

The Christian's Lamentation – Part 2

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Romans 8:19-25

Preached on: Sunday, January 15, 2012

Will you take their infallible record of the Word of God and turn to Paul's epistle to the Romans? Romans chapter eight. We continue to make our way through this amazing letter that speaks so clearly to so many doctrinal issues that are foundational to the Christian life.

This morning we want to focus our attention primarily on verses 23 through 25. But, once again, I would like to get a running start so you hear it in context. So let's begin with verse 18. Romans eight verse 18.

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. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 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. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 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 sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.¹

In verse 23 it speaks of the believer groaning within himself, waiting for something to happen, waiting for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. And I must confess that in the early years of my life I could not relate to that text very well. Frankly, I looked forward to heaven in kind of a dreamy way. Maybe you can identify with that. I think I wanted a new truck probably more than heaven if I was real honest. I really wasn't all that excited about being forever liberated from my sin and all of the physical infirmities of life, because when you are young you don't see your sin that much and you don't have many physical infirmities, but as you get older, all of that changes.

Heaven for many people, even to this day, is just not all that appealing, especially in our affluent culture, especially among our young children, many of our young adults. Most prefer a new iPad to heaven.

For many people sin is just not that serious. Salvation is just not that priceless. The Savior is just not that precious. Heaven is just not that glorious and certainly hell is not all that hideous. But with age comes pain and reality sets in. Years of seeing the effects of sin in your own life, in your body, in the lives of those that you love. And all of the pains in your body begins to herald your own departure from this life. And little by little,

¹ Romans 8:18-25.

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all of the shiny things of life lose their luster. You stop chasing all of the fleeting pleasures of this world and with every final farewell of loved ones and friends, you long more and more to leave this world of sin, sorrow and shame. And for the few that truly walk with Christ, their sorrow is over their own personal sin and the sins of others begins to increase. They begin to loathe more and more the corruption of the flesh and all that that implies. They hate the wickedness of this world.

After a while you start longing for rest, don't you? You begin to really long for something different, long to see Christ glorified, long to see sin and Satan and death forever vanquished. We identify more and more with Habakkuk said in chapter two and verse 14, longing for that day when:

“...the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.”²

We begin to echo the sentiments of Paul, remember, in 2 Timothy four and verse four and following. He spoke to Timothy about his impending death and he was lamenting about those who, quote:

“... will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”³

And then he says this:

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.⁴

Loved, literally is shining forth, the shining forth of his glorious return.

And, dear friends, in those words we have a great example of verse 23 of Romans eight, what it means to groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

The term “groan” in the original language literally means to sigh, a non verbal, noisy yearning. It is to exhale in frustration, if that makes sense. But also in this text to exhale with an eager longing for the end of this state of weakness and sorrow.

² Habakkuk 2:14.

³ 2 Timothy 4:4-5.

⁴ 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

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I find myself doing this more often as I get older, don't you? The sighs are getting longer and louder and more frequent, especially when I turn on the news. And then that sigh is quickly followed up with, "Lord Jesus, come quickly."

This, dear friends, is the Christian's lamentation, the title of the second part of my discourse to you this morning.

Now, mind you, this isn't giving up. This isn't throwing in the towel, but it is, rather, a godly expression of frustration combined with hope.

Paul said in Philippians 1:21:

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."⁵

Can't you sense the tension there? He goes on to say:

But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. And convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith.⁶

So every believer is going to experience this kind of tension. And with every believer, they will increasingly groan as life goes on, as they mature in Christ, especially the more you become fully engaged in the battle for the truth.

Now let's remember the context here. Paul has been explaining the marvelous benefits of justification, what it means for God to declare the sinner righteous based upon the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the theme of chapter eight is the assurance of salvation. And that assurance is based on the assertion that he makes at the beginning of the chapter that there is no now condemnation on those who are in Christ Jesus. And as you read it all in context, it is as if he is saying, "Yes, don't be discouraged by your sin and the suffering that you must endure in this period between your justification and your glorification, because, verse 18:"

"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."⁷

And then he goes on to explain how and why things got this bad and how and why things will get so much better for those who are justified. And in the context of all of this we

⁵ Philippians 1:21.

⁶ Philippians 1:23-25.

⁷ Romans 8:18.

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understand what I would call the Christian's lamentation, how we groan inwardly in this life in certain hope that some day things will be radically different.

Now Paul explains this by expressing two doctrines primarily. We looked at the first one last week and that is the creation's slavery to corruption. Now let me remind you of this again this morning before we look at the second component of all of this with respect to the believer.

In verses 19 through 22 we are reminded that the biblical doctrine of salvation is inextricably linked to a literal interpretation of biblical history pertaining to the creation account as recorded in Genesis. Very important concept for you to keep in mind. Paul has already made this connection in chapter five. Remember there he revealed how by one man, namely Adam, sin entered the world and death through sin and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

In verse 14 at the end he says that Adam was a type of Christ. In other words, God intended for Adam to correspond to resemble Christ. Adam was the type. Christ the antitype. Even as Adam's sin was imputed to all men because he is our representative and all of that resulted in death, so, too, Christ's righteousness is imputed to all men who believe in him because he represents all believers in righteousness. And, of course, that results in life.

Now here, again, in chapter eight verses 19 through 22 we see the importance of a literal interpretation of the historical account of creation and of man's fall and the curse upon creation and so forth.

So we must understand that what happens to man will also happen to creation in some measure. Indeed, one day creation will enjoy a new birth, a regeneration. And this corresponds to man's spiritual new birth and the ultimate enjoyment of a new heaven and a new earth that we will experience.

Now, by the way, as a footnote, there are two reasons why we would believe here at this church that we should separate from other professing believers. One is on the basis of the gospel. If somebody preaches a different gospel, what did Paul say in Galatians one? Let them be accursed. The second reason is on the authority of Scripture. And here is a great example of this. We are to contend earnestly for the faith Jude tells us. And those who would deny, for example, a literal interpretation of the account of Genesis in order to somehow appease the scientific community, the evolutionary mindset of our day, when they do that, they ultimately undermine the doctrines of salvation, not to mention many other doctrines. So it is very important that you understand this. And if you deny the authority of Scripture one place, you are probably going to do it in many others. And we see people doing this with respect to issues pertaining to homosexuality, women in leadership, church discipline, all kinds of things.

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So, again, a literal understanding of biblical history is crucial in understanding the doctrine of salvation. And I might add that this is why Satan is tireless in his efforts to attack the doctrine of the authority of Scripture in the Church today. This is why we must stand firm and we will.

So creation is tied to man. When man fell, it fell. And here in this text, Paul personifies God's animate and non rational inanimate creation as being in distress because of the curse that God placed upon man and upon creation. He subjected it to futility. In other words, it is no longer able to reach its goal which is ultimately to bring glory to God. And therefore he depicts this part of creation as earnestly expecting a particular event to occur, an event that will radically change its current state.

Verse 19.

“For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.”⁸

The *αποκαλυψις* (ap-ok-al'-oop-sis), the uncovering, the unveiling of that glorious day when the curse will be removed when Christ returns in his glory with his saints, when he renovates this earth, when he returns it again to edenic splendor.

In Colossians three verses three and four Paul says:

“When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”⁹

That will be the day we return, when we will be revealed.

Zechariah 14:9 the prophet tells us:

“And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.”¹⁰

So this is what creation is on its tiptoes looking for. Paradise was once lost. One day it will be regained, because of Christ when he returns to judge the nations who, by the way, by that time will be under the rule of the antichrist. It will be when he comes and delivers his beloved enemy Israel from their oppressors and ,frankly, from their sins and reconciles him finally unto himself.

Today we see the Muslim hordes surrounding God's covenant people, trying to annihilate Israel. So we see the rest of the pagan world, including the United States of America

⁸ Romans 8:19.

⁹ Colossians 3:4.

¹⁰ Zechariah 14:9.

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somewhat passively resigned to see this happen even as the religious people did in Hitler's day. Indeed, the world is being prepared for the antichrist. Our world is being prepared for a one world government, for a one world religion, what Revelation 17:5 describes as:

“BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”¹¹

By the way, this is what happens when wolves in sheep's clothing ascend the sacred desk of the church and they begin to compromise on the gospel and they deny the authority of Scripture. This is where you go.

But soon, as we look at the prophetic literature, as we look at all that is going on in the world around us, we realize that the cup of divine wrath is about to flow over and when that happens, according to Scripture the nostrils of the almighty God will flare and the almighty sovereign will hand the seven sealed scroll of judgment to the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then the Lord Jesus Christ will return in power and great glory and vengeance with his raptured saints. He will return as King of kings and Lord of lords and he will pour out his judgment upon this earth. Then he will establish his millennial kingdom.

Beloved, this is the day that creation is longing to see. The millennial kingdom is that consummating bridge between human history and the eternal state. Then at the end of the messianic age Jesus promised that heaven and earth is going to pass away. We are told in Scripture that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth passed away.

By the way, I never tire of thinking about these scenes, because, beloved we, as the redeemed, will witness them all. We will see our Savior face to face, the one in whom we have been hidden and one day when he returns, we, as his raptured saints will return with him. We will be revealed. We will reign with him on a renovated earth. And then we are going to see him uncreate the heavens and the earth and recreate a new one. Absolutely astounding.

No wonder Paul would say:

“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.”¹²

So, having explained the creation's slavery to corruption and its anxious and eager longing to be set free from all of this, he then sets forth another important doctrine,

¹¹ Revelation 17:5.

¹² Romans 8:18.

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secondly the Christian's perseverance in hope, in verses 23 and 25. And that is what I want to focus on this morning.

Notice what he says, verse 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 sons, the redemption of our body.”¹³

Now, like the natural creation, here we see that every believer is fully aware of the corruption of sin in his life as well as the staggering manifestations of sin in the world around us, the world in which we live. And I might add that if you are not aware of sin in your life and how sin manifests itself in your life, you are either unsaved or you have so grieved the Spirit of God by your self righteous pride and self centered living that you have really lost your sense of discernment. And so therefore you are not going to be groaning much. Get away from all of this.

And if left unchecked you will become increasingly skilled at spotting the speck in your brother's eye and being utterly blind to the log in your own. And eventually the Holy Spirit by his grace if you truly belong to the Lord he will get your attention. He will sanctify you. Every believer has a God given sensitivity to sin.

If you are like me, many times you learn that the hard way. And then as you really see your sin by God's grace, you will mourn over it more and more. You will hunger and thirst for righteousness and then you will join the ranks of those who groan within themselves over their sin. You will lament over the reality that your body is still incarcerated in this unredeemed humanness and you will long for that day of ultimate emancipation.

So we should all pray that the Holy Spirit would help us to see our sin, how it impacts other people so that we would confess it and repent of it before it wreaks havoc in our life. Otherwise, you will become what I call a hopper. It is not a biblical term. It is a biblical concept. A hopper is one that lacks discernment and will hop from one fad to the next, one ear tickling guru to the next. They will hop from one relationship to the next, one marriage to the next, one church to the next, always searching, never able to come to the truth of their own life, always blaming everything on somebody else.

So, beloved, be suspect of your spirituality. Constantly measure your life by the standard of Scripture. You will recall that David succumbed to his lust and sin with Bathsheba during the season of spiritual complacency. He was over confident. He didn't see it. And then you will recall God confronted him through Nathan and then he lamented in genuine repentance. And in Psalm 38:8 he says:

¹³ Romans 8:23.

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“I am benumbed and badly crushed; I groan because of the agitation of my heart.”¹⁴

That term “groan” is a Hebrew verb that means to make a deep inarticulate sound conveying pain and despair. It is the type of groan that would result if somebody placed a heavy weight upon your chest. It is the sound of deep oppression and sorrow.

That sound that translates into what was I thinking. Oh, God, forgive me.

It was during a season of discipleship and service and having intimate fellowship with the Lord that you will recall Peter became over confident about his unwavering allegiance to Jesus. And then he went out and denied the Lord three times. And we read in Matthew 26 at the end that he went out and wept bitterly.

Beloved, you must remember that your groaning for glory will always be in proportion to your awareness of sin, to your groaning and mourning over your own sin first and then with all that you see in the world.

Paul repeatedly acknowledge his frustration of indwelling sin. Remember in chapter seven verse 14 of Romans he said:

“...I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.”¹⁵

And in verse 18 he says:

“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.”¹⁶

And then you will recall in verse 23 he described:

“...the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.”¹⁷

Meaning his flesh.

Verse 24.

“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”¹⁸

In other words, who is going to set me free from the clutches of my sinful nature?

¹⁴ Psalm 38:8.

¹⁵ Romans 7:14.

¹⁶ Romans 7:18.

¹⁷ Romans 7:23.

¹⁸ Romans 7:24.

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But we can be glad knowing that his lament did not end there, not in some hopeless despair, but rather in joyous deliverance.

In verse 25 he says:

“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”¹⁹

And then the hallelujah chorus of forgiveness and grace and emancipated living breaks forth in Romans 8:1.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.²⁰

But, and here is the bad news. We will not experience the fullness of this promise until the redemption of the body. So until then, we groan within ourselves and wait eagerly.

But will you also notice a very encouraging description of believers that Paul gives in verse 23. He says:

“... we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit...”²¹

It could be translated, “the first fruits which is the Spirit.”

This is a marvelous concept. The metaphorical imagery here of the first fruits, really depicts the first stage of something else that is certain to come. And in this context it is a foretaste of the blessing of God in his work of redemption that will be brought to its intended climax. And, of course, this is in keeping with Paul's theme of the assurance of salvation that we see all through Romans eight.

Now first fruit has basically the same meaning as the term pledge that is used in other passages in the New Testament. For example, in 2 Corinthians one beginning in verse 21 we read:

“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God.”²²

And then he goes on to say:

“...who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.”²³

¹⁹ Romans 7:25.

²⁰ Romans 8:1-2.

²¹ Romans 8:23.

²² 2 Corinthians 1:21.

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Literally as a deposit which guarantees that the full amount is going to be paid. That is the idea of the term.

Now this speaks both of Christ's unending mediatorial, intercessory work as our great high priest who steadfastly secures our inheritance, but it also speaks of the indwelling Spirit of God who is our pledge, our indwelling guarantee, if you will.

And in 2 Corinthians five verse five he says that he gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.

He says in Ephesians one at the end of verse 13:

"...you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise."²⁴

The term "seal" speaks of a stamp of ownership.

"...you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."²⁵

The Holy Spirit is the stamp that we are the possession of God. And, beloved, this is not some ethereal, abstract doctrine. This is something that we experience. You will recall what Paul said in verses 16 and 17 of Romans eight that:

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ."²⁶

Now think about this for a second. Do you not enjoy the fruit of the Spirit that we see listed in Galatians five? Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control? Don't you see some measure of that in your life? Well, of course you do. Do you not find your heart overflowing with praise when you reflect upon the doctrines of grace and when you sing and you worship and you commune with the Lord in prayer?

Of course you do. Do you not love to fellowship with other believers? Do you not long for the life giving, life sustaining milk of the Word of God? Of course you do. Do you not love to tell others about the gospel of grace and are you not willing to suffer for Christ, come what may, knowing the glory that awaits you? Well of course you do. All of these things and many more are marks of those who have the first fruits of the Spirit. These are all samples of a spiritual harvest that will one day be fully realized in glory.

²³ 2 Corinthians 1:22.

²⁴ Ephesians 1:13.

²⁵ Ephesians 1:13-14.

²⁶ Romans 8:16-17.

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As I was meditating upon this passage, the great hymn came to my mind, the chorus:

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine.
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

So, beloved, this is the current experience of the first fruits of the Spirit. But, oh, how much more the harvest one day?

Now to suggest that a man could lose his salvation implies that somehow the sealing work of the Spirit of God is deficient. It would also suggest that his pledge really cannot be trusted. Moreover, we would see, therefore, that he is only a potential first fruit, subject to the will of man, not of God. And it would certainly also reject Jesus' very clear statement concerning our security in John 6:37.

“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.”²⁷

This is why Paul would say in Philippians 1:6:

“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”²⁸

What an enormous comfort all of this must have been to those early saints and what a comfort it is to all of us who continue to struggle with our sin, right? To know that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, to know as Paul said in Romans eight and nine that the Spirit of God dwells in you, that we experience the first fruits of the Spirit, the beginning of what is certain to come, for which we groan, for which we eagerly await, namely our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

And what an encouragement this great doctrine must have been to Peter who was so profoundly aware of his sin, who would later write under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in 1 Peter one verse three:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in

²⁷ John 6:37.

²⁸ Philippians 1:6.

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heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.²⁹

And then he closes and says:

“In this you greatly rejoice...”³⁰

Absolutely.

How sad it is to see Christian people struggle with their assurance of salvation, many times clinging to certain passages of Scripture that they misinterpret as if they are trying to do everything they can to come up with passages that would say, “Well, yeah, you can lose your salvation and you really can't have any assurance,” as if they are desperate to believe such an error.

Then what happens is they end up joining Christian and his friend Hopeful, remember in *Pilgrim's Progress*? Remember they were seized by Giant Despair. They were thrown into Doubting Castle because of a defective faith. They were uncertain about the object of their faith. They had lost their understanding of the securing work of the triune God, thinking that somehow that must be deficient, that somehow their salvation was up to them. And then you will recall that Giant Despair had a wife whose name was Diffidence. And she insisted that he go in there and beat Christian and Hopeful without mercy, to ridicule them and cast insults at them, to do everything he could to cause them to mourn with bitter lamentation over having lost their salvation.

How tragic to see people fall into this error. And you could only pray that somehow they would come to the same place that Christian and Hopeful did in the great allegory. You will remember finally when the misery was so great, Christian was ready to commit suicide and then we read how he began to pray for discernment. And they prayed together all night and then Bunyan says this, quote, “Then Christian short time before daylight became astounded and passionately exclaimed, ‘What a fool I am. Here I lie in a stinking dungeon when I could be walking in complete liberty. I have a key in my pocket called promise that I am sure will open any lock in Doubting Castle,’” end quote. In other words, I have got a key here that says there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. I have the indwelling Spirit of God as my seal and as my pledge. I experience the first fruits of all of this. What am I doing moaning here as if I have lost everything?

In Hebrews chapter six the writer there tells us beginning in verse 17:

In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to

²⁹ 1 Peter 1:3-5.

³⁰ 1 Peter 1:6.

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lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil.³¹

This is part of the key that Christian and hopeful realized they had in their pockets.

And, beloved, this is the hope that we have in the Spirit. This is the first installment of our salvation that we groan over. Notice in verse 23.

“...waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”³²

Now, as God's inherited children, we know biblically that we are eagerly awaiting the full measure of our inheritance, the full accomplishment of our redemption. We are anxiously awaiting the perfect freedom of a sinless body, a sinless universe, again, of which the indwelling Spirit is our first fruit, the blessed foretaste of glory, the guarantee of God's promise.

Now he speaks here of the redemption of our body. As we look at Scripture we learn that our souls, our inner being has already been perfectly outfitted for heaven. It is an amazing thought. We are fully redeemed. We have been made new creatures in Christ, right? The old things have passed away. The new things have come, 2 Peter 1:4. We have become partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. But not so our body. That is another issue all together.

You see, our souls remain incarcerated in the shell of unredeemed humanness. Earlier Paul explained in Romans six, verses five and six that if we, referring to believers, have become united with him, referring to Christ in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall also... we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

“...knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.”³³

So you might think of it this way. We are holy seeds in an unholy shell waiting to be free. This is why Paul said in Romans seven verse 15:

“I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.”³⁴

³¹ Hebrews 6:17-19.

³² Romans 8:23.

³³ Romans 6:6.

³⁴ Romans 7:15.

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Boy, can't you all identify with that? I get so frustrated over that.

In verse 22 he says:

For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.³⁵

Again, we can all identify with this. This is the battle between the flesh and the spirit that Paul talks about in Galatians five. Remember in verse 17 he says:

“For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit.”³⁶

There is a battle that goes on there.

“... and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”³⁷

I cannot imagine how wonderful it will be someday when that battle is forever ended. So until then, we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

Paul said in Philippians three verse 20:

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.³⁸

You know, it is fun to speculate on what our glorified body will be like. But, frankly, that is all it really is, is speculation. It exceeds the limits of our imagination, because it exceeds the reality of our experience. How can you explain something you have never experienced? We know that heaven will be a place biblically. We see that it will be a place that will transcend the limits of time and space. There will be no gravity or electromagnetic force like we are accustomed to. It is going to be a perfect universe that is not water based. And yet we are still going to somehow have a body that functions like Christ's glorified body, not limited to time, not limited to space.

Paul speaks about this a little bit in 1 Corinthians 15 beginning in verse 35. He said:

³⁵ Romans 7:62-23.

³⁶ Galatians 5:17.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Philippians 3:20-21.

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But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?" You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.³⁹

The analogy here is that of a seed. I did a little research. I found that currently scientists believe that if you take all of the plants in the world you end up with about 350,000 that they have identified and they believe there are many others that they have not identified.

Now, if you were to take just those 350,000 seeds and lay them all on the table and mix them all up and then pick up a handful of them and look at all of those seeds, would you be able to tell what that seed is going to look like when it is fully grown? No way possible. Paul's point is our physical bodies are like these seeds. You cannot merely look at the seed and from that determine what it is going to be like when it is fully glorified.

Certainly, I hope it is going to be a lot better looking than it is now.

But then he adds something fascinating in verse 39. He says:

"All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish."⁴⁰

In other words, although there are enormous variations in the animal kingdom, without exception because of their genetic code, every living species will produce the same species. Like will always produce like. You can't take, for example, a horse and a cow and breed them together and come up with a whatever or a dog and a cat. I mean, always you are going to see the same species. And so likewise, we will ultimately bear the resemblance of our current state and yet like the plant and animal world, variations will be myriad. Isn't that clarifying? Isn't that helpful? Now you know what you are going to look like, right?

He elaborates on this more. Verse 40.

There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.⁴¹

³⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:35-38.

⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:39.

⁴¹ 1 Corinthians 15:40-41.

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So, again, with the staggering variation of all that God has created, it is impossible to guess what we will finally look like, what we will finally be like. But he does tell us that our glorified body is going to include at least four things. Notice verse 42.

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body.”⁴²

In other words, it is going to be a body that is not subject to illness, not subject to death.

Verse 43.

“...it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory.”⁴³

It is going to be imperishable. It is also going to be raised in glory.

“... it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.”⁴⁴

Verse 44:

“... it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”⁴⁵

In other words, it is not going to be a body that is limited to the realm of the material like Christ's resurrected body. You will recall that he could appear suddenly even in rooms with locked doors and then he could vanish just as quickly. And yet at the same time he broke bread and he ate and I remember he ate fish and cooked fish and distributed food. People could touch him.

Are those sighs that I hear? Don't you long for that?

Verse 45.

So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.⁴⁶

⁴² 1 Corinthians 15:42.

⁴³ 1 Corinthians 15:43.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:44.

⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:45-49.

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Oh, dear Christian, this is the promise. This is the certain hope in which we persevere.

Now back in Romans eight as we close this this morning, verse 24, Paul says:

“For in home we have been saved.”⁴⁷

Now, again, keep in mind. This is the hope of absolute certainty, of unwavering certainty. This is the hope that was described earlier in Hebrews six, the hope that we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast. This is also the, quote, helmet, the hope of salvation, 1 Thessalonians 5:8. This is the eager hope that we have. We are waiting for that which is certain to be accomplished.

Then he goes on to explain, verse 24:

“...but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees?”⁴⁸

Obviously he is saying if we could see and experience our glorification right now, hoping for it would be absurd. So obviously we are hoping for that which is going to come. And what is the basis? What is the surety of that hope? It is the promises of God. All these things that Paul has declared over and over in so many ways, promises that are even more certain than the things that we can see, than the things that we can experience, remembering that salvation is a work of God from start to finish.

Verse 25.

“But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance...”⁴⁹

A term that literally means unwavering endurance, without losing confidence...

“But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.”⁵⁰

I am reminded of what Paul said in Titus two verse 13. We are:

“... looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us.”⁵¹

Oh, dear child of God, keep growing with all your pain, with all your sorrow, with all your frustration, your persecution. Keep sighing in frustration and anticipation knowing

⁴⁷ Romans 8:24.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Romans 8:25.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Titus 2:13-14.

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that some day you are going to be liberated from all of our sin and your physical infirmities and you are going to see Christ the lover of your soul face to face. So with perseverance wait eagerly for it and do as Peter said in 1 Peter three verse 14:

“... but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.”⁵²

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. May we meditate upon them. May they bring great joy to our hearts as we continue to sigh in frustration over this world of sin and shame and sorrow and death, but also sigh with that great anticipation when you will come and deliver us from it. And, Lord, especially we pray for those who may be within the sound of my voice that know nothing of the Savior. Lord, as always, we plead with you that you will overwhelm them with conviction. May they see the sword of divine justice looming over their head. May they realize that the wrath of God abides upon them, that they must repent and cry out to you for the mercy that you will grant to those who are broken over their sin and trust in you as their only hope of salvation. Lord, we pray that you will grant to this the praise of your glory. For it is in Jesus' name that we pray and for his sake. Amen.

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⁵² 1 Peter 3:15.