

Gathering Guide

for Communities and Friends
Hope's Journey: Audacity of Hope, December 22, 2019

The Big Idea

During these past four weeks we have been presented with two certainties and a practical conclusion that flows from them. First, the present time is marked by sufferings because of man's fall into sin. These suffering both teach us patience and hone our character. In addition, the statistics are undeniable: unless Jesus returns in our lifetimes, we all are going to die. Therefore, the second certainty is that the future will be marked by glory for believers as God fulfills all His promises to us. The practical conclusion is, if we keep our eyes on the future

Where we are in the Bible

This week we will again be looking at several passages but this time centered on Chapter 8 of Romans, which is, in a sense, the heart of the book. This chapter is a shout of victory contrasting with the wail of despair which closed Chapter 7. The chapter begins by assuring us that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus and closes with the promise that nothing can separate us from God's love. Our focus will be in verses 18-25, which speak of both the hope that accompanies our salvation and the hope of our future glory as we will one day rejoice in the presence and the glory of God.

Other scriptures to consider

Isaiah 11:1-10
The Branch from Jesse

I Corinthians 15
Resurrection

I Thessalonians 4:13-14
The Coming of the Lord

Revelation 21 and 22

Finding a bit of ourselves

- When in your past did you really hope to acquire something but were unable to do so, or really hoped that an event would happen, but it never quite came to pass? What was your reaction? Looking back - was your hope just a pipe dream or was it based on reasonable expectations?
- How much time would you say you spend thinking about the "hope" of eternal life? If very little, why do suppose that's the case? If quite often, why so? When you do think of eternity, what is it like? What is your picture of heaven like?
- If you could ask God one question right now about heaven/eternity, what would it be?

Where do we go from here?

- Paul says in Romans 8:18-19 that our present sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in us. Considering the time and energy we invest in focusing on our present difficulties, does it even seem possible to redirect our thoughts from today's problems? How can we best change our thinking to focus on the glory that awaits us?
- The English Poet Alexander Pope famously penned the words "Hope springs eternal". How is your "hope level" right now? Read Romans 8:18-25 again and list any reasons for, or principles about, hope that may refill your hope tank.
- Your friend is dying from a terminal disease. Your friend is a Christian and is struggling with why life has been so hard on him/her. How might you encourage your friend? (Note "Other scriptures to consider" above.)



Prayer focus

Romans 8 continues in verses 26-27 and reminds us that God searches our hearts and the Holy Spirit intercedes for us even when we do not know what to pray. So even when hope is hard to come by, we can pray:

- Asking God to search our hearts (Psalm 139:23-24)
- Asking for God's will to be done (Luke 22:42)
- That God would receive the honor and glory (Revelation:4:11)

