Creation Longs for Glory
Romans 8:19-22
90-175

Back to Romans chapter 8 tonight, Romans chapter 8; this great letter from Paul to the Christians at Rome is a presentation of the gospel of God. This whole letter is a presentation of the good news of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, and just to give you the big picture for a moment, the apostle began this great letter by presenting a brief statement of the gospel in chapter 1; then, after having established his thesis, his theme, in chapter 1, he went on to explain in detail every facet of that gospel through the rest of the epistle.

First of all, he addressed the need for salvation in chapter 1 verse 18 to chapter 3, verse 20, and the need for the gospel is based upon the sinfulness and lostness of man. And then in chapter 3:21 through 5:21, he presented the saving work of Christ, the gospel itself and how it saves, justification by faith.

And then in chapter 6, verse 1 to the end of chapter 8, the glorious benefits of salvation fill up the concepts of sanctification and glorification. So Paul is moving through an explanation of the gospel, which he introduced in chapter1, looking at the need for salvation, the saving work of Christ, and now, the glorious benefits of salvation.

And we have been looking at the benefits of salvation in chapter 8, and they're basically introduced in verse 1 by a statement, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." There are a number of benefits to salvation: Death to sin; union with Christ; we become servants of righteousness; we are free from the law in terms of the law being our judge and our sentencer, our executioner; we are free to enjoy victory over the flesh; we delight in God's truth, and then a monumental benefit comes in chapter 8, we are in a no-condemnations status. We will never be condemned.

That's how chapter 8 begins, and really, toward the end of the chapter, that is also reiterated in verse 34, "Who is going to condemn us?" Our sins have been covered by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of God. Full judgment has been meted out against our sins in the substitutionary death of Christ. We are, therefore, in a no-condemnation status, and that is the theme of chapter 8.

The purpose of this chapter is to confirm that no-condemnation status before God, our eternal security, the absolute safety of the believer, in spite of the struggle with sin that goes on, as identified in chapter 7. And this securing of the believer, this maintaining us in a non-condemnation status is uniquely the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to us as the guarantee of glory. The Holy Spirit is the one who secures our salvation by, as we've already seen, freeing us from sin and death, verses 2 and 3; enabling us to fulfill the law by imputed righteousness, verse 4; changing our nature, verses 5 through 11; empowering us for victory, verses 12 and 13, and confirming our adoption as sons of God, verses 14 to 16.

And then we come to verses 17 to 30, which is the great section of this no-condemnation discussion: The Holy Spirit guarantees our future glory. He guarantees our future glory. Because we are in a no-condemnation status, we are free from the penalty of sin and death. We are unable to fulfill the law because the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. We have a transformed nature and are empowered for victory over sin, and we are permanently and forever the children of God, guaranteed eternal glory.

As we come then into verse 17, we begin to look at the glorious future of the believer, and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to guarantee our eternal glory. It's true because God said it's true. It's true because God sees to it that it's true by giving us the Holy Spirit. Just to support that great truth that we're going to see in chapter 8 verses 17 to 30, a reminder of some other Scriptures that say the same thing.

Ephesians 1:13 and 14, "In Him," that is in Christ, "you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." At the moment you believe, you are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The Holy Spirit is given to you as a seal for the fulfillment of God's promise of eternal life.

He is given, verse 14 says, "As a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession to the praise of His glory." In other words, the Holy Spirit is given to you as a pledge, as a seal, as a down payment on the eternal promise that you will be fully and finally redeemed to the praise of His glory.

Philippians 1:6 says it this way: "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus," until the day when Christ Jesus comes. The Lord will fulfill His promise, and the guarantee of that fulfillment is the Holy Spirit.

That promise again is made in Colossians 3:4, "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." Nothing can change that. When He comes in glory, we'll be with Him in glory.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, verse 23 and 24, affirm the same promise: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete," listen to this, "without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass." The Lord will maintain your blameless status until the return of Jesus Christ so that when He comes, your spirit, soul and body — that is, your whole person — will be preserved, complete, without blame, and the One who called you to salvation is the One who will bring that to pass.

So throughout Scripture, you have these kinds of promises. Peter, of course, says, "You have an inheritance undefiled that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you," and that is to say you will receive that inherence...inheritance someday.

So we're centering our thoughts as we come to verse 17 on this great, glorious promise of future glory, the fulfillment of God's plan of redemption when He brings us into full glory. And it will happen because the One who called us will be faithful to bring it to pass. The One who began the work will

be faithful to complete the work because when we first trusted in Christ, we were given a seal, a guarantee, a pledge, a down payment, an engagement ring, namely the Holy Spirit, who will bring us to final glory. Nothing can change our future. We are in a no-condemnation status.

You say, what about sin? What if we sin and continue to sin? That sin has already been paid for in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. So that, as I've said before, we are free from the law of sin and death, and we are covered in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

So the Holy Spirit is given to us then as the guarantee of our eternal glory. The sum of this great hope is in verse 30, "That whom He," being God, "predestined, these He also called," called them to salvation, "and whom He called, these, He also justified, and whom He justified, these He also glorified." If you were chosen, you were called. If you were called, you were justified. If you were justified, you will be glorified, and nothing can change that. You are on the road to eternal glory, and nothing can alter that.

Salvation, listen carefully, is not salvation at all that does not end in eternal glory. I'll say it again. Salvation is not salvation at all that does not end in eternal glory because verse 29 says, "We were predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son." We weren't predestined to the beginning of salvation. We were predestined to the end of it when we are made like Jesus Christ. And that's the great theme of verses 17 to 30. And then verses 31 to 39 is the great benediction, the great doxology, the great paean of praise in the light of this great truth.

Now, in looking at these verses, verses 17 to 30, we have divided them down into three perspectives describing our future glory. First of all, the incomparable gains of glory; the incomparable gains of glory, and we looked at those last time. Verses 17 and 18, "If children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ." The incomparable gains of glory are defined for us as inheriting all that God possesses and all that is reserved for Christ, His own beloved Son. "We have been adopted," verses 14 to 16. We have become children of God. We are, therefore, as children of God, heirs of all that God possesses and joint heirs with all that Christ will be granted as the Son of God.

And the path to that glory, remember, in verse 17 and 18, is the path of suffering. Suffering is a necessary part of glory, and as we suffer here for righteousness sake and for the sake of the gospel and the sake of the kingdom, we gain the greater weight of eternal glory. When we consider the shortness and the purpose of suffering, which is to bring us eternal glory, then we can say, with verse 18, "I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us."

We can accept our suffering for righteousness' sake cheerfully. We can accept pain and persecution like Paul did because it not only increases our fellowship with Christ, but it increases our greater weight of eternal glory. Those are the incomparable gains of glory.

And the Spirit of God is the guarantee that we will have a full inheritance as equal heirs with Jesus Christ; so the incomparable gains of glory.

Now, tonight, we're going to begin to look at the next and the largest section in this part of the chapter, the inexpressible groans for glory, the inexpressible groans for glory.

Verses 29 to 27, and here, we're coming into one of the very most fascinating portions of this chapter. We learn that there is a great groaning and a great anticipation until this glory is revealed. First of all, in verses 19 to 22, we find that the creation groans. The creation groans, as noted in verse 22. And then we find that the believer groans in verses 23 to 25. If you'll look at verse 23, you'll say...you'll see there we ourselves groan. And then in verses 26 and 27, you will find there that the Holy Spirit groans.

So from verse 19 to 27, we have these inexpressible groans for glory; the creation groans, the believer groans and the Holy Spirit groans. This is a rich and fascinating section of Scripture, and it shows us, basically, how unfulfilled this life is. Everything is groaning. Everything is waiting for what is to come. The creation is waiting, the believers are waiting, and even the Holy Spirit is waiting in anticipation of what is to come. And the weight is a groaning weight because we have to endure the effects of a fallen world, the effects of sin. And so creation groans, and so believers groan, and so the Holy Spirit groans for the fulfillment that is to come in the future.

As I was writing the introduction to the Study Bible, I've mentioned to you before, and I was trying to introduce the whole Bible. I laid out the whole story of the Bible, really, in five great concepts, and I've gone over those with you, and I'll only mention one tonight because it's so pertinent to this message.

If you study the Scripture, you will find that there are five great themes in Scripture. One is the character of God, two is sin and disobedience and its consequence. Three is the righteous law of God, obedience and blessing. Four is the need for a Savior, who came and provided salvation. But the fifth great theme of Scripture is the coming future kingdom, for which all groan, and the story would be utterly incomplete without that. That is the great culmination. That is the great anticipation. That is the great fulfillment that God has laid out, and the story is not complete unless we understand the great truths of eschatology.

Unfortunately, many in theology today do not understand them, and they just allow the story to sort of end in a diffused kind of flurry. And I was mentioning the other night in the conversation we were having as leaders in the church that you have to understand that the story of redemption does not end with your conversion. Your conversion is only but one small part of an unfolding saga of redemption that will not end until the glorious unfolding of the purposes of God as revealed in the eschatological passages of Scripture.

The story is not over when people get saved. That's not the end, and then we just hang around until Jesus gets us out of here in an exit, either through death or through His return. That is not how the thing ends. Your... Your conversion is not the end of redemptive history. It doesn't end with you. Your conversion is but a small part of an unfolding saga, for which all of creation groans, for which all believers groan, and for which the Holy Spirit Himself groans.

And it is short-sighted and it is inaccurate and unbiblical and unfair to the ultimate purposes of God to just sort of let the story fall apart at the end. People who take the view that we can't understand prophecy, who take the view that there is no future earthly kingdom, that all of the passages that are prophetic and speak about the future are allegorical or spiritualized or are fulfilled in some way non-historically, but spiritually in the life of the church, etc., etc., really miss the great culmination of the whole of redemptive history.

That is a tragic thing. I mean, that would be like reading a book and stopping before you got to the end to find out how it all ended. History has an exacting ending, a precise ending, as exacting and precise as its beginning, and God has revealed it to us, just as He revealed the account of creation. He has revealed the record of what will happen in the future, and we're going to see into that as we look at this text.

Now, tonight, I want to have us look at the groaning of creation. We won't have time to go beyond this and look at the groaning of believers and the groaning of the Holy Spirit. Those are very important portions. But we will look tonight at the groaning of creation, and this is one of the really fascinating portions of Scripture.

Verses 19 to 22: "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 of its own will, 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."

Now, here, Paul is looking at creation, and he is painting a picture that really any Jew would recognize and understand. He is talking about this present age, and he's talking about another age to come, the glory age, and, frankly, that's basically how the Jews saw redemptive history unfolding. They saw time divided into two sections, this present age and the age which is to come, this present age and the age of the kingdom of God. This present age was bad, wicked, sinful, subject to sin and death and decay; but someday, the Jews believed, because it was so revealed to them in the Old Testament, there would be the Day of the Lord, and the Lord would come and there would be a tremendous Day of Judgment, and the world and the universe would be shaken to its foundations and shattered.

But out of that, there would come a new earth, and there would come a new life and a new kingdom. In fact, this cataclysmic renovation of the world was one of the great Jewish thoughts, one of the great Jewish hopes, and it would include and incorporate the kingdom of God and the reign of God's great king, the Messiah. They knew that in Isaiah 65:17, God had also said, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth." There was this great anticipation that there was coming renewal on the earth, renewal and the reign of the Messiah, a spiritual revival and a great prosperity for the nation, Israel, and all who turned to the true and living God and that there would even be a new heaven and a new earth, ultimately.

In the days between the testaments, bleak days, the 400 years we call the inter-testamental period, in those days when the Jews were oppressed and when they were enslaved and when they were so severely persecuted, that their literature is interesting. And while it's not inspired literature, it's interesting to read the literature of that 400 years when God didn't reveal anything. He broke the silence finally with the coming of Jesus Christ and the New Testament.

But as you read in that literature of the Jews in the inter-testamental period, they talked often and wrote often about the dreams of a new world, the dreams of the kingdom, the dreams of a renovated earth, the dreams of when the curse would be reversed and paradise would be regained. For example, in some of their literature, it says, "The vine shall yield its fruit 10,000-fold, and on each

vine, there shall be 1,000 branches, and each branch shall produce 1,000 clusters, and each cluster produce 1,000 grapes, and each grape, a core of wine, and those who have hungered shall rejoice. Moreover, also they shall behold marvels every day, for winds shall go forth from before me to bring every mountain the fragrance of aromatic fruits...every morning the fragrance of aromatic fruits, and at the close of the day, clouds distilling the dews of health," rain.

This was the world they hoped for. This was the world they longed for. It was Eden all over again. Their writings also said, "And earth and all the trees and the innumerable flocks of sheep shall give their true fruit to mankind of wine and sweet honey and white milk and corn, which to men is the most excellent of all." "Earth," they said, "shall give to mortals her best fruit and countless store 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 kine (cattle) and lambs of sheep and kids of goats. He will cause sweet fountains of white milk to burst forth, and the cities 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 any more drought throughout the land; no famine or hail to wreak havoc on the crops." End quote.

This expressed the longings of their hearts, longings that were planted there by promises in the Old Testament; the dream of a new world; the dream of prosperity, the dream of land productive beyond whatever they had ever seen or even imagined. And so the Jews understood this...this longing for a new creation. Paul understood it. He understood it because it had been promised in the Old Testament, and he knew that it was coming, and so Paul here sort of personifies nature, and he thinks of nature itself longing for the day when sin's dominion over it would be broken, when death and decay would begin to be conquered, and God's glory would come.

And so in verse 19, he says, "For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God." "Creation" is best here, not "creature." He's seeing the consummate...in the consummate sense, creation personified. The whole creation is groaning, verse 22, is the way he puts it, the whole creation. Now what... What was he talking about here? Well, he's not talking about angels, though they are created, because they're not subject to corruption. They're not even subject to hope. There's nothing for angels to hope for because the holy angels have complete fulfillment in the presence of God at all times.

He's not talking about demons because there's nothing for demons to hope for. They're never going to share in glory. They're never going to share in the glorious liberation of the sons of God. He's not talking about believers because he distinguishes believers from the creation. In verse 23, "Not only this, but also we ourselves groan." He is not talking about angels; he is not talking about demons; he is not talking about believers; he is not talking about unbelievers. We know that because he says here, "The creation," verse 20, "was subjected to futility, not of its own will."

Sinners have been subjected to futility by their own will. They voluntarily transgress the law of God, and, furthermore, sinners, unbelievers, don't live with hope, so he is not talking about angels, demons, believers or unbelievers. That leaves us only the inanimate creation, the non-rational creation. There are only angels and people, and if he's not talking about the holy angels or fallen angels and believing people and non-believing people, then he must be talking about non-rational creation, animate and inanimate.

He's talking about the material heavens and the material earth and everything in them, heaven and

earth and planets and stars and water and land and grass and flowers and animals and all the rest, and this is a somewhat poetic way to look at creation. It says, you remember in Isaiah 35:1, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad," and there also, the prophet Isaiah personifies the joy of creation when it, too, enters into that new glorious earth.

Isaiah 55:12, you'll remember, "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Again, it was common for the prophets in poetic license to personify creation as groaning or praising God for the glories of newness to come. So back to verse 19, he says, "The anxious longing," or "the earnest expectation." This is an interesting word. It is a word that literally means to sort of stretch your head up, stretch up your eyes, stand on your tiptoes; literally means "to watch away from the head," to sort of move and cast your gaze as far as you can. This is what creation is doing. It is looking longingly, waiting eagerly with readiness, with preparedness. And what's it waiting for? Verse 19, "The revealing of the sons of God," "the manifestation of the sons of God" may be better, the unveiling of the sons of God. So what did He mean by that?

Well, I look over at you as a crowd tonight, and I really, honestly, by looking at you, can't tell which of you are the sons of God. Some of you I know are because I know you, but just looking at you, I can't tell and neither can anybody else. In fact, it's so difficult to tell, that we can't sort the wheat from the tares can we, and Jesus said don't try to do that.

You see, the glorious manifestation of the sons of God has not yet occurred. And the reason we can't tell is because you haven't received your glorified what? Body. And you have a body that looks, basically, like everybody else's. There's no real way to tell at this point because the glorious manifestation of the children of God has not happened. We are still subject to futility. We are, in fact, suffering in this present time and have not yet entered, according to Verse 18, "into the glory that is to be revealed in us." So it...it is not yet manifest what we are. I think about that so often, you know. We just go bouncing through life like everybody else, going down the freeway, driving to work, going to the store and shopping and purchasing things. We wander around wherever we are, at school or work or in the neighborhood, and they have no clue who we are.

They don't know that, in the truest and spiritual sense, we are extraterrestrials. We are citizens of heaven, aren't we? We do not belong in this world, but it is not yet manifest what we shall be. That's what he's saying. It is not yet manifest what we shall be. But when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Right? 1John 3. And the world doesn't know. The time comes in God's redemptive plan when He reveals who we are, and we are transformed by the rapture and the resurrection, and then we come back to this world with Christ, according to Revelation, in full blazing glory, and we reign with Him on the earth for 1,000 years, right?

That's what Scripture promises: That we're taken to glory and we return with Christ, pictured in Revelation 19 so magnificently there. We come back. Colossians 3 says the same thing, "We're going to reign with Him in glory." We come back in full blazing glory, coming out of heaven in blazing, glorious white. We come back to earth, and here we are fully manifest. So it is our return with Christ in full glory that is the time in which He establishes His millennial kingdom, and so the connection is made here very clearly.

The whole creation is waiting eagerly for the unveiling of the sons of God because that's the time when the curse will be removed. Inanimate and animate creatures are seen as if they were standing

on their tiptoes, straining to catch a glimpse of the unveiling of the sons of God in their full glory because they know what that means. That means that the curse is removed, and the earth is restored to Edenic wonder and that all that we have hoped for and longed for has come to pass.

“Those who are wise,” speaking of believers in Daniel 12:3, just to get a little idea of what you're going to be like. “Those who are wise,” wise in terms of salvation, “will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven.” Wow. So when we come back, it's not going to be us as usual. We're going to shine brightly like the expanse of heaven. We're going to radiate the glory of God, and it is at that time when the saints come back to radiate that glory that the whole creation is wonderfully transformed, and there will be a renovated earth during the millennial kingdom and then there will be, at the end of the millennial kingdom, that renovated earth, just so you know, will be uncreated, and God will create the final state, which is a new heaven and a new earth, in which there will be no sin.

In the millennial, restored earth, there still will be unbelievers, as we know during the millennial kingdom and even a time for Satan to lead them in a great rebellion, as the book of Revelation points out. But nonetheless, that millennial kingdom will feature a restored earth. And the prophets are very clear about many of the features: the lion will lie down with the lamb, the desert will blossom like a rose, a valley will be cut right in the center of Jerusalem, and out of it, a great gushing river will feed water into the desert to make it blossom, all kinds of things. Natural enemies will become friends. If a person dies at the age of 100, they would die like a child. Life will be prolonged. The glory of the Lord will fill the earth. Truth will fill the earth. Peace will fill the earth. Wisdom will fill the earth. Righteousness will prevail. Christ will reign and rule, we along with Him. All of those features are delineated in the Scripture as part of that glorious kingdom.

Now, as we think about this creation groaning, there are four factors that I want to point out to you in the text, just four features that help us understand it, starting in Verse 20. "For the creation..." And they explain the thesis of Verse 19: "For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it."

The first point I want you to understand is the creation was subjected to futility or vanity. In other words, the whole of creation, as we know it right now, is subjected to *mataiotēs*, aimlessness, unfulfillment, futility, frustration. What does that mean? Well, the whole creation has no ability to reach the goal of its intended design. It cannot achieve what it was intended for. It is not able to fulfill its purpose. It can't be what God intended it to be. You say, well what did God intend it to be? Very simple; all of creation was made by God in six days to demonstrate and fully reflect His what? His glory. And it was able to do that, initially, and God looked at everything that He had made and said it's what? Everything was what? Good, everything. It was a pure and complete and fulfilled vehicle to manifest God’s glory, but it was, according to Verse 20, "subjected to futility."

Something happened that deterred this great creation from its intended objective. Something happened to cancel out its fulfillment. Something definite, an aorist verb used here to indicate a definite event. Something definite happened in past time at a point in history to bring creation into subjection, decay, corruption and frustration. Something happened.

Further getting into this, a second fact that explains it is also in verse 20 in this simple statement, "not of its own will." Whatever happened, whatever subjected creation to its aimlessness, whatever cancelled out its ability to do its fulfilling task of perfect reflection of the glory of God, whatever caused its decay and consequent aimlessness, whatever caused it to lose its ability to fulfill its

original goal was not something that creation did. It was not something that creation chose. Creation is an involuntary victim. You say, well, what caused it? That takes us to the third fact, verse 20, "It was because of Him who subjected it." God, it was because of Him who subjected it, God. God did it. At some point, some specific point, God canceled out the created universe's capability to fulfill its intended created purpose. At some point, God subjected the whole creation to its futility. At some point, God subjected it to an existence manifesting decay, disaster, pollution, disruption, degeneration.

In other words, the condition of the world, as we know it today, is a result of the judgment of God. Okay? It's a result of judgment of God. All things have not continued as they were from the beginning, quite the contrary. The earth, right now, is under a condition imposed upon it by the judgment of God.

What event brought this about? It's recorded in Genesis chapter 3, and it's the Fall of man. Verse 17, to Adam, God said this, "Because you've listened to the voice of your wife, have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you saying you should not eat from it, cursed is the ground because of you." God cursed the universe. Listen to this carefully. God cursed the universe to punish man. "In toil, you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall grow for you. You shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground because from it you were taken, for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

God judged this earth. God judged the whole universe. As part of the curse on man, that man would have to face every day of his life in the battle for bread and the threat of nat...natural disasters. In the reality of accidents, in the commonness of death, man would have to face the consequence of sin.

Isaiah 24:6, Isaiah put it this way, "Therefore a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty." "The Lord lays the earth waste," verse 1. "He devastates it. He distorts its surface. He scatters its inhabitants." “The inhabitants of the earth are burned.” That's all the curse of God on the earth. Jeremiah basically said the same thing: Chapter 12 of Jeremiah verse 4, "How long is the land to mourn and the vegetation of the countryside to wither for the wickedness of those who dwell in it." You see, the curse on the earth is a punishment. As beautiful as this earth is, you can only imagine what it was like before it was cursed, right?

Nature's destiny was inseparably linked with man’s, and because man sinned and fell into a cursed condition, so did man’s domain. It is now, this whole earth, in the bondage of corruption. It is literally, according to verse 21, "a slave to corruption." The world experiences...the universe and the world in which we live experiences things like suffering, vanity, bondage, corruption, groaning, travailing, pain. Those are the terms used to describe that condition. You see, there is an intimate connection between man's sin and the decay to which the whole universe is liable.

Now, let me tell you something, folks. We can't save man by moral enterprises, and we can't save the cursed universe by ecological ones. The earth is in bondage. It is in a bondage. That's a very important thing to understand. It is a slave. That's the word “bondage” there in verse 21. It is in bondage to corruption. What does that mean? It means that it can't free itself. It doesn't matter how hard we try, it cannot free itself from its corruption. It's impossible, and all efforts to remove its decay are futile.

I'm glad for people who want to take care of things. I'm not saying that I'm not. I am, but environmentalists can't rescue this cursed earth, ultimately. And think about it, evolution is an absolute and utter lie. Evolution is exactly opposite to truth. We are not moving upward. We are moving downward. We are not on the way up to perfection. We are on the way down from perfection to final destruction.

And the second law of thermodynamics says it, and every scientist knows it. Everything tends toward decay and disorder. Because man sinned he was punished by not being allowed to enjoy the full benefits of this glorious creation. He was not allowed to enjoy the full rights as regent and king of the earth and lord of creation. God cursed his entire environment so that it reluctantly yields to man as he applies all of his skills by the sweat of his brow. The whole creation is cursed.

The principle of corruption is absolutely everywhere. Hosea wrote about it. Joel wrote about it, and, particularly, Isaiah wrote about it, and why? To teach the evil of sin. But there's a last little phrase in verse 20, "in hope." He subjected it in hope. There is a little breath of good news, folks. You don't have to fix the earth. You don't have to save the planet. You don't have to save the world. There's hope. This is not a permanent curse. There's a better future ahead. God has promised ultimate deliverance. There is coming a recovery.

Folks, I can't understand how people cannot see this in Scripture. People say that they're amillennial. How can they say that when this is so clearly laid out? Look at verse 21. "Our hope is that the creation itself also will be set free from its bondage, from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God." When the children of God are made manifest in the glorious coming kingdom of Christ on earth, the creation will also be set free from its corruption. It will be delivered from the bondage of corruption. That is a promise, and all of creation, ever since the Fall, has been groaning in anticipation of that promise.

In Psalm 102, and I could really get lost in the Scriptures on this because they're everywhere. But in Psalm 102, listen to what the psalmist said. This isn't anything new. Psalm 102, verse 25, "Of old Thou didst found the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands." Listen. "Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure, and all of them will wear out like a garment, like clothing Thou wilt change them, and they will be changed, but Thou art the same." God never changes, but this creation is going to change. It is really going to change.

There is going to be a glorious restoration. There is going to be a regeneration, and I'm not talking about the new heaven and the new earth. That's after the millennial kingdom. There is going to be a change before that. Matthew 19, verse 28, Jesus talking to His disciples said, "Truly, I say to you, that you who have followed me" listen, "in the regeneration." Wow, when's that? "When the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who was left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms, for my name's sake, will receive many times as much and inherit eternal life."

Jesus says there's coming a regeneration, and when it comes, I'm going to be on my throne. And we know what the prophets said: He'd be on the throne of David in the city of Jerusalem. And not only is He going to be on His throne, He is going to rule the nation of Israel. And not only is He going to rule the nation of Israel, but the twelve apostles are going to sit on twelve thrones and assist Him in judging the twelve tribes. That's the regeneration. That's the promise of the regenerated earth, the kingdom where Christ establishes His throne and reigns. This is the promise of God.

In Acts 3:21 it is not called the regeneration, it is called the restoration. Acts 3:21 says He's going to send Jesus the Christ, "whom heaven must receive." In other words, He's going to be in heaven. Heaven's going to receive Him and hold Him until the period of restoration. There's coming a period of restoration. It says restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from ancient times.

Even Moses said, "The Lord, God, shall raise up for you a Prophet, like me, from your brethren. To Him you shall give heed in everything He says to you." There's coming a time of restoration. There's coming a time when a great Prophet will establish a kingdom on earth. And, as I said, Isaiah says it's a time when the lion will lie down with the lamb. It's a time when the desert will blossom like a rose. It's a time when a great river will flow out of Jerusalem and water the desert. It's a time when Israel will be saved. It's a time when the Gentiles will come to the Messiah, ten of them hanging on the robe of a Jew, who will bring them to...to meet the Savior. It's a time of great glory. It's a time of a transformed earth. This is, if course, the time of regeneration, the time of restoration.

So you don't really need to be worried about doing it yourself, since the Lord is going to take it over and work it His way. I can't resist just reading Isaiah 11:6, "The wolf will dwell with the lamb. The leopard will lie down with the kid. The calf and the young lion and the fatling together and a little boy will lead them." Wow.

Now, that's not heaven, folks, because all of those animals aren't there. That's earth. The cow and the bear will graze, natural enemies. Their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like an ox, no longer carnivorous. The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra because he's harmless. The weaned child will put his hand on a viper's den, “and they will not hurt or destroy on all My holy mountain for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters that cover the sea.” That's the kingdom time. That's the regeneration time. That's the restoration time.

I think it's Isaiah 49:13, "Shout for joy, oh Heavens, rejoice, oh earth; break forth into joyful shouting, oh mountains, for the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted." This is the salvation of Israel, and all the creation will rejoice in that glorious day.

Verse 13 of Isaiah 55. I mentioned earlier to you Verse 12, "The mountains, the hills will break forth into joy. The trees will clap their hands." Verse 13, "Instead of the thorn bush, the cypress will come up. Instead of the nettle, the myrtle will come up and will be a memorial to the Lord for an everlasting sign, which will not be cut off." All the thorns, all the thistles, all the weeds, everything we know associated with curse on this earth will be eliminated. This is the glory of the renovated creation, the regenerated creation.

Now, this is the hope that creation has. This great doctrine of cosmic fall and this great doctrine of cosmic recovery, listen, connects the first three chapters of Genesis with the last three chapters of Revelation. The long journey from one to the other is the sad saga of sin. When is this all going to happen? Back to Romans. It's all going to happen at the time of the glorious manifestation or the glorious revealing or the glorious unveiling of the sons of God. It's going to happen when we lose our cursed bodies, with all their sin-proneness and have the thrill of being new. It’s going to happen commensurate with verse 23, "The redemption of our body," end of the verse. And when we reach the point of our glorious bodily redemption, that's when He establishes the kingdom, and all creation

is marvelously transformed, and that will go on for 1,000 years, as indicated clearly to us, without question, in the book of Revelation.

There, we read, "I saw thrones," Revelation 20, verse 4, "and they sat on them and judgment was given to them. I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the Word of God and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand, and they came to life and reigned with Christ for 1,000 years." That's the glorious manifestation of the sons of God.

Someday, Jesus will come. He'll take us to heaven. Then there will be a fierce judgment on the earth, after which He brings us back, we are gloriously manifest at the establishment of His kingdom, and the earth is incredibly renovated to become Eden-like for 1,000 years, after which it is dissolved, and, in its place, the new heaven and the new earth, which the prophets also spoke of. Read the 66th chapter of Isaiah and read Isaiah's discussion in verses 22 to 24 of the new heaven and the new earth. But until that glorious time, all creation groans and groans under the corruption of the curse to which it is in bondage. But isn't it wonderful? Verse 20 says that, "It is in hope," because it knows that it will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Folks, the story has a wonderful end, and even the inanimate creation longs for that end. You'll notice in verse 22 that it says, "The whole creation." That is to say everything laments together because everything is touched by the curse. How great is the evil of sin, that the sin that Adam and Eve committed in the garden, two people on a little tiny planet in a universe without boundaries, polluted the whole place, two people.

You talk about the impact of sin? You talk about the far-reaching implications of iniquity? Two people polluted the whole creation so that the whole creation, ultimately, even after being renovated, has to be uncreated. That's the power of sin, and that's the point of the curse, to make that clear.

The whole creation agonizes until it can be restored, regenerated. This agony of the earth is interestingly illustrated by a comment from Martyn Lloyd Jones, "I wonder," he writes, "whether the phenomenon of the spring supplies us with an insight? Nature every year, as it were, makes an effort to renew itself, to produce something permanent. It has to 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 doesn't succeed, for spring leads only to summer; summer leads to autumn, and autumn to winter.

"Poor old 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 until now, and has been doing so for a very long time, and nature repeats the effort annually." End quote.

That's why verse 22 says, "The whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now," nothing different.

Like the pain of childbirth, the agony of wanting to bring forth something new and unable to do it, but

in hope, because Christ Himself will do it. Well, so much for the creation groans. Next Sunday night, the groaning of believers.

Father, we thank You for this portion of Scripture, so powerful, so rich. What wonder fills our minds as we contemplate the glorious manifestation of the children of God, as we contemplate what You have for us in the future in a recreated earth and universe, and we can't imagine what it will be like to be in a world as the prophets have described it, who, as You even said it, the regeneration and the restoration.

Lord, we know the plan is Your plan. You have it all laid out, and You'll bring it to pass. And we groan as well, longing, not only for the redemption of the creation, but the redemption of our bodies. We want to live that perfect life in a restored creation, that life which knows no struggle with sin. And so we wait for the redemption of the body, and we know and we praise You that the blessed Holy Spirit groans for the same fulfillment, and thus, by his groaning intercession, secures our no-condemnation status and our security that will one day bring us to that full redemption, to that glorious kingdom, and until then, we live in a continual state of gratitude for such a promise, and thank You, in Christ's name. Amen.

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