

Romans

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Romans 8:18-25



Vss. 18 – 22

- Paul concludes his previous thought (vs. 17) speaking of how right it is that we should suffer with Christ. In this passage he picks up on the thought of suffering, but he demonstrates his depth of mind and Spirit as he takes our understanding of suffering to a whole new level...for suffering is not limited to you and me.
- As Paul is writing he is using imagery that the Jews of the Roman church would understand well. The Jews had always seen history and time as being in two parts: the present age and the age to come. The present age began the day Adam and Eve were evicted from the Garden of Eden and sin's infection ran systemic throughout all of Creation. This present age is completely consumed with evil, destruction, decay, injustice, and hopelessness. But someday will come The Day of the Lord and on that day judgement will come into the world and out of it will emerge a new world.
- In Isaiah 65, the prophet speaks of how the Lord will create a new heaven and a new earth and the end result will be a return to Eden. In the hundreds of years that elapsed in between the Testaments, in a time when the Jews were occupied by Gentile armies and were enslaved and persecuted, the aching for the Lord (the Messiah!) to come and bring His judgment and wrath was etched deep within the Jewish heart.
- So Paul turns to the idea of a new heaven and a new earth in the face of the suffering of his generation of Christians. But he wants us to get outside of ourselves as we think about suffering. Paul wants us to understand the depth and breadth of sin, that sin does not simply infect people, but all of creation. Indeed, Paul suggests that Creation has suffered even more than humanity, because humanity suffers for sin we willingly commit, but Creation was cursed by God as a result of *our* sin. Our sin did not infect all of humanity only, but the entirety of the world in which we live.
- Genesis 3:17-18 tell of how God cursed the earth and how "thorns and thistles" will grow as a result. Why are there hurricanes, tornados, and earthquakes? Why is there cancer and plagues and a multitude of diseases? The answer is simple: Sin. Sin corrupted the perfect world God gave us and now gives us a very imperfect world, where Creation itself is a reflection of our sinful nature.
- So it is that Creation too "groans and suffers" and anxiously waits for Redemption and to be set free (vs. 21).

Vs. 23

- Paul goes back to his earlier thoughts on our two natures. In Romans 7:14-25 he is speaking of the inner conflict we have, the war between our sinful nature and that part of us that the Holy Spirit has redeemed. “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (vs. 24).
- But now the Spirit of God has invaded the territory wrongly occupied by sin. The Spirit now has a strong and growing foothold within us and from there comes a groaning, a longing to be fully set free, to have our bodies fully redeemed and cleansed, to be wholly adopted as children of God.
- And to be clear, the Word here is not suggesting that we long to become disembodied spirits. God created us Body, Mind, and Spirit and it is our whole person that will be redeemed. We will have renewed minds (Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:23), renewed bodies (1 Corinthians 15:35-44), and renewed spirits (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Vss. 24 – 25

- From time to time I have been accused of being too optimistic. It is not optimism, I am well aware of the power of sin in the world and in people’s lives, but rather it is Hope in the power of the Spirit. Hope in the Spirit’s power to change the lives of sinful people. Hope in the Spirit’s power to change the life and direction of a church. Hope in the Spirit’s power to change the course of nations.
- But “hope that is seen is not hope” (vs. 24). So when people ask, “Where’s the evidence?”, there’s really no point in saying much because they cannot see. “But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it” (Vs. 25).
- William Barclay: “In Romans 8:19 he uses a wonderful word for eager expectation. It is *apokaradokia* and it describes the attitude of a man who scans the horizon with head thrust forward, eagerly searching the distance for the first signs of the dawn break of glory. To Paul life was not a weary, defeated waiting; it was a throbbing, vivid expectation. The Christian is involved in the human situation. Within he must battle with his own evil human nature; without he must live in a world of death and decay. Nonetheless, the Christian does not live only in the world; he also lives in Christ. He does not see only the world; he looks beyond it to God. He does not see only the consequences of man's sin; he sees the power of God's mercy and love. Therefore, the keynote of the Christian life is always hope and never despair. The Christian waits, not for death, but for life.”