

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Creation's Groans for Glory

Scripture: Romans 8:19-22

Code: 45-61

Let's open our Bibles to the eighth chapter of Romans. We have the wonderful privilege on this lovely summer evening, as we gather together, many of our church family away on vacation, but those of us here are eager indeed for the instruction of God's precious word and we're so grateful for the privilege that is ours. And as we come back to the eighth chapter, it is with several weeks off that's been, I guess, a month since we've looked into this marvelous and thrilling and wonderful chapter. Perhaps it would be fitting to give a somewhat brief review so that we can kind of get up to speed and get a feeling for where we are.

The great letter from Paul to the Christians at Rome is basically a presentation of the gospel. In fact, in the first chapter, Paul says his purpose is to articulate what he calls the gospel of God, the good news from God, the good news about salvation in Jesus Christ. And in the first chapter of Romans, the Apostle gives us a brief statement about the gospel and about his reasons for presenting it. And having given us that basic statement of the gospel and his commitment to it in the first 17 verses of chapter 1, he then launches in to a detailed explanation of the gospel. All of its substance, all of its benefits and results and the things that are corollaries to it. And those things fill up the rest of the wonderful 16 chapters of Paul's letter to the church at Rome.

Now keep in mind just for your refreshing that from chapter 1 verse 18 through chapter 3 verse 20, Paul presented the need for salvation. And there he talked about the sinfulness and the lostness of man. Then from chapter 3 verse 21 to chapter 5 verse 21, he talked about the saving work of Christ, the great doctrine of justification by faith. Then from chapter 6 verse 1 to the end of chapter 8, he talks about all the benefits, all of the results of salvation. Some have called it the truths of sanctification, or what it means to have been made holy in Christ Jesus.

So, we're coming to the end of that great section on the results of salvation. We've been searching deeply into these truths and we've learned some wonderful things.

What were the results of salvation discussed by Paul? Well, in chapter 6 he said that because we had justification in Christ, we are dead to sin. We also, he said, have union with Christ. We also have become servants to righteousness. Then in chapter 7 he said we are freed from the law. We now have a new creation in us that wars against the flesh. We have a new heart's desire to delight in the law of God. All of those things are part of the benefits of salvation. And then chapter 8 gives us a monumental benefit of being a Christian. It says in verse 1 that there is no condemnation to them who

are in Christ Jesus.

In other words, to become a Christian means that you have forever avoided the judgment of God. There never will be any condemnation. There never will be any judgment on one who has come to know Jesus Christ.

Now that is such an overwhelming thought to the reader. That is such a comprehension that is foreign to their tradition, foreign certainly to the Jewish tradition, foreign even to the pagan tradition, that a person could enter into a permanent state of no condemnation before God. It's so hard to understand that Paul takes the whole eighth chapter to outline it, to spell it out in most marvelous terms.

And so we say, then, that the whole of the eighth chapter is a no condemnation chapter. It starts with no condemnation, it ends that way. You'll notice verse 34 in bringing it to a conclusion asks the question which it then answers: who is he that condemns? And the answer is: no one. If God doesn't, there's no higher court than He. If Christ doesn't, there's no higher court than He.

And so, this is the no-condemnation chapter. Even though we struggle with sin in chapter 7, even though we have difficulty overcoming the flesh in chapter 7, even though we are debilitated in our heart desire to fulfill the law of God, even though we see warring in ourselves, that bodily desire for sin, in spite of all of those failures, there is still no condemnation. It's a great truth ... a great, great truth. And it comes at the right point because it comes just after we face the fact that we are going to have sin in us as long as we are in this world. And still there is no condemnation because we are in Christ Jesus.

How can it be? How can it be so? Well, chapter 8 says it is because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And so we've entitled this eighth chapter, though its major theme is no condemnation, we've titled it "Life in the Spirit," because it is the Holy Spirit who makes that no condemnation status a reality and something we can count on. It is His special work to secure our salvation. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit until the promise can be fulfilled of ultimate and final salvation.

And as we have flowed through the chapter, we've noted in verses 2 and 3 that the Holy Spirit secures our no-condemnation status by freeing us from sin and death. In verse 4, by enabling us to fulfill the law. In verses 5 to 11, by changing our nature. In verses 12 and 13, by empowering us for victory. And verses 14 to 16, confirming our adoption.

And now finally and climactically in the presentation of the specific ministry of the Spirit to secure our no-condemnation status, he adds that the Spirit secures that to us by guarantying our glory, verses 17 to 30. The Holy Spirit literally guarantees in salvation that we will be glorified. This is the final element in that wonderful work of the Spirit of God. He guarantees our glory. When you were saved, God planted His Holy Spirit in you and the Holy Spirit was the guarantee of glory. If you possess the

Holy Spirit and you do, by the way, according to verse 9, if you're a Christian, if you possess the Holy Spirit, then you have God's resident guarantee that you will be glorified. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is the answer to those who fear they might lose their salvation ... not so.

Let me give you some attendant passages to reinforce this truth. In Ephesians 1:13 and 14, and these are coining briefly to you, it says, "Of course in whom you also are," that is in Christ, "after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Now note this. You were sealed. That is you were marked out for God forever. Nothing can break that seal. And it says in verse 14, "The Holy Spirit is the earnest, or the down payment, or the first installment," the word is *arraon*, in class ... in Modern Greek it means "the engagement ring." He is the engagement ring of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. When you were saved you were purchased by God. But you haven't entered into the full inheritance of that purchase, but you are guaranteed that you will by the gift of the Spirit who is the earnest, or the down payment, or the first installment, or the engagement ring promising you that the marriage will indeed come to pass.

It's the same truth articulated, I believe, by Paul to the Philippians when he says, "Being confident of this very thing," Philippians 1:6, "that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." When God begins a work, He what? He finishes it. And it is by the agency of the blessed Holy Spirit. We will enter into the fullness of inheritance guaranteed to us by the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God. And in Colossians 3:3 it says we are dead and our life is hidden with Christ in God. That's a secure place. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. That is God's promise to us.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 it says: "And the very God of peace sanctify you holy. And I pray God your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless till the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Will it happen? Will that prayer be answered? Will we be preserved to the day of the Lord Jesus Christ? The next verse says, "Faithful is He that calls you who also will do it." He will do it. All of these are true promises that we will enter into the inheritance promised us, we will enter into the redemption of the purchased possession, we will someday receive the fullness of our promise salvation and it is God's promise that is kept in us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now those are the thoughts we're going to look at as we examine verses 17 to 30. The Holy Spirit guarantees our glory. The whole idea of this section is summed up in verse 30, would you notice it for a moment? "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them he also called; and whom He called ..." Now you have predestination before we arrive, the calling is the moment of our salvation. And whomever He predestinates, He calls. There's no loss. "Whomever He calls He also justifies, and whomever He justifies them He also... what?...glorifies." There are no gaps. There are no losses. That is secure and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to guarantee that glory.

And I said something in our last study that I want to repeat to you, last Sunday night when we started this after a long time away from it, and it's an impor ... it wasn't last Sunday, it was even time before that, getting lost in my thought. But I said something to you that I want to reiterate and it's this: there is no such thing as a salvation, mark this, that is not completed in glorification. There is no such thing.

If people say, "Well, I was saved but I lost my salvation..." you never had salvation. Because salvation is the work of God begun in eternity past, brought to reality in eternity present--as it were--, and fulfilled in eternity future. And if you drop off that, you've got less than salvation. It is the very nature of salvation that bound in it is the promise of God which must be fulfilled. "Whom He predestinated He called, whom He called He justified, whom He justified He glorified," no loss. And there is no salvation that does not result in glorification. That is not salvation. So you see, when someone appears to have been saved and they fall away and they abandon the faith and they walk away from God and deny Him, they never were saved because salvation is something begun in the past, realized in the present and fulfilled in the future. It can't be salvation if it isn't.

Now in looking from verses 17 to 30 at this profound passage, and I promise you, people, it stretches your very mind to conceive of the things that are here, but as we look at it I've tried to ... to break it down into sort of bite-size units so we can get a little bit of a taste of what God is saying to us. And we saw in verses 17 and 18, in our last study, the incomparable gains of glory... the incomparable gains of glory.

Now in verses 19 through 27, we see what I'd like to call the inexpressible groans for glory ... the inexpressible groans for glory. And finally, in the future we'll look at the infallible guarantee of glory. Again, all of this uniquely the wonderful promise of God, the wonderful work of the Spirit.

Now let's reach back, just rather briefly, and remind ourselves of the incomparable gains of glory. Verse 17 says, "We have become heirs, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ since we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together." And then he says, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," the incomparable, the beyond-compare gains of glory. We are heirs, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ, we have a glory that is not to be compared with anything we can know or understand or experience. And even though we go through suffering, when we consider the shortness of suffering, when we consider the purpose of suffering for Christ's sake, when we consider the reward of suffering which is eternal glory, we are willing to do it to inherit that which is incomparable more wonderful. And so, he has reminded us of the incomparable gains of glory. Because we are the children of God, God has put away for us an inheritance eternal, incorruptible, defiled [should be undefiled], that fadeth not away, Peter said. So we look forward to that. And that's kind of reaching forward to see what's there. And now as we come to verse 19, we come to the inexpressible groans for glory. And this is a much misunderstood portion of Scripture, I think, overall. And I want to try to take it as a unit from verse 19 to 27. I don't

know if I'm going to make it tonight, but we'll give it a try. I want you to notice that there are three groans in verses 19 to 27. Creation groans in verse 22. We groan in verse 23. And the Holy Spirit groans in verse 26. Now that's very easy to outline. It's three groans: creation groans, the believer groans, and the Holy Spirit groans. You say, "What's everybody groaning about?" Basically, everybody's groaning about the same thing. Groaning means to lament. It means to moan. It means to bewail a present state. And everybody's groaning about what it's like to have to live in this world with all of the pain and sin when we have waiting for us the glorious world to come. It's the groaning for glory. And this is an utterly incredible portion of Scripture--rich, fascinating.

Let's begin with the groaning of creation, verse 19. "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God, for the creation was made subject to futility, not willing but by...not willingly but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God for we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now."

Now here Paul sees all of creation moaning. This is poetic personification. He's taking some poetic liberty at this point and he personifies creation as if creation were a person groaning, moaning, crying, lamenting in sorrow its present plight.

It was familiar to the Jews of Paul's time that God had promised there would be a new world. Isaiah 65:17 says, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth," and I think the Jews looked for that. They anticipated that that there was going to come a day when all oppression and all enslavement and all anxiety and all persecution would end and the dream that they dreamed of that new world and that new earth and that new heaven would come to pass. In fact, if you read some of the Jewish writings around the time, unbiblical writings but nonetheless significantly illustrative of their viewpoint. For example, in the apocalypse of Baruch, they write: "The vine shall yield its fruit ten thousand fold and on each vine there shall be a thousand branches and each branch shall produce a thousand clusters and each cluster produce a thousand grapes and each grape a core of wine. And those who have hungered shall rejoice, moreover also, they shall behold marvels everyday for winds shall go forth from before me to bring every morning the fragrance of aromatic fruits. And at the close of the day, clouds distilling the dews of health."

Now you see, they were looking forward to a Utopia, of sorts, a new world. In the Sibylline Oracles, they wrote:

And earth and all the trees and the innumerable flocks of sheep shall give their true fruit to mankind of wine and of sweet honey and of white milk and corn which to men is the most excellent gift of all. And again, earth the universal mother shall give to mortals her best fruit in countless stores of corn, wine and oil. Yea from heaven shall come a sweet draft of luscious honey, the trees shall yield their proper fruits and rich flocks and cattle and lambs and sheep and kids of goats. He will cause sweet fountains

of white milk to burst forth and the city shall be full of good things and the fields rich. Neither shall there be any sword throughout the land or battle din. Nor shall the earth be convulsed anymore with deep drawn groans. No war shall be anymore, nor shall there be anymore draught throughout the land, no famine or hail to work havoc on the crops.

You see, they longed for that. And they thought they saw that and they did in Isaiah 65:17 that God had promised that. And they understood that creation was groaning for a better fate than it endures. So it's not unfamiliar language to the culture of Paul to speak of a glorious future for the world, for the earth, for the creation.

Back now to verse 19 and let's look at specifics. He says, "For the earnest expectation of the creation," is the proper rendering of the terms the creation rather than creature. He's talking about creation. "...which was made subject to futility but groans for the day when it can enter into the glorious liberation of the children of God."

Now what part of creation is longing for a new age, a new dawn? What part of creation? Well, let's see who can eliminate...who we can eliminate. It wouldn't be the angels because the angels are not subject to corruption. So they're not longing for another state. It wouldn't be the demons because they will never share in any glorious liberation. They are eternally sentenced. It wouldn't be believers because in verse 23 believers are distinguished from the groaning of the creation. We have our own groaning in verse 23 to 25. It wouldn't be unbelievers because they have no hope, they have no expectation of liberation. They have no brighter day coming, they only have a worse day coming.

So, if you take out the angels and you take out the demons and you take out the redeemed people and you take out the unredeemed people, you've just removed all the rational creation and what you've got left is animate and inanimate but irrational creation...plants and animals, the mountains and hills and stars and seas and rivers and lakes and all of that. It's the material earth, the heaven, the earth, the water, the land, the grass, the flowers, the animals and all that. And creation, as I said, is personified in a poetic fashion. But it isn't the first time the writers of Scripture have done that. Do you remember Isaiah 35:1 where it says the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad? Did you ever see a happy wilderness?

That's personification again. In Isaiah 55:12, one of the beautiful verses, "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Again, personifying the joy of the creation when it enters into the glory of its future state. And so, creation is in view in verse 19. Now notice verse 19 again. Creation has an earnest expectation. It's a very vivid word. It is a word that refers to someone standing up on his tiptoes, sticking his neck way out to see something off in the distance. Nature is on its tiptoes, stretching its neck to see what's coming. Very vivid ... waiting expectantly, uplifted heads stretched as far as it will go. Great expectation. It also says that the creation waits, and that word means to wait patiently but expectantly. It has the idea of

anticipation. It has the idea of readiness. It has the idea of preparedness. So here his creation, with its neck outstretched, up on its tiptoes, looking to see as far as it can, filled with expectation, ready and prepared for the dawning of a new age. And what is it looking to see? The end of verse 19, "The manifestation of the sons of God." The word "manifestation" is unveiling. All of creation is looking, waiting for the unveiling of the sons of God. You know, the world doesn't know who we are yet. You know that, don't you? "Beloved, 1 John 3:1, it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when...what? ... He shall appear, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as H e is."

You see, right now they can't tell us...we're walking down the street, we look just like them. You know that? You go into a market, they don't know ... they don't know you have dwelling in your breasts the eternal glory of God ... they don't know that. Oh once in a while it leaks out, as Gene was saying, if you have a smile on your face and a glow about you, but basically they don't know. Because we are still ensconced in our humanness and it is a veil, isn't it? But all of creation has its neck stretched out waiting to see our unveiling. And when the unveiling comes, oh my. We're going to be glorified together. Verse 18 says with a glory without compare. And that's Colossians 3:4 again, "When He shall appear, then we shall appear with Him in...what ?...glory, blazing light, eternal glory.", What does that mean? Sin is gone, the flesh is gone, humanness is gone and we are in blazing holy pureness in the presence of our Christ. Great thought. And so creation's looking and waiting and anticipating that full glory when the saints shall shine as stars forever.

Now, why ... why is it that creation is in this position? How did creation get into this position? Verse 20 tells us, explains it: "For creation, the creation, was made subject to vanity." Stop there for a minute. There are four principles I want you to see in this verse. The first one is that creation was made subject to vanity. And the word "vanity" is an interesting word, mataiotes. It basically means "futility." It means "aimlessness." It is ... I think the best way to explain the word is "the inability to reach a goal, the inability to fulfill a purpose, the inability to achieve the desired results."

In other words, nature can't be what it was made to be. It can't be. It can't live out its potential. It can't fulfill its reason for existing. It's frustrated; it's futile in its efforts. And you remember that it originally when God made everything, He looked at it and said it's what? It's good. It's good. And there were no weeds in the garden. Did you know that? No weeds. There was no sin, there was no curse, there was ... there was ... the garden flourished. I mean, Adam didn't even have to work. He just went through there and just picked it off. It was all there. The earth was perfect.

But then it was made subject to futility and now it can no longer achieve its original purposes. Now by the way, in verse 20, "The creation was made," that's an aorist tense verb which means it happened in a moment of time in the past. By some momentary act, the earth became subjected to futility. It is also a passive verb ... mean it's not ... means it's not something the earth did or the creation did, but something that was done to it and the creation should include the heavens as well. But it isn't something that the creation did but something that was done to the creation. It became a victim of

decay, corruption and frustration and futility and it can't achieve its purpose, so we have smog and we have garbage and we have -pollution and we have all of our resources breaking down and we have all the problems we have and the Sierra Club and all the environmentalists notwithstanding, they're not going to be able to stop it. I mean, they make a nice try, sometimes. But it isn't going to stop it ultimately because something happened and the earth became subjected in a moment of time to a frustration that disallows it in accomplishing its purpose ... the fullness of its potential.

You get a few glimpses, don't you? When you see the beauty of a flower, when you see an unclouded day and you go off into the wilderness somewhere and you get a glimpse of what it must have been like. Listen, if that's the cursed earth, can you imagine what the uncursed earth looked like?

A second thing that that verse tells us is that this happened to the earth not willingly. Whatever subjected creation to this aimlessness, to this decay, to this inability to be glorious as the original goal was intended, whatever it was was not something creation chose. Creation has become in involuntary victim. Creation didn't do it willingly. Man--he sinned willingly, right? He sinned voluntarily, deliberately. But creation was a victim.

And then we go on in verse 20 to a third thought. And this has happened because of Him who has subjected the same." You can stop at that point. Somebody did something to the earth. Somebody subjected it to this situation. Who was that somebody? It's God. God subjected the creation to its futility. God cursed the earth.

Do you remember Genesis 3 ? Do you remember what happened when Adam and Eve sinned? Listen to what God said. "Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife and hast eaten of the tree which I commanded thee saying, Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed is the ground for thy sake. In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee and thou shalt eat the herb of the field and the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the ground, for out of it wast thou taken for dust though art and unto dust shalt thou return."

God cursed the earth. God cursed the skies. And it's all caught up in the curse which brings decay and disaster and pollution and degeneration and disruption. And all of that is the response to God's judgment when God pronounced a curse on man; He pronounced the curse on man's entire environment. You can see now how necessary that was because man's fooling around up in space and he's going to find it just as cursed up there as it is down here. He'll never be able to jump in one of his little boxes and fly into perfection. The whole universe was cursed because man sinned.

You say, "Why did He do that?" He did that so we would understand the tremendous effect of sin, so that we would understand the tremendous evil of sin, that sin does not just pollute the one who sins but its ramifications are endless. One man's sin pollutes an entire universe.

And so we learn here that nature's destiny is inseparably linked to the destiny of man. Because man sinned, listen now; get this, because man sinned creation fell. And listen to this, when man is restored to the glorious manifestation that God has for His children, creation will be restored with him. And you know what I believe heaven's going to be...people say, "Where do you think heaven is?" Right in this universe.

I think we're going to have a new heaven and a new earth and it's going to be right here and it's going to be made the way God wants it to be made--an uncursed, eternally glorious domain. And so, creation is groaning. But it's groaning with its neck outstretched and it's looking--and that's the fourth point. In verse 20, the last two words--"in hope," in hope. Nature is looking. Creation is looking for the glorious manifestation of the children of God because it too will be freed from the bondage of corruption.

It's such an ... this is such an incredible thought, the intimate connection between man's sin and the disaster of the decaying universe. You know, we all in science talked about the law of entropy, that all matter is breaking down, that there's disintegration everywhere. That is true and that is because of the curse and that is reiterated here by the Apostle Paul. And may I submit to you at this point, just as a side light? That evolution is a lie, it is an absolute lie. And it has to be because it is the very opposite of the truth. We're not in an upward trend and we have never been in an upward trend. We are in a downward trend. We are on the way from absolute perfection to total disaster. And the whole thing is going to end in a holocaust of devastation and it's not going to be brought on by Russia, it's going to be brought on by God. People say, "Oh, I'm so afraid of nuclear..." Well, you don't need to be afraid of nuclear war. My Bible doesn't tell me that some Russian is going to punch a button and blow us all into bits. My Bible tells me it's all going to be here when Jesus gets here. He's got to clean it up and then recreate it Himself. So I don't get nervous about that.

People say, "Well, what's your view on armament?" I don't have any view. I just have a view on the Rapture, that's all. And I just figure ... and even if my theology is wrong, I won't know it. I'll just be in heaven. But I don't think it's wrong. I think this is going to end only when the Lord does it. But creation is looking for that great time. And I love that last part of verse 20, "In hope...in hope." Creation has hope. It's a great thought because the promise of the Word of God is for a new heaven and a new earth. Have you read Revelation 21:1 lately, going to make a new heaven and a new earth? It's so wonderful. I love that chapter; let me read you just a few verses out of it. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, the first heaven, the first earth passed away, there was no more sea and I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them and they shall be His people and God Himself shall be with them and be their God and 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..."

what?...passed away." Now that's what all creation's stretching to see.

And you say, "When does that happen, John?" It happens at the same time as the manifestation, or the unveiling of the glorious children of God. When we come in blazing glory with Jesus Christ...great thought, great thought. But until that time, creation groans because it is cursed along with man.

Verse 21 then says that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberation of the children of God. That's what it's looking for, the time when it is restored and renewed. And again the verb is passive; again creation has acted upon it the work of God.

Would you look for a moment at 2 Peter 3 and I'll give you the description of what's going to happen? It says in verse 10, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night," and how does a thief in the night come? He doesn't come with banging cymbals and a lot of racket; he comes quietly with stealth at a time you don't suspect it. And that's how the day of the Lord will come. "And the heavens will pass away." The only thing you can do with the sin-cursed universe is to destroy it. To what extent? We really don't know. But it will pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and that's exactly what happens in an atomic destruction. And I do believe it will be atomic, I don't think it's going to be atomic as we know little atomic bombs, I think it's going to be atomic in the sense that God will disintegrate the atoms of the universe and set forth a chain reaction that would be beyond anyone's ability to even conceive. And everything is going to be burned up. In fact, in verse 11, it's all going to be dissolved, set loose, by the way. That word dissolved is *luo* and it means to loose something that is bound. And I get the idea that the atoms which are bound together are just going to fly apart, the separation, the splitting of the atom. That's the day we're looking for, that day called in verse 12 the day of God in which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.

You say, "Well, what's going to happen after that?" Well, verse 13, we look for a new heavens and a new earth in which dwelleth what? Righteousness. That's where it's going, folks. But you can't get the paper to print that, that's forbidden cause that's in the Bible...I guess. So the whole creation's up on its tiptoes, got its neck stretched out looking off in the horizon, waiting for a cosmic regeneration. And I believe we're going to spend all of our eternity in a new heaven and a new earth that's going to be here and it's going to be all redone...inside and out, top to bottom. And it's going to be so wonderful. In fact, in Matthew 19:28 it is called the regeneration. Jesus said to His disciples, "When I sit on my throne, you'll sit with Me judging the twelve tribes of Israel in the regeneration," the cosmic regeneration, the regeneration of the universe. It is called in Acts 3:21 the times of restitution. God makes all things the way He wants them. And it's a marvelous time. I mean, when you think about what the glories of that time are going to be-no sin, no unrighteousness, no evil, no pain, no sorrow, no death, no crying ... glorious. Creation longs for that. They're going to get an initial taste of that and a good taste of it in the millennial Kingdom. And then the full taste in the glorious new heaven and new earth.

There's a great phrase at the end of verse 21, 1 call to your attention. It says, "For we know that the whole ... 11 at the end of verse 21 rather, "They're going to be entering into the glorious liberation of the children of God coming out of the bondage of corruption." The bondage of corruption, all...obviously refers to that...the stain of sin in the world and it is a bondage. And by bondage it simply means to imply that that there's no way creation can get itself out. As I said earlier, the environmentalists and all the rest of the people who want to salvage creation from the ... from the plight of the curse are not able to do it. There's no way to stop the decay. There's no way to turn around the laws of entropy which cause everything to be breaking down. The disintegration is consistent and constant and unending and unceasing and cannot be reversed. And it is a bondage of corruption that holds the whole creation. And we see it even in the socialist institutions of man. We see it everywhere. Everything he touches turns, as it were, to ashes. And so it is bound in this corruption and it therefore from the outside, verse 21 says, must be delivered. It has to be acted upon, even as it was cursed by God it has to be reversed by God. And it will be when it enters into the glorious liberation of the children of God. And what that simply means is the time when we're liberated from sin and we're liberated from the flesh and we're liberated from our humanness and we enter into the glory of God.

Now what is the glory of God? You say, "What does it mean that I'm going to be glorified?" I think the best definition is 1 John 3:2, "When we see Him we'll be ... what? ... like Him." That is glory, to be like Jesus Christ. And that day when we're made like Jesus Christ, all of creation also will be gloriously liberated from the bondage that the curse has brought upon it. So we're looking for a new heaven and a new earth.

I love what it says at the end of 1 Corinthians 15, "This corruptible must put on incorruption, this mortal must put on immortality." Isn't that a great thought? And it even tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 we're going to have new bodies. If you want to know what your new body's like, read about it there, it's all there, tell you what it's like. And if you want to know how it works, you just watch Jesus. He could walk through walls, He could also eat. Now I don't know how that works. I don't know how you can walk through walls and still eat. You say, "Well, if you eat do you digest? Don't ask me that, I don't know about that. That's where I stop and God takes over. But God is so infinitely beyond us ... you know, we think we have to understand all this. No, you can't understand it, you just believe it. It's like the trinity. You can't understand the trinity, it's just a fact. You don't have to understand it. You just believe it. It's like a lot of other things. We talk about the paradoxes of the Bible. You don't have to resolve them, just believe them. You know, God's mind is so far beyond us. And maybe you have a dog ... to illustrate it to you ... I mean, your dog may be very clever, he may be able to go get the paper. You got a dog who can go get the paper? I'll bet he can't read it. Never was a dog who could read a paper. Now your dog, if he's been trained right, he can go get the paper but he can't read it. You don't expect your dog to read it. There's no way your dog even comprehends the thoughts that are in it. And if you think that's something, just imagine that God is an infinite billion times beyond that

compared to you. As you are to your dog, so God is to you only billions of billions of infinities beyond that. So you don't have to understand it all...just go get it and bring it back and...

But it is a wonderful thing as a Christian; it is a wonderful thing to have this hope, isn't it? I mean, we know where the world's going. I can't really get too into this environmental stuff because it isn't going to do anything in the end. I'm waiting for the great environmentalist in the sky to come down and do the whole thing in one shot. I mean, I do mow my lawn and try to keep my part but it's with a certain amount of reluctance.

In Philippians chapter 3, one of the passages that I really love is 3:20; it says our citizenship is in heaven. I guess that's why I'm so sort of detached. Our citizenship is in heaven. From which also we look. Now you know it isn't creation alone that's up on its tiptoes, we're there, too, aren't we? And we're looking off and we're looking to see the glorious manifestation of the children of God. We're looking to see the time when we're liberated from the bondage of corruption. And he says we're looking for the Savior. I'm not looking for the Antichrist; I'm looking for the Savior. And what's He going to do? Change our vile body. Won't it be good? That it may be fashioned ... here comes glory ... like His glorious body. That's what we're looking for. And creation is looking with us because they're going to be liberated at the same time.

And then verse 22 closes that section...and we'll just take this one and stop too, but verse 22 says: "For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now." Take the little phrase "until now," it just means "up to the present." Up to this time, Paul says when he writes, creation's still groaning. Here we are later, we can say until now it's the same. The word "groan" is literally the word "to groan together." It's as if all of the elements are in some kind of symphonic harmony, moaning, lamenting, groaning their cursed state.

And here we see, beloved, how great is the evil of sin. Sin has polluted the whole universe. This is the sin of one man...one sin by one man pollutes the entire universe ... the whole thing. Think about that. When you try to excuse sin in your mind the next time, remember that if you had been alive as Adam was alive and just committed one sin, one time, you would have polluted the whole universe. Haldane, that wonderful commentator of years ago, wrote: "For as the leprosy not only defiled the man who was infected with it, but also the house he inhabited, in the same way sin which is the leprosy of man has not only defiled our bodies and souls but by the just judgment of God has infected all of creation." And so it groans.

And then it says it travails in pain. That's an interesting word. That's the word for the pain of childbirth. That's right. It's not a ... it's not a futile pain, it's not a pain that leads to nothing, it's a pain that leads to something good. That's the one pain that I guess women look forward to ... the travail that brings a child into the world. It's a marvelous reality. It's a good pain, in a way. Oh it is a mark of the curse for in Genesis 3 God cursed the woman with pain in childbearing, but it is a pain that brings forth a good

thing. And so the groaning and the moaning, as it were, and the pain of the earth in its anticipation, is ultimately a travail that will bring forth a new age. But in the meantime, until now, it just groans.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones has such a wonderful ability to see inside the Scripture, wrote this: "I wonder whether the phenomenon of the spring supplies us with an answer to this passage. Nature every year, as it were, makes an effort to renew itself, to produce something permanent. It is come out of the death and the darkness of all that is so true of the winter. In the spring it seems to be trying to produce a perfect creation, to be going through some kind of birth pangs year by year. But unfortunately it does not succeed for spring leads only to summer whereas summer leads to autumn and autumn to winter. Poor ole nature tries every year to defeat the vanity, the principle of death and decay and disintegration that is in it, but it cannot do so. It fails every time. It still goes on trying as if it feels things should be different and better. But it never succeeds. So it goes on groaning and travailing in pain together. It has been doing so for a very long time. But nature still repeats the effort annually. But one of these days it's going to dawn in a new era. We look for that. We look for that."

So, creation groans. Two more groaners. We'll have to take them next time and see how they fit together so wonderfully. Let's pray.

Paradise was lost when men sinned. And a sword of fire was set up to turn in every direction so as to guard the way to the tree of life. That sword of fire was meant to throw a ring of flame around the garden. It was like a blazing wall. What could be so full of menace as a sword and fire in one? It would threaten instant death for any man who tried to return to the garden by his own self-effort and yet it would preserve it all as if to show that God purposed to bring man home at length to the glorious paradise he had lost. It was in the desert of man's sin that the Son of Man came to sheath that sword in His own body and open again the gates to the garden of paradise. It was He on the cross who made possible a new creation, a new heaven, a new earth where flows the pure river of the water of life clear as crystal, where stands the tree whose leaves shall be for the healing of the nations. Here shall God's servants see His face and there shall be no more curse.

Father, that fills our hearts with hope ... great hope. Thank You that we are saved in hope, that our salvation was planned in eternity past, brought to personal reality in the present and yet to be fulfilled in the glorious manifestation of the children of God when they are delivered from the bondage of corruption and become like Jesus Christ, having new bodies fashioned like His glorious body. O what a great hope. And what a hope for the creation that it, too, which for so long has decayed shall in another moment of time be paradise regained. We pray, Lord, that if there are any in our fellowship tonight who are not by faith in Jesus Christ to be a part of that glorious manifestation, may this be their time tonight. Fill our hearts with hope and thanksgiving, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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