

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

## The Audacity of Hope

Romans 8:18-25

Amen. Church you may be seated. Thank you for that reading, Victoria. Hey just a few announcements for you before we get started this morning. Tonight we are having a prayer night here at Harvest Decatur. I want to encourage you to come and be part of that. We're going to meet right here at 5pm. We're going to spend just about an hour praying... praying for three C's: 1) our country, 2) our city (Decatur), and 3) our church. So come and be a part of that this evening.

Also next Sunday, we are beginning a new series here at Harvest Decatur. This is a series that will be team-taught by myself and the other elders. We are calling it "Journey through James." And I'm going to be introducing that series next Sunday. And I want to encourage you to commit to reading through the **Book of James** several times this summer. As a matter of fact, this was a series that we had planned to start at the first of June. But 2020 has, can I say it this way, not gone according to plan. And so we have moved that series to next week. And I'm really excited to think through the **Book of James** with you and hear from our elders as well this summer. Let me encourage you to participate in that by reading the **Book of James** yourself.

For today, we want to take another look at this great chapter of **Romans**. **Romans 8**. And the central idea in today's passage, **Romans 8:18-25**, is hope. This message is about hope. Can I interest you in some hope this morning, Harvest Decatur?

I heard a great quote this last week by the late **Chuck Colson**. It goes like this: "The way to understand any worldview is by following it to its logical conclusion."<sup>1</sup> Do you know why I'm not an atheist, Harvest Decatur? I'll tell you why. It's because there's no hope in that worldview. There's no vision for the future. Do you know why I'm not a Darwinian Evolutionist? It's because there's no hope in that worldview. Just take those worldviews to their logical conclusion. According to those worldviews the world is going to burn up in about a billion years. And all of this, everything that we are living for right now, will disappear into nothingness and meaninglessness. That's a cheery thought, isn't it?

I read recently about an "atheist church" that meets in England called the "Sunday Assembly."<sup>2</sup> And the "pastor" there very openly preaches sermons about how we are all going to die and there is no afterlife. In the service, they give lectures on science. They sing songs by Queen by and Stevie Wonder. In one particular service they performed a reading of *Alice in Wonderland*. To be honest, the whole thing seems incredible pointless and derivative of Christianity. Why go to an "atheist church" (that's an oxymoron by the way) on a Sunday if you don't believe in God?

The whole thing reminds me of Tim Hawkins singing "Atheist Kids' Songs."

*"Evolution this I know  
For Charles Darwin told me so  
Accidentally alive  
If you're weak, you won't survive."*

Listen, I believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, because it's true. God recorded it here for me in the Scriptures. And I believe that Jesus actually died on a cross for our sins. I would believe that, even if I didn't have a hope for the future. Even if that only meant that my sins are removed, and I don't have to go to hell for eternity, I would believe it.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in the article by John Stonestreet and David Carlson, "Legalizing polyamory: Following bad ideas to their logical conclusion," The Christian Post, 07.18.20: <https://www.christianpost.com/voices/legalizing-polyamory-following-bad-ideas-to-their-logical-conclusion.html>

<sup>2</sup> See the article by Brian Wheeler, "What Happens at an Atheist Church," BBC News Magazine, 02-04-13: <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21319945>. See also "At Atheist Church in London, No Faith Required," at the Opinion Pages of The New York Times, 01-22-13: <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/01/22/is-atheism-a-religion/at-atheist-church-in-london-no-faith-required>. See also Al Mohler's podcast "The Briefing," 02-11-13: <https://albertmohler.com/2013/02/11/the-briefing-02-11-13>

But beyond that God offers us something wonderful, something totally undeserved. He offers us a future. He gives us *hope* beyond this present life. And for those who have a hard life on this side of eternity... for those who suffer... their reward in eternity will be great. That is our hope.

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So let's talk about hope today, Harvest Decatur. And let's be specific too. I don't want your "hope" for eternity to be this kind of nebulous and undefined uncertainty. God gives us some specific statements on this in the Bible. Yes, some of it is shrouded in mystery. But not all of it. So, let me give you, *Four things that Christians should put their hope in:*

Here's the first:

1. Our future **glory** (8:18)

Paul says in **verse 18**,

<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Now remember this is coming right on the heels of **verse 17**, where Paul said that we are heir, co-heirs with Christ Jesus. We get everything that Jesus gets, "provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." We get everything that is Christ's. We get Christ's glory on the other side of eternity, and we get Christ's suffering on this side of eternity. But just to make it clear how much our future glory will be compared to a little bit of suffering on this side of eternity, Paul says,

<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

**In 1967, the speaker and activist, Joni Eareckson Tada, dove into a shallow part of Chesapeake Bay. And when she did that, she snapped her neck paralyzing her body from the shoulders down. Tada has been confined to a wheelchair since then for the last 53 years. She has suffered greatly through multiple surgeries and chronic pain. Life has been a struggle for her for decades.**

And yet God has used her mightily to be an activist for the physically handicapped. She has been used as a writer and an evangelist. Her life story is absolutely inspiring, and if I'm honest her life story is a little bit convicting. Her joy in the midst of great anguish shames me when I think of my piddling joy in the midst of lesser sufferings. And yet even Joni Eareckson Tada confesses that she has her moments of despair and self-pity. You know what motivates her? This is what motivates her: *hope*. Hope that her future glory will not be compared to her present suffering.

Here's a great quote by her: "When I get to heaven I am going to push my wheelchair to the throne of Jesus. Notice I'll be walking. I am going to thank Him for every character-refining work He did in me and through me because of this wheelchair. And then I'm going to ask Jesus to send this wheelchair straight to Hell, because it was only needed/relevant because of the wreckage of sin."<sup>3</sup> **Amen, Harvest Decatur? What do you think about that?** That's a woman who's got the right perspective on eternity. Her hope is in future glory!

Now to that statement, you might ask, "What's glory going to look like, Pastor Tony?" "What does that mean that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us?" Well at the very least that future glory means no more pain and suffering. It means no more hardships, turmoil, emotional pain, physical pain, psychological pain, etc. It means that we will receive a new glorified body like Jesus's glorified body. And it means that all of the goodness that we experience in this world will be experienced 100 million fold with none of the drawbacks or sinfulness or shortcomings that we experience in this world. Could I interest you in that, Harvest Decatur? Anybody interested in that? This is the hope that we have as Christians. And it is a glorious hope.

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Here something else we should put our hope in. Our future glory, yes, but also...

2. Our unveiling as the **sons** of **God** (8:19-21)

If you remember, last week we talked about the "sons of God." And ladies, if you remember, I told you that you want to be the "sons of God," just like we, as men, should want to be the bride of Christ. Because sonship is part of your inheritance with Christ Jesus. We are those who have the Holy Spirit inside of us, the

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in a sermon by J.D. Greear, "Hope: The Greatest Chapter in the Bible - Part 3," 07-28-19: <https://summitchurch.com/message/hope-the-greatest-chapter-in-the-bible-part-3>. See also the blog by Justin Taylor "Why Joni Eareckson Tada Wants to Bring Her Wheelchair to Heaven" at the TGC website, 08-15-11: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/why-joni-eareckson-tada-wants-to-bring-her-wheelchair-to-heaven/>

“Spirit of adoption as sons” as Paul describes it in **Romans 8:15**. It’s because of that Spirit of adoption that we can call God, “Abba, Father,” just like Jesus does, which is a mind-blowing reality.

But what Paul asserts here in **verses 19-21** is that there is a coming out party for believers. The creation is groaning for this future unveiling of the sons of God. Paul says in **verse 19**:

<sup>19</sup> *For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.*

“Who’s it going to be?” says the earth and all its inhabitants. “Who belongs to God?” says all the plants and animals? And the reason they wait with eager longing is because the sons of Adam haven’t been great to this world. The sin of Adam and Eve brought evil and destruction down on planet earth. That sin brought down an avalanche of consequence: war, pestilence, disease, natural disasters, pollution, and devastation. Paul says later that creation is groaning as a result of this. They want the pain to end.

<sup>20</sup> *For the creation was subjected to futility [or emptiness], not willingly, but because of him who subjected it,*

This is a reference to the curse. God cursed the ground, and now weeds grow faster than plants.<sup>4</sup> Now bugs destroy trees, and droughts destroy crops. God did that as punishment for sin.<sup>5</sup> That wasn’t the way it was in the Garden of Eden.<sup>6</sup>

But God had a plan in that, even in the cursing of the ground.

<sup>20</sup> *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope<sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

Here’s a question for you, Harvest Decatur. When is God going to reverse his curse on the ground? When is God going to set creation free “from its bondage to corruption”? Well the **Book of Revelation** talks about this. Jesus will come and set up his millennial kingdom, and for 1000 years Jesus will reign on this earth. In the OT Book of **Isaiah** says that during that time, “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them” (**Isa 11:6**). Also in the next verse Isaiah says, “The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox” (**Isa 11:7**). Also, “The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (**11:8-9**).

Then according to **Revelation**, after this 1000 year reign of Christ, Satan will marshal a final rebellion against God and against his people. Of course, Satan will lose. And after that God will banish Satan and all his followers into the Lake of Fire. And then God will reconstruct our world. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. There will be what’s called the New Jerusalem on the new earth (**Rev 21-22**). And we will eat once again from the Tree of Life, just like Adam and Eve did in the Garden. It’ll be the Garden of Eden all over again, except it will be better. And we’ll be together there in the presence of the LORD. This is what creation is groaning for. This is what this world eagerly awaits.<sup>7</sup> And that’s our hope for eternity too. Our hope for eternity is the world’s hope for eternity. All of creation including human beings, God’s greatest creation longs for this future of peace and tranquility.

And I’ll tell you what, we won’t find it on this side of eternity. I don’t care what the politicians promise you. We won’t find it in the here and now. You know what we find now. Groaning! We find groaning. As God’s people and God’s creation cry out “Maranatha. Come Lord Jesus.”

**You know what this reminds me of, honestly? Romans 8:19?** *For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. It reminds me of a strange mixture of “The Price is Right” and Narnia. That’s where my mind went this week, studying this passage. Do you remember on “The Price is Right” when people’s names get called, and they just go berserk! That’s how I imagine this unveiling. “Tony Caffey you are one of the sons of God... come on down!” And I do my little dance and freak out all the way down. And instead of people clapping and cheering, this is where the Narnia part comes in, there is an audience of plants and trees and rocks and animals, and they are the ones cheering for me. “Yeah. Yeah.”*

<sup>4</sup> “The natural world is a victim of humanity’s disobedience, now subject to futility and unable to fulfill the purpose for which it was created. It brings forth weeds more easily than useful crops.” Harry Alan Hahne quoted in Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, ed. D. A. Carson, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 347.

<sup>5</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Romans: Verse by Verse* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2017), 241.

<sup>6</sup> “We may think of the whole magnificent theatre of the universe together with all its splendid properties and all the chorus of sub-human life, created to glorify God but unable to do so fully, so long as man the chief actor in the drama of God’s praise fails to contribute his rational part.” C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 414.

<sup>7</sup> Osborne, *Romans*, 240 says, “Interestingly, Paul does not depict creation as longing for its own release but rather for ‘the children of God to be revealed.’ It recognizes that its own future is caught up with God’s people.”

**“That guys one of the sons of God. Oh, that’s surprising. I thought for sure he played for the other team.” And of course, when I’m revealed as one of the sons of God, I’m going to jump with joy and celebrate in my new resurrection body free from arthritis and knee surgeries and back pain.**

**And then we’ll celebrate by eating coconut cream pie together. All of us! Even those of you who don’t like coconut. Because in eternity your resurrection bodies won’t have a sin nature, and so then you will like coconut.**

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**Speaking of resurrection bodies. Here’s a third thing we put our hope in.**

3. Our renewed, incorruptible **bodies** (8:22-23)

At the end of the **Book of Revelation**, God, who is seated on his princely throne, says, “Behold I am making all things new” (21:5). God renews all things including these old rickety bodies that are breaking down. He says in that same chapter, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son” (21:6-7). Just before that, He said, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (21:3-4).

**Can I interest you in that, Harvest Decatur?** That is my hope! I don’t know what you’re hoping in, but I’m hoping in that. If you want to embrace an atheistic worldview, go right ahead. But you forfeit this. You forfeit your hope in this. Other religions of the world put their hope in other things. None of those religions holds a candle to what is written here. This is what we as Christians anticipate. And it is glorious.

Paul says in **verse 22**,

<sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

That is such a great analogy right there. How many of you, ladies, regret bringing children into the world because the pains of childbirth were just too great? How many of you after your kids were born said, **“Take him away! The pain was too much!”** What did you do? You said, **“Give me that baby!”** You said, **“It wasn’t that bad.”** You said, **“It was worth it.”**

And this is true even for us as husbands. **R. Kent Hughes** says, **“Many of us have pictures of our wives after they have delivered a child, and typically the baby is in their arms and mother is radiant. None of us have a picture of our wives in labor. We do not reach into our wallets saying, ‘Let me show you a picture of Margaret groaning in labor. Isn’t the agony terrific?’”**<sup>8</sup> No! We forget about the pain, because the glory of childbirth is so glorious!

Here’s why this is such a great analogy. What Christian in eternity right now, in the presence of the Lord, is going to say, **“You know, LORD, it just wasn’t worth it... Being in heaven now is great and all... being in your presence is great and all, but the suffering on earth was just too painful”?** You think anybody is saying that right now? No! They’re saying, **“I don’t even remember the suffering. I had no idea that it was going to be this good. If I knew it was going to be this good, I would have gotten here faster.”**

You know Paul says he knew a man who went up to the third heaven one time, which is the presence of the LORD, and he experienced things there he couldn’t even talk about (2 Cor 12:1-4). Some people think that Paul was talking autobiographically there in third person, which I think is probably right. God probably told him not to talk about it, because if he did, and if he told people how amazing it was, then everyone would be looking for the fastest exit out of this place. **“Give me that COVID-19! I need to get out of here.”**

**I heard a pastor say this last week that people don’t sing about heaven anymore. People don’t sing about eternity. In the past, people would sing and dream about eternity, because they were just one infection away from death. They were surrounded by death.**

**I’ve been reading a couple books about the Pilgrims lately, trying to get ready for the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pilgrim’s landing on Plymouth Rock.<sup>9</sup> And one of the shocking things I read is that 45 of the first 102 Pilgrims that came over on the *Mayflower* died in the first winter of 1620. I’ve never seen a depiction of that in a kids’ play. And infant mortality rates were high at that time. And people in that day**

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<sup>8</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Romans: Righteousness from Heaven*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 160.

<sup>9</sup> John G. Turner, *They Knew They Were Pilgrims: Plymouth Colony and the Contest for American Liberty* (Yale University Press, 2020). Robert Tracy McKenzie, *The First Thanksgiving: What the Real Story tells us about Loving God and Learning from History* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2013).

rarely lived past 60. It's kind of frustrating, because as you read about the Pilgrims, you start to get into the story about one of the people, and then all of a sudden the author says, "and he died" or "and she died." And there's no context. I want to know what they died of. They rarely say. They rarely know. It was probably small pox or malnutrition or some 17<sup>th</sup> century equivalent to COVID-19. They knew that life was short. And so they sang about heaven.

People in previous centuries knew that life was short and they could die at any moment, so they sang about heaven. They sang stanzas like,

*When Christ shall come, with shout of acclimation,  
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart,  
Then I shall bow, in humble adoration,  
And then proclaim, My God, how great thou art.*

And they sang,

*When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be!  
When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the victory.*

And they sang,

*When we've been there ten thousand years  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we've first begun*

C.S. Lewis said about his own generation half a century ago that, "We are half-hearted creatures fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea."<sup>10</sup> That's a pretty good description of our cultural moment right now. Christians are often prisoners of their cultural moment. It doesn't have to be that way.

You know every time we sing that song, "Bound for glory" here at Harvest, I can feel the energy pick up in this room. I think that song brings a clarity to our situation.

*This world is not my home  
I'm here for a moment  
It's all I've ever known  
But this world is not my home ... I am bound for glory.*

Paul says this in **verse 23**. Let's get back to the text here. Actually let's look at **verse 22** again first.

<sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,

O yeah, the Spirit! Paul's emphasis in **Romans 8** is all about the Spirit. I wondered when he was going to get back to that. Here it is. We have the firstfruits of the Spirit right now. Which means that the full harvest is coming. That little taste of the Spirit you get now... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, self-control, etc... that assurance that the Holy Spirit works in you... that's just a foretaste of how awesome life is going to be in eternity. We just get the firstfruits now. The full harvest is coming.

<sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Paul says elsewhere in **2 Corinthians 5:2**, "For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling." **Every time you take a painful step and groan because your arthritis is flaring up again, you should say "Hallelujah. The redemption of my body is coming!"** Every time you get indigestion and you groan inwardly, you should say, "Hallelujah, thank you, LORD, that there will be no indigestion in eternity." Every time you go to the doctor... every time you go to the dentist... every time you go to the podiatrist... every time you go to your gynecologist... every time you go to your gastroenterologist... **that's a little reminder to you that this world is not your home, and this body is not your eternal body.** And maybe that's not fun, and maybe that's not pleasant... I get that. But that is a gift from God. That is a blessing. Because your trip to the doctor is a reminder that this world is not your ultimate destiny, and something better is coming. The redemption of your bodies is coming. A new, incorruptible, eternal body is heading your way, and it couldn't come fast enough as far as I'm concerned.

**And to that you might say, "Okay, Okay, Pastor Tony. I'll try to be thankful for that reminder. But can we still groan? Is that okay? Can we whimper even when things wear out on our bodies and it hurts?" Yes, you groan. Yes you can whimper. Paul says you can groan in this passage. But, careful now.**

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<sup>10</sup> From C.S. Lewis's sermon "The Weight of Glory," quoted in R. Kent Hughes, *Romans*, 158–159.

**Here's what you can't do. You can't grumble. You can lament, yes. But you can't murmur like Israelites in the wilderness.**

**By the way, you know what the difference is between groaning and grumbling? The difference is hope.<sup>11</sup> The Israelites, if you listen to their grumbling and their murmuring in the wilderness, they lost their hope. They started looking backwards not forward. "O God, at least we had leeks and onions in Egypt." They lost hope. Grumbling is how people suffer without hope. Groaning is how people suffer with hope. Can you groan while still anticipating your future glory? Can you groan in anticipation of your future glory, your new resurrection bodies? Yes, you can. Paul says as much in Romans 8:23: but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. You can groan. But you can't grumble.**

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**And here's a final thing we can put our hope in. #4.**

4. Our faith becoming **sight** (8:24-25)

Paul says in verse 24:

<sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

This is honestly a pretty easy thing to explain here. This doesn't require a lot of teaching. As Christians, we hope not in that which is seeable, but in that which is foreseeable. I can't direct your eyes to the eternity that Jesus is preparing for you, your physical eyes. I can't show you it right now. I can only show it to you in the Scripture, in **Romans**, in **Revelation** and elsewhere. Your hope is not seeable; it's foreseeable.

Remember what Jesus said to Thomas after Thomas said, "Unless I see him with my eyes." He said, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails...I will never believe" (20:25). And what did Jesus say. It was actually a soft rebuke of doubting Thomas. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (20:29). Doesn't that sound like Paul in **Romans 8**? Doesn't that sound like **verse 24**: "Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?" It's almost like Paul was familiar with what Jesus said to Thomas, eh?

**And just as a reminder, Jesus wasn't telling Thomas to have a blind, unreasonable, "Peter Pan" kind of faith. "I can fly. I can fly." This is not R. Kelly singing, "I believe I can Fly." This is faith built on the truth of God's promises. This is hope that God who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus (Phil 1:6).**

Paul says in **2 Corinthians**, I promise this is my last cross reference. I don't like to offer too many cross-references whenever I preach a message, but this is just so good. I have to give you just one more. Paul said at the end of **2 Corinthians 4**, one of my favorite chapters of Scripture: "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self his being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Cor 4:16-18).

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**You know, can I just be honest with you for a second? Can I just confess something to you right now? I'll be honest with you, at the middle and the end of 2019, I was feeling pretty good about this world. Life was pretty good. And I felt like I had kind of arrived in this world. I got a nice house now in Decatur. No more commuting from Arthur. Sanja's doing good, going on twenty years of marriage with yours truly. Alastair is good too entering his teenage years. Got two cars that are reasonably reliable. Got a steady job. Sanja's able to work a little now too.**

**To be honest, things were going so good that I was honestly getting a little restless. I kept telling Sanja, "I'm getting restless. It's time for a mid-life crisis. Can I have a mid-life crisis? Can I buy a motorcycle?" Sanja said, "No, you cannot!" So I asked here, "Can I shave my head bald or something?"**

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<sup>11</sup> Christopher Ash, *Teaching Romans: Unlocking Romans 1-8 for the Bible Teacher*, ed. David Jackman and Robin Sydserff, vol. 1, Teach the Bible (London: Christian Focus Publications, 2009), 291-292 says it this way: "Christian groaning is not therefore the shapeless cry uttered into empty space, saying, 'This is awful', grumbling and doubting; it is a cry given by the Spirit of adoption, directed to our Father, longing for his promised future. It is the cry, 'Come, O Lord' (Maranatha, 1 Cor. 16:22); 'Come, Lord Jesus' (Rev. 22:20); 'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' (Matt. 6:10)."

Sanja said, “No, you cannot!” “Well, can I go on a ski trip with my dad?” Sanja said, “Yes, you can do that. That’s your mid-life crisis!”

And 2019 was cooking. The sky was the limit. Who needs heaven? Who needs the New Jerusalem? I was singing Belinda Carlisle. “Heaven is a place on earth!” I was singing Jon Bon Jovi! “Livin’ on a Prayer,” baby. Life is good.

But then you know what happened? I’ll tell you what happened. 2020 happened. 2020 hit, and then COVID-19 hit. And then racial strife in our country started to stir up. And then social media turned into a dumpster fire of anger and toxicity. And all of a sudden our country lost its ever-loving mind. And now I’m not singing, “Ooh, heaven is a place on earth!” I’m singing Hank Williams, “I’m so lonesome I could cry.” I’m singing R.E.M. “Everybody hurts.”

Speaking of R.E.M., they have this famous song called “Losing My Religion,” which is kind of a misnomer, because in the south “losing my religion” doesn’t mean “Losing your faith” or “de-converting” or something like that. It means “losing my bearings as a Christian.” It’s what you would say if you’ve been standing in line for 20 minutes at the DMV and you’re getting agitated, and you say, “I’m about to lose my religion right here!” ... meaning, I’m about to cuss or act out in a non-Christian way. And I think that’s exactly the way that I’ve felt throughout 2020. I’m about to lose my religion here. I’m about to act out in a non-Christian way. I’m getting really agitated right now.

And you stop and think for a moment about all that and you say to yourself, “What are we going to do about all this? What’s the solution for all this hurt and pain and anger and suffering and divisiveness?” And I’ll tell your right now, the solution is not in the 2020 election. It’s not in the Democratic or the Republican Party. If you are putting your “hope” ultimately in that, prepare to be disappointed.

Here’s where you put your hope. The Old hymn written by Edward Mote says it best:

*My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name*

2020 is a time right now to put your hope back in the right thing, in the right future. Christ Jesus is coming back, y’all. He is. And he will not disappoint us. So put your hope in him. Put your hope in...

- 1) Our future **glory** (8:18)
- 2) Our unveiling as the **sons** of **God** (8:19-21)
- 3) Our renewed, incorruptible **bodies** (8:22-23)
- 4) Our faith becoming **sight** (8:24-25)

Amen? Let’s pray together.