

Romans 8:24-25 (NKJV)

²⁴ For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?

²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance.

We closed last week looking at the statement “hope that is seen is not hope”. The argument is very easy to understand. The nature of hope is looking forward to something we know is going to happen. It is impossible to hope for something that is present.

I can hope to see my mother when she is sitting in Elysburg and I am in Oakland. I cannot hope to see my mom when we are sitting at her table in Elysburg looking at each other. This fact is easy to understand. It is something, but it isn't hope. Now what does that mean to us?

There is a trap the devil uses with great success. It is often aided by some of the preaching that passes for evangelism these days.

First he creates an expectation in a person that the salvation we receive from God accomplishes things that God never promised.

The devil would lead us to believe that if we come to Christ:

Our living situation will improve.

We will have plenty of money.

Our loved ones will be kept healthy.

We will have the jobs we want.

We will never be lonely.

Our families will love us.

The church people will only show loving virtues.

We will not be tempted by sin.

It will get easier and easier to follow Christ

Our pains and suffering will be taken away.

Our prayers will be answered the way that we ask them.

All in all- our lives will be a bed of roses.

Have you ever heard those kinds of lies preached? I have.

All the devil has to do to harm us at this point is to introduce a life situation that goes contrary to those lies. We will derail because we will think that we have been double crossed, that God is not true. We will think that this is not what we signed up for.

We talked a few weeks ago about realistic expectations. Well these would be called unrealistic expectations.

Think about the times you were derailed in the past. Didn't it happen just like this? Didn't we think, "If I am a Christian God should not allow this to happen to me?" We had expectations of God that weren't based on His word. Then when life dealt its blows, the devil could maximize his effect.

We need to be careful what we proclaim as the gospel. If we set unrealistic expectations, we do people more harm than good. Even if they will agree to pray a sinners prayer they are not really coming to Christ on Christ's terms. We are doing false advertising.

Do you remember the Army's advertising campaign that said "Be all you can be"? They portrayed a life of opportunity for self advancement. They showed a life of travel and excitement. But really, what is the job of a soldier about? Isn't it laying your life on the line for people you don't even know. It isn't about self advancement. It is about self sacrifice.

Well so much of evangelism today is that kind of advertising- false advertising. So why should we compel those around us to come to Christ? Because they need free from sin and free from God's judgment. They need that so they can live forever in glory in the presence of God. Mike said often that the only reason to come to Christ is because of sin. Until a person understands that they are guilty of sin, both from their heredity- from being born in Adam, and from their history- having committed sin willingly and often knowingly, until that truth grips us, we have no reason to come to Christ. It is only after we realize that hideous truth that we can begin to understand that we deserve the wrath of God being poured out upon us. Because sin is always against God. It is an attack on all the He is and He loves. Once we understand that we begin looking for an answer to our problem. We want free of the penalty of sin. We want free of the power of sin over our lives. And that is exactly what Christ offers. And He offers it to whoever will come to Him.

When we present the gospel like that, a person is coming to Christ for the right reasons. And only the Spirit of God will draw a person for those reasons.

When we come to Christ like that we can receive the promises of God as they are intended. And we can adjust our expectations according to what God really promises.

And when we are tempted to think that our Christian lives should be easier or simpler or more enjoyable or less painful or less tempted to sin or less grieved by

loss or even more comfortable, we can pull this quote from Paul and it will serve as fuel for faithful living.

Hope that is seen is not hope!

You don't hope for what you see. So we don't need to be discouraged by what we see. What we see is not all that there is. The majority of what we will receive as a believer is not seen now, but it is hoped for- it is looked forward to. We are hoping for what hasn't happened yet. It is a future benefit of our present salvation. We have a fact filled hope that the best is yet to come. And we are certain that it will not come in this life.

And since we know that this life is not all that there is, this life is not the best that there is, in fact, often this life is not really that great, true believers have something that makes them unstoppable.

We hope for what we don't see and with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. Have you ever read Foxes Book of Martyrs? It is a book about people who have been put to death for their faith. There is page after page of the grizzly treatment that believers suffered at the hands of unbelievers. You would think that, given the topic, it would be depressing. But it isn't. It is oddly encouraging. Because it shows us how these saints faced their tribulations. And the things that came out of their mouths was "HOPE". They saw death as the entry way to all that they longed for.

Hope is the thing that makes a Christian unstoppable by the world. Really what can the world do to a person who values greater that which is to come than that which is here and now? Future life is more valued than present life.

So when the powers of the world threaten our lives, we can say, "Go ahead. Take them."

We can know that ultimately they are doing us a favor. They are ushering us into our reward. Hope removes the ability of the world to threaten us or to bully us. It makes us dangerous because we cannot be corralled and led like those around us.

Is that what our hope is like? Do we have a hope like that? Do we even have a hope that will stand up to the small and daily disappointments of life? Or are we likely to be derailed by the smallest misfortunes of life? Will our hope stand up to the suffering that comes to us, sometimes for long periods of time? Do we find that we can stand up to anything this world throws at us because we have such a living hope for that which is to come?

Now notice here in this text that hope is coupled with endurance. Let's look at the words.

We eagerly wait for what is coming with perseverance.

The Greek word for eagerly wait means pretty much to “assiduously and patiently to wait for” Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. It means what it says.

Perseverance- means steadfastness, constancy, endurance”. In the N.T. it is the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings: Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.

So to paraphrase- If we are looking forward to what we know is going to happen in the future, something that we can't presently see, then we will look forward to it with much anticipation. And the truth of just how great this future grace is will cause a steadfastness, a constancy, a keep on keeping on quality in our lives. And we will look forward to this future event with a solid present attitude and practice.

Let's look at the next passage as we consider endurance and perseverance. Look at the relationship that hope has to perseverance.

Romans 5:1-5 (NKJV)

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

²through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (So we see that we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. We start the process with hope. Hope is included in the gospel message. When we begin the Christian life we begin with Hope.)

³And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; (So we start with hope and as a result of that hope we glory in tribulations. And those tribulations produce perseverance.)

⁴and perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Now here we see that we started with hope. Hope caused us to face our current circumstances faithfully. We know that current pain has eternally good results. That attitude causes us to have a steady staying power. And that steady staying power leads on to what? Hope.) Let's finish the passage:

⁵Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

A puritan once noticed this “hope” relationship and said this. “Hope is at one and the same time the mother and daughter of patience.” I think that is a really good way of saying it. Hope comes first. Think about it. If you had nothing to look forward to, could you really be patient in difficult circumstances? How much we should pity those around us who do not have Christ. How dismal a thought it would be that this life is all there is. But the Christian starts with hope. We know that we have a future that is far better than our present.

So the Christian can face hardship and have patience. Hope here is the mother of patience. Hope begets patience. So in our Christian lives we steadily deal with the circumstances of life with the understanding that our efforts are worth it. They are not worth it for what they produce now. But they are worth it for the reward that is coming.

So we keep exercising that patience. And as we do, we see a Christian character develop that we know for sure did not come from us. We become a sort of person that we would not have become apart from God’s work in our lives. We have a track record of facing difficult things and coming out the victor. Some of the battles might be ugly, but we come out a victor just like Christ said. So we gain confidence in Christ and assurance of His work in our lives. And what does that result in? Greater hope. We become even more sure that He will do what He says He’ll do in the future, because we have witness what He has done to us in the present. And at that point, hope is the daughter of patience, because hope has sprung out of the efforts of patience.

Sometimes we look at perseverance as being the kind of thing that plods along under a heavy load and joylessly keeps taking each step. That is really not the picture here. Remember that this perseverance is fueled by hope. There is a positivity to this constant endurance. I like what Martyn Lloyd Jones says here. He says, “Certain people have a reputation for being patient, but sometimes the real truth about them is that they are just dull. They are not sensitive, they do not react, and are more or less stupid.” This is not what we are talking about this morning. The patient endurance that we are to show is very active. It grows throughout a Christian’s life. There is an eternal “looking forward” that keeps it always in perspective. It is never “for nothing” that we struggle. We know and firmly believe that what we do is worth it.

Think about something big you have done in your life, something that took a long time to accomplish. How did you keep working on it? Wasn’t there something at the end that caused you to labor day after day. When Ruth is sanding off her furniture I doubt that her heart cries out, oh how I love sanding so! But Ruth has in

mind the finished product. She knows that her efforts are worth the price. She will be able to look upon the thing that she labored on with appreciation and satisfaction.

Our endurance is like that. It is not meaningless. It is not grueling in its most negative sense. It is ultimately positive. We are doing something small to gain something big. Our investment is small but the payoff is large. So even when we suffer we know that ultimately we are the blessed ones. It is just a matter of staying the course. It is a good course, even if the road gets a bit rocky. We are going where we want to go.

Notice here too the odd position we are in. We are eager. And we are patient. If I asked you, describe an eager man, you would likely describe a man that isn't patient. And if I asked you to describe a patient man, you would likely describe a man that isn't eager. But we believers are to be a supernatural mix of both of those traits. The picture painted is of a person that can't wait to get to glory but is determined to wait until he or she gets to glory. Isn't that similar to how Paul described his life?

Philippians 1:19-26 (NKJV)

¹⁹ For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

²¹ For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

²² But if *I* live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.

²³ For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better.

²⁴ Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you.

²⁵ And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith,

²⁶ that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

What do we see here? Is Paul showing a grueling- "I will if I have to" attitude toward endurance? No, it is full of purpose. It is full of love. He is content and willing to remain as long as it serves a purpose. He is patient.

But is he eager? He sure is. **having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.**

Paul knows where his hope lies.

What about us? Are we eager and patiently enduring? Or are we continually distracted? Would death grant us what we long for or would it really interrupt our hopes?

I'd like to read a passage from MLJ. It is about what a 10-12 yr old girl wrote when her father died. It was from around 1860.

“Today Dada has left us. He has gone into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” A little girl of 10 or 12 in the sixties of the last century could write that way. Why? Because those were the terms in which she thought, the climate in which her family lived. How many of us think in that way? How many of us could write like that? Is that our view of our own ultimate departure? Do we think instinctively in that way when our loved ones who are Christians leave us and go to be with Christ? This is true Christianity. I ask again, what is the value of our head knowledge if it does not bring us to this? This is triumphing. It transforms everything. Life, death and everything else becomes different. **“If we hope for that we see not, then through patience do we with eager expectation wait for it”** What a poor generation of Christians we are! What has gone wrong, I wonder, during the last hundred years or so? The answer, I fear, is that we are all so subjective, always looking at ourselves and our happiness, instead of thinking and meditating on the truth of scriptures and setting our affection on things above. Look at Christ, consider Him and what He is preparing for us. It transforms everything. That is the way in which, it seems to me, we **“through patience should eagerly wait for”** this blessed hope that is set before us.”

So how can we be this kind of a person? How can we be the people who hope, who eagerly wait and who patiently endure?

First- see the world as it is. Ask yourself, how long will the things you are spending your time on last? We live in a mix where we must provide for our families and work continually against the curse for mere survival. But I am talking beyond that. What do we gravitate toward when we have the time to do anything. It is good to choose not to do things that we know are sinful. Certainly we must stop there. But there are many things that are permissible that are not beneficial. Whenever our use of time becomes fixated on our pleasures instead of eternity, we are in great danger. We are to redeem the time, not fill it with worthless stuff. So

we would do well to examine our lives and recognize those things that have value and those things that do not.

2. Keep yourself from those things that are of this world. Don't allow yourself to become fixated with the world's stuff. Put to death all of the evil and worthless desires and ambitions we have.

3 Remind yourself of those things that God says are true about you if you are a believer. This doesn't come for free. It takes time. Don't trust your impressions or your feelings. Believe God's word about yourself.

4 Set your affections on things above. This doesn't just happen. You must be active in the process. As we read scripture we must ask- is this true of me? Think about that. Meditate on those things. Pray that God would show you the truth about it. Pray that he would reveal to you the ways that you fail Him. He will answer those prayers. Then think about the truths of our future reality. Bring them to mind. Memorize them. Do whatever is needed. Think of the world to which you are going, not to the world you are currently in.

Keep dwelling on that until it becomes absolutely real to you. Keep fixing your affections until you see reactive responses in you that prove that the reality of your future hope springs out in all you do.