

Life in a Genesis 3 World
Romans 8:18-25 (06/16/13)
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There is only one book that explains life and this world as it really is. It's not the Koran or the Book of Mormon or Origin of Species or any other religious writings. No, it's the Bible. Without the truths of the Bible we are like the people in H. G. Wells's short story, "The Country of the Blind." The poor people were blind for fourteen generations and had no idea they were blind. People without the Bible in their hearts are blind like people without eyes in their heads.

FOUR OVERARCHING TRUTHS

How does the Bible explain life and this world? There are four overarching truths that cover the entire Bible and explain all of life. The world has its lies to deny each one.

Creation, or how we got here, is the first truth. The Bible clearly tells us God created everything in six days. Buy this truth and sell it not. The world says no, everything came into existence by time and chance and somehow something came out of nothing and here we are billions of years later.

Second, the fall of man happened and that is why things are the way they are now. Adam and Eve's sin caused a spiritual and physical devastating explosion resulting in our Genesis 3 world. Everything is different after Genesis 3. We get sick, we suffer pain, and we die. Acts of God wipe out whole towns and villages, tsunamis sweep hundreds of thousands of people into eternity, evil people do all kinds of evil things. No sooner had Adam and Eve rebelled against God than their first born son murdered his brother! Polygamy and total world corruption followed. The flood reduced us down to eight people. But again, drunkenness, lies, homosexuality, rape, all kinds of sexual perversions, and brother cheating and betraying brother became the norm. And that's just the first book in this library of sixty-six books! The lie says man is not sinful, but basically good and should be given opportunity to experience any pleasure he or she pleases. The lie says there's no such thing as sin and guilt, only syndromes and guilt feelings.

Third, redemption is God's plan to deliver us from the penalty, power, and ultimately presence of our sin. God's plan began unfolding in Genesis and appeared on the stage of human history in Jesus Christ. Our Creator entered the human race, lived a perfect life, died in the place of guilty sinners, and now is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to God the Father except through Christ. The world says no, we don't need to be saved and every religion will get us to whatever God there may or may not be.

Consummation is the fourth overarching truth. We are headed somewhere. We are not just spiraling through time. We are not just material beings who cease to exist when we die. No, human beings are eternal. There's a final judgment coming where all men will give account of their lives and justice will be served. There's an eternity for each of us either under the judgment of God or in the glory and joy of God's presence.

Our passage this morning deals with all of these truths, but focuses on the second truth, how to live in a Genesis 3 world. Paul has extolled the glories of justification by faith alone and the greater blessing of adoption into the family of God as sons and daughters. We are heirs and glory sharers together with Christ. But we are suffering. We're hurting. People are being killed. Friends are coming down with cancer. Parents are aging and experiencing dementia or Alzheimer's. People are being persecuted around the world for the name of Christ. Nancy Guthrie wrote *Holding On To Hope* , in which she describes her and her husband's experience of bringing not one, but two babies into this world with Zellweger syndrome. The first was named Hope. There's no cure. They only had each of them for about a year. How does this fit in with being in Christ? Paul here reminds us, though we are justified and adopted in Christ, we must

remember we live in a Genesis 3 world. And lest we lose heart, he gives us three perspectives to guide us.

Compare Your Genesis 3 World Suffering with Your Future Glory – vv. 18-21.

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.

Let's think with Paul as he considers the difference between "this present time" and what is coming in the future. Paul knew about suffering. He was stoned and left for dead outside Lystra. He spent years in prison. He was betrayed. He finally had to submit to the Roman sword. He knew these Roman believers would suffer. There would be ten waves of persecution to sweep across the Roman Empire within the next 250 years or so. Christians would be hated and despised, tortured, thrown to wild beasts, burned, and suffer horribly.

Paul knows all God's people will suffer. Just being in these bodies and living in a "this present time" Genesis 3 world guarantees suffering. Peter talks about this same "present time" in 1 Peter 1:6, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now *for a little while*, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials." These trials can be exceedingly distressing. Ask Job who lost everything in mere moments. Ask John Calvin who endured excruciating pain from kidney stones. Ask Spurgeon with his gout. Ask B. B. Warfield who saw his new bride struck down with a life-long disease that required his daily care while he taught at Princeton Seminary.

We live in a Genesis 3 world and we must face it squarely. Why is there evil, suffering, horror of every sort, some inflicted by evil people, some because our bodies are under the curse of sin, providential acts of nature or "acts of God?" Car wrecks alone kill over 100 people every day. A family was recently returning home to Kansas from a vacation in Florida. They had a layover in Birmingham and as they walked through the airport a sign fell on them severely injuring Mom, five-year old Tyler, eight-year old Sam, and worse of all, killed ten-year old Luke! How do you live with that? You trust God and understand this is a Genesis 3 world, where suddenly tragedy changes everything.

But notice what Paul says. We must compare our present suffering with coming glory. Our suffering here looks horrendous and it is hard. But as we stand back and measure it in the light of our future glory, it is a drop in the ocean. Turn to 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 and let's lay the contrasts of this present time and eternity side by side. Paul says, "Don't lose heart about what's happening to you now. Remember present suffering and future glory."

- You've got an outer man and an inner man.
- You're decaying and renewing.
- There's momentary and eternal.
- There's light and heavy.
- There's affliction and glory.
- There're things seen and things not seen.
- There's temporal and there's eternal.

The eternal must captivate our hearts and fill our hopes. Paul says even creation is looking forward to it, verses 19-21.

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.

CREATION LOOKS FOWARD

Here's a fascinating thing. All creation is pointing forward to and looking forward to that consummation. You've probably enjoyed Discovery Channel's "Planet Earth." It's advertised like this: "See stunning footage of the natural world and explore the marvels of our planet." Sadly, most of the brilliant minds and skills behind these documentaries have no idea they're looking at God's handiwork and that all those penguins and humming birds and whales are shouting, "God made us! We eat each other now because this is a Genesis 3 world, but we're excited about what's coming down the road!"

See those words "anxious longing?" It's a sesquipedalian word of seven syllables and means creation is watching with head stretched out, looking intensely. "Waits eagerly" has the idea of going out the front walk and looking down the road. When our kids were little and grandparents were coming for a visit from Pennsylvania, they'd get on their bikes about 6 pm and head down the road, around the corner, and even down to the next corner to get their first glimpse of Grammy and Pop Pop. They were anxiously longing and eagerly waiting for Grammy and Pop Pop's arrival, along with all the goodies they always brought!

And what is creation waiting for? It is waiting for Christ's return and the public revealing of His people. In this Genesis 3 world believers are marginalized and minimized and mocked and worse, but soon God is going to display them off to this entire world. He's going to "unveil" who His people really are! I sure hope you're part of that unveiling.

CREATION IS SUBJECT TO FUTILITY

I don't understand this, but when Adam and Eve sinned, the effect was a universe-wide catastrophe. God's grace keeps things going while under the curse of sin, but sin's effects are still seen all over the place with Katrinas and Sandys and tornadoes and decade-long draughts. God subjected creation to futility. The earth is creaking with earthquakes and spewing deadly lava in places. The moon with all its craters looks like someone was using it for target practice. God subjected this fallen creation to futility, which means empty, aimless. The second law of thermodynamics is certainly a part of this. Everything is rotting, rusting, ruining, and running down, right? Nature struggles to be fruitful, but all kinds of bugs and insects and blight attack it. Go get your insecticides and weed killers and fungus preventers at Rural King – the shelves are heavy with every imaginable weapon to fight the Genesis 3 curse.

There's a lot of really neat stuff in this old world, but keep your gun handy. It's a Genesis 3 world with evil lurking around the corner. Ask Jan Cooper of Anaheim, California. She and her veteran husband were enjoying a quiet evening a short while back when suddenly a burglar tried to enter. Jan called 911, grabbed her Smith and Wesson revolver, warned the guy, and, as she said, "blasted away." She missed him, but the police got him. This is the kind of world we live in.

Creation exists in hope of coming freedom when Christ returns and frees His people completely from the corruption of sin and brings them into all this glory God has planned for them. It's going to be beyond all imagination. Will there be animals in this future glory? Here's what Calvin said, "Some subtle men, but hardly sober-minded, inquire whether all kinds of animals will be immortal." There will be animals in the millennium, but I don't know about the coming eternal glory.

Here's one application while living in this Genesis 3 world – don't put your eggs in the basket of this present time; they will rot! That's what Jesus said. If you lay up treasure on earth, it will rot or rust or you'll get ripped off. You lose. God left you here to display the coming glory. You are a marker of grace, a sign that this isn't the final story. You're just in the preface and introduction. Death is awful, but like in C. S. Lewis' Final Battle of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, when you get to this glory, chapter one begins!

Second, Groaning Is Normal in this Genesis 3 World – vv. 22-23

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.

Two groups are groaning here, and both are groaning because stuff is messed up and out of sync. But something infinitely better is coming. Notice that the entire creation isn't groaning and suffering in death throes, but in childbirth. Something is coming! Creation groans today for the coming of a grand spanking new heaven and earth! Will it be an absolutely new universe or a renewed one with sin finally purged completely from it? When God's great plan is finally completed, I'm thinking it will be a renewed earth, one that is even better than before. "According to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

Believers are groaning too. Why? God has already secured us by putting His Spirit in us as first fruits. First fruits means there are more fruits coming. Much, much more is coming. We're groaning because we're not yet finished. God redeemed our souls and adopted our spirits and secured us by giving us His Spirit, but our bodies haven't been redeemed and adopted yet. We are waiting eagerly for this (v. 23). It's that same word of going out and looking down the road. In this case, we are to keep our eyes on the heavens because He'll break through the blue sometime soon and every living and dead believer will be snatched up, and we'll be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, and we shall be glorified into perfection just like Christ's body. No more funeral homes or hospitals or doctors or nurses or pharmaceutical companies or crutches or wheelchairs. No more health insurance.

Let me put two things together for us here. We should be groaning because we know there is more to come, but we should also be rejoicing because we know it will come. We should be joyful groaners. That's the definition of a Christian. Last week we were part of the Dead Dog Society. Now we're the Joyful Groaners. If all we are in this Genesis 3 world is giddy happy clappy, we don't understand this world. We aren't facing the realities of weeping with those who weep. But if all we're doing is groaning, talking about how awful this world is, how everything's going to hell in a hand bag, and it's all getting worse and our chins are scraping the ground, we've got our eyes on the wrong prize. We've lost sight of Christ and His glorious gospel with its coming glory. We are to rejoice and groan at the same time. Is that you?

Third, Hope Will Keep You Going through this Genesis 3 World – vv. 24-25.

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.

We've been saved in hope, which means we don't have it all now. Salvation is not "our best life now." God has given us a lot, but like Christmas for a youngster, there's so much more to come and we hang in there, knowing God will make good on all He promised. So we live by hope, a confident expectation based on God's promise. It's not just a "Well, I sure hope I make it!" No, God's people have a living hope with Christ already there and coming again!

Are you living with that hope? When the suffering of this present time hits you full force, where will you look? Have you built your house on the rock Jesus Christ so when the storms and winds beat your house, you stand firm? Or will you fall down, like the guy with his house on the sand?

The gospel song had it right:

*While we walk this pilgrim pathway
Clouds will overspread the sky;
But when trav'ling days are over
Not a shadow, not a sigh.
When we all get to heaven
What a day of rejoicing that will be.*

*When we all see Jesus,
We'll sing and shout the victory.*