

Romans

Romans Chapter Eight

Romans 8:18-25

December 19, 2010

This is lesson number 70 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

“Groaning to be Glorified”

Romans 8:18-25

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

In our study of verse 18 we learned, I “hope” that it is ‘normal’, yes, even necessary, for the believer to suffer with Christ in this ‘present time.’

The ‘present time’ for the Christian is the span of time from the resurrection of Jesus Christ until He returns in glory. A glory that will be revealed in ‘us.’ The ‘us’ are all those who are ‘in Christ.’

All through this ‘present age’ there will be tribulation and wars, and rumors of wars, unrest and doubt. Terrorism! But the child of God has vs. 18.

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The subject of Romans 8 is assurance!

The context of this section [18-25] is **glorification**.

The greatness of His glory is the thread that runs through this passage from vs. 18, ‘**the glory which shall be revealed in us**’, to vs. 30, ‘**Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.**’

This morning let’s talk about ‘**groaning**.’

Suffering with Christ – groaning!

Waiting for glory – groaning!

There is groaning.

My title for this lesson is: “**Groaning to be Glorified.**”

Let’s work on vss. 19-22.

Find 8:19 ff in your Bible and follow along as I read.

Something causes the **creation**, the **elect of God**, and the **Holy Spirit** to **groan**. Before glorification is to be realized, there is “**Groaning to be Glorified.**”

Webster’s Dictionary defines the English word ‘**groan**’ as:

To utter a deep sound expressing pain, distress, or disapproval.

The Greek word translated ‘groans’ in verse 22 is *sustenazo* (soos-ten-ad'-zo); and it means to moan jointly, i.e. experience a common calamity: The creation groans jointly with the elect, and the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word *stenazo* (sten-ad'-zo): ‘groan’ in verse 23, and ‘groanings’ in verse 26 means to be in trouble, i.e. to sigh, to murmur, to pray inaudibly.

In verse 26 it is the Holy Spirit who makes intercession for the ‘us’. He makes ‘groanings’ which are *alaletos* (al-al'-ay-tos); unspeakable: unutterable, ‘groanings’ that cannot be uttered.

We are told in verse 19 that the ‘creation’ is ‘leaning forward,’ ‘craning its neck,’ eagerly waiting for the revelation of the ‘sons of God.’

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Verse 20 tells us that something happened to creation that was not creation's fault. God did something to creation that for the 'present time' appears to be **futile**, or useless. Something that is **futile** is not fulfilling its purpose.

Notice that it was God Himself who subjected creation to futility. But God did it with a view of a glorious future restoration of creation.

Verse 21 says that this apparently futile creation will itself be made free or delivered from the bondage of decay in conjunction with the glorious liberty or freedom of the children of God.

In the present time the creation is rotting away and decaying.

Verse 22 tells us that it is the '**whole creation** that groans' and is, as it were, in the pains of childbirth waiting for this glorious revelation of the children of God.

Calvin reminds us that these are birth pains and not death pains.

That is a lot for anyone to comprehend at one time and I will borrow an expression from John Piper. Others who use the term may have borrowed the expression from Piper. I don't know from whom Piper borrowed the expression. But it is a good term and it is to '**unpack**' these verses.

'Unpack' is a very good word picture. We have a package of information in these verses, so let's 'unpack' verses 19-22.

Let's first find out what 'Creation' refers to?

Paul mentions '**the creation**' three times in verses 19, 20, and 21. Then in verse 22, it is the '**whole creation.**'

To understand what he means by the 'whole creation' it is necessary to consider what it **cannot** mean; what is not included!

If we take it to mean every created thing, i.e., the entire universe of absolutely every created thing, material, and spiritual, it would result in some impossible conclusions.

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I borrowed this line of thought from William Hendriksen. After I read what Hendriksen had to say, I studied Lloyd-Jones who preceded Hendriksen with a commentary on Romans by about 30 years; I found the exact same argument.

“The truth is the truth.” Amen?

Creation? What it cannot mean.

First, it cannot mean the **good angels** because they were never subjected to ‘futility’ and they will never suffer decay or corruption.

Second, it cannot mean **Satan and his demons {fallen angels}**. **They** are ruled out, for they will never be set free, nor will they be glorified.

Jude 6

And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;

The **third** group that it cannot include is all those people who will never be saved, the **non-elect**.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,¹⁰ when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

The **fourth** and final group that the **whole creation** does not include in vs. 19-22 is the **elect** because they are dealt with separately in vs. 23-25.

When you exclude these four groups [good angels, demons {fallen angels}, lost men, and saved men] all that is left is the animate and inanimate **irrational creation** or simply, **Nature**.

We are told that this ‘whole creation’ is, with earnest expectation, with outstretched head, craning forward, eagerly looking forward to the revelation of the sons of God.

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How is it possible for irrational things like birds and cows and inanimate things like plants and dirt to show such an eager interest in what will happen to God's children?

The answer is that the 'whole creation' is included in this future glory!

Consider what the words of Scripture say about the irrational creation:

Paul is using **personification** to refer to the irrational creation. The Bible frequently uses personification, to attribute human or personal qualities to irrational or inanimate objects.

E.g., 'wisdom' in the Proverbs is spoken of as a person.

"Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift up her voice?" Proverbs 8:1

Psalm 96:11-13

**11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
Let the sea roar, and all its fullness;
12 Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it.
Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the LORD.
13 For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth.
He shall judge the world with righteousness,
And the peoples with His truth.**

Psalm 98:7-9

**7 Let the sea roar, and all its fullness,
The world and those who dwell in it;
8 Let the rivers clap their hands;
Let the hills be joyful together before the LORD,
9 For He is coming to judge the earth.
With righteousness He shall judge the world,
And the peoples with equity.**

Isaiah 35:1-2

**The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them,
And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;
2 It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice,
Even with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
The excellence of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
The excellency of our God.**

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Isaiah 55:12

**12 "For you shall go out with joy,
And be led out with peace;
The mountains and the hills
Shall break forth into singing before you,
And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.**

And so Paul here attributes personality and strong desire and emotion to the irrational creation like birds and cows and plants and dirt.

But that raises another question.

How is the irrational creation linked to the sons of God? We have already said that the 'whole creation' is included in this future glory!

Both the irrational creation and the sons of God are to be restored and glorified. It will not be a matter of public knowledge how much God loves His creation and His elect people **until** the restoration of the creation.

Matthew 13:36-43

Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." 37 He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.39 The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. 40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Daniel 12:1-3

**"At that time Michael shall stand up,
The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people;
And there shall be a time of trouble,
Such as never was since there was a nation,
Even to that time.
And at that time your people shall be delivered,
Every one who is found written in the book.**

2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,

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Some to everlasting life,
Some to shame and everlasting contempt.
3 Those who are wise shall shine
Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness
Like the stars forever and ever.

The whole creation is looking forward eagerly to the revelation of the sons of God because that will mean the glorification of the whole creation.

It was 'not by its own choice' i.e., it was not its own fault that the irrational creation was made futile. **It was not the creation that sinned. It was man.**

And it was God who subjected the irrational creation to futility. Because of man's sin, God pronounced a curse not only on man, but also on the irrational creation!

Genesis 3:17-19

17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it':

"Cursed is the ground for your sake;

In toil you shall eat of it

All the days of your life.

18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,
And you shall eat the herb of the field.

19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread

Till you return to the ground,

For out of it you were taken;

For dust you are,

And to dust you shall return."

Just as an aside, this is one more place where Scripture knocks down any support from Scripture for the anti-God philosophy of evolution.

Back in chapter 5 we made the point that for Paul to use a 'mythical' Adam, as a 'type' of a real Christ would be nonsense. If Jesus is a real person then so is Adam a real historical person!

If God did not **create** the creation referred to here then any talk of a future restoration and glory is nonsense!

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Back to our text: The irrational creation was subjected to **futility**, but it was not creation's fault, as verse 20 clearly says, and the creation is craning its neck, as it were, to behold the sons of God.

What a day to look forward to when all the restraints of man's sin are removed and we see creation restored as it was in the Garden of Eden before Adam sinned away his innocence and ours with him.

But Wait! Sounds like one of those \$19.95 deals on TV. After they have sold you on the piece of junk, they shout, "**But Wait!**"

Since you don't need one of them we will give you two of them.

But Wait! Creation will be even better than it was before Adam sinned, it will be **glorified!**

Restoration means to be put back in order.

Glorification means to be made perfect and beyond the possibility of sin.

Adam was innocent but not righteous.

Creation was 'very good' but became futile.

2 Peter 3:7-13

7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? 13

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Revelation 21:1-5

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of

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God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

My understanding of heaven is that it is not so much that we will be 'going to heaven' but that heaven is coming down to us. Heaven is not "out yonder" Heaven will be a new created heaven and earth.

It is my understanding that 'pearly gates and streets of gold' symbolize the beauty and the glory of the 'heavenly Jerusalem.' Heaven, I believe, will be a restored world without sin. The heavenly conditions will be experienced right here on a restored creation when the creation and the elect are glorified.

Paul preached the Scriptures and I believe his favorite prophet was Isaiah.

I encourage you to read all of Isaiah 11 to see the context but listen to:

Isaiah 11:6-9

**6 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little child shall lead them.
7 The cow and the bear shall graze;
Their young ones shall lie down together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole,
And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.
9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
As the waters cover the sea.**

An eschatological note: Postmillennialism sees this as the thousand years of peace after which Christ returns.

My view is that this is the new earth at the return of Christ.

Another Isaiah passage: Don't try to make every phrase correspond to some concept of heaven, but listen to:

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Isaiah 65:17-25

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, And her people a joy.¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying.

20 "No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.²² They shall not build and another inhabit; They shall not plant and another eat; For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.²³ They shall not labor in vain, Nor bring forth children for trouble; For they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, And their offspring with them. 24 "It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear.²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox, And dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," Says the LORD.

This morning we have seen how and why the irrational creation, or nature, groans together in anticipation of the revelation of the sons of God.

Because of the one sin of the one man, Adam, the irrational creation was made subject to futility for the present time.

Not only that but every natural offspring of Adam, which includes you and me, is condemned because of Adam's sin. Not only are we guilty of original sin, we prove our just condemnation by multiplying personal sins against the holy, just, and good law of God.

But God is merciful, and the Gospel, which is the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ, is being preached. The Gospel of propitiation by His blood! The Holy Spirit continues to give life to the preaching of the Gospel and He calls out those chosen from before the foundation of the world.

They will come to Jesus Christ in faith. They will hear the gospel and they will believe in Jesus Christ and their only hope. They are the 'we' in verses 23-25 and by God's great mercy we will consider next week the groans of the 'we.'

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The very elect of God also groan.

“Groaning to be Glorified.”