know there's going to be issues. We know there's going to be delays.

But we're prepared to go through that frustration. Because of the end game. Right? The holiday. The arrival. And here we are talking about being made like Jesus.

Alright? This isn't just some place where you're going to go sit in the sun. We're talking about being made like Jesus. And what about the groaning? It's more. When I finish with the frustration. Okay? I've got more to go. What about the groaning? He talks about this groaning in verses 22 and 23. Do you see that? Look at that. Those groaning. He says. What about that? We know that the whole creation groans.

As in the pains of childbirth. Right up to the present time. You can just kind of feel it. Can't you? Anybody get up this morning? Right?

[20 : 23] Do any of you. Are any of you. Are any of you. One of those kind of really. You know. Crazy people. That just hops out of bed in the morning. You know.

It's. You groan. You groan. I'm sure. You groan. I'm going to be 58 this year. And I'm groaning. I groan a lot more getting out of bed now than I used to.

I feel it. I feel the decay. I feel the aging. We're groaning. Not just physically. Spiritually. We feel it. We groan. Because we're fighting against sin.

All the spirit. Right? Galatians. The spirit. Warring against the flesh. And the flesh against. And we feel that. We groan. It gets us. We're groaning. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5. Because we can't wait to get out of this mortal tent.

And into the heavenly body that God's preparing for us. He talks about there. And isn't it incredible? And this shocked me in a new way as I prepared for this this morning.

[21 : 23] But isn't it incredible? I'd seen this many, many times before. And I thought about it. But it shocked me in a kind of a new way this morning. Isn't it incredible that the spirit groans with us? Isn't that?

I've never quite seen it from that angle before. I know that he intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words in prayer. And I kind of stopped with that. I didn't think about the word groaning. Isn't it just? I'm just going to lay it. I don't want to make a big theological deal out of this this morning.

All right? I just want to lay it on you. Think about it. I just found it incredible. The spirit groans with us. Not that the spirit is in sin. But it's the same word. It's the same word.

The spirit groans with us. In the same way the spirit helps us in our weakness. We don't know how we ought to pray. But the spirit himself intercedes to us through wordless groans. Isn't that interesting? Searching our hearts.

Knowing our hearts. Feeling our hearts. And interceding for us in accordance with the will of God. And I think he's groaning perhaps because he knows how hard it is for us.

[22 : 22] He's groaning with us because he knows how hard it is for us. Because he is searching. We're told in verse 27 there. He's searching our hearts. And yet all the while.

And here's where the direction changes a little bit. I'm almost finished. All the while. There remains. Paul says here. This eager expectation and hope. There's frustration.

There's groaning. I'm being chipped and chiseled away at. But all the while. Paul makes it very clear. He makes it very clear.

There is this strange eager expectation. And hope. That he talks about in verse 19. Talks about in verse 24. Talks about in verse 25.

Because the now. He says. He begins with this. The now. Isn't even worthy to be compared with the then. So there's this eager expectation.

[23 : 24] God giving us. He says. The first fruits of his spirit. It's like he gives us. This. This. This down payment. He gives us this front. End blessing.

The first fruits. Of the spirit. He says. He gives. You see that in verse 23. To help us in the frustration. And to help us in the groaning. And to help us in the praying.

And to help us in the persevering. Isn't that good? Isn't that good? And the knowledge. Not just the spirit. That's there. Just kind of doing something.

Outside of us. And we just kind of. Are like a rag doll. And he animates us. It's more than that. We have life. Real life. We interact. We engage with the spirit. And so it's not just the spirit in us.

And we're just all floppy. And he does his thing. That's not how it goes. He works in every part of our being. Our emotion. Our will. Our intellect. That's part of being made in the image of God.

[24 : 20] And he. He interacts with us. In those different areas. And so it's not just. The spirit in us. But it's the knowledge. He says here. Look at this. My goodness. The knowledge.

That God is. Working all of these things. Together. He says. For. Our good. Did you see that in verse. Verse 28. Everything. Everything.

He is working. Together. All the frustration. You got to get this. You've got to get this. Because it will give you perseverance.

All the frustration. You think. Wow. The frustration. That's just such a godless thing. And it may be in some ways. A godless thing. The groaning may be a godless thing. But god takes those things. The temptations that you face. God takes all those things. Paul says. And uses them. He works them together.

[25 : 19] I like that. That's a good picture. Right? Like the master craftsman. He was there in the beginning. Making the world. Here he's making. Us. Remaking us. In the image of Christ. He takes all those things.

And he works them together. It says. For. Our. Our. Good. And please don't miss the wording here. Don't miss the wording here. Because sometimes I think we do as Christian. Paul doesn't say that God works all these things.

Together. That feel good. He doesn't say that. It's not the wording he uses. He doesn't say he works. He takes all these things. And works them together. To feel good. No. He says he works them together.

For good. For good. So often. We know they don't feel good. But we got to trust them. That even though they don't feel good.

They're for good. And there is a huge difference there. The fire doesn't feel good. The fire doesn't feel good. But man.

[26 : 14] It gets rid of the garbage. Doesn't it? It gets rid of the garbage. It doesn't feel good. When we're being purified. Because fire does that.

Fire does that. It doesn't feel good. When you're in the fire. But it's for good. It gets rid of the garbage. And then finally.

Please don't do what I think. So many people do. With this passage. Romans 8.28. Whoop. We quote Romans 8.28. How come we don't always quote. Romans 8.28. And 29. We stop at Romans 8.28.

Don't do that. Because Romans 8.28. Doesn't really make. Complete sense. Without. Romans 8.29. God causes all things to work together. For good. To those who love God.

And are called according to his purpose. Please don't stop there. Paul doesn't stop there. He goes on to verse 29. It's not just that God causes all things to work together. For good.

[27 : 10] It's that God causes all things to work together. For the good purpose. Of transforming us. Into the image of his son.

You see that in verse 29. That's the end game we've got to keep in mind. That's the end game we've got to keep in mind. Predestined to be conformed. Into the image of his son.

Isn't that good? Isn't that good? And here's the best. The best is. That for those of us. Who put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

The process has already started. Don't have to wait for this. You don't have to wait for this. The process is. Isn't it? You can feel it. You know it. You know this is a process. Has already started. That those who believe will be conformed into the image of Jesus. As we're called and justified and past tense. In God's mind glorified. Glorified.

[28 : 08] Even though we're not there yet. In God's mind it's a done deal. Glorified there is in the heiress past tense. It's a done deal.

Even though we're not there yet. And so. Paul says. And maybe now it makes just a little bit more sense. That he considers the suffering of this now. Present time.

To be not even worthy to be compared with the glory. That's going to be revealed in us. At that then glorious culmination of all things.

Isn't God good? Isn't he good? Well let me pray. Father this is just such a good place to be.

On a Sunday morning. Thank you. Thank you for. For this. This gathering of your people here.

Thank you for this corner of our city.

[29 : 09] Where you're gathering together men and women. And just as we've seen this morning. Boys and girls. Together. In Christ. Under the sound of your glorious truth.

In the shadow of the cross. With all of your good purposes being worked out. In our lives. We thank you this morning. Thank you for this passage of scripture.

Thank you for this great letter that Paul wrote. For this particular chapter. It's only going to get better next week. As they look at the end of the chapter. And we realize as we pick it apart. A little bit like we have this morning. That this is you. This is you. This is what you're like. This is how good you are. This is how gracious you are. This is how loving and kind you are. And so Lord we just pray as we finish up our worship time this morning here. Go into the rest of the day. Come back tonight. Move on into a new week of responsibilities and activities. [30 : 16] Just to do that experiencing the frustrations and the groanings. In light of the fact that they're not even worthy to be compared. With the glory that's to be revealed to us. Lord thank you for Jesus because he's made all this possible. Help us to live in light of that. Live in true worship. And praise of his name. Amen. Amen. Amen.