

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Heaven—The Curse Is Gone

Romans 18-25

PowerPoint Presentation: *None*

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I. Introduction.

- A. Give the story of the Fall and its results.
 - 1. We have no idea how not to live without sin. Every thread of our lives are affected by it and defined by it.
 - 2. We live a life factoring in sin's power and presence in everything we do.
- B. The story of the gospel is that God will not leave His Creation in this state, He will resolve it in a manner that brings Him the greatest glory.
 - 1. It began in the Old Testament with a promise (Genesis 3:15).
 - 2. But it developed more clearly with the nation of Israel, through whom God will bring a Messiah, one chosen to make all things right.
 - a. He would be the perfect prophet of God because he was the perfect revelation of God.
 - b. He would be the perfect/true King.
 - c. He would be the better High Priest.
 - 3. All of this began the day Mary found out that she was miraculously pregnant.
 - 4. Moved to the passion.
 - 5. But did not end there. What Jesus did what set into motion a series of events that will inevitably lead to the restoration of all of creation.
 - a. This is known as the new heavens and earth
 - b. And this is what we will begin to explore today.
- C. **Read Romans 8:17-25.**
 - 1. We wait for what is the not yet and while we do this we live in the now.
 - 2. And a key part of the now is that we shall endure suffering.

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3. The question is how do we do this? And why would we do this?
- D. Paul gives us a glorious, hope-filled answer to how to endure and even embrace our sufferings as Christians, and it all has to do with Heaven.

II. The Way to Heaven Is on a Path of Suffering. (17)

- A. The behind-the-scenes reason that we endure through the suffering is because we are truly spiritually alive. The Holy Spirit works in and through us that we would endure.
- B. This passage is glorious because it speaks to the great blessing we enjoy as children of God. It speaks of the glorious inheritance that is ours. It speaks of being joint-heirs with Jesus.
- C. But it is scary because it also says very clearly that the pathway to enjoying this inheritance is through suffering.
- D. What Paul is doing here is beginning to point our hearts and minds to the future, to the time where we enjoy our joint-inheritance. But there is a present aspect that also exists. Suffering.
 1. And what we will see today is that there is a real relationship between these two events.
 2. One is joyful, the inheritance. And one is painful, suffering.
 3. Both need to be kept in our mind. If you only think about the future inheritance then you can be greatly dismayed when suffering comes.
 4. If you only think that you shall inherit all things in Christ and forget that it is through suffering, then you will stumble.
 5. If you only see your suffering and you forget where that pathway leads then you will stumble as well.
 6. So, both must be kept in balance and both must be understood. How do they work together and how do they cooperate with one another to bring about the plan of God in our lives?
- E. This is one of those pivot verses, where Paul is preparing to transition away from one key point and move on to another one.
 1. In verses 1-16 Paul teaches on our relationship in Christ as children of God.
 2. And in verses 18-30 he is going to begin to describe the fullness of that sonship that is to come in eternity.

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3. And it is here, with this verse that the transition will be made.
- F. This “if” does not mean “since” but truly is a condition and must be understood as such.
 1. Since we are children of God we naturally become heirs of all that is His.
 2. The reason behind that is nothing that we did, but due to our intimate union with Jesus. Therefore we are joint-heirs with Jesus.
 3. The next ‘if’ is a stronger version of the first one. It is also assuming we will suffer with Jesus.
- G. So hear me well for it must be heard by you. The reality is that the pathway to heaven is the path of suffering.
 1. And that beloved, is the hard, hard reality of it all. The gospel of the health and wealth teachers is an evil gospel that lies to us. For it tells us that we do not need suffering.
 2. But it is not only in that system that there is much error. So many churches teach in so many ways that if a person is suffering they have done something wrong or that they need to be rescued from it.
- H. But this suffering is not alone, it is with Jesus. And it is not the end, it ends in a wonderful manner.

III. Focus on the glory to come, not the suffering that is now (18-25).

- A. Basis of argument (18).
 1. Paul does not want us to recoil from the hard message of verse 17. He knows us and desires that we endure.
 2. Therefore he gives us his own perspective on this whole matter.
 3. And for Paul, there is no contest, the suffering that are for now have no comparison to the glory that is to come.
 - a. “not worthy to be compared” comes from a word that refers to scales. Now usually we don’t use scales like they used to make them except in certain places.
 - b. The type of scales here refer to two separate plates where you would put an object on one side, and then something of comparable weight on the other side until it evened out. (Such as when I baked).

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- c. What Paul says is that you take all of the sufferings that you might be called to endure—and frankly, for many of us, it is very little—and you pile it all up on one side. Then you take the glory that is awaiting you and put it on the other side and immediately the scales fall over to the side of glory.
 - (1) There is no wavering, no vacillation of the scales.
 - (2) They simply do not even register the presence of the suffering.
4. In other words, the “now” of suffering must be interpreted with the “not yet” of glorification. And if you will do so, then the suffering that is yours by the will of God shall be a light burden to bear.
5. But verse 17 makes it clear that there is only one path that all believers must walk. They must suffer with Christ.
6. Therefore, do you confess Jesus as your Lord? Then understand the path you are on.

IV. Two arguments as to why the glory that is to come outweighs the suffering that is now (19-25).

- A. Argument #1, The glory must be worth the suffering because creation longs for it (19-22).
 1. Notice the “for.” But the question that should be raised in your minds is what reason.
 - a. He doesn’t say, “For we must suffer to earn the glory.”
 - b. Nor does he say tell us to hang in there or keep on enduring.
 - c. He also does not tell us exactly what that glory that is ours to come actually is. In fact, it is probably beyond our ability to really understand the glory.
 - d. So, what Paul does is show us that it must be truly a glorious thing by showing how even all of creation longs for this event.
 2. Notice how he puts it in verse 19.
 - a. When Paul talks about creation here he is speaking of a specific aspect of creation. Let me explain:

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- (1) Creation could refer to everything created. Meaning, anything and everything that is not God Himself. But it is doubtful that this is what Paul is referring to here.
 - (2) The answer to this is found in noticing what this creation is doing and what has happened to this creation.
 - (a) It is eagerly waiting for our glory to be revealed.
 - (b) And it has been subjected, meaning innocently subjected, to futility.
 - (3) With those two points in mind we can then eliminate angels from this, because, though they look forward to the revelation of Christ and the glory to come, they are not subject to any futility.
 - (4) We can eliminate demons because they are guilty of their sin and rebellion against God and they do not look forward to the end of time, for then they shall enter into eternal judgment. The same for Satan himself.
 - (5) We can eliminate believers, because Paul makes a distinction between us and the 'creation' in vss. 19, 21, and 23.
 - (6) In fact we should eliminate mankind in general from this use of creation. Mankind is not eagerly awaiting the revelation of Christ, nor does mankind delight in the Lord and His glory.
 - (7) Therefore, we need to see creation here as referring to the nonrational creation. The animals, the trees, the clouds and water, the planets and stars, the dirt and the bugs.
- b. So, what is this creation doing?
- (1) It anxiously longs, it yearns for this revelation of glory that is to come.
 - (a) That word, "anxious," is a word that literally means to 'stretch the head forward.'
 - (b) We have all seen this, it is most easily seen in children when they are straining to watch something.

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- (c) So here is creation, standing on tiptoe, craning its neck forward, seeking to capture a glimpse of the fulfillment of this long awaited promise
 - (2) Paul, then, is personifying creation, making dirt and trees be like they can think and reason.
 - c. What is it that creation longs to see? The “revealing of the sons of God.”
 - (1) It looks to the day that is to come when we are all changed and made into the likeness of our Lord and Savior.
 - (2) For on that day the Father shall lift the curse from this creation and it shall finally have peace again.
 - (3) When is this to come? I believe that this is not speaking only of eternity, but of the earthly reign of Jesus Christ.
 - (4) That He shall come and He shall reign and there shall be justice and peace upon the whole of the world.
 - (5) This will then expand itself into eternity when the new heavens and the new earth are created and we enter into eternity where death and sin and Satan are all banished.
- 3. Now, look at verse 20 and notice the next ‘for.’
 - a. What does this one mean? [‘for this reason’]. Paul now explains in verses 20-22 why it is that creation is longing for the revelation of us in our glory.
 - b. First, when we are revealed in our glory then creation shall be relieved from its enslavement (20).
 - (1) “was subjected to futility.”
 - (a) ‘frustration’ is a good sense of the meaning.
 - (b) Creation has been prevented from fulfilling its real purpose.
 - (2) How did this happen?
 - (a) Not its own will, nor its own fault.
 - (b) Creation is an innocent party in all of this.

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- (c) It is all of what I started this sermon out regarding the Fall.
- (3) Creation was designed by God to perfectly display His glory.
 - (4) But since the Fall, this has not happened. And there is a real sense of frustration in all of this.
 - (a) We can understand this ourselves as Christians. We know that we are called to glorify God in all ways, but so often we fall short. And there is a yearning and ache in our inability.
- (5) But when this happened, when God subjected all of creation it was done “in hope.” (20c).
 - (a) There was the promise of the day that the Lord would redeem us. That was Genesis 3:15.
 - (b) When the great enemy, Satan would be destroyed.
 - (c) And that moment began to dawn upon creation the day when the Son of God became man.
 - i) He entered His creation.
 - ii) The Lord of Creation walked upon His earth.
 - iii) When He went to the Cross, creation wept.
 - a) Remember the earthquake?
 - b) The great darkness that fell upon the land as He hung there dying.
 - c) And then the great words of our Lord, “it is finished.” And He gave up His spirit and died.
 - d) And at that moment creation began to yearn all the more! For great enemy of sin was destroyed there.
 - e) Imagine all the more how much creation began to hope when on the 3rd day He arose!

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- f) And now, it waits, with a fervent expectation for the return of its Lord. For on that day we shall be changed and we too shall be revealed in our eternal glory with the Lord and creation shall finally be free!
- c. Notice verse 21 speaks to this freedom.
 - (1) At that time it shall be set free from the decay that sin brought into its existence.
 - (2) on the positive side it shall be brought back into the fulness of the glory that it was designed by God to fulfill.
 - (3) Now you think about that for a moment:
 - (a) Think of the most glorious thing in all of creation that you have even witnessed.
 - (b) Think of the fact that all of creation all day and night is constantly declaring the glory of God.
 - (c) And realize that this is not even to the level that it was designed.
 - (d) On that day, finally the shackles that it has been bound in are released and all of creation shall exult and pour forth the great praise and glory that it was always designed to do.
 - (e) Paul is telling us that this yearning of creation is a key piece of evidence that tells us that we should be looking forward to that day of our glory.
- d. Verse 22 describes this in the terms of childbirth.
 - (1) There is a huge difference between the cries of pain in the emergency room of a hospital as compared to the maternity ward.
 - (2) As Calvin said it, these are not death pangs, but birth pangs. And oh what a difference that makes to the one suffering.
 - (3) And this is the groans that Creation finds itself in.

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- (4) It aches and hurts, yet there is hope, for in the end there shall be the birth of freedom and glory.
- (5) And therefore it endures and continues to look to that day.
4. And in the same way we are to be yearning and aching for that day, which leads us to the second and final argument that Paul makes.
- B. Argument #2, The glory must be worth the suffering because all believers long for it (23-25).
 1. “And not only this. . .” This shows that there is a progression in Paul’s argument. Not only is creation groaning, but we too!
 2. The new creation and the glory that shall come must be amazing because even we, ourselves are groaning for that day.
 3. But the groaning that we do here is not a groaning under sin, but rather it is like creation in the pangs of childbirth.
 4. And it is a groaning that comes because we have the Holy Spirit within us.
 - a. “First fruits of the Spirit.”
 - (1) The first fruits refers to the Jewish custom of bringing the first of the harvest to the temple and offering it to God. . . . This consecrated the whole harvest, and it carries with it the thought that there will be later fruits” (Morris, 323).
 - (2) But this is also different in that in the Old Testament the word ‘firstfruits’ referred to what **we** would give to God, with the understanding that God would give us the rest of the harvest.
 - (3) Now Paul is saying that **God has given** us the Spirit and it is a foretaste of what is to come.
 - b. In vs 23 we are awaiting our redemption of what [our bodies].
 - c. And it is all because we have the Spirit.
 - (1) The unbeliever does not have this desire.
 - (2) They also hate the pain and the suffering, but it is all wrapped up here and now. The doctors and the vacations and the comforts of life that are here and now.

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- (3) But for the believer, the Holy Spirit does such a work that we are never satisfied here, rather there is a natural longing for the day of redemption.

V. Conclusion.

- A. Beloved there shall be suffering in this life as a believer.
1. Some of it shall be persecutions.
 2. Some shall the Lord's discipline.
 3. But a lot of it shall be just the hard reality that this is a fallen world that we live in.
 4. But in all of this, we understand that through this suffering there is the eternal hope that we shall enjoy the fulness of redemption one day.
 5. And as the hymn say, "and what a day of rejoicing it shall be."
- B. Notice then our last verses, 24-25.
1. Paul is closing his argument now.
 2. God has not let us enjoy these blessing right now.
 3. We were saved (vs 24), past tense, but this salvation involves a forward looking aspect. For though by faith we believe we are saved, the fulness is not ours to enjoy at this time.
 4. We still suffer under the effects of a fallen world.
 5. And therefore we live with an expectant hope in that day that is to come.
 6. Rather, we wait in hope and with a sense of eagerness. Why? Because the curse of sin shall be forever removed.

Small Group Questions

- Try to come up with as many ways as you can in how sin is factored into your life? Spend a good amount of time on this so that you can then consider how different eternity will be without sin.
- Can you share a time of suffering where through it you began to have a greater taste for heaven?

T e m p l e B a p t i s t C h u r c h

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- How can the others in your group help encourage you to persevere in the midst of suffering