

When Life Is Tough - Part 3

Discovering The Patience Of Christian Hope

Romans 8:23-25

Well we are back and after all those airports and all those lines in all those airports I realize something, I hate waiting. Hate it, lines for everything. Hate it. Just like you, you hate waiting too, don't you? 3 letters, D-M-V, how about that? What's with that place? Or how about the Post Office? I don't get why everything takes so long there. 91 Freeway that brings up good feelings, doesn't it? 91 Freeway. Yes, it's hard to wait; we hate to wait especially for the things that are profound and serious, right? I mean when we're waiting for the doctor to come back with the test results, I mean that's the kind of waiting that's more than inconvenient. Waiting for the economy to turn around, that's hard. That painful or difficult situation in your life that you've been praying about week after week, month after month, some of you year after year waiting through all of that is particularly hard. We hate to wait but for just about everything in life there is a wait attached to it.

Now I know God I'm assuming could have made a universe where waiting was not required but the fallen universe in which we live, I mean waiting is a perpetual assignment. We're always going to be called on to wait. And when it comes to those profound and deep desires of our lives, the most profound desires of our lives the waiting is really the most challenging and really honestly and literally the most protracted most prolonged. And if by the way you haven't learned how to wait well, and I'm sure we can all improve, if you haven't learned to wait well you haven't learned really one of the fundamental virtues of the Christian life. You know the bible is big on patience. You know that, right? It's big on patience because impatience is really the cause of a hundred lesser evils in our lives. Think about it. I mean unfaithfulness, outbursts of anger, laziness, negativity, apostasy all of these things at some point they intersect with the problem of impatience. So the bible is big on patience. And I know everyone could use more patience in this world but Christians especially need it more than any other segment of society.

There is something unique about being a Christian that according to the bible exacerbates the problem. It makes it worse for us. On the other hand the other side of that coin is there are some resources available to us that aren't available to everyone else that will allow us to wait with a kind of strength, a kind of endurance, a kind of fortitude and a patience that really will be beyond our own character and ability in and of ourselves to wait.

We've been studying through the book of Romans we got to chapter 8 and we saw a lot already in the 8th chapter certainly in the second half of the 8th chapter that the world is not what it ought to be. I mean that's a good definition of sin by the way. Things aren't as they ought to be. That's part of the graphical theme-matic art work we've had around this series. This that should go this way go that way. Things that ought to connect don't. Things that should be separate are conjoined. I mean things that are crooked you know they should be straight it's a world that's mixed up and up side down. And we said last week, the last passage we were dealing with talked about how creation is in a way groaning for things to be turned right side up. And that's the great hope of the Christian life. One day the king of kings and Lord of Lords will come to us and the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He will reign forever and ever. And all that's wrong will be made right and as Isaiah said every crooked path will be made straight all the rough places plain, mountains made low, valleys raised up it will be made right and for the world the bible said in the last passage we studied in Romans 8 it will be liberated it will rejoice it will be happy and finally it will be freed from that bondage to corruption.

Well we get to verse number 23 in Romans chapter 8 and the focus shifts to redeemed people. Not just the general population but people that have put their trust in Jesus Christ and have God

dwelling in them in the third person of the Godhead the Holy Spirit resident in their lives and it says this. Take a look at it with me if you haven't already opened up your bibles Romans chapter 8. We're only going to look at three verses this morning, verses 23, 24 and 25. And as the spot light shifts to us it says it's not only the creation, verse 23, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, capital S, God now dwelling in us, we groan inwardly. That's the word he used for creation. Creation is groaning it wants to be liberated it wants to be free from the subjection to corruption and futility. And we he says will groan within ourselves as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons. That's an interesting thing. I though we're already adopted. No, we're waiting for it. Waiting eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies, to be specific. Verse 24, for in this hope, that's a key Christian word, we were saved. I mean we were looking forward to this, that was the whole point. Now hope that is seen, in other words if it's already realized well that's not hope. The bible would never use that word but it does use the word, because who is going to hope for what he sees. If you already have it you wouldn't be hoping for it. Verse 25, for if we hope for what we do not see then, he said, we wait for it with patience.

Biblical Christian hope will produce in us if its rightly understood a kind of resilient strong patience that we will desperately need and will need it more than anyone else because according to verse 23 we have this thing called the firstfruits of the Spirit that make us more than anyone else realize how badly we want everything turned right side up. Particularly and very intimately in our own bodies because we know things aren't right. We understand that we have to wait just like creation for the liberation that will come with the arrival and the presentation of the eschaton, the final chapter of God's plan as He brings His son Jesus Christ to make all things right.

My kids like yours, I never thought I'd hear it, I've said it many times as a kid when we're traveling on some cross country trip in the car they ask. Are we there yet? They ask it all the time. Do your kids say that? I get tired of hearing that so sometimes what I say just for fun even if we're 500 miles away, I'll say, yeah. Sure, isn't it great we're here. Of course they understand that I'm being sarcastic. They don't particularly appreciate it because they can tell. Well it doesn't seem like we're here. That's a kind of cruel thing to say particularly if my kids were to believe me. That would be a cruel thing to say we're here when we're not here. Let me just by that simple observation in verses 23 and 24 seeing that the Christian life is about hope it's about something that hasn't happened yet. Let us just recognize that when it comes to the question, are we there yet, theologically the answer is no. And you say, well duh. You know that is something that most people don't seem to get particularly in our day.

There's been a problem through out church history it's been a recurring problem and some days it's vogue and really popular and other days it goes away. But in this season in the Western Church in 21st century evangelical Christianity, we're the height probably one of the biggest heights of this false teaching. And it's what we like to summarize as we look back through church history we call it an over realized eschatology. Have you heard me use that phrase before? An over realized eschatology. Eschatology is what the bible has to say about the end times. And those are all good things right? I mean half the book of Isaiah is all about the great things that are going to happen when Christ sets up his kingdom. Much of the New Testament is about the good things that are going to be realized in our bodies and our lives and our relationships and our minds and the world when Christ comes back, that's eschatology. And proper understanding of the bible leads us to hope for that knowing that one day it will come.

An over realized eschatology is a grave theological mistake but a very popular one that says we all that stuff and we want it now. In other words if there is healing in the cross and redemption of our bodies through the work of the Messiah then we want that health now. If it's all about great relationships and God is going to make everything right and we'll live in perfect harmony then we want to see that all now. If it comes to God giving us and bestowing on us great blessing then I want all that prosperity and I want it now. We like to call it, at least the American expression of it the health, wealth and prosperity gospel. Have you heard me pick on that before? Which week haven't you? Well here's another week we'll pick on it. Because when it comes to reading

Romans chapter 8 you can't get around the fact that that is an absolute utter lie because that's not what the bible teaches. It does not teach that all the benefits and blessings of what Christ has come to accomplish are to be realized now. So in other words number one on your outline if you're taking notes you might want to jot this down I mean just to put it in a phrase in the vernacular. Here it comes, you ready? We just need to realize, number one, this life isn't it.

1. Realize This Life Isn't It

This life isn't it. That's kind of a bummer. It's not, it's the zonk, right? Door number 2 or whatever. Sorry that really dates me. The zonk, remember that? That's had a recurrence or so I've heard. Monty Hall. It's not what we were hoping for. One of the worse problems with Christians waiting is people that think that we've arrived and they think we don't have to wait. And that's a kind of frustration that is not predicted in this passage but it is a problem that we even see within the pages of the New Testament. Turn for instance with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 4. We see a concept of over realized eschatology particularly in the Corinthian church which is predictable because we'll find through out church history as well that an over realized eschatology or our expression of a health, wealth and prosperity gospel usually takes root and people start to buy it in places of affluence and wealth. In other words the back drop is already things are pretty good here and Corinth at the crossroads of the ancient world it was a place that naturally prospered. We were there actually one of the pictures I think was me preaching there in Corinth and it was a place where I tried to relate to our Compass travelers was a lot like Orange County in many ways because if you went to the homes in Corinth and you compared them to the homes anywhere, I mean just take concentric circles and go 50, 100, 150 miles out for Corinth everything kind of gets a little shabbier in the ancient world. I mean if you go to the civic center and you go to the market place and the agora in the ancient city of Corinth everything was a little nicer. I mean the streets were paved with better stones and things were painted and white washed a whole lot better. The columns were bigger and it was a place of prosperity. If you were a Christian in Corinth you start to recognize well this is great. I get Christ and my life is going pretty well, my business is flourishing and I'm riding a better donkey then the guy over there in Philippi. And I mean things are good. I'm so glad I can add Christ now to my life and things ought to get even better. And people started to buy that in Corinth and they had a sense that Christianity ought to just exalt them even to the next level.

Now of course from the very beginning Jesus said in this world you'll have prosperity. Is that what He said? In this world you will have tribulation or suffering or persecution. Paul when around saying this, "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." I mean this was the promise. If they hated me, Jesus said, they'll hate you also. If they called the head of the household Beelzebub what do you think they'll call you? That was the promise of the New Testament but in Corinth they didn't get that. They didn't want to believe that, they didn't want to take a step back. They didn't want to think their Christianity would make their lives more difficult. They thought it would make it even better.

1 Corinthians chapter 4 Paul addresses this and don't miss the sarcasm here starting in verse number 8, dripping with sarcasm. You see a lot of this in the letters to the Corinthians. He says in verse number 8, 1 Corinthians 4:8, already you have all you want! There are no ancient exclamation points or question marks here but I mean here's a sense of exclamation point question mark. I mean you go all you want, really? Already you've become rich! Look at this now, without us you've become kings. A lot of sarcasm here. I mean that's the way they wanted to feel it. That's the way their doctrine wanted to deposit it. That's the way they'd hope their Christianity would work out, it's kind of a pretending that everything is great now because of Christ. But look at this corrective in the middle of verse 8. And would that you did reign, no I wish we were there, I wish you were exalted, I wish you were kings now, I wish you were princes in the processional of the returned Christ. Why? Then we would share that rule with you. I wish you did reign so that we might share the rule with you. But that's not really how it's going for us at the top of the Christian pyramid here. The apostles the ones closest to Christ for I think that God has exhibited, verse number 9, us apostles as last of all like men sentenced to death. I mean we're

getting halled out of city walls in a basket, we're running by nighttime to a new city, they're throwing rocks at us over in Thessalonica I mean we're having a hard time. We're a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. Oh we're considered fools for Christ when we stand up and preach the gospel. Oh but, you are wise in Christ. Oh there's a lot of that in America today, we want to prop this up and make it respectable. And oh isn't it great. Do you understand how wrong this is?

I like to call it the Larry King syndrome. You get these pastors on Larry King and watch whether it's Larry King or whatever the big national platform is. Watch them try to make Christianity respectable. Whatever the topic is, right? Oh well you know it's really better for society if you kind of live by these rules. They want to kind of have that respect and dignity and they want to be respected for their position. They don't want to walk in there and say here's what Jesus said, turn from your sin or this is an abomination. Or when they ask well is this guy really you think they're going to hell? Yes that's what the bible says they're going to hell and so are you Larry if you don't repent of your sins and put your trust in, they don't what to say that. Now that's what the apostle Paul would say and not get invited back. But that's not what the Christian spokespeople in a kind of over realized eschatology like to say, they want to be respectable and see our position. It's a Christian position it's a smart position, it's a superior position, it's the high road the world is not going to buy that. If we stand firmly on the unchanging principles of God's word we ought to expect like the Apostle Paul that they more assume throw rocks at us then give us honorary degrees at their universities. We're fools for Christ's sake, verse 10, oh but you're wise in Christ. We are weak, oh but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we are in disrepute. To this present hour we're hungry and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless. We labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless, when persecuted, we endure, when slandered, we entreat. We become and still are he says the scum of the world. He says the refuse of all things. That's how we're considered. Now how's it again that you're the princes and the kings and you're reigning? And if you didn't catch that this was a rebuke, he says in verse 14, I'm not just trying to slap you in the face with this. I write these things not to make you ashamed but I want to admonish you as my beloved children. Get off this concept that all the prosperity the blessing the acceptance of what Christ promised is for the here and now. It's not.

As a matter of fact in chapter 15, do you know that chapter on the resurrection? That would be worth looking at as long as we're in the neighborhood. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, they even taught that there was some thing that whatever the resurrection meant there was something about the resurrection that should make our lives now kind of that resurrected life. And I don't just mean morally or ethically, I mean physically. They had taught as in some places through out the ancient near east that there was a resurrection already taking place. You trust in Christ and it's like he infuses you with that resurrection life in your biology. Some were saying the resurrection had taken place but not resurrection from the dead. I mean if you're dead you're dead. We don't believe that. 1 Corinthians 15 verse 16, he says come on guys if the dead aren't raised, then not even Christ has been raised and if Christ has not been raised your faith is futile you're still in your sins and those who have fallen asleep in Christ they perish. Now come on if this life if that's all it is, verse 19 good one to underline, if in Christ we've hoped in this life only, then we are of all people most to be pitied. Check that out, read it again. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from dead, and He is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Where's our hope? It's in the next life. Where's our focus? It's in the next life.

This guy named Jonathan Edwards, you know who he is? Jonathan Edwards early 17 hundreds, one of the most brilliant brains America has ever produced, just a huge prolific writer a fantastic in-depth thoughtful Christian theology. Attended Yale at 13 was a pastor in his early twenties. He really turned the world upside down in America here. Was one of the main contributing fuels for the great awakening with George Witfield and the rest. I mean this was a real pivotal time when the preaching of God's word it really made a difference. He was known and if you only know him for this sermon it's unfortunate. But he was the one who preached, ""Sinners in the hands of an angry God"". You've heard that one? Heard people in sociology class make fun of

that or whatever. Those hard lined puritans. I mean you need to read more about Jonathan Edwards in terms of that everything in that sermon was true. He was a well rounded thoughtful passionate Christian who led in North Hampton and made a huge difference for Christ in this world. And like C.S. Lewis said "It is those who are the most heavenly minded that are the most earthly good." You've heard me quote that a couple of times. Listen to what Jonathan Edwards wrote early in his life about his perspective and his ministry. Here's what he said, "it becomes us to spend this life only as a journey toward heaven to which we should subordinate all other concerns of life why should be labor or set our hearts on anything else but that which is our proper end and our true happiness." Oh, that's a great line. Why should we labor or set our hearts on anything else but that which is our proper end and our true happiness.

In other words there's nothing in this life that is going to fulfill you. I mean there's nothing in this life that lasts. If you store up treasure on earth I mean eventually the rust will corrode it and the thieves will break in and steal it and the moths will eat it up. But if you live for eternity, I mean that's really where your focus is then you got your heart in the right place. And by the way if you do have your heart in the right place, you're going to groan for that. Now he did long for heaven and I'm just begging you to begin to long for heaven our citizenship is there from where we according to Paul to the Philippians we long for the return of Christ who when He comes will transform our lowly bodies to be like His resurrected body. I mean this is the core of the Christian faith and too many people are neglecting any talk about the next life and all their Christian sermons are focused on how to make this life better. I don't understand that. I mean you got to look at a pretty razor thin group of passages to preach your entire ministry about making this life better. I understand you can fill arenas doing it, right? I mean we can fill arenas talking about how to make this life wonderful and we can leave all that stuff out about sin and judgment and eternal life and the bema seat and riches in heaven and we can just focus on the here and now. It may tickle itching ears but it's not the biblical gospel. It's what we call and over realized eschatology.

You want a remedy for that? Well, then all you've got to do is realize this life isn't it. It's not it. As a matter of fact according to our passage look at it, it's printed on your worksheet there, because we have the firstfruits of the Spirit we're going to groan inwardly as we eagerly wait for something that hasn't happened yet for adoption as sons. It's coming can't wait for that. Oh I realize that I have it sealed up now but it's not delivered till then the promise has been secured but the delivery hasn't so I can't wait for that. I am all about rejoicing when the promise is secured. I guess to help with the whole over realized eschatology is a phrase I've often used and it's good for you to have in your theological vocabulary and that is the phrase, all ready not yet. Which sounds like theological double talk but the "all ready not yet" tension is what the bible has so much to say. Like in this text, if I'm longing for the future it's not because the reality of my Christian life is not settled. In other words it says there that I'm saved. Verse 24, in this hope we were saved. Are you saved? Yes, I'm saved but the salvation that is promised hasn't been fully realized. Or to look at verse 23, I'm waiting eagerly for adoption as sons. Now look back up at verse 15, what does it say there in Romans chapter 8 verse 15? It says I've already got the Spirit of adoption now am I adopted or am I not adopted? Well, I'm adopted yes already but it's not yet because my body has not been redeemed. And that's another word, redemption. Am I redeemed? Chapter 3 says I'm redeemed. Now it says I'm waiting for the redemption at least the redemption of my body. So those words saved adopted redeemed they're true now but they're not fully true.

It's like winning the lottery, which I would know nothing about because I don't play but some of you have won something I'm sure. But let's picture it's the guy on channel 9 or whatever with the bowtie and the numbers are coming down and you buy the ticket and you're waiting and you hit all your numbers. Let's just imagine that. You're acting like this is foreign to you but some of you play the lottery I know you do. So you look at those numbers and all those numbers come down and they hit and it's yours and you look at it 5 times and got the ticket and it's the big ball double triple latte number lotto whatever they do. Wow. 13 million dollar winner, boom, it's your ticket. Now you won the lottery. Did you win the lottery? Yes, but you don't have any of the money. Not yet. You got the ticket but you can't wait to get the check. You see what I'm saying? Some

people just want to dance around with the ticket and think well that's what it's all about let's go on a shopping spree I got the ticket. Can't go on a shopping spree till you get the check.

We talk about the gospel as an umbrella the cross. It saves me from the wrath which is to come. You may say you're saved, but what are you saved from? Well, really the bible is all about being saved from the coming wrath well it isn't raining yet but you got them umbrella. We were going to all these ancient sites and I don't know if Paul had to deal with it but we dealt with a lot of rain. And of course I'm trying to pack light so did I pack an umbrella? No, but we get there and of course all these guys have their 10, 15 dollar umbrellas to sell. I don't like to get ripped off and it's not raining yet but the clouds are forming on the horizon. And we're walking into these sites and they're out there trying to sell their umbrellas. Now I didn't bring one and I don't want to get ripped off so I didn't buy one. Mistake because it pours and there's no where to get out of the rain and it's raining. Now some of those people that went by and I said "sucker" as they hand them 10 bucks and buy the umbrella. I realize later I would have liked to bought an umbrella and I try to tuck under their umbrella as we walk around. But the point is when they have the umbrella even before it starts raining see they're saved from the rain but it's not really realized quite yet.

The point though is and that's a negative example we are looking forward to being saved when we meet Christ. We are looking forward to the redemption of our bodies. We're looking forward to our adoption as sons. We're looking forward to our inheritance all of that is yet future. We got the ticket we're waiting for the check. And the point is we need to have our focus on that future and if you get the ticket but the check isn't for 100 years that's going to be tough 100 years. As a matter of fact you're thinking of all the ways to spend that lottery check and you're going to groan for that. You're going to look forward to it, you're going to want it and because you won a lot of "money" illustration you'll groan even more. If you won 10 dollars and that's postponed 100 years that isn't too bad. That's why Christians have a unique challenge in waiting because what we are looking forward to is so much better then the present that our wait is going to be harder than anybody else because we realize what we're going to get. We have the firstfruits of the Spirit and we're groaning within ourselves for this to come. Put it down this way if you would, number 2 on your outline if it says we're going to groan inwardly then expect to groan inwardly. Let's just change the word groan to frustration. You need to expect some internal frustration.

2. Expect Some Internal Frustration

Which is not something you're going to hear in the arenas in an over realized eschatology sermon. They're going to tell you, you're going to have no frustration. I'm here preaching this morning, you will have frustration. There's going to be frustration in your life and you ought to expect it. I didn't say despair and I didn't say God won't provide us the ability to endure it but I am saying your Christian life you ought to expect a lot of internal frustration because what God has promised you you're going to long for and increasingly so the more you walk in step with the Holy Spirit.

And let's just talk about that descriptive for a second, Holy. Let's just start with that. If God according to Ezekiel takes your heart of stone out and gives you a heart of flesh then the Holy Spirit invades your life. You're going to want holiness. You're going to want that. You are as Jesus said on the Sermon on the Mount you're going to hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be satisfied, filled. The problem is you're not going to be filled now. Matter fact what's not going to cooperate is the thing we're waiting to get redeemed here in the whole process and that's the redemption of our bodies. Jesus said to the disciples who were told to pray and wanted to pray but fell asleep when praying he said the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. I mean does your body really in all your fleshly humanity want to get up in the morning and spend an hour in prayer? Answer, no. But a redeemed heart walking in step with the Holy Spirit will want that communion with God more and more. It'll want to stand up and speak boldly for Christ at work this week but your flesh your fallen humanity it won't. It's not only weak it's hostile toward that. Picture this it's like, weird illustration, it's like you become a Christian and God gives you an appetite a stomach. Let's say we're all just

you know we're kind of zombies with no stomachs. Let's start an illustration that way, you're a zombie with no stomach. And you become a Christian and God gives you this huge vacuous stomach and it's hungry. That's not hard to imagine. It wants to eat really bad. You're hungering for that. But to eat you're going need your jaw to move your hands to pick up food, you're going to need some cooperation from your body. Imagine that you had a voracious appetite and you want to badly eat food but your body wouldn't cooperate. That's the struggle of the Christian life. Your inside your heart with the Holy Spirit prompting aiding pushing you to obey the word of God is going to want the right thing and yet your body does not want to cooperate. As a matter of fact every time you tell your had to pick up that burrito and put it toward your mouth it's going to want to throw it on the ground. Nice illustration getting really weird. But picture that, I wanted to eat that, I'm starving. Your hands are going eh eh eh eh. You put it up to your mouth your jaw refuses to move. I'm starving, chew, chew, eh, eh, eh. Forget this illustration as bizarre as it is. That's the problem with your Christian life. That is the problem with your Christian life. Why is it that you will look at yourself in the mirror I assume at some point this week because your heart is beating to do what is right and the Holy Spirit is prompting you to do what's right and you'll look in the mirror and say why didn't I do what was right? Now if you're a non-Christian you don't even get this. I mean you don't get it. But if you're a Christian you know exactly what I'm talking about. You have the firstfruits of the Spirit and you groan for your body to start cooperating. And when I say body I'm not just talking about your cells. I'm talking about your whole encased humanity that's why we're longing for the resurrection because when you get that resurrected body it will beat with a desire to please God. Disobedience will not even be possible because your heart the spirit and your flesh will be now resurrected and there will be nothing to do but do what is right.

One passage on this, how about 2 Corinthians chapter 5, I would be remiss as a pastor if I didn't take you to this passage it's such a perfect extrapolation or explanation unpacking of this one phrase in Romans 8:23. This is 2 Corinthians chapter 5. Now again non-Christians you're going to snooze through this because you don't get it, you don't have that desire you just want to go through life and have a good time. You know if I can get a little Jesus sprinkled on my life and that makes things better that's great. But if you're a real Christian you'll start to despise the things in your heart in your life that are turned upside down and you'll want nothing more then to have them turned right side up. Verse 1, look at these 5 verses, for we know that if this tent that is our earthly home. This is all reference now to our bodies right now our human bodies. If it's destroyed, and they will be, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent, our bodies, we groan, there's the word again, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. There will be a period of disembodiment which is not the focus of this text but we want the resurrection body. Verse 4, for while we are still in this tent, the fallen body, we groan being burdened, that's the norm for the Christian life, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. That's what I can't wait for. Verse 5, he who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us, look at the exacerbating problem here, the Spirit as a guarantee. That makes it worse.

In one sense Christians should be the most impatient people on the planet because we know the good that's coming and inside of us is the third person of the Godhead longing for things in my life to be done right, longing for the things in this world to be done right. It is the cry of every godly heart and I hope it's your cry because it is a sign of spiritual health that like the Psalmist through out the Psalms in the Old Testament you say this repeatedly in prayer. How long oh Lord? Remember that prayer? How long? How long? How long? That's a good homework assignment just look at how many times those two words show up together in the Psalms. How long, how long, how long, how long, how long. Because the godly person says it's not right. How long will I feel far from you? How long will you turn your face from me? How long will my enemies triumph over me? How long will people not keep your word? Psalm 119. How long? So many of these how long statements.

Now again if you're content and you just want a little Jesus sprinkled on your life so you can have a better Orange County Christianity that's not biblical Christianity and you ought to find another

place to go to church or better yet why don't you ditch that fantasy world and why don't you embrace biblical Christianity that's going to make you care a whole lot less about this Orange County life and it's going to shift your focus on living for eternity. Oh it'll be tough because you'll be groaning for something you don't yet have. And like the Apostle Paul you'll say weird things like well for me to live is Christ but to die is gain. I mean that'll be the prayer of your heart. I'm hard pressed between the two I don't know which to choose. If I say here it'll mean meaningful ministry productive and fruitful ministry among you but I'd much rather depart and be with Christ for that would be far better. I mean who prays like that in our western 21st century church? That ought to be the prayer of our heart not just when you're sick and racked with cancer on your back but when you're living in the middle of your life and you got a job and you've got food on the table and everything is fine. That still ought to be the cry of our heart. Can't wait to see all the fulfillment of all the promises of God so I don't have to battle the flesh the devil and this world and we can see all the realization of these things come to fruition. So expect some internal frustration but the very thing that exacerbates the wait is also the thing according to verse 25 gives us resources to have fortitude and strength and to wait with patience.

Take a look at this it utilizes the word hope, verse 24, three times. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But verse 25, this is Romans 8:25, but if we hope for what we do not see. Now that's a big biblical word hope. Hope is not this, how many times have I said that? It's not cross your fingers, I hope, I hope, I hope. I hope there's a God, I hope I go to heaven when I die. That's not biblical hope. Here's biblical hope, it is an overwhelming confidence that God will keep the promises that He made. That's biblical hope. It is an overwhelming resolve and confidence that God will keep the promises that He has made. And the promise that He's made is that if you trust in him even if you die yet shall you life. If you trust in Him your sins will be forgiven you'll be entered into the kingdom of God. Enter into the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world. You will be a part of the kingdom of God where everything is right, where your body beats in sync with the will of God, where our relationships are perfect. That is the promise of God and if that is your hope and you don't see it now because it's not realized now then it produces a kind of patience a kind of waiting with patience.

That's a big word. There are two Greek words in the New Testament that are translated patience. You can't tell the difference between them when English translates it patience, you just see the word patience. One is makrothumia and some of these are familiar words to you so I use them. Makrothumia. Thumas is heat. Makro means long. I mean sometimes it's translated at least in commentaries a long fuse. It means you can get poked and prodded and provoked a lot but you're not going to respond because you're makrothumia. You don't get hot right away. The second one is a little bit different. It's the word you've heard me preach entire sermons on, it's the word hupomone. You've heard that word? Hupomone. Makrothumia would be a good word here and it's a good word and a good Christian virtue but that's not the word here. If I'm waiting with hope for the promise and the fulfillment of what God has said He'll do then I will wait for it with hupomone. Hupomone. Hupo means under. Mone means to remain, to stay and every time I use that word I try to get you to remember the burro in Tijuana with the giant packs of stuff on his back and his back is arched and he's sitting there. I'm thinking wow that's too much don't put on anything else on his back the donkey is going to fall on the ground and be smashed like a pancake because I can't believe he can do that and on he plods down the road, right? The burro with the giant stuff on, he stays under the weight of the pressure. That has to do with chronology. In other words makrothumia would be you could poke me a lot but I'm not going to get mad. But when it comes to this kind of patience what I need is that endurance which by the way hupomone is often translated endurance. Sometimes in the ESV steadfastness here it's translated patience. I like to call it "stick-to-it-tiveness". You can hang in there without despairing, without giving up, without being negative, without apostasy, without unfaithfulness. You keep on going because you're focused with Christian hope on the fulfillment of the promise which is not now its then. Number 3 on your outline let's put it this way you and I can acquire strength that's what we need that's what patience is all about at least this patience, hupomone, by looking forward.

3. Acquire Strength By Looking Forward

Keep your sights there. Keep looking at the finish line not sitting there thinking oh my feet hurt, my feet hurt, my feet hurt. Look at the finish line you'll be there soon. That's the thing that fuels this consistent hupomone in your life. Jesus is our model. Jesus is the template. Let me show it to you once you write all that down. Hebrews chapter 12 verses 1 through 3. Please turn to this passage it's about Jesus Christ. The one who died for you, He's got a pattern for you a template for you to live just like He lived. Now you won't have to be crucified on a Roman execution rack I assume but you're going to struggle with things that aren't going to happen the way you want them to happen. You're going to want fulfillment of things that are going to be postponed and prolonged and delayed. The most important and profound desires of our lives, we'll want things to work right here in our lives and our minds and our relationships and our body and this world. We'll do what Jesus did. Now we're coming off the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, Sunday School Grads you know what that's all about, right? All these heroes of the Old Testament their faith was in God and he says this in chapter 11 and yet they died without the fulfillment of promises. They had to welcome them all from afar. They didn't see the fulfillment they just trusted, they had faith. They endured through all of the things that God put them through and yet they trusted that one day that God would fulfill their promise. They were aliens in this world it says of Abraham. He was looking for a city that he could call his own. The architect and builder was God he knew it wasn't in this life. He was focused on the next life. Well it says in verse one then, surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. I mean with so many people like that in the Old Testament that we can read about that testify to this enduring faith. He says, let us also lay aside every weight, anything that's weighing you down, anything that keeps you focused here, lay it aside. I know you got to go to work, I know you got to pay your bills, I know you got to feed the family but can you take every encumbrance that weights you to this world, as Paul said to the Corinthians, if you own something pretend as though you don't. I mean treat this world as though it's provisional. Let us throw off or lay aside every weight every encumbrance and the sin which clings so closely let's get through that and let us run with, here's our word, hupomone. Let us run with that enduring patient kind of attitude, the race that's set before us. Now it's not like Noah or Abraham I don't know what their race is compared to yours but you've got a race that's going to involve some waiting.

And you've got to be looking to Jesus here's the example. He's the founder and perfecter of this kind of faith, who, now here's His pattern, follow it, for the joy that was set before him endured, there's our word again, hupomone. He hupomoned the cross. Now wait a minute read it again. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross. Was the cross joy? No, that was terrible. He was in the garden saying let this cup pass from me. He was not looking forward to the cross. He had to as matter of fact, kataphroneo, he had to despise, look down on, I mean here's Mike's translation, he had to say, well whatever to the shame. Just forget it. Kata, down. Phroneo, to think. He though down, he minimized the shame of it all. And He's now seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Take that phrase, circle it and go back to the word joy. That was the joy set before him and it happened to be that between the joy of the throne of God which he prayed about in Acts 17, restore the glory to me I had before I came into the world. He was looking to the payoff and the cross was in-between and he plodded and marched right through it with hupomone. Why? Because His focus was on the cross? No, his focus was on the crown. His focus wasn't on the pain, wasn't on the process, it was on the payoff, it was on the goal. Consider him, verse 3, who hupomoned, he endured from sinners such hostility against Himself. Why? So that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. Catch that? So that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. Don't get into over realized eschatology. You will be groaning but you will not be fainthearted or weary. You will not give up. Paul use to talk about this distinction all the time. I may be cast down but I'm not defeated. I may have a groaning in my heart and an unsettled feeling about this life but I'm not fainthearted. I'm not quitting. Hupomone means that we'll live with the difficulties, and for you it could be your health it could be your life, could be your relationships your family your sin. Whatever you bear through all of this making progress by the power of God as best you can, trusting Him by keeping your focus in the right place.

No, I can't compare this to a Roman execution rack but flying on that plane for 11 hours, in coach. Holy smokes man. And they always apologize well it takes longer because we're flying against the jet stream. And I'm thinking can we go around the other side of the world then and go with it and get home faster. Oh it's agony. And your knees are there and the person in front of you wants to lay back and his chair goes back further than yours and I'll never understand that. And it's so painful and it smells bad and it's just awful. And after an hour you're going Ohhh only 10 hours left. It was awful. And while I was blessed to be there and it was great to be able to lead it and teach it and do all that. I was there without my family. My dear wife was back home and my 3 kids I haven't seen for 2 weeks. This was a long trip and we were working hard and I was finally done. I had preached all the sermons I was going to preach and I did all the stuff I was going to do. We posted all videos we were going to post and we're on our way home and it's taking forever! But I endured by thinking of seeing my wife, watching all the travelers with their spouses, going I'm coming home. Seeing the faces of my 3 kids, I mean this is what I had on my mind, my wife, Matthew, John, Stephanie, my recliner was big on the list, my ice machine. I had six things on my mind that kept me going. Only 3 hours left, only 2 hours left, I couldn't wait. Like my Dad use to say when I was a kid and I use to say, I can't wait, he'd say, you're going to have to. There's no getting there any faster and you're not going to get to heaven any faster. But you can wait with a mindset that's fixated on the finish line. And while that's not a popular lesson anymore in the church of Jesus Christ in America and the western churches should be our heartbeat. I don't want to pass through church full of Orange County Christians who just want to sprinkle more Jesus on their life to have a better life here and now. I want you and I with all abandon not caring what Larry King thinks of us. To be able to say I'm going to stand with Christ, I'm going to live for heaven, I'm going to set my mind on things above, I don't care what it costs me on earth, I don't care how uncomfortable gets down here, we're going to live for eternity. I mean that's where we ought to live, that's the kind of church that can change the world.

Speaking of world changers, I talked about Jonathan Edwards. Early in his life as a Christian he wrote out what is now famous his 70 resolutions. Are you familiar with that? They would be worth reading, the 70 resolutions of Jonathan Edwards. The guy who sermons and life and values changed so much in American and even World Christianity in the early 18th century. Let me read you just 3 of them. This first one may come as a surprise, resolution number 9 they all start with this phrase, I resolve. Number 9, I resolve to think much on all occasions about my dieing. What? Here's a young guy in his early twenties. I want to think on all occasions about my death. That sounds morbid. No that sounds really biblical, teach us Lord to number our days. Let us see the end of our lives our lives are like a vapor. I mean there's so much in scripture that says realize you are like the flower of field here today and gone tomorrow. There's a guy with the right mindset. I resolve in all occasions to think of my own dieing. Resolve number 19, I'm resolved to never do anything which I would be afraid to do if I expected it would not be above an hour before I shall hear the last trump. Did you catch that? I resolve to never do anything which I would ever be afraid to do if I expected it would not be above an hour before I shall hear the last trump. I'm always going to think my life is fleeting and secondly I'm always going to think that the trumpet of Christ could sound at any time, I can be raptured it could be over. Resolve 22 I'm resolved to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness in the next world as I possibly can. I love that. I am resolved to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness in the other world as I possibly can. I guy who is always thinking my life is fleeting, it could be over at any minute, and I want to store up for myself as much treasure in heaven as possible. How do you think he made decisions about his summer plans? About a bonus check or a tax return about some time he had on a Sunday afternoon. About whether to take the job promotion or have time to do this. I mean it effects everything in your life. Resolve to thinking on as much as possible on all occasions on my own dieing, resolve never to do anything which I would be afraid to do except above the hour before I shall hear the last trump, resolved to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness in the other world as I possibly can. Jesus said where your treasure is there your heart will be also. So where is yours, seriously, where's yours? Let's acquire some strength not just to survive but to thrive as we march our way toward heaven. Get your focus there please it'll change the way we live it'll change the kind of church we have. It can change the world because we're living for the next one. Let's pray.

God, so important for us to recognize that all the disappointments and the aches the pains the problems the sin the failures the frailties of this life. They are all realities that should make us groan and because of the Holy Spirit in our lives we're going to groan all the more just waiting eagerly for it all to be done. Like the Apostle Paul it is not up to us to end our lives though we may wish to be in your presence our goal is to continue on like Jonathan Edwards knowing we could die at any time it could be over at any time but we want to store up as much treasure in heaven as possible. We want the next reality to have that to being with the words well done good and faithful servant. And it isn't going to happen if all these folks in this church that hear my voice right now say how can we live for today? Not about living for today. Help us to care a whole lot less about all the ambitions of this world and make us ambitious for heaven. Give us a thirst for righteousness that can only be fulfilled when the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ. May we pray with the early church Maranatha may we pray the disciples prayer your kingdom come may we say with Jesus we're not all that interested in laying up for ourselves any treasure on earth if it happens whatever doesn't matter what we care about as laying up for ourselves treasure in heaven. Make us good stewards of every hour of our lives as we look forward to the arrival of Christ and the transformation of our bodies. Let us say with Paul to the Phillipians that we are citizens of heaven our minds aren't sent here our feet aren't clamped down on this earth. If we've been raised up with Christ we keep seeking the things above. That may sound esoteric and we didn't take a lot of time to get detailed and all the effects of that but God please help us to let this sift into every decision that we make even starting today where it's very clear that our values are in the next life. Thanks for men like Jonathan Edwards who lived their lives faithfully with a focus on eternity, let this generation raise up many like Edwards to do a lot of great things for eternity because our focus is in the right place. We pray this in Jesus name, Amen.