

3. As God intended

God has never given up on His plan for mankind and his creation. Christ will return and there will be a new heaven and new earth without the corruption of sin. In fact, if we want to get a clearer picture of what the rescued creation will look like we can read Revelation.

*3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God...1 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 2 through 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. 3 No 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.
- Revelation 21:3, 22:1-3 ESV*

The passage above is a small sample of the description of the new heaven and new earth that awaits us.

What are some of the characteristics of the new heaven and new earth that fill you with joyful anticipation?

WRAP-UP

In this section of Romans 8 Paul compares glory and suffering. But he also highlights the hope that creation holds on to. That one day, God's original design would be restored and all creation will be free of the corruption and decay of sin as God's image-bearers take authority over and wisely rule creation.

MEMORY VERSE

For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. - Romans 8:19 NLT

Challenge-

As you walk about this week take note of the gift of God's creation and look for ways to be a good steward of it.

Rescue of Creation

Romans 8 - Week 5

INTRODUCTION

We know we live in a fallen world. All around us we see the effects of Man's sin and rebellion, not only on our own eternal destiny, but even in God's good creation. God didn't create Eden only to see it decay and die. He placed Man in the garden to tend and watch over it. But when Adam and Eve rejected God's plan and took a different path, they were expelled from Eden, and since that time all of God's creation has suffered because of their decision. In his letter to the Roman church, Paul reminds us that all creation looks forward to the day when God's redeemed children will rescue this world from death and decay. For when God sent Jesus to save mankind, He also set into motion the restoration of all creation as Man is restored and empowered to resume the destiny God originally intended for us.

Ice Breaker

Do you have a garden? If so, what has been your greatest challenge to keeping it flourishing?

Key Passage

17 And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering. 18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. 19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. 20 Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. - Romans 8:17-21 NLT

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Glory

In this passage of scripture Paul uses the word glory five times. So, it is important that we try to understand what he was referring to. In the Greek, the word for glory is *doxa*. We find that there are many meanings for **doxa** including **radiance, dignity, status and worth**. Its definition *does not* include "the place where the faithful go after they die", although we may sometimes hear people refer to someone, 'going on to

glory". (In fact, we don't find the idea of an escape from this world into "heaven" but rather a return of God's creation to the stewardship of Man in verses 19-21.) In Hebrew passages of the Old Testament, "glory" is the word *kābôd* and can mean **abundance, riches, splendor, reputation or reverence**.

Let's consider which of these meanings might be applied to Paul's writings.

2 Suddenly, the glory of the God of Israel appeared from the east. The sound of his coming was like the roar of rushing waters, and the whole landscape shone with his glory. ... 4 And the glory of the LORD came into the Temple through the east gateway.
- Ezekiel 43:2, 4 NLT

Some of the Old Testament prophets had visions of God's glory in His Temple. In Ezekiel 43, how would you describe the use of "Glory"? There is no longer a temple in Jerusalem, but God's glorious Spirit does dwell in a temple. What temple does God's presence occupy today? How might this definition of glory be applied in Rom 8:17?

3 When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers-- the moon and the stars you set in place-- 4 what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? 5 Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. 6 You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority--
- Psalm 8:3-6 NLT

In Psalm 8 David refers to being "crowned with glory and honor". What does David reference that shows God honoring human beings? Paul refers to a future glory we will receive. How might the description of glory in Psalm 8 (a time when man has charge over everything God made) give us insight into Romans 8 verses 19 – 21?

It appears that Paul is referring to a glory that will be revealed later in God's children which frees God's creation from death and decay. The imagery of a shining crown on mankind in Ps 8 is another reminder that the power and authority God gives His children is a part of His glory being shared with us.

2. Suffering of Creation

Sometimes we miss how closely we are connected to all of God's creation. Verse 20 says creation was subject to *mataiotēs* meaning frustration or futility. The suffering we are to share with Christ includes not only pain of

sin and death of those who reject His salvation, but also the grieving He feels over the all-encompassing corruption and decay of the whole world.

After God spoke the world into existence, He formed man from the dust and gave him authority to rule over creation. But Adam's sin caused the ground from which he was formed to be cursed and now man labors hard to produce food from the earth he once had dominion over.

7 Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person. ... 15 The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. - Genesis 2: 7, 15 NLT 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." - Genesis 1:28 ESV

17 And to the man he said, "Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. 18 It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. 19 By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return." - Genesis 3:17-19 NLT

What are some ways that suffering resulted from Adam's fall in these passages? What do you think Eden would have been like if Adam hadn't sinned? How do you think God felt about the corruption of His creation?

17b 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...20 For the creation was subjected to frustration¹, 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.
- Romans 8: 17-18, 20-21

Let's see if we can fit together our concepts of glory and suffering. What if the glory we look forward to is not only the indwelling of God's radiant presence, but also our return to the plan designed by God for us to live in His constant presence and have authority to tend and watch over creation. How does the suffering for the lost and for a broken world compared to prospect of living in a restored Eden? (v. 18)