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# The Effectual Working of Our Joyful Hope

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*(A Primer on Romans 8:18-25)*

“Hope springs eternal,” or so the saying goes. And for the most part it does. As men encounter and experience various trials, troubles, and vicissitudes in their lives, they quickly seek for solace, encouragement, and the determination to endure by laying hold on some form of hope. It may be nothing more than the simple optimistic thinking that ‘Things can’t get much worse; they just have to get better soon’; which isn’t much more than mere wishful thinking. Or it may be much stronger than that. It may actually be the assured prospect of a definite change coming soon. Yet whatever the hope may be, and whether it is a weak one or a strong one, it is the inner man’s natural first line of defense against the discouraging and distressing effects of trouble and suffering.

With this being so, hope usually does ‘spring eternal.’ Since a troubled soul is a soul in desperate need of hope, if by some chance one hope does not ‘pan out,’ the search immediately begins for a new one. And when it is found, it is then latched on to for support and stability. In connection with this it is interesting to note, as Proverbs 13:12 states, that...

12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but *when* the desire cometh, *it is* a tree of life.

*(Proverbs 13:12)*

Hope, therefore, certainly is health to the inner man, especially in times of adversity.

## Our Own Need For Hope

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The various adversities, troubles, and vicissitudes of life that we are speaking about are common to man. They are a natural part of this world, being the fruits of the bondage of sin, corruption, and devolution that grips it. As such all of these things come under the heading of what the apostle Paul in Romans 8:18 refers to as “the sufferings of this present time.” And we ourselves, even though we are the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, are by no means immune to them.

In fact in this present dispensation of His grace, God makes it plain and clear to us that He is not going to be shielding us from them. This, of course, is in contrast to the way things operate in God’s program and dealings with Israel, where many forms of natural trouble and suffering could be avoided, or God would directly intervene to remove it. But such is not the case in God’s program with us today. Indeed the reality of this is the unavoidable bottom line to all that we are taught in Romans 8:18-39.

With this being so, we ourselves also have a need for hope when we encounter adversity and suffering. Yet we do not have the hope, or expectation, of God stepping in and ‘putting His hand between us and the trouble.’ Again, this is not how God is dealing with us in His program for this present dispensation.

Nevertheless, we still do have a God-given hope that we are to operate upon in this dispensation. And it is not only a true hope, it is a joyful hope at that. As well it is perfectly fitting to God’s program and dealings with us today. And as such

it is *the hope* that God has specifically designed to effectually work within us when it comes to “the sufferings of this present time.”

Now before looking at our joyful hope and considering its effectual working in our lives, we ought to first make sure that we fully realize that God is by no means mistreating us in this dispensation because He is not shielding us from “the sufferings of this present time.” Nor are we somehow being shortchanged in this regard. Far from it. In fact the exact opposite is true. As strange as it may sound, by allowing us to encounter and experience “the sufferings of this present time” God is actually honoring us. That’s right. In particular God is honoring us as His “sons.” And as such He has designed it so that “the sufferings of this present time” actually have a bearing upon our inheritance as His “sons.”

### **Our Sonship Status, Inheritance, and “The Sufferings of This Present Time”**

It is significant and important to note that when Paul deals with the subject of “the sufferings of this present time,” he does so immediately after teaching us about our sonship status.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

(Romans 8:14-18)

Now this is not just coincidental, as if our sonship status and “the sufferings of this present time” are

two completely unrelated matters that just happen to be set forth in close proximity to each other. No, not at all. The subject of “the sufferings of this present time” purposely follows the doctrine of our sonship status. And it does this because there is a direct connection between those sufferings and a particular aspect of our inheritance as “sons.”

Simply and briefly put, one of the first matters about which a father educates his son upon his adoption is the matter of his inheritance. In so doing, a “son” learns that there are two aspects to his inheritance. There is an unconditional part and a conditional part. That is, there is the part which the “son” inherits by default, so to speak, seeing he is his father’s child. However there is also the part that he can inherit by way of promotion, or reward, in his father’s business at the conclusion of his sonship education and training. Or in other words there is the part that is called “the reward of the inheritance.” This particular aspect of a son’s inheritance is tied to the issue of his response to his sonship education and his functional life as a “son.” And this the “son” can receive for having been a wise and honorable “son,” who faithfully labored with his father in his business. The son’s labor is worthy of a reward, and his father rewards him with “the reward of the inheritance.”

Now as it is with sonship in general, so also is it with us as God’s “sons.” Having declared us to be His “sons,” God therefore immediately educates us in the matter of our inheritance, as Romans 8:16-17 sets forth. And as verse 17 makes clear, we learn that we also have the same two aspects to our inheritance.

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

(Romans 8:17)

As Paul says, we are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Being “heirs of God,” we

are heirs of God's life and all that belongs to the honor of living in His presence. And we will have all of this in glorified, immortal bodies. This is the default aspect of our inheritance.

However Paul also speaks of us being "joint heirs with Christ." Yet being "joint-heirs with Christ" is not the same thing as being "heirs of God." It is an additional issue, or an additional aspect of our inheritance. And as the remainder of verse 17 sets forth, it is the conditional aspect. It is conditioned upon, "if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together." And with this being the case, this is where the issue of "the sufferings of this present time" come into play.

The opportunity for us to 'suffer with Christ' actually begins with the issue of "the sufferings of this present time" and our response to them. We 'suffer with Him' when we ourselves respond to such things with the same godly thinking and attitude towards them as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has.

Indeed as the Lord witnesses the occurrence of such things, and as He sees us encounter and experience them, He 'suffers' their existence, as well as our experiencing of them. He does not ignore them, hide His eyes from them, or pretend that they aren't real. Instead He actually 'suffers' them. Yet He does not do this stoically, or fatalistically, or with mere gritty toleration. Rather He does so through the effectual working within Him of a very particular understanding that He has about them. An understanding that is derived from the comprehension that He has of His Father's business and why they are allowed to occur. And with that understanding He Himself 'suffers' the continued existence of the effects of the bondage of corruption in this world, and He does so with patience and contentment. Moreover His patience and contentment has for its solid, unmoveable foundation the knowledge of, and effectual working of, a joyful hope.

Now once again, we as "sons" today have the privilege of 'suffering with Christ.' With this

being so God is indeed honoring us when it comes to the issue of us encountering and experiencing "the sufferings of this present time." As His "sons" God is honoring us with the godly privilege of thinking like He does, and like the Lord Jesus Christ does, regarding "the sufferings of this present time." Our Father is granting us the sonship privilege of responding to them as His godly "sons"; of possessing His godly thinking and having it effectually work within us to produce the same godly patience, longsuffering, and endurance that He Himself has. This, therefore, is a sonship grace indeed, and one which provides for us to be "joint-heirs with Christ" in the day when God manifests us as His "sons," and establishes both Christ and us in the fulness of His business and its future operations.

So then with this being the case, God is by no means shortchanging us by not delivering us from troubles, adversities, and sufferings. And neither has God 'left us in a lurch' when it comes to dealing with any of "the sufferings of this present time." That is, He has not left us to our own devices for coping with them, nor does He expect us to have to resort to the common hopes of the natural man, or to those of this ungodly world. Rather, in accordance with our sonship status and our godly edifying, God has given to us a very particular hope that is contained in a 'form of doctrine' which He wants us to have operating within us. This 'form of doctrine' is set forth in Romans 8:18-39, and it begins with the specific doctrine of our joyful hope in verses 18-25.

### **The Doctrinal Purpose of Romans 8:18-25**

Simply put, the 'form of doctrine' set forth in Romans 8:18-39 has at least 3 distinct components to it, the first of which is contained in verses 18-25 and forms the foundation. This foundation is the doctrine of the specific joyful hope that God has given to us in this present dispensation of His grace. And once again, it is the very same joyful hope that our Lord Jesus

Christ Himself presently operates upon. As His “sons” God has designed that it likewise effectually work within us, and as it does for it to produce in us the same kind of *godly patience and content endurance* presently belonging to Christ.

However this is not all. As the doctrine of our joyful hope effectually works within us to produce godly patience and endurance, it also redounds to God’s glory on account of its godliness. This is something no other hope, no matter how effective it may be, is able to do. And this is also something that could not be produced at all, if God shielded us from the sufferings instead of allowing us to experience them.

Therefore being “sons” we ought to count it a privilege of God’s grace to us to be equipped to respond to any of “the sufferings of this present time” as such. And in view of it we naturally ought to want to have the doctrine of our joyful hope effectually working within us to this end.

Now there is one more thing that we should do before looking at our joyful hope. We should take a brief look at the actual mechanics of how the effectual working of a joyful hope produces *godly patience and endurance*. This is important to note since there is a distinct material difference between godly patience and endurance, and that which is humanly devised. To see this we will look at two other cases: that of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself in God’s program with Israel, and then that of the remnant of Israel.

## The Lord’s Joyful Hope

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

(Hebrews 12:1-2)

In this passage the example of the Lord Himself is placed before the remnant of Israel with a view to them fully understanding and appreciating the effectual working of a joyful hope. As they were told back in the latter part of chapter 10, they have “need of patience” when it comes to enduring their particular sufferings. To be precise, they needed to have *godly patience and endurance* in the face of those sufferings. And in view of this they have been given a body of instruction and exhortation beginning at the end of chapter 10 that is specifically designed to effectually work within them to produce it.

And so with their “need of patience” having been clearly established from chapter 10, and with them now being exhorted in 12:1 to “run with patience” the race that is set before them (especially in view of their increased sufferings to come), God culminates the doctrine to them in verse 2 by giving them the Lord’s own example of how He Himself operated upon the effectual working of a joyful hope.

Now as they are exhorted to ‘look unto Jesus’ in this regards, they are told how that He “for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,…” And so He did. The Lord operated upon a particular “joy that was set before him”; a particular joyful hope. And it effectually worked within Him to produce *God honoring patience and endurance* in connection with the sufferings of the cross.

In God's program with Israel, (just as is described earlier on in the book of Hebrews), the Lord's joyful hope pertains to the issue of Him bringing to pass and enjoying all of the glories that are resident in the final mandates of the Davidic Covenant. On the cross the Lord Jesus knew that He would be fulfilling the first mandate of that covenant — being the Redeemer — and that He would need to suffer greatly in connection with it. However He also knew that this first mandate was the one upon which the glories belonging to all of the other mandates would depend. There would be “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow,” with the glory dependent upon the sufferings.

Therefore upon fulfilling the first mandate, the Lord knew that He would then be “set down at the right hand of the throne of God,” where in eager anticipation He would be “expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.” Where He would be eagerly anticipating putting into effect the remaining mandates of the Davidic Covenant, and in so doing bring to pass and enjoy His joyful hope.

Now of particular importance to us in all of this is what is said about the actual effectual working of the Lord's joyful hope within Him. Specifically the mechanics of it, and the nature of the endurance it produced. As Hebrews 12:2 says, the Lord had “joy that was set before him,” and because of it He “endured the cross, despising the shame.”

When something is “set before” your mind, it is put there for your thoughtful consideration; indeed for your constant thoughtful consideration. It is designed for you to think on it, not just occasionally think about it. It is provided as a ‘stay’ for your mind, when there would be pressure upon your mind either to wander, or to be distracted, or to be distressed.

Such was the case with our Lord's joyful hope, and He did with it just what He was supposed to do with it. It therefore effectually worked within

Him, enabling Him to ‘endure the cross’ because “the shame” of it was ‘despised’ by Him, being displaced in His thinking by the knowledge of the more compelling issue of His joyful hope.

The Lord's example, therefore, makes it clear that *godly patience and endurance* is not the same as any form of mere humanly devised endurance. That is, it isn't the issue of us being patient and enduring some difficult situation or circumstance simply by gritting our teeth and tolerating it. It's not the issue of us having an ‘iron will’ despite being under pressure. Nor is it the issue of us simply determining to put up with something by trying to put it out of our mind, and so not let it ‘get us down.’ Neither is it the issue of us being given some fleeting words of encouragement, which we discard once our trouble passes. (For example, “Adversities build character, don't you know.” Or, “It's pressure that turns a lump of coal into a diamond.”) It's also not the issue of us possessing an indomitable human spirit, (so highly prized and praised by the natural man), which through ‘dint of force’ reaches deep down within and musters the strength to endure and go on. Nor is it, (even though I have used the word in this article), simply the issue of us learning somehow to cope with some difficulty.

*Godly patience and endurance* is none of these things. Instead it is the issue of being both willing, and actually desiring, to see some suffering, difficulty, or adversity through to its end, because a very specific hope that God Himself has given effectually works within to produce an overpowering “joy” for seeing and enjoying that hope. And the overpowering “joy” belonging to the hope overpowers any distress caused by the suffering because it produces a despising of the shame, embarrassment, ridicule, discomfort, grief, and the like, that may be associated with the adversity. The overpowering joyful hope makes it so that the distress associated with the suffering loses its power to occupy the mind. It is as if there just isn't room for distress to settle in the mind, because the mind

is occupied with the joyful hope.

This is what *godly patience and endurance* is all about, as well as where it comes from. And naturally it is what the Lord Himself possessed by means of the effectual working within Him of His joyful hope.

It is also what the remnant of Israel is exhorted to possess in connection with their particular sufferings, as well as what we ourselves ought to possess in this present dispensation in connection with “the sufferings of this present time.”

### The Remnant of Israel’s Joyful Hope

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

(Hebrews 12:3-4)

What the Lord endured, and how He did so, is set forth as an example to the remnant. And as they “consider him that endured” they are to understand and appreciate the mechanics of the effectual working of a joyful hope. In particular, they are to understand and appreciate the mechanics of the effectual working of *their* joyful hope. They are to realize exactly how it is that God has designed for their “need of patience” to be fulfilled.

Hence they themselves are to ‘consider’ the joyful hope that God has “set before” them. They are to think on it, be occupied with it, so that they can operate upon it; so that it can effectually work within them unto the producing of *godly patience and endurance*, even when the time comes that they do begin to ‘resist unto blood.’

In connection with this, in the remainder of Hebrews through The Revelation we naturally find them being reminded more than once of their joyful hope and its effectual working within them. For example,...

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

(1 Peter 1:3-6)

The “power of God” that keeps them, and enables them to “greatly rejoice,” though they are “in heaviness through manifold temptations,” is the effectual working within them of their “lively hope” and all the joy belonging to it.

### Our Joyful Hope

Once again, in Romans 8:18ff God has the apostle Paul “set before” us the doctrine of *our* joyful hope, along with the issue of its effectual working within us when it comes to any of “the sufferings of this present time” that we may experience.

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not *worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

(Romans 8:18)

“The glory which shall be revealed in us” is our joyful hope. And as Paul says, the knowledge of it effectually working within makes “the sufferings of this present time” pale by comparison. No, in truth Paul says it does even more than that. As Paul himself encountered and experienced any such sufferings, in his mind they not only paled by comparison to our joyful hope, they were not even “worthy to be compared” with it. Hence they did not pre-occupy his thinking, or become the persistent disconcerting object of his

thinking. And as such they were not able to get a grip upon him, nor distress him. They were not able to make him miserable and/or despondent, nor depress him. Instead the effectual working of the knowledge of our joyful hope within Paul precluded any of these things from happening to him. It produced within him the godly patience and contentment to endure any of the sufferings, and to actually do it with joy.

Now just what is our joyful hope? Just what is this “glory which shall be revealed in us,” which is designed to work so effectually within us? Is it the knowledge of our confident expectation of the glory of God to come since we are justified unto eternal life; i.e. the issue of living forever with God? This indeed is part of it, however our joyful hope is more specific and more defined than that.

The joyful hope that is set before us is our participation in the fabulous glory belonging to the specific role and vocation that God has purposed for us to fulfill as His heirs. And that role, (which God has only now revealed in this dispensation), is that of us providing for “the creature itself” to also “be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” As Paul explains,...

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope,

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

(Romans 8:19-21)

“The creature” is the designation given to the body, or realm, of God’s creation surrounding the earth, which by the very nature of its creation actually has it being a creature type embodiment for the earth. As such it incorporates the heavenly realm with its living, intelligent angelic creatures designed by God to function within it.

Designating it as “the creature,” it is descriptive of God’s intended function for that realm, creating it as He did with the earth in its midst, and designing it to be lively and responsive to His very presence and residence on the earth within the midst of it.

However though it was created as such, as Paul says, “the creature” has yet to function accordingly. Instead, it “was made subject to vanity.” And this took place in connection with the implementation of Satan’s plan of evil, which he implemented first in the heavenly realm, and then shortly thereafter on the earth itself. In connection with this, God Himself subjected “the creature” to vanity. Yet, as Paul teaches, God did this “in hope.” For He Himself had a plan for delivering it from vanity, though He did not reveal it at the time. Instead He left “the creature” “subject to vanity,” while He revealed and administered His plan for delivering the earthly realm within its midst.

But now the creature’s “hope” has been revealed by God. He will not leave it “subject to vanity.” Rather, “the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” And this will be accomplished through some other “children of God.” Some others, who being God’s heirs, will be used by Him to provide for glorious liberty to be given to “the creature.” And those other “children of God” are us; God’s “new creature,” the church the body of Christ, in this present dispensation of God’s grace.

Such, therefore, is God’s glorious purpose with us in this present dispensation. Being His “children,” and therefore being His “heirs,” God has purposed for us to be utilized by Him to provide for “the creature” to be “delivered from the bondage of corruption.” And with this being so, the indescribable glorious liberty that this will bring to “the creature itself,” as well as the phenomenal honor that it is to us ourselves to be so used of God, combine to constitute our joyful hope.

## Its Effectual Working Within Us

What a hope we have! Think on it. It is a hope that is charged with such joy for what it all means, and for what it all amounts to, that it should effectually work within us to make it so that any of “the sufferings of this present time” that we may experience amount to nothing more than mere background noise to us. Like a radio playing in the background, the sufferings are there; but they “are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Instead, as we ourselves “consider” the “joy that is set before” us, it effectually works within us to enable us to “despise” any personal shame, grief, discomfort, unpleasantness, and the like belonging to a suffering, knowing as God Himself does, and as the Lord Jesus Christ does, that it is all worth it for His and our joyful hope’s sake.

So rather than our minds being consumed with the grievous, unpleasant effects of any of “the sufferings of this present time,” we like “the whole creation” should have our minds consumed with the knowledge of what God is doing. And indeed the knowledge of what He is doing is that compelling.

Specifically we should be preoccupied with the grandeur of what we now know that God is providing for by means of this present dispensation, and with the issue of our joyful hope in connection with it. Such knowledge is indeed much more compelling, and it should consume us like the earnest expectation and joy of a coming birth does for a woman who is ‘groaning and travailing in pain’ waiting to be delivered. Hence Paul says,...

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

(Romans 8:22-23)

So then as Paul goes on to say, with our joyful hope effectually working within us to produce such ‘groaning within ourselves,’ we are “saved.”

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*.

(Romans 8:24-25)

Hence we are “saved” from the grievous effects of “the sufferings of this present time,” including such things as being driven to distress and/or misery by any of them, or from being plunged into despair, or despondency, or depression by them. And by being so “saved,” we can “with patience wait for” our joyful hope to come to pass, and also for the privilege of being “joint-heirs with Christ” in that day.

Such, therefore, is the effectual working of our joyful hope when it comes to “the sufferings of this present time.”

Now this has only been a brief primer on the doctrine of our joyful hope. Nevertheless it bears asking, Does the knowledge of your joyful hope effectually work within you? Is your response to any of “the sufferings of this present time” the same as Christ’s response? In other words, do you ‘suffer with Him’? Can you therefore genuinely say with Paul, (having the same compelling understanding, appreciation, and conviction), “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not *worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us”?

These questions are important to ask. And not only in connection with the effectual working of the doctrine of our joyful hope. But also because this doctrine is really just the beginning of hope's effectual working within us. Or in other words, this is just the beginning for us when it comes to the overall doctrine of hope that God sets before us in our epistles. There is more hope that God has for us. More hope that He has designed to effectually work within us to produce certain results. Even some very specialized hopes. For example, there are those that God has designed to be for specific comfort, consolation, and endurance with regards to "the sufferings of Christ." And these other hopes are set before us, and we learn about them, as our godly edifying and sonship education proceeds on from Romans 8.

In view of this, the doctrine of our joyful hope is really foundational in nature. And by the same token so also is its effectual working within us. Consequently, if we do not benefit from it when it comes to "the sufferings of this present time," most likely we will not benefit from the other hopes either. Naturally therefore we should take earnest heed to the effectual working of our joyful hope. For our capacity to 'abound in hope' rests upon it. — *Keith R. Blades*