

O, THAT WE MIGHT BE A PEOPLE FILLED WITH THE DARING POWER OF BIBLICAL HOPE

Part four - Teaching #1247 - Sunday, February 15th, 2009. 10:00 a.m.
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THE OBJECTS OF OUR HOPE - THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODIES

Romans 8:18-25 - “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. [19] For the creation waits with eager longing 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] that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. [22] For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. [23] And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. [24] For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? [25] But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”

In our last study we looked at perhaps the most blessed object of our hope as children of God. In fact, it's even called “**the blessed hope.**” In many ways, it's the **ultimate** hope for the Christian - the **second coming**, or the “**appearing,**” of Jesus Christ at the end of this age. All earthly hopes are measured as **small** and **temporary** hopes when compared to this grand finale. This final hope is the **target** of all our dreams and aspirations.

In today's message we're going to consider another object of our hope as Christians, **the redemption of our bodies.** These are wonderful topics for study. We are to actually set our hearts on these truths freshly each day. We are to **remind** ourselves of these great realities because this whole world is orchestrated to **distract** us and **divert** us from setting our hearts on these grand, eternal sources of hope. So if we don't set our hope on these things - **dressing our minds** like we **clothe our bodies** each morning, our hope will run dry and we will get sluggish in our Christian walk. The New Testament actually **says** this about us: **Hebrews 6:11-12** - “**And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, [12] so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**”

Considering these truths together will keep us from becoming sluggish in our quest for glory. So, let's look at this passage from Romans chapter eight:

1) **ALL THE PAIN AND SUFFERING WE EXPERIENCE IN THIS PRESENT LIFE WILL SEEM AS NOTHING WHEN COMPARED TO THE GLORY WE WILL ONE DAY EXPERIENCE IN THE AGE TO COME**

Romans 8:18 - “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

While Paul doesn't specifically mention his physical body in this verse we know that's what he's thinking about by the way he talks about his “**sufferings.**” These are the pains of life that he **experiences** in his physical existence. These are the sufferings he **feels.**

Well, what is the Christian to **do** with these sufferings? He can't just make them all **disappear.** That may be what I'd **like** God to do with my sufferings, but He has a different plan. Rather than just **remove** all my sufferings, causing me to confuse this earthly existence with **heaven,** He **uses** my sufferings to force me to **set my hope** on the age to come. I don't mean that I **ignore** this present world and its problems. But I don't set my **hope** on the false securities of this world.

Then Paul gets more specific. He says I'm to view the trials and the pains of this life in a certain way. I'm to view them the way a woman views the pains of giving birth. Now, I've never experienced that particular form of pain. In the good old days, men didn't even have to go into the delivery room. We just waited outside and read golf magazines, shared a few stories with the

other “fathers in waiting” and then, after a little while, a nurse came and told you that you had a son or daughter.

I don't know where things got all fouled up today. But most wives make it very clear to their husbands that having a baby is no picnic. **Carol Burnett** used to say if a man wanted to know what it was like to have a baby, all he had to do was grab his bottom lip and pull it up over the top of his head.

But there is one thing we all know for certain. What makes that pain bearable for that woman is the fact that she knows there is something precious at the end of the pain. And she knows she won't have to be in labour the rest of her life. She knows those pains she feels are **birth pains**. They are the particular pains that come from something else coming to life. They are the **transition pains** of a new reality coming into being.

Paul makes this direct comparison in **Romans 8:22** - “**For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.**” We know from the rest of Paul's life that these weren't just empty words of comfort. Paul knew what it was like to **need to draw strength from another realm**. He knew what it was like to suffer like few of us ever will:

2 Corinthians 11:24-28 - “**Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. [25] Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; [26] on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; [27] in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. [28] And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.**”

Now, you don't have to be a genius to imagine the effect all of those things have on a person's body over the years. They take their toll. You don't get over them as quickly as when you were a young man. You're maimed for life.

So when Paul says the outer man is “**wasting away**” he wasn't just waxing poetic. He was experiencing that sapping of strength, that pain that comes from bones broken that never set right, permanent afflictions and deformities in an age without Tylenol.

But catch the passion of his heart - sense what is going on in this man's mind - as he sits, perhaps with arthritic, pain-filled joints that are no longer able to hold a quill for ink anymore, and yet writes these words: **Romans 8:18** - “**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**”

Notice those words, “**the sufferings of this present time.**” He hurts as he writes. He's all alone. What is holding Paul up? What keeps his faith buoyant and confident? While he can't make all his suffering **disappear**, he can put it into proper **perspective**. He doesn't **ignore** it, but he does **compare** it. He compares present suffering with future glorification. And we know this wasn't just some fluffy day-dream with Paul. He pushed his mind into this kind of divine, hope-filled comparison over and over again. He never gave up on this:

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 - “**So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. [17] For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, [18] as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.**”

You begin to see just how important this subject of hope is. These are truths that must be known and made known in the church of Jesus Christ. There is no strength without this hope. The

doctrine of hope isn't an *elective*. This is a *compulsory* course.

2) **PAUL TELLS US WHY WE CAN BE SO SURE OF THIS HOPE**

Romans 8:19-21 - "For the creation waits with eager longing 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] that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God."

There are two important truths in these verses:

a) ***First, there is something wrong with the whole created world as we see it today.*** It is not the way God intended it to be. And notice, I said there is something wrong with *all* of creation, not just some *pagan* part of creation. There is something wrong with *all* of creation.

Paul is very clear on this point. **Verse 19** talks about creation "***waiting with eager longing.***" That's the whole of creation - birds, cats, trees, bugs, flowers, mountains, monkeys, horses, planets, stars. ***This is a universe full of groaning and longing.***

Then Paul clearly points out that Christians too experience what this is all about - **Romans 8: 23** - "***And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.***"

The Holy Spirit doesn't ***remove*** this groaning. He ***increases*** our homesickness. We aren't excluded from this groaning, this frustration that soaks our beings to the core. We experience trials. We experience sickness. We experience suffering and pain. We experience loss and difficulty. We long for the completion of our redemption. We long for the day when redemption will reach all the way down through these physical bodies.

"Well, I don't understand, pastor Don. You said you were going to look at how we can be so sure of our hope and all you've done is prove from the text that things are in a mess. What gives?"

Let me finish. Paul gives us more in these great verses. He doesn't just say that the world is groaning. There's another important detail in those words. He tells us it is God's ***plan*** that the world exist in groaning. Look again at **8:20** - "***For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope....***"

You see, only the Bible gives an adequate ***reason*** for the frustration and pain of life in this world. If evolution were true, if things are evolving and improving and moving on and on to a brighter day, ***why are people more and more filled with hopelessness and despair?*** Why are we not solving all of our problems as we become more brilliant? Why can't politics and science and natural selection take away human sin and shame?

You see, only the Bible comes to terms with the frustration and despair and groaning of this world. Only the Bible accounts for what we all feel so deeply at different times in our hearts. In short, one of the reasons I know God's Word is true is I can see in it the only explanation for the world as it presently is. I can see the results of the fall. I can ***feel*** the results of the fall in my own heart.

So in this despair I see the hand of God and the truth of the Word. Even as Christians, we suffer because ***God, in His love, refuses to let us feel at home in this fallen world.*** He gets us ready for heaven. In fact, He makes us ***long for it.***

So the first thing we see in these verses is there is something wrong, right at the center of this whole created order. And we learn that creation is this way ***in the plan and intention of the Creator Himself.***

b) ***Second, we learn that just as certainly as creation experiences groaning and frustration now, it will experience glory and freedom on God's terms and in God's time.***

Romans 8:23-25 - "And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. [24] For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? [25] But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

God has built two basic realities into the very fabric of creation. The first is ***futility***. The second is ***hope***. He has put futility there to teach man that ***sin has consequences*** and to teach him that ***he will never be able to save himself.***

But God has also put ***hope*** into our hearts. Creation itself is suffering. But - and now remember our child-birth illustration - it's ***suffering trying to give birth***. It's the suffering brought upon creation by a loving God trying to cause us all to recognize the futility of our own resources. It's suffering given to birth hope for a divine, grace solution and a more glorious future.

And God keeps trying. His is a restlessly reaching love. At times our world doesn't even know what it's hoping for. But it still hopes. Those famous words, "***Hope springs eternal in the human breast***" weren't written by a Christian. But they're probably true. Even pagans know that they were made for something better than this groaning world presently offers.

But Christians ***must*** know. They ***remind*** themselves over and over. Christians know the plan, the intention and the object of the hope in their hearts. Christians know ***there is a part of salvation they don't fully see yet*** - **Romans 8:23-25** - "And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. [24] For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? [25] But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

The great thoughts pile up here. **Verse 18** says there is a glory that is "***....yet to be revealed to us.***" **Verse 23** says we "***....wait eagerly for the redemption of our bodies.***" **Verse 25** says we "***....wait for it with patience.***" **Verse 19** says all creation "***waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.***"

I know we're son's of God right now. The Bible says so in **Romans 8:14** - "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." But there is yet to come a full revealing, an unfolding of the whole package of salvation. This will include the unfolding of a whole new era. It will be initiated only by the physical second coming of Jesus Christ. The Bible says that God is going to be praised and glorified by a brand new creation.

John speaks to the very same theme in **1 John 3:1-3** - "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."

The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. [2] Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. [3] And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure."

3) THE SPECIFIC HOPE PAUL SPEAKS OF IN THESE VERSES IS THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODIES

Romans 8:23-25 - "And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, *the redemption of our bodies*. [24] For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? [25] But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

Consider this. We are unique in all of the created world. There are *created beings who don't have physical bodies* (angels, demons, cherubs, etc.). There are also *physical bodies who aren't made in God's image* (dogs, cats, aardvarks and reptiles). But people are the *only beings in the whole universe who have physical bodies and yet are made in the image of God*.

I say all of this to raise the important question, *why is God so interested in the redemption of body of His redeemed?* Or, to put it slightly differently, *why did God give us bodies in the first place?* He could have created us in any way He chose. *Why didn't he just make us spiritual beings?*

Here's the answer to that question. *God already had spiritual beings to obey and worship Him*. God gave us bodies so *we could worship Him in ways that no other created order could*. That's why the Scriptures are so adamant and clear on the glorifying of God with these bodies of ours. *It's our unique assignment before our Creator*.

There are *spiritual beings* that have never experienced either the *Fall* or *redemption*. They can't worship God with the same experience of thankful joy. There are *spiritual beings* that are fallen but have never been *redeemed*. They are still stubborn and rebellious against their Creator. There are *living physical beings in the whole animal world* who never were made in the same image of their Creator and aren't capable of *God consciousness* as you and I. If they glorify God at all it is only by *instinct*. And there are material created objects that aren't living in any sense. Rocks and trees and atoms just reflect God's creative power by unconscious existence.

But we are different from all of these. We are physical beings who have fallen, have had God the Son become permanently one of us to redeem us from our rebellious condition. Therefore we, and we *alone* have been "*bought with a price*." And Paul spells out the unique obligation that comes from such purchase:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, [20] for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

Romans 12:1 - "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

Romans 6:13 - "Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness."

No doubt about it. The body is *God's instrument to glorify Himself in an absolutely unique way*. Sexual sins are so damaging because they go against the very grain of God's creative plan

and design for the body. Worship is so important because it involves the body. We lift our hands, bow our knees, raise our voices, etc. because ***this fulfills the unique design God has given us in His creative plan.***

Spirit beings can think nice ***thoughts*** about God. ***But only you and I can offer our bodies as living sacrifices.*** So when I see God's incredible zeal for His glory in the Scriptures, I know for sure that He will raise this old body up in a new form that will be just like Jesus' resurrection body. This was His intention in creation itself! And the Bible takes great pains to assure us that God will have no trouble doing this with our bodies: **Philippians 3:20-21** - ***“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, [21] who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”***