

CREATION

We've all heard the story since we were in children's church. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." We learned how each day God made something new, whether it was the stars, moon, animals, or man. And we learned how on the seventh day He rested. But as we grow older, the story seems to become just that: a story, and we begin to overlook the wondrous creation that God did make. Creation is a way for us to realize that God's promises are true and that one day He will return for us, His bride. Each year in the fall, the trees begin to give up their leaves and the fields are given to the harvest. Soon winter comes and the world is cold, dark and dreary. This should remind us of the time that Jesus was crucified and placed into a borrowed tomb for each and everyone of us. For three days, the world seemed cold, dark, and dreary. But Jesus did not stay in that tomb; on the third day He arose with the keys of victory over death in His hands. Each spring, as the trees begin to renew their leaves and the earth becomes green with grass, we should hear God whisper, "I'm coming back for you." Every time we see a tulip bulb sprout from the ground we should hear God whisper, "I am here for you." Every time the crops spring from the ground producing food, we should hear God whisper, "I will provide for you." God gives us a visual representation for us to realize that He will keep His promises, and one day, He will return for us just as He said that He would. On this day all creation will sing of His glory and all that He has.

ROMANS 8:18-25

WE MUST SHARE IN HIS SUFFERINGS

In the previous verse to this study, Paul reminds us that if we are to share in Christ's glory that we must also share in His sufferings. Every day we share in Christ's sufferings. We must constantly deal with our sin nature and all the deterioration in our society. When God first created the world, before Adam and Eve sinned, He did not want us to have to suffer or deal with many of the things that we daily face. In His perfect plan, there would have been no disease, no cancer, no murder, and no drugs. His people would not have had to face those things. However, when Adam and Eve sinned, the world was placed under the curse of sin. More than this though, Paul is describing the persecution we should face if we are truly believers. No, we may not have to give up our life or family at this particular time, but God does call us to give up our own desires and resist to conforming to the world. We must share in these sufferings, but realize that they are nothing in comparison to the glory we will share in.

CREATION SHARES IN HIS SUFFERINGS

It's hard for many of us to believe, but creation, the earth itself, shares in Christ's sufferings. Before sin entered into the world, the world was perfect, just as God had planned it to be. Once sin came, creation was sentenced by God, as well. He said in Genesis 3:17, "Cursed is the ground because of you..." When we look around us at the creation God has made, we can see the sufferings it takes

part in. Our world is constantly deteriorating and being destroyed. Since sin entered, the world experiences decay and pollution. The creation groans in labor pains, waiting for the new earth to be born. We are seeing the effects of these "labor pains" more and more around us. Tsunamis, tornadoes, fires, earthquakes, flooding, and hurricanes have all hit the earth. The creation is suffering and is anxiously awaiting the day when Christ will return and reinvent it to its former glory.

WE ALL SHARE IN HIS GLORY

At the end of these verses, Paul talks of the hope that we all have while waiting for the glorious day when Christ shall return to take His bride. We must remember, for our own sake, whatever we suffer on this earth cannot even begin to compare to the glory we will experience at that last day. God has already given us a down payment for this future glory as He has entrusted us with the Holy Spirit (vs. 23). Once we accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we can begin to hope and long for the day when we will be redeemed. We can only imagine what it will truly be like on that day. We will have our new bodies, the new heaven and earth, the absence of sin and suffering, and most importantly, we will be face to face with Jesus Christ. Oh, what a day that will be! We must wait patiently (vs. 25) as we do not know the time or season when He will return. Once He does, though, all creation and humanity will sing His praises and will lift up His name forever.

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