

Len Griehs - Jeremiahs Lament

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Jeremiah, of course, was, as you know, a prophet during the time of Israel's captivity or going into captivity over several period of time, and Jeremiah just had a terrible, terrible life as a prophet, but truly an example of one who pursued his mission under most unfavorable circumstances. If you ever get a chance. There is a YouTube video on Jeremiah with Patrick Dempsey. It just captures the spirit of Jeremiah and all the things he went through.

Gretchen's been engaged in this reading group for the two year reading and been on Jeremiah three years. Okay. Jeremiah and Isaiah in that period. But it really helps you reflect the things that these prophets that will be rewarded with a perfect resurrection, why they deserve that, and I say deserve it.

I mean, in the sense that the way they suffered, it's amazing, and I do like Pastor Russell's thought that at the end of the millennium, because of their faithfulness, they will be separated from the rest of mankind and perhaps receive a spiritual resurrection. We don't have a scripture in that, but I like that thought because they did fulfill such a great role in this work.

This is about Jeremiah's, not Jeremiah the book, but the book he wrote called Lamentations that follows Jeremiah. Very short. We don't spend a lot of time on it, but I think it gives us a really good reflection in the permission of evil in Jeremiah's thoughts, and that's really what the subject is about. How Jeremiah's Lamentations give us an insight into why God permits evil.

That undoubtedly is the doctrine that sets us apart from every faith that I know of. When Billy Graham was asked, why did 9, 11 happen? He said, I don't know. Well, we know, brethren, as part of the permission of evil, and that's why this doctrine is such an important one in giving comfort to the world and to us about what's going on.

So Lamentations begins with this Hebrew word, echo, which means dismay, and that really reflects how he was during this period of time. Jeremiah was perplexed. But the lamentations of Jeremiah were meant to provide a comfort, a comfort to him and a comfort to those few who were faithful. If we look at Lamentations, there's no mention of Babylon in this book.

There's no mention of Nebuchadnezzar, who's going to take Zedekiah, put his eyes out, kill his sons and take him to Babylon. Only the mention is God as one dealing with the sins of Israel, which of course, we have reflected in some of the other prophets. Even though God is going to bring misery and suffering to Israel, he has a compassion for that nation, not because they were greater than anyone else, but because of his promises to Abraham and the faith of Abraham, and so he would never give up on them. You and I certainly would have said, this is enough, let's start over. But God didn't do that.

His faithfulness, his mercy, it was abounding throughout that period of time.

So the key point, if we would take one point from this Lamentations, is that God loves. So, as said earlier in this session, God loves what he is obliged to smite, is obliged to smite what he loves. It seems like a paradox, but we know that from the trials and testings we have, and it's reflected here in Lamentations with the nation of Israel and further in this picture of the permission of evil with mankind. So if we put together God, Lamentations and Israel, we will have an insight into how he deals with. With the fall of man.

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An important scripture in Jeremiah 29, several scriptures, but this section of Jeremiah 29 says is the promise, even though he's going to take them into Babylon, and Jeremiah says, go, because God is saying, go be under Nebuchadnezzar. He says, I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile. I meant that on an immediate basis, but as we'll see, meant it on a whole wider basis for that nation of Israel as well. Isaiah reflects this in his own assessment.

Remember, he's prophesying at the same time, but he broadens it up to give us that perspective of the entire will of mankind. He says, the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow, and signs shall flee away. So in the midst of this condemnation of Israel for all their sins and their deliverance into Babylon, we have this promise of hope given by Isaiah. We find it in Ecto. We find it through all these prophets that are dealing with.

With the sins of Israel and the casting off of them in that first captivity.

During this whole period of time, God is showing compassion on Israel, even though they're cut off from him. Yes, and he laments over Jerusalem. Here we have In Jeremiah the 15th chapter, he says, for who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? Or who shall bemoan thee? Or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest?

No one did, but God had that perspective as he dealt with them. Remember Jesus when he wept over Jerusalem? Everything he dealt with was trying to reach out to them and bring them in and help them understand that he was there to deliver them from their sins. But they didn't want that. They wanted delivery only from Rome.

And that's exactly what happened in Lamentations within days of Jeremiah. They wanted to get out of what was predicted the delivery into Babylon, by making alliances with Egypt and others. Jesus reflected on that in his own ministry near the end when he said, oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, now that killest the prophets stonest them which are sent to thee. How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathered for chickens under her wings? And ye would not think about how Jesus must have felt about that, weeping over Jerusalem because they didn't respond.

He didn't throw them out. He really wanted that people follow with him. We have that same kind of reflection when we think about God's care for man. Man disobeyed God, and disobedience just keeps getting worse. But in Psalms 8,4,5 from Rotherham, this reflection on man what is man, that thou remembers him, or man's son, that thou visitest him, Thou madest him less, some little than messengers with glory and honor thou crownest him, and did support him over the works of thy hands.

We see that first applied to man, and then we have it applied to Jesus as well as a man, and that he would receive this promise. But this is what God's intention was for man was to be the King of the Earth.

Volume 1, page 175. The comment on that psalm, Brother Russell writes this David in the psalm refers to man in his original estate, and prophetically intimates that God has not abandoned his original plan to have man in his own image and the king of earth, and that he will remember him, redeem him, and restore him like that flow, remember, redeem, and restore the very things that we hold so precious. This was promised in that psalm goes on to say the apostle in Hebrews 2, 7 calls attention to the same fact that God's original purpose has not been abandoned, that man, originally grand and perfect, the king of earth, is to be remembered and visited and restored. He then adds,

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we see not this promised restitution yet, but we do see the first step God is taking towards its accomplishment. We see Jesus crowned with this glory and honor of perfect manhood, that as a fitting ransom or substitute, might by God's favor taste death for every man, and thus prepare the way for the restitution to man, to all that was lost brethren.

The ransom is the fundamental doctrine we know that is so important to understanding that it will give every man a chance to truly be what God wanted them to be when he created them.

So we have in the five chapters of Lamentations five principles behind this idea of the permission of evil, and that's where I'll spend my time on those five principles. The first one, disobedience brings punishment. Second, God rejects what is his own creation in order to bring them back. Third, God's representative in one case, Jeremiah, in other case, Jesus bears the deep grief of what was brought upon Jerusalem before the cup of God's wrath passes upon those who rejoice in the evil upon his people.

And fifth, God's favor is to be renewed in his own time.

Disobedience brings punishment.

In Lamentations, the first chapter, verse 12 reads, Jerusalem says, you who pass by on the road don't seem to care. Come, look at me and see. Is there any pain like mine? Is there any pain like that? He has caused me?

The Lord has punished me on the day of his great anger. That's the reflection of Israel. As to this through these words of Jeremiah, think about it. At this point, the unsurpassed beauty of the temple is gone. The command over the land is taken away over.

When they're swept into Babylon, that which was promised seems to be gone.

Adam's disobedience cost him paradise. Genesis 3:17 19. We read unto Adam, he said, because thou hast eaten of the tree, and of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat, cursed is the ground for thy sake and sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistle shall it bring forth to thee, till thou return unto the ground. For out of it was thou taken, or dost thou art?

Does this disobedience cost Israel, Jerusalem? So with Adam, that disobedience cost him and all mankind paradise. The beauty of his world was gone, and God said, thorns also and thistles shall bring forth to thee. The world that was largely would be inhabited now was going to be made uninhabitable.

Is that where we are? Well, we certainly got 7 billion people on the planet. But when we look at the wider Earth, the Earth is largely uninhabitable. Oceans cover 71% of the Earth's surface. Of the 1/4 of the world that is landmass, half of it, or one eighth of that total land mass, is uninhabitable and unsuitable for agriculture, according to the American Farmland Trust.

So there is very little, and when we think about where are we going to put perhaps 20 billion people? Well, there's plenty of Space, it's just uninhabitable at this point, and that's part of man's future, the development of paradise. Isaiah 45:18 says, Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens.

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God himself that formed the earth and made it. He's established that he created it. Not in vain. He formed it to be inhabited. I am the Lord.

There's none else. Part of man's commission will be to, I think positively, produce results and increase the inhabitability of the land. We always used to say in business, and I'm sure you did, that you got to have.

You got to have a stake in the game, right? To appreciate it. I think if you are put in charge, you got to have something that causes you to do it. Right now, many people just go on, take up space. But man has a stake in the game and the development under the direction of a positive way.

I believe man will have great responsibility because then he will have great care for paradise, just like God told Adam he would have to. So that's what we see in Isaiah 35:10 when it says, the ransom of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with joy and gladness, sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The resurrected billions will have land to live and plenty of land to develop. But also, here's a quote from Volume 1, page 296. When mankind reaches perfection at the close of the millennial age, they will be admitted into membership in the kingdom of God and given the entire control of the earth as at first designed. Each man a sovereign, a king. This is clearly shown in the symbolic prophecy of John in Revelation 21:24 26.

For in vision he not only saw the people walk in the light of it, but he saw the kings enter it in glory. Think of that. Each man becomes a sovereign and important part. Now it's relegated to every to a handful of people. But each man will have his own state.

Yet none could enter it who would defile it. None can become identified with that city or kingdom who has not first been thoroughly tested. None who would work or love to work. Deceit and unrighteousness. Only those who in the land will write as worthy of life everlasting, and to whom he will say, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.

So the disobedience that brought punishment, we know the result of that. But again we have the promise that that will be reversed as part of that process of Jesus dying as a ransom and providing that opportunity. The second point. God rejects what is his own in creation, in order to bring them back. Well, that seems like an odd thing, but it's exactly what we see happen with Israel and we see what happens with the with the world of man.

Because there's an object lesson that must be learned in all that. Lamentations. The second chapter starts with these words. My eyes have no more tears, I'm sick to my stomach. I feel empty inside because my people have been destroyed.

Children and babies are fainting in the streets of the city. Exactly. If you read that history of the desecration of the temple, you'll see that's exactly what happened. What he was seeing.

Israel's priesthood led the people astray because of their own disbelief, and every leader led led them astray at that time, saying, nothing's going to happen, don't worry about it. We have reflected in Amos 3, 2 promise to Israel. You only have I known of all the families of the earth. But that doesn't where it ends sometimes we end it there.

Therefore. There's that important therefore that several of the speakers talked about. I will punish you for all your iniquities. If you're going to get the reward, you're going to suffer a punishment

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when you don't obey, and that's exactly what happened with Israel.

Israel really suffered significantly. Is there anybody, any ethnic group on earth that suffered more than they did just simply because of who they were? The second Temple, when they came back, Ezra and Nehemiah come back, they returned from Babylon, build a brand new temple. 70 A.D. it's gone again.

It gets destroyed. That really removed the Jew, the Jews from Israel for a long time. Now according to Talmud, which is the written interpretation the rabbis have of the Torah, that destruction began on the 9th of AV, and the burning continued through the 10th of Ave. Two days burning.

But the 9th of AB was an important date after that period. 70 A.D. we know it was another 60 years and we have the Romans crushing the last of the Israelites in Barakopa's revolt destroy the city of Batar, where they were killed over a hundred thousand Jews, and that was done on July 8th of 132 AD the 9th of Ave. Following the Barakopa revolt, a Roman commander, Turnus Rufus plowed the site of the temple.

They turned it into another city and but he did that almost a year later in 133ad, purportedly on the 9th of AV. That's why the 9th of Ave. Has become a national day of mourning. Now there's other interesting things that happened there. 1914, August 1 Ring a bell?

Certainly does August 1, 1914, when Germany declares war on Russia. It was the 9th of AV. What resulted from that? Well, the Jews in Europe became a target for everyone, and those effects continued until 1942, when the Second World War is over.

July 23, 1942, when the masses are women. When it started. Sorry. When the deportation begins of the Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka death camp, the Holocaust begins. That was on the 9th of Ave.

July 23rd was my dad's birthday. That wasn't. Not the 9th of Ave. That was a happy day. But it does show you there was an important significance that the Jews learned from.

This 9th of AV.

Man has likewise suffered continuously because of Adam's disobedience. Think about the devastation. We've heard reports of brethren suffering and others. But think about this. Each year over 55 million people die.

That's one out of every 13 people in the world. Over a half a million are murdered. This year we may go up on that number. That's the things we see in the news. What we don't see are the other things, the other ways that people die.

The incurable, chronic and agonizing and debilitating diseases Israel suffered over a long period of time and for many, many years. These kinds of things. Multiple sclerosis that kills two and a half million people a year worldwide. Osteoarthritis. Billion and a half people become disabled from.

From that. Parkinson's disease, 7 to 10 million worldwide. Alzheimer's and dementia affect over 35 million people worldwide each year. Those are statistics. It's really easy for us to look at these numbers and say, oh, isn't that terrible?

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But if you look beyond that, brethren, there's an individual element of suffering. Before I show you the next one, I want to tell you a story about World War II and the Jews going into the ghetto. There was a young man that when it started in 1942, he would go by where the Nazis were tormenting Jews and he would see that going on in the streets and he would run and hide, couldn't take it. The next day he goes again. He sees the same thing happening.

He hurries through. He didn't run away. Third day he sees this. He goes by, kind of gives a passing glance to it, doesn't walk particularly. So the fourth day he sees this going on.

He actually stops and watches. That's the impact the sin can have on us, seeing so much of it. We can watch it and not be moved by it, like that young man, and that's what happens to Us, if we're not careful in guarding our hearts. These are statistics, but these are real people behind these things.

If we look at some of the diseases that affect real people, things that there is no cure for, I think it makes it much more personal. But think about this. I'm only going to give you two examples here. Thing called Ondine's curse. How many of you ever heard of that?

Undyne's curse affects people that have to voluntarily breathe. If they forget to breathe, they'll die. A lot of infants who have that disease, they just die when they fall asleep. But today those like this young girl here with it, have to use a breathing machine continuously for their whole life.

That makes a real personal element to this suffering. Fatal familial insomnia. We've all suffered from some kind of insomnia, right? Oh, I didn't sleep good last night. I'm just a wreck.

Think if you didn't sleep ever. A person is normal with this. Everything's fine until they're about 40 or 50 years old. Then they get this inherited disease. A person cannot sleep no matter what intervention is done.

It can last for a year and then the person dies. There's no treatment for it. The chance that parents will pass it on to their kids is 50%. So when a person from an inherited parent gets to be 20, they can. They can test to see that they have this 50, 50 chance that they'll get this fatal disease in about 10 to 15 years.

Think if you're living with that or you find it. Those are the personal elements. Brethren, we should never forget. We are committing ourselves to the purpose of taking away this kind of effects of sin, and that's something we should never forget.

That's what tortured Jeremiah when he saw and he knew the things that were going on with Israel. It should make this scripture in Revelation 21:4 all the more meaningful to us. God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying. Neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

Number three. God's representative in this case Jeremiah, bears the deep grief of what was brought upon Jerusalem. He suffered greatly for the sins of Israel. But he waited patiently. He waited patiently.

And in Lamentations 3 we have this scripture. The Lord's love never ends. His mercies never stop. They're new every morning. Lord, your loyalty is great.

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The Lord is mine, so I hope in him. The Lord is good to those who hope in him. It is good to wait quietly for the Lord to save waiting for God to accomplish his purpose. It's a challenge. Jeremiah was a challenge for us.

It's a challenge. We cry out, oh Lord, how long before things are corrected? There's 37 scriptures that talk about waiting on the Lord. Let me give you just a few. Romans 8:25 if we hope for what we see not, then with patience we will wait for him.

2nd Thessalonians 3:5 the Lord, direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ. Psalm 37:7 Be silent before the Lord and wait patiently for him. Isaiah 64:4 since the beginning of the world, men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen. O God, beside thee. What hath he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

So when we get grieved by the troubles that we see all around us, the challenge for us is to wait patiently, like Jeremiah did. We can't control things. God waits until the right time to act. Bible students proclaim 1914 it's not the end of the world, it's the beginning of the end, and we must wait until it's accomplished. Israel waited 2500 years for their deliverance and their restoration.

So here we are, 100 and some years past what was for early expected? Is that really so long when you think of the grand scheme of things?

God promises that he will bring relief when the time is right for Israel. 194870 years after their restoration begins he makes them a state the Lord will not cast off forever, but though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the multitude of mercies. He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. It's for a purpose, and it's for a lesson. Jesus bore that grief just as Jeremiah bore the grief of Lamentations.

We read that in Hebrews though he were a son, yet he learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.

Volume 6, page 120 Our Lord already fully obedient Volume 5 Sorry. 120 Our Lord, already fully obedient to the Father under favorable conditions, learned what it meant to be obedient under most adverse conditions, and that's what man is learning. It's how Jesus could become that sympathetic high priest and empathize with fallen man. God will reverse this course of sin when the time is right.

We both labor and suffer reproach because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men. That promise is solid that he will deliver man from sin and evil. His long suffering is to Assure not a temporary change, but a permanent one and an effective one. This world with sickness and trouble will be phased out when that lesson is completed and when his chosen are completed. Number four.

The cup of God's wrath passes upon those who rejoice in the evil on his people. We know what happened to Babylon, and we know what happened to those there, and we know what happened to the priests. Lamentations chapter four starts this way. Those who are killed in the war were better off than those killed by hunger.

They starve in pain and die because there's no food from the field. With their own hands, kind women cook their own children. The Lord turned loose all of his anger, burning it down to the foundations. The priests, the leaders, they all told Jeremiah it was crazy. Get him out of here.

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Throwing in the pit, this is not going to happen, and they did not heed the word of the Lord. So it is with the world. It has to be totally brought to destruction by those who would have it preserved under less than desirable circumstances. World today hasn't really made all that much progress in solving their problems.

Some of those long term problems don't go away. They're short term solutions that really end up just kicking the can down the road, and things can get worse, and it reminds you of the scripture that Jesus gave in Matthew 9. No man putteth a piece of new cloth into an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment.

The red is made worse. No matter how hard fry, you can't patch up the world that's there today. There has to be a new and a fresh start.

Back in 1970, the world's richest countries agreed to give 0.7% of their gross national income as international aid to all those less developed countries. Now through the first part of the 21st century, only six of the 34 have met that promise. That's the problem. God promises it comes true. Man promises it comes short.

Foreign aid problems for individual recipients never get there. Most of the aid doesn't even go to the poorest who need it the most. Most of the aid is diverted off large projects. Massive strategies often fail to help them. But much of the money just gets embezzled away or by graft.

I was an auditor when we passed the Foreign Corrupt Practices act back in 1977, and he had to check, see where the money's going, you know, are you paying off people? And that's exactly what happened. The whole aid remember We Are the World song, that all the things, all that money was squandered and given and most of the goods sat on the dock and rotted away because there wasn't anybody that would pay off group to distribute it. This is the way God assesses these this kind of activity.

Jeremiah 23:16 says, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you, they make you vain. They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. No matter who we look at the promises that are made, religious wise or otherwise, by the leaders, they are always broken.

The fifth God's favor is renewed, but in his own due time.

Lamentations chapter 5 contains this but there's another connecting word, but after all this you rule forever, Lord. You will be king from now on. Bring us back to you, Lord. Make our days as they were before. Are you so angry with us?

There Jeremiah is lamenting for the time when the nation of Israel had God as their king, but they wanted other kings. He's longing for those days. Is man longing for a time of utopia? It's been promised many times, but they've never pleaded to God for it. Remember the lessons that come in Ezekiel 38 and 39, when Israel cries out to the Lord and he delivers them from that last enemy, and then that kingdom is fully established.

The weeping over the destruction comes from Jeremiah before a plea for help. So at the inauguration of the kingdom, Israel receives its kingdom position with tears. He says, I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplications, and they shall look upon me when they appear, and they shall mourn for him as one

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mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is bitterness for his firstborn. Zechariah tells us this.

Now I know there's some dispute over Is this talking about God and Jesus or Jesus alone? I tend to favor the first. They will look to God whom they did pierce, but they will mourn for Jesus and understanding he was the Messiah. That was Israel's destiny, and finally they will be delivered.

Israel was blind to the opportunity they had for the high calling other than a remnant. But Paul tells us in Romans 11, had God cast away his people? God forbid. They were scattered to the four corners of the earth in 70 AD 2000 years. It looked like God had abandoned them completely.

But that was never God's plan to abandon them. He said in Amos after that, three, two, I will plant them upon their land. They shall be no More be pulled up out of their land, which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God. Hetatikva in 1878 became that first settlement. Ever since then, Israel has been solid in their land.

There has never been a historical. A historical precedent. Well, obviously if there's never been, there's no precedent we ever have for anything like this. Is there any doubt it's God's hand? Then he goes on to say, so all Israel will be saved.

The deliverer will come from Zion, and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins. That new covenant to be made with Israel and then all mankind will flow unto it shows us that God does punish them. But it's not to be vindictive. It's for a purpose, to teach them a lesson. He has a preserved Jewish nation or the Jewish people for 3, 500 years and made them set apart and then bring them back to land.

And then he says, well, I'm not going to do anything with them. Now we know that there's a purpose behind it. So God has preserved the world. In the days of Noah, he struck out, but he kept a few. But Isaiah tells us the same for the world.

When the kingdom is fully established, I think all people will come to Zion, he says, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. That's the promise he gives to the entire world of mankind.

So what are the lessons we want to take from this short exploration of the Book of Lamentations? The emphasis is on waiting, waiting for God to accomplish the purpose. Why? Because it seems really long waiting. Sometimes you just say, when is it going to happen?

And we have debates as Bible students over that very issue. We want to know. God knows, and in his time he will bring it about. Jeremiah learned that God's dealing with Israel was a lesson in the consequences of disobedience. He told them that there would be mercies coming back, but first they had to go through this misery and pain to pay the penalty and to learn the lessons so that they would have a deep trust despite the trouble all around.

Brethren, we must have that deep trust when we see all the trouble going around. Now that we are headed on the right course, our vision is clear. We see the end result.

So we have to emulate Jeremiah. We have to wait. We have to keep the faith. God waits until it's the right time to act. Israel never wanted to wait for God's blessings.

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They wanted them. Now, man has always looked for some kind of quick fix and continues to do so. Everything we all do, it's just human nature.

Silence and waiting. It's really unappealing. Well, I think I'll just sit here and wait. But that's sometimes what we must do. That's why prayer is so important.

Prayer is an exercise in patience. We're told to pray for these things but we don't know when the answer will come. We pray for these things to happen but we can't come to a pre conceived conclusion as to when it will be. God will act in his own time at the very best time and the right time. Evil will not exist forever.

Romans 8 Paul says the creation itself will be set free from its slavery the corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together till now, and not only this, but also we ourselves having the first fruits of the spirit. Even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons the redemption of our body. Brethren, even for us we know some of we have to stick for a long time.

It's not a short course that we're in. We don't go out like a martyr with a blowing our body up in one blaze of glory. We have to stick with patience to the road and the course on which God directs us. Just remember, great is the road we climb. But the crown that's offered by an easier effort is not worth the gathering.

Let us continue in our way waiting patiently and continuing in prayer and supplication waiting for the manifestation of ourselves as part of the sons of God when the whole world can enjoy. Remember this is what we've committed to. It's not just for. It's not for ourselves. It's so that we can be part of of serving God and bringing glory and honor to him through the creation that will reflect truly that glory as he intended at the first to God be the glory forever and ever.