

Creation on Tiptoes

Romans 8: 18 – 21

- Paul's whole point here in chapter 8 is to assure us of the end goal of our salvation—our glorification.
 - Why do we need that assurance? Because, in this life we often don't feel too glorified, do we? We often feel sullied and dirty from our sin and failures.
 - We live in a world full of trouble and brokenness, and in that trouble and brokenness there are times when it can feel like God has forgotten us, or doesn't love us, or doesn't have the power to make things right. Or maybe we feel like we have made such a mess of things that there is no hope for us.
 - In those times, when we begin to live by sight rather than faith, we can begin to wonder, "Is there really any hope of glory for us? Any salvation for us?"
- How can we be sure of our salvation? Because it is not about us at all. It is a work of God from beginning to end.

Romans 8: 29 – 30 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

- So, when did God predestine or elect, or choose us?

Ephesians 1: 4 – 6 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.

- When did God's work to save you begin? Before the foundation of the world.
- And what is very end result of God's election? Glorification. You being holy and blameless before Him, adopted as His beloved.

Romans 8: 30 those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

- Election is the beginning of the process of your salvation and glorification is the end result—the finished work of your salvation. It is your sure and certain destiny as a Christian.

Philippians 1: 6 He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

- These are the grounds for all of our hope, all of our faith. God who is faithful, good, loving and all powerful is at work to save us and glorify us, and because of that, no matter what we have done, no matter how things seem to have turned against us, our salvation, our glorification, our eternal hope is secure.
- If God's work in you began before the foundation of the world and it will only end when Christ comes again, which will be the end of the world as we know it, then it means that God is working from the beginning of time to end of time to save you.

- Our life here on earth is just a speck of dust on the timeline of eternity. Just a blip. And yet, God has been at work to secure my salvation, your salvation, literally from before the beginning of time, to the end of time.
 - Just think of all God did so that you could be here today. One person dies early, one person marries someone else, and you aren't here.
 - But God elected you before the foundation of the world, so God arranged every human relationship in your whole family tree so you could be here.
- But that is just part of it. That is just the physical side of life. As we well know, physical life does not guarantee spiritual life. So along with all the maneuvering that God did to give me physical life, God was also at work, carrying out a plan to give me spiritual life so that one day I could be glorified and be with Him forever.
 - Just as God arranged the course of people's lives to give me physical life, he also arranged the course of people's lives to bring me to spiritual life. None of the events in my life were just random events.
 - God orchestrated those events, including the many good and mostly bad decisions that I have made, the good times, and especially the suffering times, to mold me and shape me to bring me to where I am today.
 - But even before I was born God was working to redeem me. Bringing my parents to faith, appointing the churches I would grow up in, orchestrating events in the lives of those who would be my teachers and mentors. God has done all of that for me since the dawn of time, because in love He chose me to be His forever.
- And of course, all of that fits under the general umbrella of God arranging the plan of my salvation. If God chose me before the foundation of the world, then His plan of salvation goes back to before the foundation of the world.
 - I am a Christian today, not just because Adam and Eve decided to have children. I am a Christian because after Adam and Eve sinned, God began to unfold His plan of salvation for me. As God speaks to Satan after Adam and Eve's sin, we see the first contours of that plan.

Genesis 3: 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

- From the offspring of woman would come one who would be wounded by Satan (that's what bruise his heel means), but that seed of the woman would crush the head of Satan. Why? All so that I could be saved from the dominion of Satan, sin, and death, and belong to God forever.
 - Now what happened at Good Friday, which we just celebrated? Satan struck the heel of Christ, and wounded him at the cross. It was an evil planned by Satan, carried out by man, but God allowed the evil to happen and used the evil to crush the head of Satan, as Christ rose from the grave three days later.
- Out of death comes new life. Every event in Biblical history, every event in the history of the cosmos, every good, every evil, is about God working out His plan to

save me—to save you. To take you, to take me, from being a gleam in His eye from before the foundation of the world to an eternal state of glorification when:

Matthew 13: 34 the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

- That's what God is doing in your life. Now, if you are thinking about what I just said, your mind should be completely blown, God did all of that for you, for your salvation.
 - But how do you know that what I just said is true?

Romans 8: 16 – 24 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.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.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 hope²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption 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.

- If you look at the passage you will notice that Paul uses the word for a lot. For is the connecting word for all of his arguments. So, it goes like this:
 - Premise: we are children of God, heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Christ
 - Argument 1 to support premise (v 18): For I consider (account) that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
 - Because of who we are in Christ, we can make a rational calculation that whatever suffering we are dealing with today pales in comparison to the glorious inheritance that is ours in Christ.
 - Argument 2 to support argument 1 (v 19): For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.
 - Translation: The whole cosmos is standing on its tippy toes with craned necks (that is actually what the Greek words mean) to see the redeemed of the Lord take their places of honor in the courts of heaven. This is how glorious our inheritance is. The whole of the cosmos is waiting in eager expectation for its final unveiling.
 - Now why does Paul add this as an argument to support argument 1 to support his premise? Because of this, if all of creation is in eager anticipation of our glorification, shouldn't we be too?
 - Argument 3, in support of argument 2, in support of argument 1, in support of his main premise (v 20) For the creation was subjected to futility not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope.

- God created man to glorify God by being a benevolent ruler over creation—to be a kingdom of priests over creation. To both rule over creation and to serve creation for the good of the creation.
- How? By making more image bearers of God to fill the earth. But when Adam and Eve sinned, the image of God was marred in them. The nature of man was corrupted. The mandate God gave to rule the earth is still there, but because sin corrupted the nature of man, man no longer rules as a benevolent ruler, but as despot, seeking to exploit all creatures of our God and King for our own ends.
- Because man could no longer rule over creation as he ought to, God subjected creation to futility.

1. What is this futility?

- We can sum it up in two words that we find in verse 21: bondage and corruption. From the moment Adam and Eve sinned, until the moment that Jesus comes again, all of creation including us, lives in bondage to corruption.
 - Because of sin, we are not what we were made to be and nothing in the cosmos is what it ought to be.
- When God created, He created everything to have shalom (interwovenness)—a perfect harmony that comes as a result of God perfectly weaving all things together. God created the cosmos and man to have shalom. God created nature to have a perfect shalom or interwovenness with itself, and with man as God's appointed, benevolent, ruler.
 - God created man to have shalom with fellow men, with the cosmos (creation), and with God.
 - But what happened when man sinned and rebelled against God? God subjected nature to futility allowing nature to rebel against man.

Genesis 3: 17 - 19 cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

- That is the bondage of corruption. The shalom, the interwovenness that God created everything to have is destroyed by sin. Because of our sin, God has not only allowed but decreed that shalom should unravel.
 - Man no longer lives in perfect harmony with God.

Colossians 1: 21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

- Man no longer lives in shalom with man.

Matthew 24: 6 you will hear of wars and rumors of wars....⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom,

- Man no longer lives in shalom with nature.

Matthew 24: 7 there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

Genesis 3: 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you

- And on top of all that, everything lives in bondage to death.

Genesis 3: 19 you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

- This is the futility of the bondage to corruption. The breaking of shalom. Man, lives in a constant state of hostilities with God, fellow man, and even nature.
 - Even the cosmos is pulling itself apart. All matter is in a state of decay. The sun is slowly burning itself out. The universe is running down. It is what physicists refer to as the 2nd law of thermodynamics.
 - Everything dies. All of creation lives in the winter of discontent constantly.
 - It is all futile. Everything that has life dies and returns to dust.
 - When we sinned, it is as if we pulled at a thread of shalom, and that pulling caused everything to unravel, and we feel that unraveling deep in our souls.

2. Why the futility?

Romans 8: 20 – 21 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

- Creation was brought into this state of futility, not by its choice, but by the sin of man, and the will of God. Now I want you to think about what I just said, because it is hard and a lot of people, even Christians, don't want to go there.
 - All this bondage to corruption, all this futility, all of this death is by the will of the one who subjected it. And who is that? God.
 - There are people who want to say that God doesn't cause cancer, or earthquakes, floods, and tornadoes, because a good God would never do things like that.
 - But in the Bible, it's very clear that God sometimes causes terrible things to happen to people. Noah and the flood. Fire and brimstone raining down on Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues in Egypt, Jonah getting swallowed whole by a great fish, and I could go on.
 - And we can say without a doubt that whenever disease, calamities, or death comes, that whether God is the direct cause of it or not, those things come as a part of His perfect plan, part of his perfect will.
 - Prime example—read Job 1. Satan brought all the trouble, all the calamity, but God allowed it. Whatever happened to Job, happened because God allowed the futility of the bondage of corruption to come into Job's life.
 - I know that it may cause you anxiety, but this is the God of the Bible.

Isaiah 55: 8 – 9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.



- God and what God is doing is so much bigger than we are. So much bigger than we can dare to imagine. But what we do know for sure is that God is always at work in the bondage to decay to bring good to His people.
 - Just as I started this morning, God is at work in all of history, in all of the futility and bondage to decay to bring us to glory.
- We can see that so very clearly here in Romans 8: 20. God subjected in hope. God has a purpose in the futility, in the bondage to corruption. What is it? To restore shalom.
 - All the futility in nature, all the futility in your life, is allowed into your life by God to restore shalom, first to you and then ultimately to the entire cosmos.
 - In other words, sin unraveled shalom, now rather than trying to simply mend the unraveling, God is allowing the unraveling to continue so that one day shalom can be completely restored. And that day is coming.

Isaiah 11: 6 – 9 The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them....⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

- What is the prophet looking forward to? That is the end of the curse. The end of futility. The end of bondage to corruption. The end of death.

3. The end of futility

- Think about what we see as we look at the Bible. The storyline starts in a garden.

Genesis 2: 15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

- And the storyline ends in a garden in a beautiful city:

Revelation 22: 1 - 3 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

- Everything between Genesis 3 and Revelation 22 is about how God is working to restore shalom, by reversing the curse of sin, to get us back to the garden.
- Everybody longs to get back to the garden. Back to shalom. The futility of life tells us that the world is not what it ought to be. The marred image of God that is in each of us tells us that we are not what we ought to be. We all long to get back to the Garden.

*“We are stardust, we are golden, we are billion-year-old carbon,
And we got to get ourselves back to the garden.”* Woodstock (Crosby, Stills, and Nash)

- They actually get a few things right those lyrics along with a couple of things they really get wrong. You know like the whole billion-year-old carbon thing. But look what they get right. They felt the need to have their soul set free, and they knew for that to happen they had to get back to the garden.

Unfortunately for them they thought the way back to the garden was to join a rock and roll band at a music festival and be part of a wild orgy of sex, drugs, and rock and roll.

- The Garden is God's, and you cannot get to the Garden apart from God. The things of the earth, whether it is a rock and roll festival, a job, or even a relationship will never give you true shalom, because all those things are corruptible and have an end. They die.
- Here's a depressing but true thought. One day, you will be permanently separated from your job, your success, your wealth, your deepest relationships.
 - Everything you value is in bondage to decay—it is dying, if for no other reason than you are dying.
- But there is one thing that, if you have it, will never die—your relationship with God. So, shouldn't that be the focus of our lives?
 - In this cursed world everything dies except for that one eternal thing. God.
- This is God's purpose in subjecting creation to futility. To make us see our need to get back to the garden and see the means for us to get back to the Garden. Back to the true source of shalom—God himself.
- But why does God do it this way? Why doesn't he just fix things without all the futility? Well, in order to fix creation, God first had to fix us.
 - What was it that broke shalom in the first place? Adam and Eve ate fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Why did they do that? Pride. They wanted to be like God.
 - Pride broke shalom, and the only way shalom can be restored is through pride being broken.
 - What do we call that? Humility.
 - Now think about this. If things were going well for us. If there was no futility, if everything we did succeeded, if there was no bondage to decay, no death, do you think we would ever seek a way for shalom to be restored with God?
 - The only thing that makes us cry out to God to save us is futility, bondage to decay and death. Creation is subjected to all those things by God for the purpose of our redemption, our salvation—to show us how desperately we need to be reconciled to God.
- Think what Paul is saying here. When will the futility and bondage to decay end?

Romans 8: 19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

- Creation will be set free when the children of God are revealed.
- When will the children of God be revealed? When Christ comes again. That is when we will be glorified, and our salvation will be complete.
 - On that day, sin will be no more. Why? Because our sinful flesh will be gone, and we will have resurrection flesh that is free from sin. And everything tainted by sin in creation will be gone and transformed into something new.



- God is allowing creation to be subjected to frustration, and you to suffer as a result, so that you will be ready for the day of your glorification. All the futility, all of the bondage to corruption, all of the suffering, is to bring you to glory.
- There was shalom in the Garden of Eden, but it was a shalom that could be undone and corrupted by sin. But in the new Garden, there at the end of the book of Revelations, shalom will be incorruptible because the redeemed of the Lord will be incorruptible.

1 Corinthians 15: 47 – 55 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall ⁵⁰ also bear the image of the man of heaven.... For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” ⁵⁵ “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

- There it is. The end of futility, and it happens at the return of Christ when the children of God are revealed. The corruptible becomes incorruptible.
 - But that day hasn’t come yet. We live in the age of futility, bondage to decay, and death. How then should we live?

4. How to live in the midst of futility

- We live in hope. We live in the hope of glory. Why? Because God has subjected creation to frustration in hope.
 - And don’t think of hope here like we typically think of hope—a kind of wishful thinking. No, this hope that Paul is talking about is a sure and certain hope—a reality that has not yet happened but will, because God is orchestrating it all.
- God’s plan, God’s purpose, in electing us, calling us, justifying us, and glorifying us will stand. Nothing can thwart it, so we, as people of faith, must live our lives in that sure and certain hope. Faith transforms the suffering and futility of this world into a glorious hymn of praise to God and His work of redemption.
 - Nothing is wasted with God. All the futility that you experience in life, all the suffering, is being used by God to point you and the world around you to Christ, and the hope of glory that is found in Him.
 - Think of that. God is orchestrating everything in your life, everything in history, so you can be reconciled to him through Christ and through that reconciliation shine like the sun in the kingdom of our Father. In love God predestined you for this!
- So, how should we respond to all the futility, all the suffering, all the bondage to corruption? We put our hope in Christ and nothing else.

Ephesians 1:11-12 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.