

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Longing And Looking For The Coming Glory

by Dan Trygg

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.¹⁹ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the children of God.²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope²¹ that *the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*²² For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.²³ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our adoption as children, the redemption of our body.*”

Romans 8:18-23

Last time we talked about how Paul had employed a certain technique to drive home the point of our union with Christ. He used a prefix (Gk. –συν), meaning “together-with”, added to verbs describing things done to Jesus. The thrust of this technique was to show that as this action was done to Jesus, in the same way it was done to us *in Him*, so that it was as if these things were truly done to us. As a result, we were co-crucified with, co-buried with, co-raised with, made-alive-together-with, and jointly-seated in the heavens with Him. We became joint heirs with Him, fellow-sufferers-with Him, in order that we might be jointly-glorified together with Him. In that study, we focused on how our sufferings-with Jesus actually give the opportunities for the glory of the Holy Spirit who is in us to be revealed. He is the glory that we share with Jesus now, and He will more fully fill us, and be revealed in us, when Christ returns. At that time, our old sinful bodies will be replaced with glorious spiritual-bodies, and we will be able to reveal that inner glory of the Spirit more fully and accurately than we ever could in this life.

In these next few verses, Paul continues using the same technique, but with a different point of reference and focus. In vss.19-23 **the physical and spiritual creation presently groans-together-with us and is-in-birth-pangs-together-with us, anxiously-straining-for and eagerly-awaiting the revealing of the children of God. Why? Because when Christ returns, we will be changed.** We, who are now perishable, will be raised as imperishable. We, who are presently mortal, will be raised and transformed to being immortal (1 Cor. 15:51-54). Here is the kicker, however. **Our transformation will initiate a much larger transformation.** Just as the world was subjected to the futility of our (humankind’s) sinful choice, so also **the completion of our redemption will initiate changes that will transform and liberate the entire planet from death, decay and corruption.** In the end, God will create a new heavens and a new earth to fully remove all the brokenness

Death entered the world through Adam and Eve’s sin and spread through the entire planet (Rom. 5:12), **disrupting the spiritual and ecological balance at every level.** Animal behavior changed. The weather changed. Worldwide disaster came upon every creature because the sin of humanity had even crept into the animal kingdoms (Gen. 6:11-13). With a global flood, God wiped the slate clean, removing the most extreme forms of perversion, and He put the fear of humanity upon the animals so that they would not be so easily enticed into perversion with people (Gen. 9:2). **The entire face of the planet was changed because of human sin. The relationships between animals and people were broken, and the corruption, brokenness and violence caused by sin continues to be played out in the interactions between species.** Initially, all animals and people were vegetarians (Gen. 1:29-31). Now, part of the brokenness of the world order is the predator-prey relationship between animals, the violence between species and the eating of the flesh of other living creatures. **The world as it is today is not at all like the world God had created.**

Something inside of us knows that this is true. Something inside of us is repelled at the violence and harshness of the world around us. Something inside of us wants to warn the prey that the predator is approaching, and we are relieved if it manages to escape. Something inside of us wishes that we could hug a bear, or run our fingers through the mane of a lion, or that the birds would willingly land upon our outstretched hand. If the world was supposed to be built upon the survival of the fittest, would we not be moved to *rejoice* at the successful kill of the antelope by the lion, or the consumption of a mouse by a snake? It is amazing to watch, but something in us recoils against the loss of life to sustain life, the violence of one creature toward another. **The Bible tells us that we should be appalled at this. It is not the way it is supposed to be. The world is broken. It has been spoiled, “subjected to futility”,** says Paul. Furthermore, something in us grieves at the extinction of a species. People have devoted their lives to prevent it. Is this not based upon the inner sense that we have been commissioned to be stewards here? Is there not an inner sense that it is a tragedy that a species should be lost to us? Why is that true? There have been

countless examples of other creatures that have become extinct, many of which we have never even seen, yet there is inside of us a sense that they should not have been lost, that somehow the world has been diminished with their loss.

Furthermore, the Bible tells us that **the world is moving toward a climax, an end point, the return of Christ to establish His Kingdom on the earth. As we come closer to this, nature will convulse with birth pangs** (Matt. 24:7,8,11; Lk. 21:11). There will also be great signs in the heavens, events which will put dismay among the nations. People will be thrown into perplexity, terror and fear at the things coming upon the earth in those days (Lk. 21:25,26). When you read the descriptions of some of these events in the book of Revelation, you can appreciate why both Jesus and Paul talked of these events as “birth pangs”. **They will dramatically increase in frequency and in intensity as we approach the end** (Rev. 6-8; 16).

What Paul says in Romans 8:18-25 is that **we will have sufferings here in this present time, yes, but they are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory**. Both we ourselves, *as well as the entire creation*, groan-together and jointly-suffer-labor-pains, as we long for the coming of Christ. As mentioned above, **the “birth pangs” or convulsions of nature will continue to increase and get worse until, at the end of the age, the earth will be totally devastated and completely ruined**. Its surface will be distorted, and it will be fully laid waste (Isa. 24:1-3). It will be broken up, split through, shaken violently. It will totter and reel to and fro (Isa. 24:19,20). There will be a great earthquake, such as *never happened before* (Ezk. 38:19,20; Rev. 16:18). Cities around the world will be devastated. The mountains will collapse, and the islands in the sea will disappear (vss. 19,20). Huge rocks or “hailstones”, weighing 75 pounds each, will fall from heaven to pelt the surface of the earth (vs. 21).

Then, when Jesus finally returns, we who are His will be fully redeemed. The dead in Christ will rise from their graves, and we who are still alive at His coming will be snatched up, **we will be transformed and will meet the Lord in the air, to return with His victorious procession over the world system** (I Cor. 15:51-54; I Thess. 4:16,16). At that time, those who sided with the Antichrist will be put to death, and **we will reign with Christ for 1,000 years** over the survivors of the end time cataclysms. The mountain of the Lord in Jerusalem will become the highest mountain on the planet, and Christ will reign over the nations from there (Isa. 2:1-4; Mic. 4:1-5; Zech. 14:9-11). Satan will be bound up for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-3), and the curse will be lifted from the land (Zech. 14:11). **This millennial reign will be a time of relative peace and prosperity**. Then, at the end of that time, Satan will be released to tempt the nations once again, and those who rebel will be quickly destroyed. *Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire* (Rev. 20:7-10).

At that time, **this entire creation will be destroyed, its very elements dissolved with intense heat** (II Pet. 3:7-13). Humankind will be judged, each one standing before the throne of God to give an account of their lives, being judged by their deeds and actions, and whether or not their names have been written in the Lamb’s book of life. After this, **God will create a new heavens and a new earth, in which is only righteousness**. The heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, a cube of condos 1,500 miles on each side, will come out of heaven to land on the new earth, and God will dwell there with all His people. He Himself will wipe away every tear from our eyes. **In that place, there will be no more death, no more mourning, no more crying, no more pain. All that old, sinful, broken world will have passed away**. “Behold,” God will say, “I am making *all things* new.” Then, “... the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper’s den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.” (Rev. 21:1-5; Isa. 11:6-9). *This is what our hearts tell us should be the way the world is. Isn’t it interesting that our hearts recognize the brokenness, and inwardly yearn for something better? We have an inner sense of “oughtness” that we did not learn from our broken world.* It is part of the remnant of the God-image in us.

What can we learn from this study? If we believe the Bible, we know that we ultimately will not be able to preserve this world. It will eventually be destroyed.

(1.) We cannot save this planet. The best we can do is get saved ourselves, and help others to find salvation in Jesus. We do need to be good stewards of the earth, yes. That was part of our first commission by the Lord in the garden, and those who misuse and pollute it will be judged (Gen. 1:6-28; 2:15; Isa. 24:5,6). **But, our focus must be upon what counts for eternity, not on what is here**, since this planet and all that is in it will be destroyed.

(2.) We must prepare ourselves to face difficult times. The world is broken, and it is not getting better. As we approach the end, we must be mentally and spiritually prepared for the trials and suffering which is before us.

(3.) Finally, we must clearly understand and cling to the hope of our redemption in Christ. Though the journey ahead is fraught with difficulty, it is paved with awesome victories and an incredible outcome. **We do not need to be afraid. God is with us, and He will lead us into a life that is both rewarding and worthwhile** (Rom. 12:2).