

## What's Going On Here? – Romans 8:18-30

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Who's To Say?*

1. One day a poor farmer discovered a beautiful white horse standing in his barn. How it got there he had no idea.
2. He spent a week trying to find the owner but no one claimed him.
3. His neighbors came by to see the horse & said, "That's a gorgeous horse but you should sell him because you're too poor to keep him & someone is sure to steal him."
4. Sure enough, a few weeks later the horse disappeared.
5. His neighbors said, "We told you should've sold him. Now you have nothing. This is bad."
6. But the farmer replied, "Say not that this is bad; say only that horse is gone. Whether it's good or bad we can not tell. Only God knows."
7. A month later the horse returned leading 12 others all as healthy as he.
8. The neighbors said, "You were right. This was not bad but good. Now instead of 1 horse you have many. You can sell them for a lot of money. This is good."
9. The farmer said, "Say not that this is good for whether or not it's good or bad no one knows. Say only that my horse is back & that 12 others have come with him. For whether this is good or bad only God knows."
10. A few days later while trying to break in the horses the farmer's son fell & broke his leg in 3 places.
11. The neighbors said, "You were right *again*, this is bad. For your son will not be able to train the horses & you won't be able to sell them. Their upkeep will ruin you."
12. The farmer replied, "Say not that this is a bad thing. Say only that my son broke his leg. For whether or not this is bad or good only God knows."
13. A few weeks past & war broke out. All the young men were drafted except the farmer's son because of his broken leg.
14. The neighbors said, "You were right! This was good, for all of our sons have gone to war but *your* son has been spared because his leg was broken when he fell from the horse."
15. The father said, "Do not say that this is a good thing. Say only that my son did not have to go to war."

#### B. *It's All Good*

1. This man had learned an important lesson; to not judge by appearance, but to wait & see what the *ultimate* outcome is.
2. That lesson is spelled out in vs. 18-30 of Romans 8. But there's a major difference here.
  - a. While the farmer remained *undecided* about the outcome of the events of his life,
  - b. We can have absolute confidence it's *all good*, even *before* we see the outcome!
3. Originally, I planned on taking our study today all the way through v. 30.
  - a. Vs. 18-27 are the *lead up* to the climax in vs. 28-30.
  - b. And most studies or sermons you'll hear on this passage *rush through* vs. 18-27 so they can get to v. 28
  - c. That's unfortunate because there's some rich stuff in these verses.
  - d. So instead of rushing through them, we're going to slow down & dig into them today & save vs. 28-30 for *next* Sunday.

## II. TEXT

### A. V. 18

**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.**

1. This ties back to what we ended with last week in v. 17.
  - a. As sons & daughters of God who live in the midst of a world in rebellion against Him, it's inevitable we will suffer.
  - b. The Bible is filled with stories of those who suffered because they identified with God.
  - c. Jesus repeatedly warned His followers that siding with Him would result in the hatred & opposition of the world.
2. In the beatitudes He said we ought to endure suffering for His sake as a **badge of honor** because it **marks us** as belonging to Him.
3. Suffering is something believers can **expect**.
  - a. But we don't need to **seek** it out – it'll find us on it's own.
  - b. Think of suffering like a red light.
    - 1) If you drive, it's inevitable you'll have to stop at a red light.
    - 2) The **more** you drive, the **more red lights** you'll encounter.
    - 3) Now, we don't **like** red lights; we'd much rather they were all green.
    - 4) Red lights are a bother. But they serve an important purpose.
    - 5) And while we don't **like** red lights, we **endure** them; counting them as part & parcel of what it means to travel the roads.
    - 6) When a light goes from green to yellow to red, we don't throw a hissyfit & start whining about how **hard** driving is.
    - 7) We take it in stride as a necessary part of driving.
  - c. That's the way we ought to see suffering.
  - d. We don't like it. It's a bother. But it's a part of life in a fallen world.

---

4. Paul shares here the **perspective** we ought to have on **our suffering**.
  - a. Yes—it's a present reality, & there **are** times it can be intense – ask Paul!
  - b. He'd been beaten, stoned, imprisoned, put in stocks, whipped & shipwrecked.
  - c. But when he considered all that **against the glorious future** he was destined for, the suffering wasn't worth worrying about.
  - d. Today's suffering is **temporary**: Tomorrow's glory is **eternal**.
5. You see, God is at work in us right now to **complete the work of our redemption**.
  - a. Salvation is far more than just the removal of **sin's penalty**.
  - b. It includes our deliverance from **sins' power & presence**.
  - c. As we live in the Spirit as Paul describes here in ch. 8, God changes us from the inside out.
  - d. He heals our fallenness & restores us to the image we were originally created in.

---

6. There is in each of us what I call a **"ghost of greatness"** – a deep sense of a glorious destiny & purpose.
  - a. At our core, there's a faint etching of the image of God we were created in.
  - b. While the Fall shattered that image, it's still there, waiting to be put back together again.
  - c. This is the great potential of every human being.
  - d. The devil sees it, & hates & fears it.
  - e. He does his best to hide, mar, bend, twist, & distort it.
  - f. All his lies & temptations have **this goal** – to keep God from redeeming & restoring His image in us.
  - g. But the devil doesn't have the last say – God does!

7. One day, God's image **will be** fully restored in us. As Phil. 1:6 says –  
**Be confident in this → That He who has begun a good work in you will carry it to completion on the Day of Jesus Christ.**
  8. That's what Paul has in mind here in v. 18 – the Day all history is moving toward;
    - a. The Day when Jesus returns and takes us home;
    - b. The day when our redemption get's its final touches & we stand complete in glory.
  9. The longer I live, the more I realize God made creation like a huge blackboard He draws lessons on.
    - a. Everywhere I look I see how creation is an analogy & illustration of spiritual truth.
    - b. **Growing up** provides a great analogy to the truth Paul reveals here.
    - c. Do you remember how as you got older the things that seemed so important when you were young **lost** their importance?
    - d. How things that were hard got easier?
    - e. And how when you were small, each year passed so slowly but now they fly by?
  10. By faith Paul puts himself in that place when his redemption is complete & **looks back** on his present experience of suffering.
  11. He knows his **future** glory will turn all his present trials into gold.
- 
12. That perspective transforms his view of everything as he goes on to explain . . .

### **B. Vs. 19-21**

**<sup>19</sup>For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; <sup>21</sup>because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.**

1. Because creation was placed under the dominion of Adam, when he fell creation fell with him.
  2. The death that came as the legacy of sin infected all creation.
  3. The **real inconvenient truth** about the environment isn't greenhouse gases, it's sin & rebellion against God. **That's** the root of **all** the problems with our planet.
    - a. If people showed as much concern about **eternal burning** as they do about global warming we'd be a lot better off.
    - b. There is something wrong with Planet Earth but it's not CO<sub>2</sub>, it's S-I-N.
- 
4. Just as David in the Psalms ascribed a voice to creation & said the hills & rocks & trees worship God,
  5. So Paul says that the creation **yearns** for the day when the curse laid on it in the Fall is lifted.
  6. It's important we realize that History is **not** just a random sequence of events with no meaning or direction.
  7. History is just that = **His-Story**.
    - a. There's a goal to it all, a grand climax is coming.
    - b. You're not just incidental filler, created for a cosmic crowd shot.
    - c. You're no extra whose name isn't included in the credits.
    - d. No! We are the sons & daughters of the Author, Producer & Director of the Drama of Redemption.
    - e. We're the main characters & our names are inscribed in God's eternal record.
    - f. All we do by faith is being recorded.
  8. Contrary to what public school science classes are mandated to teach, we are **NOT** the result of random collisions of atoms in space.
  9. We were in the mind & heart of God before anything else was.
  10. We did **not** come from the primordial ooze.
  11. We came from God's divine Word that spoke & gave reality to His purpose & love.

12. You are no after-thought, no mistake – despite what some cruel relative may have told you.
13. We are, as Paul says here – *the reason for it all*.
14. All of creation is *awaiting the fulfillment* of God’s redemption in us.

### C. V. 22

**For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.**

1. Disturbances like earthquakes & storms are creation’s travail to *assist* in the emergence of our redemption.
2. Labor is a rough ordeal. If you consider each contraction by itself, there’s no apparent reason for it.
3. But when you see each contraction as part of a process that’s going somewhere – you realize the end is glorious – a new life emerges!
4. In a similar way, this fallen creation *not only yearns* for the redemption, it’s *assisting* it by being a platform on which God molds & shapes us.
5. When tragedy strikes our world, it reveals what’s in the heart of man by how he reacts.
  - a. Compassion or greed.
  - b. Indifference or concern.
6. Tragedy holds a mirror up to humanity & shows what’s really there.
  - a. A little over a year ago, a report was released after a massive research project on charitable giving.<sup>1</sup>
  - b. The researchers wanted to produce a profile of what kind of person gave to the poor & needy.
  - c. The results, by their own admission, were not at all what they expected.
  - d. They found that those who gave most to charitable causes were political & religious *conservatives*.
  - e. Those who gave the least? Political & religious *liberals*.
  - f. The researchers admitted they were surprised by the findings.
  - g. They’d thought those who argue most loudly for welfare & social justice –liberals, would be the most giving –
  - h. While those who wanted to reform or do away with government-run social welfare programs would give the least.
  - i. The *opposite* was the case.
7. Whenever there’s a disaster somewhere, guess who gets there first, works the hardest, and stays the longest? *Believers!*
  - a. This is what we heard again & again during both the tsunami in Thailand & with Katrina.
  - b. Politicians & secular groups showed up for the initial photo ops, then left.
  - c. It was the church groups that continued to go for months, & STILL go, that have done all the *REAL* work.

### D. V. 23

**Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.**

1. Creation isn’t the only thing that yearns for deliverance from the curse - So do we!
2. We yearn for liberation from the presence & power of sin.
3. We look forward to the day, as in a Roman adoption, when the Father sets us before all creation, puts His hands on our shoulders, announces our new name, and declares us eternally His.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://articles.moneycentral.msn.com/News/SurprisingResearchOnCharitableGiving.aspx?page=1>

**E. Vs. 24-25**

**<sup>24</sup>For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.**

1. Our full & final redemption is not yet. We wait for it.
2. And because the God Who promised us redemption cannot lie, *we have hope*.
3. Our hope is not the “hope so” of others. It’s an inner confidence that come what may, it’s all going to work out.
4. This is where the follower of Christ has great advantage on the unbeliever.
  - a. We have hope because we’re *promised* eternal life.
  - b. As Paul says in Eph. 1, the Holy Spirit is a down payment God gives us to ensure our redemption will one day be complete.
5. So as tough as things may get in this life, as intense as the disappointments & sorrow may be, one day soon, it will all be behind us & all that will remain is glory!
6. When that day arrives, hope will be no more because we won’t need it.
7. Hope is the evidence we’re not in heaven yet, but that we will be.

---

8. Look at v. 25 again –

**If we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.**

- a. “Eagerly wait” is a word-picture: It’s the person who stretches their neck to see over the heads of others or to look around an obstacle.
- b. There’s a desire to catch sight of something important.
9. When Lynn & I were engaged, I was living in San Jose while she lived in the OC.
  - a. I drove down often to see her & she occasionally flew up to see me.
  - b. There was a little terminal at the airport in San Jose at that time & when her flight arrived, I would stand outside, leaning against the railing, scanning the sky for her plane.
  - c. As soon as I saw it, my heart started to beat faster, & the closer it got, the more *excited* I got.
  - d. When the landing gear touched the tarmac, the hope was a fever – I couldn’t wait to see & hug her.
  - e. I watched the plane taxi over to the terminal then ran downstairs & inside to the door where she’d enter.
  - f. It seemed like ages before she finally appeared – but when she did, we embraced.
10. Here’s the thing – the closer she got, the nearer the moment of our reunion, the greater my hope & longing for her.
11. But the moment we touched – there was no more hope because we were now *together*.
12. Then we began hoping *for other things*: Like our wedding in May.
  - a. But once that arrived, we set our hopes on our first child, then the second, & third.
  - b. Now our hope is set on *no more* pregnancies.
13. So it is in the hope of our faith.
  - a. As we follow Christ, the Spirit reveals something that needs to be redeemed.
  - b. We repent, we pray, we yield, & we yearn in hope for God to work.
  - c. He does, then the Spirit reveals *some new thing* & we go through the process all over again, & again, & again.
  - d. But as far as we go with Christ in this life, we realize there are *some things* we’ll not see redeemed till we stand with Him in glory.
14. And the more we realize that, the more *eagerly* we hope for His return.

## F. Vs. 26-27

**<sup>26</sup>Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. <sup>27</sup>Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.**

1. Throughout ch. 8, Paul refers to the Holy Spirit as our inner-companion Who leads us to redemption.
2. Here he says the Spirit *assists us in praying*. I sure do appreciate this!
3. As Paul says in v. 26, I often do not know how to pray as I ought.
  - a. I used to think I knew what & how to pray, then I realized so many of the things I told God He ought to do would have been a nightmare if He did!
  - b. We ought to pray for God's kingdom to come & His will to be done on Earth as it is in heaven.
  - c. The best place to discover God's will is in His Word.
  - d. While Scripture provides guidance for *most* of our prayers, there are some things we just don't know what God's will is.
4. That's when we *specially* need the guidance of the Spirit, Who as God, knows both what to do & how to do it.
5. Sometimes, the only prayer we can give is an inarticulate groan, sigh, or moan.
  - a. And while this may seem awkward or odd at first, it's important we go ahead & utter it.
  - b. Here's why - Though God is sovereign, remember that He *gave* dominion of Earth to man.
  - c. Adam forfeited that dominion to the devil in the Fall, but Jesus came to *restore & redeem* us.
  - d. The Spirit is the *agent* of that redemption within us, *restoring our rightful dominion*.
  - e. He's returning us to the place of being God's agents on Earth.
  - f. God honors our choices, so He awaits our requests that He would move in the affairs of Earth.
  - g. Sometimes the details & intricacies of His plan elude us but the Spirit burdens us with the *need* to pray.
  - h. Not knowing *what* to pray, all we can do is send forth a groan or moan, which is all God needs to accomplish His purpose.
6. In many cases, this is what the gift of tongues is for.
7. I've met many over the years who've told me they regularly awake in the middle of the night with a deep burden to pray.
  - a. They don't know who or what for, but they know they *must* pray.
  - b. They begin to pray as the Spirit moves them, in an unknown tongue or in groaning.
  - c. And after a while, the burden lifts & they go promptly back to sleep.
  - d. My mother was one of these - & there were times when I was in rebellion & out late doing bad stuff when all of a sudden I had the strongest sense that I needed to flee - to stop what I was doing & get out of there.
  - e. At most of those times, something bad happened after I left.
  - f. I know it was my mother's prayers that prevailed & delivered me.

## III. CONCLUSION

### A. End There

1. All of this is perfect set up for vs. 28-30 but there's no way we can cover that properly today, so we'll leave it for next week.