Hope That Transcends the Groaning
Scripture: Romans 8:18-25
Code: 90-424

We have been going through a series on the Holy Spirit that was generated by my own heart concern for the terrible ways that the Holy Spirit is dishonored in the name of evangelicalism today. The Charismatic movement sort of leads the parade on abusing the Holy Spirit, grieving the Holy Spirit, insulting the Holy Spirit, even blaspheming the Holy Spirit. And it just seems to be unbridled, relentless abuse that is heaped upon the Holy Spirit. As I said very early on in the series, the unpardonable sin that Jesus addressed in the gospel of Matthew was attributing to Satan the works of the Holy Spirit. And I think there is a reverse of that sin today, and that is attributing to the Holy Spirit the works of Satan. This is rampant in our world and the abuses are obvious for all of us to see.

It's very popular today to say anything you want to say about the Holy Spirit, to assign to the Holy Spirit anything you wish to assign to Him to gain power over people. Dishonoring the Holy Spirit is a kind of an open sport now. There are attacks on God the Father. Open theism, that's a theological attack that basically says God is not omniscient, He doesn't know everything, doesn't know the future. That's a theological attack. There are attacks on God the Son. One, called a Pauline perspective, denies the actual atoning death of Christ on the cross. It assaults the nature of God, open theism does. It assaults the nature of the work of Christ, the Pauline perspective, and an assault on the doctrine of atonement, imputation, justification.

There have always been those attacks of a theological nature coming from within the church on the Father and the Son. The attacks on the Holy Spirit, while they are doctrinal don't come across as doctrinal. They're not identifiable as doctrinal. They're just relentless things that are blamed on the Holy Spirit of an experiential nature. They're tragically attacking God, the glorious God who is three in one. The Charismatic movement has, in essence, rejected the true identity of the Holy Spirit, rejected the true, glorious work of the Holy Spirit and substituted a false God. There is a false God identified as the Holy Spirit who is not the Holy Spirit, it's a God of the making of people in the church today. It's a golden calf, it's a misrepresentation of God the Spirit.

And the movement freely ignores the truth about the Holy Spirit and with reckless license puts up an idol spirit in the house of God, blaspheming the Holy Spirit in His own name. There are so many illustrations of this that one can barely keep up with them. There is a new book that is the current bestseller, top of *The New York Times* list. It is a book that comes out of the Christian world called *Heaven Is For Real*. It is a book that chronicles, supposedly, the trip of a four-year-old during an appendectomy to heaven. He went to heaven, came back. You would think that a book like that

couldn't fall off a shelf, let alone have somebody take it off a shelf and buy it. But five million were sold in the first nine months. Five million books in which a four-year-old describes what he saw in heaven while he visited there during his appendectomy.

He saw the Father, he says, who has wings like Gabriel. He saw Jesus, who has blue eyes and is only half as tall as Michael and shorter than Gabriel, but though He's really short, He's more powerful than the rest of them and He rides a rainbow horse that only He can ride. And he saw the Holy Spirit, too. And the Holy Spirit is a blue transparent fog floating around up there who shoots out power toward the earth. Five million of those in nine months? This is where we get our view of the Holy Spirit and God the Son and God the Father and heaven? From a hoax? Fraud? Four-year-old whose imagination is prompted and expanded by his parents, no doubt?

The Holy Spirit has been turned into the latest transformer toy. He can become whatever you want Him to be. Whatever shape you want Him in, whatever comforts you, whatever interests you, whatever allows you to manipulate people for your own ends, you can blame it on the Holy Spirit. This is a kind of blasphemy and insult. We've talked about that the last few weeks, that is unworthy of any true Christian and certainly inconsistent with what Scripture says, whether it's a severe heresy regarding the Holy Spirit or some frivolous experience and misrepresentation. In any case, whatever the misrepresentation, whatever the untruth is, it brings dishonor on the Holy Spirit, who's worthy of all honor and all praise and all glory.

So we've been trying to sort of get a clear view of who the Holy Spirit is and what His ministry is so that we can worship Him in spirit and in truth. And for the starting point of our series, textually, we've gone to Romans 8. So you can turn in your Bible now, if you will, to Romans 8. I've been very encouraged at the response to the series. You've given us wonderful feedback that this is a blessing to you and that you're seeing things in a fresh and new way and that it's altering the way you view the Holy Spirit and the way you worship Him, the way you worship in general, which is so very, very central to our Christian life.

As we come to the 8th chapter of Romans, of course, the book of Romans is about the gospel, and the opening five chapters talk about the gospel. The opening couple of chapters talk about the need for the gospel, the sinfulness of man, and then from chapter 3:21 to chapter 5, the end of chapter 5, verse 21, talks about the salvation offered in Christ to meet that need. So it's a book about the gospel. The opening chapter presents the gospel of God, verses 1 to 17. Then comes the sinfulness of man, then comes the solution in the wonderful sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So by the time you come to the end of chapter 5, we've pretty well gone through the fact that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, not by works, and that's made very, very clear. So the way of salvation is laid out.

When you get to chapter 6 in the book of Romans, you're now going to talk about the benefits of the gospel, and they run all the way through verse 39 of chapter 8. So we have chapter 6, chapter 7, chapter 8 on the benefits of the gospel. In a very general sense, we could say this: 6 and 7 deal with the negative benefits and 8 deals with the positive benefit. Six and 7 deal with the negative benefits in this sense: It's a no-longer section. You're no longer under the law. You're no longer a bond slave or a slave to sin. You are no longer under the curse. You are no longer dead, you've come to life. You are no longer a victim of your flesh. So 6 and 7 give the negative aspects, which are certainly positive in their effect, but they're articulated in a negative way– freedom from the law, freedom from sin, freedom from punishment, freedom from death.

When you come into chapter 8, now you get into the positive aspects and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit becomes the theme of chapter 8. This is that which the Holy Spirit does in us, for us, with us. And we found that in chapter 8, it's more than a text within itself, it's a launching point that sends us all over the New Testament to find comparative passages that expand on everything it says. We're not going to do a lot of that– we're trying to restrain ourselves to work our way through this 8th chapter. But nonetheless, we see the vastness of the things that are here revealed about the Holy Spirit and how they can be elucidated from other portions in the New Testament in particular.

So we're looking at the benefits section of what salvation brings us, and this is where the work of the Holy Spirit begins to really become clear to us. The Father made the plan, the Son made the plan possible, and the Holy Spirit makes the plan work. Okay? The Father designed it, the Father initiated salvation, the Son validated salvation, and the Holy Spirit applies the reality of salvation. The Father is the one who chose us, the Son is the one who redeemed us, the Spirit is the one who sanctifies us. Election is the work of the Father, justification is the work of the Son, sanctification is the work of the Spirit. The Trinity engaged in this wondrous reality of salvation.

So as you come into chapter 8, and you're looking at the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, as He positively sanctifies the believer, it comes down to this: We're moving from grace to glory. Okay? We're no longer under condemnation. That's how verse 1 starts. We're no longer under the sentence of death by the law. We have been delivered from the law of sin and death. We have been given new life. We have been regenerated. We are born again. Now we begin to experience the powerful ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit as He moves us from grace to glory. And this is so critical for us to understand because this is where we live.

A right understanding of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is necessary to worship the Spirit of God for the very things that He is at this time doing in our lives. You cannot truly worship the Holy Spirit as you should and you must unless you understand what it is that He is doing and what makes Him so worthy of worship.

So in the 8th chapter, this is what we find out. Verses 2 and 3, He is freeing us from death, from sin and death. Verse 4, He's enabling us to fulfill the law. It's not the negative of being free from the curse of the law, it's the positive of being enabled to fulfill the law. Verses 5 to 11, He's changing our nature. Verses 12 and 13, He is empowering us continually for righteousness. Verses 14 to 16, He is confirming our adoption as sons of God. And that leads us now to verse 17 where we find the last identifiable ministry of the Holy Spirit in this chapter; He is guaranteeing or securing our future eternal glory. He is guaranteeing or securing our future eternal glory, and that, of course, is the ultimate gift of God, a salvation that is inviolable.

We have a guarantee of eternal glory. This is the best of all the elements of salvation, for what would a salvation be that we could forfeit? And as I've often said, if we could forfeit it, we would forfeit it. If it depended on us in any way, we would lose it because none of us could do whatever it would take to secure to ourselves by our own merit a salvation from God. So the only hope we have for eternal glory, the final part of our salvation, the final chapter, is to be secured by the same God who chose us, called us, justified us, and will one day glorify us.

It is the Holy Spirit then who, while sanctifying us, is at the same time securing us. So we could say that the two works of the Holy Spirit are sanctification and security. Down through verse 13, we could say we are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit, starting in verse 14 where we get into being adopted as children of God, which is a permanent relationship, we could say the work of the Holy Spirit is in securing us. He progressively conforms us to a righteous standard, which is modeled perfectly by Jesus, we saw that, and He secures us, He keeps us. That's what Ephesians 1:13 means when it says we're sealed by the Spirit. That seal can't be broken. We have a seal of the Spirit. We have the pledge of the Spirit. We have the guarantee of the Spirit. Or it says here in verse 23, we have the first fruits of the Spirit; that is, God gives us the first fruits of a full crop to come in glory. That's our guarantee of future glory.

The Holy Spirit, then, does this twofold work in us of sanctifying us, which is conforming us to Christ, who is the model. Remember, we said that Christ lived a life of 33 years in order to establish the model of what sanctification looks like to which we seek to be conformed under the power of the Holy Spirit. So He is in that work of conforming us to Christ, which will only be perfected when we see Him face-to-face. But here, we're going to see He secures us to our future glory.

Anybody who tells you that you can lose your salvation doesn't understand salvation. Anybody who says that you can have salvation and lose it doesn't understand salvation. Salvation is a gift given by God before the foundation of the world, and everyone– we will read in a minute– in this category of being chosen by God will be glorified for whom He predestined, He called, and whom He called, He justified, and whom He justified, He glorified. Jesus says, "All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me, and I will lose none of them, but raise Him up on the last day," John 6. We are then indebted to the blessed Holy Spirit for regenerating us, giving us life and then for sanctifying us and securing us

until the day that He Himself transforms us. We will be raised to our eternal condition by the power of the same Holy Spirit that regenerated us at our conversion. It's a work that the Father designed and the Son validated and the Spirit effects.

Now look at verses 17 and following. We come into this section on the securing, guaranteeing ministry of the Holy Spirit by which we can be confident that we will reach eternal glory. Let me read it to you, starting in verse 17. "If children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." And with that last line, Paul introduces the concept of eternal glory. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see with perseverance, we wait eagerly for it. In the same way, the Spirit also helps our weakness for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And He who searches the hearts know what the mind of the Spirit is because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

This is all about future glory. It was launched with the last statement of verse 17, which we've already considered, being glorified with Him. Verse 18 talks about the glory that is to be revealed to us. Verse 19, the revealing of the sons of God again in glory. Verse 21 at the end of the verse, the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Verse 23 ends that we are waiting for the redemption of our body. Verse 24 and 25 talk about our hope for glory yet to come for which we eagerly wait.

So we're now introduced to a category of ministry of the Holy Spirit which secures us to future glory. Verse 23 indicates that at the heart of this is the gift of the Holy Spirit, a down payment on future glory. We also learn in verses 26 and 27 that the Spirit is interceding for us, which again is His work to secure us. A constant interceding on our behalf.

One word jumps out at you when you read this passage, and it's the form of the word "groan." There's a lot of groaning in this passage. Creation is groaning in this passage in verse 19. The creation groans is one way to translate that. This one says the anxious longing of the creation, but the Authorized talks about the groaning of creation. And then you find in verse 23 that we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we groan. And then down in verse 26, we have the groaning of the Holy Spirit. This indicates that the creation and us and the Holy Spirit are going through certain groanings, certain agonies, until the final realization of glory. That's the whole point of this passage.

The Holy Spirit lives within us as a down payment on our future glory, and the Holy Spirit is the one who carries us to that future glory. That's His ministry. There is no greater gift that God could ever give us than this. As I said, what would a salvation be worth that we could forfeit? We would surely do it because we have not the power in us to secure our own salvation in any sense.

So here, the creation groans in verses 19 to 22, the believer groans in verses 23 to 25, and the Holy Spirit groans in verses 26 to 27. And all of those groanings are some indication of an unfulfilled reality. All of creation feels the unfulfillment. Believers feel the unfulfillment. Even the blessed Holy Spirit experiences that unfulfillment. This is wonderful truth. There's so much here, it's daunting for me to try to get our arms around it in one morning, and we're not going to be able to do that, but I'll take you as far as I did the people in the first service, so that's the standard always for you guys.

Let's look at the groaning of creation– let's look at the groaning of creation. Verse 19: "For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God." Creation is groaning in verse 19. Creation is mentioned in verse 20. Creation is mentioned again in verse 21. Creation is mentioned again in verse 22. So in those four verses, creation is the subject. Creation is groaning. What is this talking about? And in what sense is the creation groaning?

I think the readers, if they were Jewish, would have some kind of an understanding of this. This is about– this is the groaning of anticipation. This is the groaning of unfulfillment. This is a kind of suffering condition waiting for the promise to be fulfilled, and the Jews would certainly recognize it because they talked about two eras of redemptive history, the present age and the age to come. It was pretty simple. There was the present age and the age to come. The present age was the age of sin and suffering and decay and corruption and fallenness and sin. And the age to come was the age of the new heaven and the new earth and righteousness and purity and holiness and virtue and glory and the absence of death and decay and disease. It was the Isaiah 65:17: "I will create new heavens and a new earth."

People who knew the Word of God and waited for the fulfillment of this understood what it was to be living in a groaning world. And even nature is seen as groaning. Nature here is personified. Verse 19: "For the groaning"– or the anxious longing, as the NAS puts it– "of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God."

Now, what are we talking about when we're talking about creation here? In what sense is creation groaning? And it's mentioned, as I said, all the way down to verse 22. What part of creation? Angels? They're created beings. No. They're not groaning. Holy angels are not groaning because it's never going to get any better for them, right? They're around the throne of God now, they're in eternal perfection and eternal holiness. They're not subject to corruption, they've never been subject to corruption; therefore, they don't have hope for anything because nothing could get any better than it is.

What about demons? Is he talking about the created angels who fell and are the demons? No. They're not groaning in hope for their liberation because there is no liberation, there's no salvation, there's no deliverance, there's no forgiveness, there's no better future for demons, only the Lake of Fire.

Well, maybe he's talking about believers. No, he's not talking about believers because there's a distinction made between the creation and believers. Please notice, verse 19, the creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God; therefore, the creation is distinct from the sons of God. Verse 23, the creation wants to be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. So the creation that is moaning and groaning and waiting and eagerly anticipating is distinct from believers.

Well, maybe it's unbelievers, is that who it is? Is it unbelievers? No, because unbelievers are not hoping in Christ, they're not hoping for glory, they're not hoping or expecting something better from heaven. They don't have any information about that, they have no desire for that. And furthermore, if you look at verse 20, they were not subjected to futility unwillingly. No, that's not true of unbelievers. They are willing sinners. They are willing to feed their own corruption.

Bottom line, the creation that groans is no part of the rational creation– no part of the rational, personal creation. What is left is non-rational creation, animate and inanimate. So what you have here is a personification of creation, the material heavens, the material earth, and everything that's in them, heaven and all the bodies that are in it, earth, water, land, grass, flowers, animals, bugs, fish, rivers, streams– everything that is in the animate and inanimate, impersonal, non-rational creation. Creation is given an identity here. It's personified in a sort of poetic fashion.

For example, in Isaiah 35:1, Isaiah says, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad." Well, how could a wilderness and a solitary place be anything consciously? But this is personification. Or even more richly, the wonderful, familiar words of Isaiah 55:12: "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." And I promise you, that if you ever hear the mountains singing and the trees clapping their hands, they're going to take you away in a white coat, so that's not talking about something that is a reality but is a kind of a poetic personification.

Creation, that non-rational, impersonal, animate and inanimate, that is to be identified as living things and non-living things, rocks and animals, that creation is anxiously longing, earnestly expecting, waiting eagerly. That's the groaning of creation. And the language here is very strong. That statement, "anxious longing" there is a Greek verb that means to– literally it's a strange combination of components. It means to watch away from the head. It means to sort of stretch your head, get on your tiptoes to look into the future, into the distance what you cannot see immediately, stretching to

see something that you wait eagerly for.

So this is a kind of expectancy. It's as if creation is up on its tiptoes looking out for something that it longs to see and who is it? It's persons. It's the revealing of the sons of God, the unveiling of the sons of God. That's the time when we are all glorified. That would be at the end of all human history, the end of the Millennial kingdom, the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth. Creation is waiting for that. In verse 21, it's put this way: "The freedom of the glory of the children of God." When all the children of God are glorified, creation is going to get the benefit of it, right? Because there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

All creation, then, is viewed as up on its tiptoes eagerly looking and waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. An amazing statement– a cosmological statement of massive proportions, inanimate and animate creation standing on its tiptoes to catch the first glimpse of the persons that it longs to see, waiting for the unveiling, the manifestation, the revelation of the sons of God in their full glory, and it will come. Daniel 12:3 says it will shine like the stars and Matthew 13:43 says will shine like the sun, will be blazing glory. The whole creation is looking for that event, eagerly anticipating it.

Why? Why is creation doing that? Go back to verse 20 for a minute. Because the creation was subjected to futility. The creation was subjected to futility, or vanity, *mataiots*, means aimlessness, emptiness, uselessness, futility, inability to reach a goal, the inability to achieve a purpose. It can't be what it wants to be. All creation was originally good, right? When God created in Genesis 1, it was good, remember? He said– and He looked and it was good, and He saw it and it was good. And then at the end, in chapter 1:31 He says it was all very good. But it was subjected to futility. It can't fulfill its purpose. It is no longer what it should be, what it would be, what it could be.

And by the way, when it says in verse 20 it was subjected, it is a verb that indicates a past tense. It's correctly translated in the NAS. It was a point in time. A definite event happened in past time in history at which the creation went from being purposeful and perfect to being purposeless and futile. It was subjected to decay, to corruption, to frustration, to death and decay, destruction.

Now, can we blame the creation? Is this just– it's just that something went wrong in the evolutionary cycle? Is that what it was? What happened?

Well, go back to verse 20 again. It was subjected to futility not willingly– not willingly. The creation isn't at fault. Whatever subjected creation to its aimlessness, whatever subjected creation to its decay and its inability to be glorious as the original created goal was intended, whatever, it wasn't creation's fault. Creation is an involuntary victim. Something else did this to creation. Someone else did it to creation. Who? Keep reading. "Not willingly but because of Him who subjected it." Who's that? God. God subjected creation to its futility. God, according to Genesis 3:17, 18, and 19 pronounced a curse on the creation. Why? Because of the sin of Adam and Eve.

When Adam and Eve sinned, a plague came on them, a deadly plague, a plague that was so infectious no human being who ever walks on this planet will escape it. A plague that is so contagious that no one can avoid it. Like living in the midst of a city that had been hit by the Black Plague in the Middle Ages. The plague was not only in the people, but the plague dominated their environment. The plague was not only in the man lying in the bed in the house, dying; the plague was everywhere in the house. It was not only everywhere in the house, it was everywhere in the street, and it was everywhere in the city, and it was everywhere in the countryside, and there was no escape because the environment was under the corruption. So it was when Adam sinned, the plague was everywhere on the planet, and it continues to this day. Decay, disaster, pollution, disruption, degeneration– those are not the result of some evolutionary fluke; those are the result– because it's supposed to get better, according to the evolutionists, some anomaly, some bad mutation. The things are the way they are in the world because God cursed this entire creation. He cursed it so that man is left to face every waking moment of his life the deadly, destructive, corrupting realities of sin.

As Isaiah 24:6– a curse devours the earth. As Jeremiah 12:4 says, the land mourns. Nature's destiny is inseparably linked with man's, and because man sinned and fell into a corrupt condition, so the domain of man is in the bondage or the slavery of corruption. See that phrase there in verse 21? That the creation itself is in slavery to corruption. Intimate connection between man's sin and the decay to which the whole universe is subject.

Environmentalists aren't going to turn that over. They're not going to reverse that, they're not going to mitigate that. Nice try, but it won't work. Solar energy won't do it. Eliminating carbon footprints is not going to do it. Getting rid of fossil fuels isn't going to do it. Education isn't going to do it. This is a divine curse. We're not on an upward trend; we're on the way down from perfection. Listen: We're on the way down from perfection to total destruction and there's no stopping point. That is a world view that is biblical because when man sinned, he was punished by not being allowed to enjoy purity because he chose sin and not even being allowed to enjoy the benefits of a perfect environment as king of the earth. He was now a king who lost his crown and tried to rule over an unruly, corrupt, decaying, and deadly creation. God cursed his entire environment.

You know, Isaiah has so much to say about this, I can hardly resist reading some of the things that are there. But one of them, I'll resist a little bit. Isaiah 24:4: "The earth mourns and withers, the world fades and withers, the exalted of the people of the earth, they fade away. The earth is polluted by its inhabitants. They transgress laws, violate statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned and few men are left." Then he goes on to talk about even more disastrous elements of trying to live and survive in this world; 34th chapter of Isaiah, he says even more about it; 33rd chapter, the whole creation is cursed. So the principle of corruption is everywhere, so the creation is groaning because it has been subjected to futility, not of its own will but as an accommodation, a necessary

accommodation, to the curse of God on Adam and Eve and on all humanity, and it cannot do anything to reverse its slavery to corruption. This is an act of God.

“But,” you say, “why is creation up on its tiptoes?” End of verse 20: “In hope”– in hope– “in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption.” Beautiful imagery. The whole creation standing on its tiptoes, longing to be what it was originally created by God to be and knowing it will never happen until the glorious manifestation of the children of God, the freedom of the glory of the children of God, until the final eternal state. That’s what all creation is waiting for. They are looking for a better future.

That’s the kind of world we live in. We live in a very difficult world. I’m working on a book that will come out in a few months, it’s called *Twelve Unlikely Heroes*. People seem to want to buy books that have “twelve” in the title, so I’m just going to keep writing books that have “twelve” in the title– *Twelve Ordinary Men*, *Twelve Extraordinary Women*– so I think they like “twelve,” so *Twelve Unlikely Heroes* . One of the heroes is Enoch. And you look at Enoch, you say, “Well, wait a minute. A hero has got to be somebody who has some kind of impact on a lot of other people, and Enoch seemed a kind of a solitary figure.” He was walking with God. It was just the two of them. He was walking, and one day he just walked to heaven, didn’t die, remember that? Enoch, just like Elijah, carried in a chariot of fire to heaven. That’s a very rare situation. But what makes Enoch a hero? Why would you think of Enoch as a hero? What level of influence? What range of influence? What about him is so heroic? He was a righteous man who walked so intimately with God that God just took the walk right into heaven one day. What makes him special?

I’ll tell you what. Do you understand this, that the entire generation in which Enoch lived were all drowned in the flood except for eight people? Do you know how rare a bird Enoch was? Do you know what it is to be the only guy in the world that walks with God? You’re looking at a hero if ever there was a hero. You’re looking at a man who lived against the grain of a culture that was so corrupt, God killed millions of them in one fell swoop. That’s why it’s heroic. For Enoch, it was that he walked with God. And for us, how do we survive this corrupt world? Look, lower your expectations, will you, for the world? Will you? Lower your expectations for the world, for its education, its politics, its social structures– just lower your expectations. Get them down somewhere like those in Genesis where God saw the world and it was only evil continually. Just get them down there and you’ll be okay. And then walk with God.

God protected Enoch through a corrupt world, and that’s the work of the Holy Spirit. God is still doing that, not by walking with us, but by living in us, and it’s the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us in the midst of this corrupt world. Paul even calls it a crooked and perverse generation. That’s the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This whole creation is waiting for the deliverance, the freedom of the glory of the children of God when it will also be set free from the slavery to corruption that has cursed it.

How is this going to happen? How is it going to happen? Well, the psalmist talked about it in Psalm 102. You might overlook this if you didn't look closely, but it's a wonderful statement, Psalm 102 verse 25. It says, speaking to God, "O my God," he says, and then he says, "You founded the earth and the heavens are the work of Your hands. Even they will perish, but You endure. All of them will wear out like a garment, like clothing; you'll change them and they'll be changed but You are the same." You created it, it will go out of existence and something new will come, that's Psalm 102. And it is described in careful detail in 2 Peter 3. Second Peter 3 gives us these words, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief in which the heavens will pass away"– exactly what the psalmist said– "with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat and the earth and its works will be burned up." That will be literally the atomic explosion of the created universe made up of atoms.

And it tells us even further in verse 12: "The heavens will be destroyed by burning and the elements will melt with intense heat." And the world and the earth and heavens, as we know it, will go out of existence. I call it the uncreation. "And in its place will come a new heaven and a new earth." That's what Peter said. Revelation 20 says it, 21 says it, 22 says it. So creation is awaiting a cosmic regeneration.

In fact, looking to the future, there is no hope for any change in the creation from the way it is until the glorious freedom of the children of God. Look, the creation went down with the Fall of man, and the creation will come back again in the exaltation of man, okay? Between– in the first three chapters of Genesis, you have the cursed creation. Cursed because man is corrupt. In the last three chapters of Revelation, you have the new creation in perfection and righteousness because you have glorified humanity. And in between is the sad, long history of sin and corruption. The two are linked. What happened to man in the Garden happened to the creation. What happens to man in glory will happen to the creation as well. It will be liberated. So all creation groans, waiting for that to happen.

Verse 22 sums it up. "The whole creation groans, all of it, because all of it is cursed, and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now." A verb that means pains of childbirth. And childbirth pain is a positive pain, right? I mean, it has a positive result. Some pain has negative result. You're feeling bad and you're going to feel worse, you're going to die maybe. But childbirth pain basically is the kind of pain that anticipates something wonderful, like great event, something blessed, and that's the kind of pain that the creation feels.

You don't need to take care of the creation, folks. Can I tell you that again? I've said this before. Step on the grass, kill a deer, do what you want, you don't need to protect the creation. It's here for you. You don't need to be stupid about it, you don't need to be evil about it, but you have to understand, this is a cursed creation. It still is allowed to yield riches and blessing for us. God's going to take care of His creation until the time when He destroys the entire thing. Okay? So don't get carried away with trying to preserve the creation in the condition it's in. You will be much better served when it doesn't

even exist. Okay? Not that you could hurry it or delay it, that's in God's plan.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "I wonder whether the phenomenon of the spring supplies us with a part answer. Nature, every year, as it were, makes an effort to renew itself, to produce something permanent. It has 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 back 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 can't do it. 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. It has been doing that for so very long."

So very long but it still reappears and reenergizes the effort every year. Be kind. Don't blame your grass, don't blame your flowers, it's the nature of it. They make a good try, he says, every spring. Creation groans for glory.

Secondly, and just briefly– couple of minutes. Believers groan for glory– verse 23. "Not only this"– that meaning creation– "but we also ourselves. We ourselves groan within ourselves waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, namely the redemption of our body."

Look, we understand the groaning of creation in its imperfection because we're part of creation and we are living imperfections. We groan in ourselves, lamenting our cursed situation. Paul says, "O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death?" Romans 7:24. You remember 2 Corinthians 5:4 where Paul also says, "In this tent we groan, desiring not to be unclothed but to be clothed upon with our new body, that this mortal shall put on immortality, that death shall be swallowed up in life." David groaned in Psalm 38:9: "All my desire is before You and my groaning is not hid from You." We know what it is to groan. We groan.

What are we waiting for? What are we groaning for? Well, he says in verse 23, "Our adoption as sons." You say, "Wait a minute, we were already adopted. You told us that in 14 to 16 in this chapter, that we have been adopted." Yes, we have been adopted but we don't have our inheritance yet. True? And what is our inheritance connected to? End of verse 23, the redemption of what? Our body. We've already been adopted formally into the family of God. We are the children of God. We have the Holy Spirit leading us now– verse 14. We have the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, in us by which we cry, "Abba, Father." We sense that intimacy with God. The Spirit is testifying with our spirit– verse 16– that we're the children of God. So we have been adopted but we have not received our inheritance.

You remember 1 Peter 1:3-4? We have an inheritance that fades not away, reserved in heaven for us, not yet received– not received until the glorious freedom of the children of God. So we groan. We

groan for the day when this mortal shall put on immortality, when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, when death shall be swallowed up with life, right? First Corinthians 15. We groan for that experience. We want to be clothed with our heavenly body, like unto His glorious body, Philippians chapter 3. Paul even calls these vile bodies, our flesh, our fallenness, our humanness, our sin. We can't wait. Thankful for grace but we can't wait to go from grace to glory– from grace to glory.

Are we going to make it? We are– verse 23 says– because we have already the first fruits of the Spirit. That doesn't mean something that comes from the Spirit, not first fruits from the Spirit, but the first fruits of the future promise from God who is the Spirit. The Spirit is the first fruits, the first fruits of the Holy Spirit. He is the first installment. First fruits was the little bit of the crop that the farmer pulled first, the first part that came in while the rest was still reaching its full bloom. He would pull in the first and he would know what the future crop would be like by the first that came. The Holy Spirit is the first fruits of the full crop that God has prepared for His people. He is the installment, the down payment, the arrabon, the engagement ring, the seal, the pledge, all that language is found in Paul's writings. And He is the Spirit of promise. That's the hope of the redeemed. Colossians 1:27: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

We then groan until that is fulfilled. And the older you get, the more you groan, right? Really, the more you groan. You groan more because you can do less. You groan more because you have more to groan about. Not only personally in your own body, but things are going on around you that make you groan. I didn't used to groan so much about the way things were in the world when I was a lot younger. I didn't groan so much about the loss of life and the challenges. Between services I sat and prayed with John James whose wife had a stroke, a brain leak, and after 62 years of marriage went to heaven this week unexpectedly, and I sat and felt the groaning and agony of his own heart as he tried to explain to me what it was like to lose his wife. He's been in our church with her since 1972 and how much the church has meant to them. And it's a groaning life and the longer you live it, the more you accumulate about the groaning of it. And we all live in hope, but that hope burns brighter as we grow older and experience more of living in a corrupt and fallen world. I'm not trying to fix the world. I'm just waiting for the day when the Lord puts it to an end and creates a new heaven and a new earth. We live in hope. Verse 24: "In hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he already sees?"

In other words, we're saved by faith, but we're saved in hope, right? Because our salvation is not full yet. You're nearer now– Romans 13– nearer to salvation. Your salvation is nearer than when you believed, that is the future aspect of it. So we live in hope for what we don't see. But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we eagerly wait for it.

What keeps our perseverance strong? What keeps our hope bright? It's the ministry of the Spirit of God in us, the first fruit deposit of the Holy Spirit. He is the one leading us, He is the one confirming our adoption, the Spirit of adoption by which we cry, "Abba, Father." He is the one testifying with our

spirit that we're the children of God. He holds us, secures us, causes us to have a persevering hope with which we wait for the return of Christ. And we wait for our own future glory. So creation groans and believers groan.

In verses 26 and 27, the Holy Spirit groans. But that's such a great section, and I'm going to save that for next time because it leads into all things working together for good which is a familiar verse, verse 28. Such a wonderful thing to look honestly and truthfully at the ministry of the blessed Holy Spirit in our lives and get past the folly and the foolishness of childish imaginations about the blessed and marvelous, magnificent Holy Spirit. To reduce Him to some kind of a blue fog is foolishness, misrepresentation of the intention of our understandings of Him.

And I speak of that as a golden calf because it turns God into some kind of visual image. And you never want to think about the Holy Spirit in a visual way. You never want to think about God in a visual way. You're entitled to think about Jesus Christ as a man. Salvation includes faith which looks back to the finished work of Christ, and it includes hope, which looks forward to the unfinished work of Christ. It is a faith walk and it is a hope walk as well.

Father, we thank You for our time together today and for all the wonderful music that we enjoyed and participated in, the wonderful fellowship with those around us and yet even more as we fellowship when things are over here and through the day. Thank You for the opportunity to come back again tonight for the ministry of the Word and to worship and to honor You. We thank You, blessed Holy Spirit, for all that You do in us to sanctify us and to secure us unto eternal glory. Thank You, O Christ, for the provision You made on the cross that renders this possible. And, Father, we thank You for the wondrous plan that You ordained before the world began. Thank You to our blessed Savior for sending the Spirit that He might do His sanctifying and securing work in us until that day when we are glorified in the new heaven and the new earth. We long for that reality, not only for our own sakes; we long for that reality for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who is worthy of honor for the sake of the Holy Spirit, even God the Father who deserves to be worshiped forever and ever. And that will be what heaven is, the true worship of the Trinity forever. We can't even comprehend it, but we pray, Lord, that You will cause us to be faithful in hope to wait for that day when You will surprise us every moment of eternity with Your glory and Your goodness. Thank You for calling us, thank You for justifying us, thank You for promising to glorify us. In the name of our Savior, we pray. Amen.

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