

One of the unique things about history is being able to look back and see the moments and turning points when everything changed. It is neat to see how some of the smallest and seemingly unimportant events, at a certain moment in time, had greater significance than anyone could have imagined. Take World War Two for example. Historians have studied the conflict so thoroughly that they can pinpoint the exact place and time of the war’s key turning point. It wasn’t in Europe, or in the Pacific Ocean, or in Russia. It was in El Alamein, in Egypt. At this battle, British forces smashed the Axis powers and stopped the Nazi movement in Africa. From there, the Allies were able to plan a strong attack against occupied Italy, and from there retake Europe. It was this moment that won the war and changed World history forever, even though it seemed like an ordinary moment in battle. It certainly was a key turning point.

In Romans 8, we see the effects of another important turning point in history. This turning point occurred for a newlywed couple in a wonderful paradise. This paradise was a wonderful garden that was full of life, fruit-bearing trees, vegetation, and peaceful animals. This place was called “Good” by its Creator. Everything was fine and dandy until a crafty serpent slithered up next to the woman named Eve and said, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” She responded that they could eat of any tree except the one that is in the midst of the garden. She added that they couldn’t even touch it lest they die.

But the serpent was persistent and shrewd, and reassuringly said, “You certainly won’t die. Don’t you want to be like God, knowing good and evil?” And with that, she grabbed the fruit of the tree, took a bite, and then served some of it to her husband, a man named Adam. With that first bite, history’s first major turning point happened, along with the consequences that would

follow. As they ate, their eyes opened, and they realized that they were naked. They decided to hide because of that.

But the Creator, the Lord, decided to look for them. When Adam and Eve came out of their hiding, a confrontation broke out. The Lord asked if they had eaten from the forbidden tree, and Adam replied, “It’s your fault, God! You gave me that woman Eve, who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.” Then the Lord asked Eve, “What is this that you have done?” and she replied, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” What happened next were the consequences of that turning point. Both the serpent and the woman are cursed because of their sin. Next comes the man’s curse, and then one more.... creation’s! The Lord told the man, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you....” Who knew that one little bite from a piece of fruit could do so much damage?

In Romans 8, Paul tells us that the effects of this turning point are still felt today! He writes, “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” As man fell, so did creation, whether it deserved to or not. Because of the sin of Adam and Eve, creation has come under God’s judgment too. It is no longer able to fulfill God’s purposes. Instead of producing fruit and flowers, it produces thorns and thistles, a sign of its curse. Creation longs for freedom and redemption from the futility, corruption, and decay that it is subjected to. It longs for the completion of our redemption at the last day so that it too will be renewed, restored, and free.

But creation is not the only one that suffers from that turning point in the Garden of Eden. The apostle says, “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” With creation, we groan too because of the suffering and hardships that we endure because of Adam and Eve’s sin. We are still enduring the effects of their sin, some 5,000 plus years later! We feel the effect of sin in our bodies and see it in our lives. We endure the frustration and devastation that comes with bodies that are susceptible to diseases like cancer, diabetes, strokes, depression, and arthritis. We bear the pain of loss and heartache that comes from the death of a wife, husband, son, daughter, brother, or sister. We struggle with the stresses of life, like worries about making ends meet or even about our own futures. All these things are the results and effects of sin in our world. We look forward to and long for a time when we will be free from sin, suffering, sickness, pain, and problems. With creation, we long for that final day when Jesus will make all things new. We long for the completion of our adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

Fortunately, Paul is a man who knows his history, and he points to another turning point in the world's history. This event took place outside of a major city on a major holiday. It happened on the heels of a trial where an innocent man was condemned to die in the place of all. This innocent man was bruised, beaten, and broken. He was stripped naked and wore a crown of thorns that mocked His Kingship. He was nailed to a lifeless tree, a cross, and hung there for three agonizing hours. The turning point continued three days later at an open tomb where this once dead man stood alive again.

In Jesus Christ, the Creator came to reclaim and restore His entire creation. On the cross, Jesus bore our sin and its curse. At the tomb, His victory is announced, and His resurrection signals that creation itself will also be made new. All of history is heading towards our Lord’s return, where the salvation Jesus won at the cross and tomb will be fully experienced. Creation will be liberated, transformed, and renewed. We too will be free from sin, made new, and have our adoption complete. Our bodies will be redeemed, and we will enjoy paradise with our Creator and Saviour.

As people who live in this hope, we enjoy the blessings and effects of that turning point that happened at Jesus’ cross and tomb. We are saved and are at peace with God now, but unfortunately, we will still have to wait for the completion of that salvation at the last day. We will have to endure the difficulties of living in a sinful and fallen world. However, we have something that creation doesn’t have, God’s Spirit, that helps us endure this waiting and these circumstances. Paul writes, “Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness.” In our baptism, we have been given the Holy Spirit who strengthens us. This Spirit encourages us and is with us in the various sufferings and trials that we will endure. One specific way He helps us, though, is through prayer. “For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And He who searches hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

Sometimes in life, the sin and destruction that we experience in this world can leave us speechless, dumbfounded, and unsure of what to pray about or to say. Sometimes we don’t even know what to ask for, or what we truly need. Paul tells us that the Spirit helps us with our prayer life. He knows what to say and ask, even when we can’t muster the words or a thought. He intercedes on

our behalf and intercedes for us according to God’s will. He helps us pray to the One Who loves, forgives, and cares for us. He helps us pray to the One Who does all things for our good. We can endure suffering because we have been given the Spirit who helps us pray to the One who can help us! We can endure because our Lord will make all things new.

History is full of turning points, those moments in which things have never been the same since. Jesus’ death and resurrection are the greatest of those. For although we are saved now, we still must wait for the completion of that salvation at His return. While we wait, we are given His Spirit, who helps us to endure and pray. Amen.