

THE BONDAGE OF CORRUPTION

January 3, 2016

Romans 8:1-25

“For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” Romans 8:20, 21

In prosperity and ease we do not contemplate that we are in bondage. Yet our text describes us as being in “the bondage of corruption,” awaiting “the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

Writing by divine inspiration, the Apostle Paul affirmed that there is no condemnation to those who are united with Jesus Christ by faith (8:1). They will not be condemned for their sin because Christ “condemned sin in the flesh” (8:3) when He died in their place (Isa. 53:6; II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:24). They have the Spirit of God to guide them, thus, they “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (8:1). Guided by God’s Spirit they receive certain benefits.

Among those benefit is the Holy Spirit’s testimony that they are children of God (8:16). As God’s children they are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (8:17). And as heirs, a glory awaits them that surpasses the sufferings of this age by such measure that they are unworthy of comparison (8:18).

The apostle refers to this glory with several phrases: “the manifestation of the sons of God” (19), “the glorious liberty of the children of God” (21), “the adoption” and “the redemption of our body” (23). These contrast with phrases which describe our present existence: “the sufferings of this present time” (18), “made subject to vanity” (20), “the bondage of corruption” (21) and groaning and travailing in pain (22, 23).

Do you think of your present existence as being one of bondage? Doubtless most people living in this land do not. Some may feel bound by debt or other limitations, yet we do not look at our existence itself as being subjected to bondage. Yet Scripture here affirms what we all know: that all living things die, followed by corruption. Every day we live is an effort to delay death. But it always prevails. Yea, “it is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb. 9:27). Even for those who reach old age, “yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psa. 90:10). This life is lived in “the bondage of corruption.”

Paul reasons that not only those who have the Holy Spirit, but “the whole creation groaneth” in this bondage. He means that the created order around us exhibits this bondage. It is shown abundantly: every living thing dies; suffering is evident; the weak are preyed upon by ruthless, heartless strong ones; floods and earthquakes ravage and destroy; wars, disease and murderers kill, etc., etc. With this abundant, irrefutable evidence that we are in “the bondage of corruption,” why do we not live with that consciousness?

Two answers may be offered. First, in our prosperity and ease we are so in love with this present world-system, so much that we cannot see it as bondage. We are not pilgrims and strangers in this world (I Peter 3:11), but are very much at home. Second, because we love the world and the things that are in the world, “the love of the Father” is not in us (I John 2:15), thus we are not living in communion with the Spirit of God.