

God Sustains and Will Redeem “All Things”: Rom 8:18-25

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Covenant Church

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Romans 8:18-25

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰ for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; ²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

A. Introduction

This sermon series, last week’s message, today

B. God “sustains” and “reconciles” “all things”

Col 1:15-20 ¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶ for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—***all things have been created*** through him and ***for him***. ¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and ***in him all things hold together***. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and ***through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things***, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

(1) All things ***created*** “for” him; (2) All things ***hold together*** “in” him; (3) All things ***reconciled to God*** “through” him

C. God will redeem “all things”?

1. The most provocative, least certain text: Col 1:23a

Col 1:23b provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, ***which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven...***

Should it be translated “in all creation” (ESV, NAS) rather than “to every creature” (NRSV, RSV, NIV)?

“What would it look like, practically speaking, to proclaim the gospel to rivers, redwoods, raccoons and roaches? Is our presence on earth good news for all the creatures with which we live?” —Bahnsen and Wirzba¹

2. Provocative but not definitive: Neuter pronouns

Acts 3:19–21 ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, ²⁰ so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is, Jesus, ²¹ who must remain in heaven until **the time of universal restoration** [better: “restoration of all things”] that God announced long ago through his holy prophets.

Mark 9:12 He said to them, “Elijah is indeed coming first to **restore all things**...”

Rev 21:5a And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, **I am making all things new**” ...

3. The major passage: Romans 8 and three observations

- Distinction between “Creation” and “children”
- An implicit narrative—past, present, future—that parallels humanity’s story: “was subjected to futility” (past) → “is waiting with eager longing” (present) → “will be set free” (future)
- An “imbalance” between “Creation” and humanity: (1) Creation subjected “not of its own will” and (2) must await human liberation

4. What does “was subjected to futility” and in “bondage to decay” mean?

Genesis 3—or more than this?

Gen 3:17–18 ¹⁷ And to the man he said,
“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,
and have eaten of the tree
about which I commanded you,
‘You shall not eat of it,’
cursed is the ground because of you;
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

Isa 24:4-6 ⁴ The earth dries up and withers,
the world languishes and withers;
the heavens languish together with the earth.

⁵ The earth lies polluted
under its inhabitants;
for they have transgressed laws,
violated the statutes,
broken the everlasting covenant.

⁶ Therefore a curse devours the earth,
and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt;
therefore the inhabitants of the earth dwindled,
and few people are left.

5. What does liberation for “Creation” mean?

Situate in the bigger story!

Isa 11:6-9 ⁶ The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

⁹ They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

Mark 1:13 [Jesus] was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Hos 2:18 I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety.

Isaiah 65:21–22

²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

²² They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

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²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
but the serpent—its food shall be dust!

They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,
says the LORD.

Isa 66:22–23 ²² For as the new heavens and the new earth,
which I will make,
shall remain before me, says the LORD;
so shall your descendants and your name remain.

²³ From new moon to new moon,
and from sabbath to sabbath,
all flesh shall come to worship before me,
says the LORD.

Question: What is one thing that God may have said to you through this sermon?

¹ Fred Bahnsen and Norman Wirzba, *Making Peace with the Land: God's Call to Reconcile with Creation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012).