

Our Guarantee of Glory

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[0 : 00] Please turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 8. And in Romans chapter 8, this morning we'll be looking at verses 18 through 25.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope.

That the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption, into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

[1 : 23] And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

For in hope we have been saved. But hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he already sees?

But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. I asked Gary to share with us the same portion from Romans chapter 8 that we considered last week, because there are some unattended things in it that I want to bring to your attention, and it is such a monumental passage.

It really deserves all of the exposition we can provide for it, because this passage, perhaps as well as any other, deals with the issue of the final outcome of our journey here on this earth, and particularly as it affects believers, because it is contrasting sufferings, which are very real, with glory, which is going to be the end result.

Those two items are about as far apart as they can possibly be. I really do appreciate the fact that the passage does not in any way deny the reality of suffering.

[3 : 13] It admits it. It predicts it. It tells us that we ought to understand it and anticipate it. And by the way, this really gives the lie to the crowd that would have us believe that every Christian is supposed to be healthy and wealthy.

That's just so much nonsense. It doesn't even deserve the time for reputation. The scriptures make it so very, very clear that there is a principle involved, that God is doing something, and he is at work behind the scenes in this issue of suffering.

And it may take any kind of avenue that you can think of. First, I guess, we probably think of physical suffering and physical pain.

And everybody here, to one degree or another, has experienced that. Some of you have experienced it in a great way, and over a long period of time.

And you know what it's like to live with perpetual pain for a long time. And some suffer from all kinds of emotional pain and stress and agony, just from living in a complicated world and from being engaged in relationships that sometimes go awry, that are pain-producing.

[4 : 30] This world has got pain around every corner of one kind or another. And the time is coming, and what this text wants to assure us of, that this pain, that is very real, not to be denied, is one day going to give way to glory.

And the glory is the exact opposite of suffering pain. It is the fulfillment. It is the... How shall I describe this glory?

It is everything that God wants it to be and can make it to be, and it will fulfill the greatest longings of your heart in realization and final outcome.

There will be no room for improvement in this glory that awaits us. And yet, there is the process that is involved, and it is the process with which we have difficulty, because we just as soon skip the process.

You know, even Jesus went through this. Even he realized that there would be no crown without the cross.

[5 : 50] That was part of the price he paid for the exaltation that we read about in Philippians chapter 2. That Christ endured all that he did, and the end result of that is that, therefore, God has highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, things in heaven and earth and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

But that is not going to be realized without his paying his dues, without the suffering that preceded it. That's the principle.

And Christ learned obedience through the things that he suffered, we are told in Hebrews. And that means he experienced obedience on a daily level, each time he was confronted with choices, probably the most dramatic of which are those associated with the temptation wilderness by Satan for 40 days and 40 nights.

And he met the temptations head on, and he managed them. He survived them. He overcame them. That was just one instance wherein he learned obedience.

But by far and away, the greatest was that night in Gethsemane, when in agony, he wept and prayed and said, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

[7 : 33] Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done. And here was just one more instance where the Son of God made himself subservient to his Father's will.

It was all about obedience. And when we suffer, if we are able to muster obedience in the midst of the suffering, we shall fare well.

What else can we muster? Anger? Anger? Resentment? Gripping?

Bitterness? Pity parties? What did I do to deserve this? Why is God? Has God got it in for me, or what? Am I some kind of a terrible person that I have to suffer these things, and everybody else seems to be getting along so well?

Let's take just a brief journey that I hadn't planned to take. Back to Psalm 73 for just a moment, but keep your place in Romans 8, because that is our principal text.

[8 : 39] Psalm 73 really speaks to this in some instances. The psalmist is having a great deal of difficulty, not just with his own adversity, but with the prosperity of certain others who definitely did not deserve it.

Psalm 73, Surely God is good to Israel to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling.

My steps had almost slipped, for I was envious at the arrogant, as I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Now, what in the world are wicked people doing, enjoying prosperity? Not supposed to work that way. But in this world, that is often the way it works.

The wicked are enjoying prosperity. There are no pains in their death, and their body is fat. They are not in trouble as other men.

[9 : 53] Nor are they plagued like mankind. Therefore, pride is their necklace. They wear it like jewelry.

It sticks out all over them. The garment of violence covers them. Their eye bulges from fatness. The imaginations of their heart run riot.

They mock and wickedly speak of oppression. They speak from on high. They have set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue parades through the earth.

Therefore, his people return to this place, and waters of abundance are drunk by them. And they say, How does God know?

It is their knowledge with the Most High. Behold, these are the wicked, and always at ease. They have increased in wealth. Surely, in vain, I have kept my heart pure.

[10 : 53] Think of that. Here he's having second thoughts. I've kept my heart pure. And for what? What good has it done me? I've washed my hands in innocence.

For I have been stricken all day long, and chastened every morning. If I had said I will speak thus, behold, I should have betrayed the generation of thy children.

And when I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight. It really got to me. I thought, God, what's going on?

This isn't the way this thing's supposed to work. We're the good guys. Remember, we're on your side. You're supposed to be looking out for us, and look what we're going through, and look at what these ungodly people are going through.

Man, they've never had it so good. And everything changed. Everything changed in the next verse. It was troublesome in my sight until I came into the sanctuary of God.

[11 : 56] You know what the principal thing they do in the sanctuary of God? When the Jewish people go to synagogue, you know what the highlight is, what the big deal is, what the climax is of the whole service?

It's when the attendant, goes to the cabinet in the back, opens it up, and takes out the Torah, the scriptures, and brings them over, and hands them to the reader, and the reader unrolls the scroll, and begins reading.

That's the highlight. That's plugging in to God's perspective. Until we do that, all we have is our perspective, which is inaccurate, and incomplete, and skewed, and we just don't see things often like they really are.

We just don't have the ability to do that because we're limited. And as I've often said, perspective changes everything. That's the message here.

When I went into the temple of God, and the implication is, in being there, the scroll is opened and read, and there we get God's viewpoint.

[13 : 22] We know what our viewpoint is. And as I've said, it's often lacking. So let's go back to the Romans 8 passage again, if we may. For I considered. Verse 18.

Sufferings of this present time. And this, let's remember, the guy who's talking about sufferings knows something about it. On five different occasions, he was beaten by his own Jewish countrymen, given 40 lashes, save one.

Actually, it was 39 lashes because what they used to lash a man with was kind of like a cat of nine tails, only it just had three tails. And it was, it had a stiff handle, like a, like a broom handle.

And then at the end of it, there were attached to it leather thongs. And those strands of leather had embedded in them bits of metal.

And when one would be lashed with that, he would get 13 lashes because each strand had its own damage that it did to the back.

[14 : 34] It was lacerating. And when you multiply the three times 13, or three, three times 13, you get 39. And that was the lashes, even though 40 was prescribed, but it was against the law to give anyone more than 40 lashes.

So they made sure that they would not extend that. And they had this three-pronged thing that administered 39 lashes on five different occasions.

And that is in addition to his being beaten with rods. And this guy is on God's side.

God is on his side. And he allows this to go on. Where do you see the rationale in that?

And you know, way back in Acts 9, which will not take time to investigate now, but right after Paul's encounter with this brilliant, dazzling Shekinah glory on the Damascus road, God appears to Ananias.

[15 : 49] And this is not to be confused with the Ananias of chapter 5 who was married to Sapphira. This is a different Ananias. And God said, Ananias, I want you to go into Syria, into Damascus, to the street called Straight, and inquire after one whose name is Saul of Tarsus.

He is praying. And Ananias said, Saul of Tarsus. I've heard of that guy.

Surely, surely you can't be talking about him. Because I've heard what great damage he has done to your people in Jerusalem. And there's something wrong with this mission.

And he says, no, the Lord says to Ananias, I've got the right guy. And I have already shown him what great things he must suffer for my name.

What is this thing about God calling people to suffer? is that what you do to your friends?

[17 : 06] The video that we saw this morning at the 9 o'clock hour really tied in beautifully with this. And frankly, none of it was planned or coordinated at all.

But it was all about learning obedience through deprivation and suffering and pain and hardship and doing without. It is a case of learning to trust the Lord rather than trust people or things or stuff or whatever.

There are lessons to be learned through suffering that can never ever be learned through pleasure. I don't know about you, but if I'm going to take my choice between pleasure and pain, guess which one I want.

I mean, I'm not into sadism. I would just as soon take the pleasure and go with it and enjoy it and milk it for all the mileage that is there and the pain.

Thank you, Lord. Well, why don't you just give that to somebody else who's more eager for it because I'd just assume you skip me when it comes to the pain thing. And you know what? He would.

[18 : 25] If he didn't love me so much, he would. But again, this is God providing for us what he knows we need. We do not know what we need. We only know what we want.

God knows what we need. And it's the same thing as your children. You've got a two or three year old in the high chair and he may want all kinds of things that you're not going to give him.

He knows what he wants, but you, you know what he needs and you love him too much to just give him what he wants. You're going to require him to take what he needs because you know that is in his best interest.

Now, we don't have any problem understanding that. As deficient as our perspective and understanding is, we can get that and we see that as a parental responsibility.

can we look at the relationship between God and us the same way? It is just the same except there is one major difference and that is this.

[19 : 34] That which separates you from God in your perspective is far, far greater from what separates you from your child in that perspective. Now, these are just things of logic and reason if we'll stop and think about them a little bit.

It doesn't make any difference what comes into your life or how much it hurts. God is committed to loving you and providing for you what he knows you need even though you probably don't want it.

That's nothing more than his wisdom and knowledge and perspective being so superior to ours. what we ought to learn to do. What we need to learn to do is take great comfort in that.

Relax in that. And remind ourselves our heavenly father is in charge and he knows the way that I take and when I come forth I shall come forth as that which has been purified in the fire.

God is up to something. And he's got a case for each and every one of us and no two cases are exactly alike.

[20 : 51] Amazing. So I consider the sufferings of this present time and again be reminded this is somebody that knew a whole lot about sufferings.

They are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us for the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

And this creation here is talking about the totality of creation. It is animal, vegetable, and mineral, everything. Because when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, having been installed as the federal head of creation and given dominion over the whole earth, and when they fell, everything under their authority came crashing down with them.

Kaboom. And that's where we are today, living with the consequences of that. And the creation was subjected to futility. That means emptiness, vanity.

Not of his own will. In other words, creation and the animal kingdom and the vegetable kingdom and all the rest of it, they were innocent in this. They didn't have anything to do with this. This was placed upon them, imposed upon them.

[22 : 06] by those who were in charge, or as a result of the sin of those who were in charge. Not of its own will, but because of him who subjected it in hope.

And that word, who subjected it in hope. This means that at the very moment that God saw to it that everything in the human world came crashing down, it was with that, with that crash, with that fall, God already had in mind the principles that he was going to put in place to bring it back to where it needs to be.

No sooner had the fall taken place, it was subjected in hope. That means in absolute confidence. And we've dealt with this word hope a number of times here at Grace over the years.

And I don't want to belabor the point, but I do want to make it clear that we are not talking about the hope that we employ when we use the word here. We always have a question mark after it.

And that is, I hope it doesn't snow tomorrow, which means I don't know whether it will or not. I don't want it to, and I hope it won't, but I'll just have to wait and see because I don't know what the outcome is going to be.

[23 : 33] And the Bible never uses the word hope that way. And it's terrible that it's even translated that way because we get an entirely different meaning from it. This word hope has an absolute built-in confidence to it that removes all doubt and all question marks.

It is as certain as it can possibly be. This is exactly the same hope that Paul was referring to when he wrote to the Colossians and talked about Christ being in you, the hope of glory.

It means the absolute confidence of future glory because Christ is in you. It is a done deal. In fact, everything that God has promised, you might as well just consider it already happened.

It's that certain. It's that sure. That's what hope involves. He subjected it in hope in the absolute confidence that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

And there is no maybe about it. It is an absolute certainty. For we know, it isn't that we suspect or we have a hunch.

[24 : 57] We know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And the idea that the illustration that is being used here is that childbirth involves a lot of pain.

Now, we men will never know anything about this. Someone has said that if a man has to suffer from a really severe bout, of a kidney stone, that's probably about as close as he will come to knowing anything about the kind of pain that is involved in childbirth.

The point is, with childbirth as with this, is that the suffering that attends it provides a payoff. There is something good at the end of the suffering.

And it may be toddling around your house now in diapers or whatever, but that's the payoff. And there's going to be a payoff for this too. Creation suffers just like a woman in labor.

Creation is suffering the pains of childbirth together until now. Not only this, but also we ourselves having the first fruits of the spirit.

[26 : 15] The spirit is the first fruits. What in the world is this all about? Well, what this is all about is we are made in the likeness and image of God.

We have a body and we have a spirit. Our body is physical. Our spirit is not. When God made Adam from the dust of the earth, he was a lump of clay molded as a human being.

And the text tells us in Genesis that God breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life and Adam became a living soul.

That spirit that was breathed into him is the life principle which we really do not understand. but we do know this.

When you don't have, when your body does not have the life principle, you're dead. The body is dead. James 2 makes that quite clear.

[27 : 29] And when you come to faith in Christ, it is that life principle that is in you, that is immaterial, that is regenerated or made anew in Christ and your body is not changed one bit.

Your body still has the same blemishes and weaknesses and deficiencies that it had before because salvation did not affect your body at all and was not intended to.

You were made alive, regenerated by the spirit of God on the inside and it was that human spirit of yours that he regenerated.

And this is what the text means when it says, God's spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God. This is an internal thing and when it talks about the first fruits of the spirit, it's a beautiful expression because Jews were very familiar in this culture with the first fruits and that had to do with the crops that were planted and whether it was barley or wheat or oats or whatever it was, they would prepare for the time of harvest and when they would keep an eye on the harvest and they would measure the rainfall and the sunshine and everything and the shoots started coming up and growing and there would always be a certain segment of the field that would turn ripe before the rest of the field.

Maybe it had better nutrients in the soil there, maybe it had better irrigation and water there, but it kind of shot up first before all the rest of it and you could look out there in the field and you could say, hey, look at that corner over there.

[29 : 17] Boy, that's already high. That's practically ready to be harvested and the rest of the whole crop is kind of lagging behind. Well, that's the first fruits. That's the first cuttings.

That's the first that comes to maturity. And when the text says we have the first fruits of the spirit, that means that when you received Christ as your Savior, the Spirit of God came into your body in a way that none of us can understand.

And he did something on the inside of you that made you a different person from what you were before. We call that the miracle of the new birth.

That's regeneration. There isn't one of us who understands how he does that or exactly what it is that he does, but all we know is this. We're not the same.

We're different on the inside. Which is addressed by Paul when he says, if anyone be in Christ, he's a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. Well, he just looks the same.

[30 : 22] I don't see any difference. He just looks like he always looked. She hasn't changed one bit. But the change is on the inside. That's the first fruits of the spirit. fruit. And what that signifies is, just as it does with the harvest of crop, when there is a first fruits, that is guarantee, the assurance, that all the rest of the crop is going to come along.

And this is just the first cutting. And you can look forward to the rest of the harvest. That will be the major harvest. And what that will be is, when your body, physical body, undergoes the same kind of miraculous change physically that your spirit underwent spiritually, non-physically.

Read on the text. And not only this, but also we ourselves having the first fruits of the spirit.

That's the down payment. That is God's down payment on your person. He has made an investment in you. And he has put his seal in you, in the person of the spirit of God.

Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. What does that mean?

[31 : 57] That means that's the part that's lacking. That's the rest of the harvest. You've got the first fruits, but the major harvest is going to come later. And when that comes, then we will be completely redeemed.

When Jesus Christ died on that cross, he made a payment in full for our redemption. redemption. But it has not all been applied. The only thing that has been applied to our redemption is our internal spirit that was made new in Christ.

And when we die physically, that spirit leaves the body and goes to be with the Lord. But we remain unfinished.

We are an incomplete product. Even as we meet here together right now, we are all in process.

None of us is a finished product. We are all under construction. Every one of us. We are not what we are going to be. But thank God someone said we are not what we were.

[33 : 08] We are not what we're going to be. We are in process and we will not be a finished product until the rest of the harvest comes in.

And that's our physical body. As he goes on to say, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. From the time we believed, we were saved on the basis of a future expectation of complete restoration.

We were saved on the basis of an expectation from the time we believed and we are as saved as we will ever be. But there is not yet any evidence whatsoever of a redeemed body.

And nobody can see your redeemed spirit. When Christ died and accomplished our redemption, the debt was paid in its entirety.

Yet the application of that debt has not been applied. So we remain unfinished works of grace. We continue in this life to still being under construction.

[34 : 21] And when the redemption work of Christ is applied to our physical body, in addition to our non-physical spirit, we will then be a finished product completely conformed to the image of Christ.

Christ, and this is what Paul means when he goes on and says, in hope we have been saved. That is, it is with this confidence and this assurance at the outset of the whole process that was realized when we were saved.

This hope was in place from the very beginning. But hope that is seen is not hope. And here's another aspect about hope. Not only is it certain, complete, absolute, positive, guaranteed, but it's always future.

It's always off in the distance. It's not realized. And the text says, what does anyone hope for if they already haven't?

There's no need for hope because the hope has been realized. It's been accomplished. So you stop hoping once you have the reality. But we don't have that reality. so we still look for it.

[35 : 34] And the eager anticipation, the word that is used in the Greek here conveys an idea, the eager anticipation conveys an idea of someone perched up on a hill, looking off in the distance like this.

And they're craning their neck in the anticipation of seeing the first arrival of that which is anticipated coming off in the distance. That's the earnest expectation that he's talking about here.

And it's a beautiful concept. If we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance, we wait eagerly for it.

it all depends on your attitude.

it all depends on whether you are committed to this perspective. Because if you are not, you will not have the perseverance that's mentioned here.

[36 : 40] This perseverance means staying power. We call it hanging in there when the going gets tough.

come back just a couple of pages to Romans chapter 5. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand.

and we exult in the absolute assurance and confidence of the glory of God. Not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations.

Really? Are you kidding me? I don't know about you, but in my woodworking shop when I get underway and I smack my big old fat thumb with the hammer, I still haven't been able to say, oh, praise the Lord.

well, we glory in our tribulations knowing, again, knowing, not suspecting, not having a hunch, knowing.

[38 : 27] How can you know that? You can't know that unless you have the audacity to just believe what God says just because he says it.

That's the basis for knowing, and that's the only basis for knowing, and that's the only basis he wants you to have for knowing. I believe it, God said it, that settles it. Well, what about my pain?

Yeah, what about your pain? It's real, it's genuine, and you want to be rid of it as soon as you can. But in the midst of it, there is a positive aspect to what God is doing in the midst of the suffering and the pain that you never in your right mind volunteer for.

But it is designed to do a job in you, and nothing else can do it. This is why we say saints do not grow well in sunshine, they grow best in the shadows.

And who among us would not rather be out in that bright, beautiful sunshine. Not only this, but we also exalt, that means rejoice, that means we get excited and thankful about our tribulations, knowing, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance.

[39 : 50] Perseverance, the word is, the word in the Greek is hupomone, it's a compound Greek word, and it means to dwell under. And the idea that is that pressure, pressure is being applied and put upon you.

And every desire and tendency is to get out from under that. Because it hurts, it's painful, we want to be released from it.

But hupomone says, you hang in there and you stick it out, and you take the pain, and you have confidence that God really knows what he's doing.

And he's not out to just hurt you. He's molding and shaping and chipping away at the dross.

Knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance, staying power. And let me again remind you of the guy who's saying this and his personal experience.

[41 : 07] And perseverance, proven character, and proven character, hope, there's that absolute confidence again, and our absolute confidence does not and will not disappoint us because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

That's that earnest down payment, first fruits again, who was given to us even when we were still helpless at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

Back to our text and let's conclude this and we'll open it for some Q&A.; if we hope for what we do not see with perseverance, we wait eagerly for it.

Wow. This is just this, of course, it is all warming to this grand verse that we're going to reach eventually when we get there. That's 828. And this is this win-win thing that God has provided for all believers and it doesn't make any difference how unlikely it appears in your case.

And sometimes we think, surely we must be an exception to this 828 thing because of what I'm going through. Listen, God knows full well exactly what you're going through.

[42 : 26] Every pain, every disappointment, every heartache, every adversity, every reversal. He knows full well about it and He will not allow anything to go to waste.

He's committed to using it all. And His singular, His singular motivation behind this whole thing, the whole smear, is His love for you.

Same thing that you have for that two-year-old in the high chair is your love for them. This is God's love for you. And someone says, you can rest in the fact that God is, God loves us too much to hurt us and He's too big to make a mistake.

So you just relax and settle down in Him. And you know what my prayer to God is sometimes when I'm going through adversity and difficulty and pain and things that go along with it, stuff that I'd never in the world volunteer for.

What my main prayer is, is Lord, I know you are trying to teach me something through this difficulty and through this disappointment.

[43 : 49] and I don't want to be a slow learner. I want to get the drift of this in a hurry so we can move on to something else.

God help me not to be a slow learner. And you know, this will severely impact your attitude. You get away from the why me's and what did I do to deserve this and the pity parties and God doesn't know what He's doing and I must be some special, some kind of special person outside the will of God that He's allowing this to happen and on and on and on.

And instead, when you adopt these principles and understand what this text is saying that we've just been through, it provides the ultimate basis for relaxation, peace, enjoyment, security, just relax.

Let God do His thing. Say, Lord, here I am. You can move me. any way you want to anywhere you want to do anything you want. I'm at your disposal.

And then just relax and enjoy the ride. Questions or comments? Come on now.

[45 : 06] I'm sure some of you has got a yeah, but what if? anyone?

Anyone? Anyone? Okay, Gary up here. Just a comment.

When the ride gets bumpy, do you have a spare cushion? when the ride gets bumpy, do I have a spare cushion?

Well, I must admit, I've never thought in those terms.

I can't say that I have a backup or a way of taking off the pressure or anything. Yes, come back to Gary again if you would please. Maybe you can clarify your question a little better.

[46 : 14] You do have a spare cushion. Your office is always open. Oh, well, yeah, I guess, I guess you could say that my office is always open.

I do have a spare cushion in that regard. Yeah. But where do I go? Where do I go? Well, for starters, I have a half a dozen elders who are at my disposal.

And I have found them to be men of encouragement and integrity and assistance for whatever has been needed over these past 45 years.

And I have drawn heavily upon their wisdom and expertise and encouragement, sometimes in ways that they're not even aware of. So in some respects, they constitute a kind of a spare for me.

You know, in this body of Christ, and let me make this clear too, because I certainly didn't want to give this impression. Not at all. That what we've been talking about has to do a lot with the maturing process and the developing process between you as an individual and the Lord.

[47 : 33] And that's the main burden of the message, and I think that's what the text is saying. But God has also provided the wherewithal that these things are are not to be lived out apart from community.

There is something incredibly important, valuable, helpful, necessary within the body of Christ whereby we are called upon to need one another and to be encouraged one by another.

We are to gather ourselves together, not forsaking that assembly, to gather ourselves together that we might be available to each other for mutual encouragement and accountability.

And that is very, very important. Very important. I was talking about this just recently on one of the segments in Christianity Clarified, and I just made mention of that passage in Hebrews, I think it's Hebrews 11 or 12, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.

And believers are to come together that we might be available to each other for mutual encouragement and for building up in the body of Christ.

[49 : 01] And that you really are hard-pressed scripturally to say, well, I'll just sit home and get such and such a really good preacher on TV.

Well, I don't care how good the preacher is on TV or radio or whatever. You do not get the community that is intended by God for the body of Christ.

And we need to be available to each other. We are to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. You need me. I need you.

And that is by design, by divine design. No man is an island. No one stands alone in this thing. If the body of Christ means anything, it's all about the corporate aspect of it.

And each member contributes to that body in a different way. And it's a beautiful dynamic and it cannot be improved upon because God designed it. Anything else?

[49 : 58] Anyone? Yes, Loretta up here. Sometimes I have to remember when those hard times are coming and you're in the middle of it, it's hard to see beyond the point where you're at.

But sometimes I have to remind myself that maybe these hard times are for me, but also for someone else. I mean, you know, maybe what I'm going through is an experience or something that somebody else is going to learn from.

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. That's important. That's all part of this interconnectedness. You would be surprised. You would be surprised how much what you say and what you do has an influence on somebody else.

And I don't have any idea how God works this body dynamic together, how he puts people where they are, when they are, for what they are, to contribute what they do.

But it's just marvelous and it's wonderful the way he does it. And he does it all from his perspective and his wisdom. And you know what? Ninety percent of the time, we don't even know what's going on.

[51 : 22] We're not even aware that all kinds of things are taking place behind the scenes. We don't have a clue. And he's behind all of them. He knows exactly what, who, when, where, how much, and all the rest of it.

And we can be so thankful, so thankful that he does. Would you stand, please? Thank you again, Father, for a text that we fail to grasp as fully as we would like.

But we trust that we have grasped it enough, sufficiently, to be able to implement its truths and its principles and be richly, be richly enhanced because of it.

Thank you for the body of Christ, for believers gathering together, for bearing one another's burdens, for the love that you have poured into this assembly, that each one has for the other.

And it all stems back to our love for you, which began with your love for us. And we are grateful in Christ's name. Amen.