



Our One and Only Hope

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Suffering is nothing new

Romans 8:18-25

18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

The apostle Paul reminds us that throughout the arc of scripture (creation to present time) there “has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth”.

- Imagery reminds us of Genesis
- Comparison to childbirth reminds us of the suffering (labor) as well as the future hope/joy (new life)

What we experienced this past year was nothing more than the broken, groaning, and longing state of creation. Maybe God, in His mercy, has allowed some of us to see this truth as a mere realization.... Maybe others have been brought through the fire, but either way.... We’ve experienced it together.

Suffering is not the end

1 Corinthians 9:24 NIV

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

Philippians 3:13-14 NIV

13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul compares the Christian life to a race. All races have a finish line. Can you imagine running a race without one? Our suffering is part of our movement towards the goal.

False finish lines

When we think of all that was taken away this past year... relationships, finances, jobs, school, church, health. If we had those as our finish lines, then we would be absolutely crushed. Defeated. If our hope was in our relationships, our finances, our health, then we would have suffered at their loss... we'd then believe that all was lost... we would lose all hope.

BUT, if our suffering is not the end, then we still have hope. A hope of something more. A hope of our future beyond our suffering.

1 Peter 5:10 NIV

10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

Suffering is an opportunity

Romans 5:3-5 NIV

3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 NIV

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Our suffering, more so our perseverance through suffering, is an opportunity to emphasize our future hope. A hope that “does not put us to shame”.

Herein lies the question. “Where is our future hope?” For us, as Christians, our hope is emphasized by the empty tomb. Jesus did not suffer and die in vain, therefore we do not suffer and die in vain. Our suffering is an opportunity to share in Jesus’ life and in His resurrection.

Hebrews 12:1-2

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus did not see suffering as an obstacle or as something to avoid. He saw it as part of the race set before Him. He endured the suffering for the prize. For the same future hope that we have. The joy set before Him.

Jesus wants to share with you that same peace and joy. Our Savior is not dead, HE IS ALIVE! He is seated at the right hand of God and He has prepared a place for us with Him!

If you feel God’s Spirit moving you towards this hope that is found only in Jesus Christ, then we pray that you reach out to us and let us know. God loves you, we love you, and we want to come alongside you.