

Asking for a Friend, Environmental Armageddon

Message Outline

Romans 8:18-27 (NIV)

Present Suffering and Future Glory

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

Go to www.menti.com and enter code 18 45 1

_____ for _____ not to _____ it, but to _____ to God's _____.

God has _____ creation. Salvation means _____

John 3:16: For God so loved the _____ that he gave his only son.

God is _____ creation

In the Time of the _____, the time in between the Kingdom of God _____ and the Kingdom of God _____ is described as: a _____ in _____ and _____

In the Time of the _____, the time in between Creation _____ and Creation _____ is described as: a _____ in _____ and _____

We are now called to _____ in God's salvation. This means we _____ for God's creation beside we are called to _____ and because we are _____.

God will _____ creation

Until complete _____ and _____, the _____,
and _____ all _____ together.

Application:

_____ for _____

_____ in God's _____. Who is your _____?

Soul Food Day 1

Scripture

Romans 8:18-27 (NIV)

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The Groaning of Creation

For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

In [Romans 8:22](#), "all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth." The Greek original uses two verbs here: *sustenazein*, which means "to groan or sigh with" someone, and *sunodinein*, which means "to share in labor pains with" someone. Why is creation in such agony? Because it was "subjected to God's curse" as a result of human sin (v. 20; see [Gen. 3:16-19](#)). Yet the groaning of creation is not a permanent condition. Like a woman experiencing pain in childbirth, the suffering of the present moment is permeated by the hope of something wonderful that is coming. In time, creation itself will be set free from "death and decay" (v. 21). When God's new creation comes, the time of groaning will be over and the age of rejoicing

will begin.

We see evidence of creation's groaning all around us. When hurricanes devastate coastal cities or earthquakes destroy hospitals and schools, we witness the groaning of the natural world. We also long for the day when the brokenness of this world will be mended. Yet we don't simply sit back and watch the unfolding of the cosmic drama. In fact, God has chosen us to participate in his work of renewing the cosmos. Thus, even as we watch the horrors of natural catastrophes, we also bring relief to their victims and seek to rebuild in a way that will protect people in the future. Our original stewardship over God's perfect creation ([Gen. 1:28-29](#)) now involves partnership with God in mending the brokenness of the earth. Yet we do this, not with an audacity that assumes we can fix all that's wrong with the world. Rather, we rely upon God's power at work through us and labor in the hope of the full renewal of creation that's yet to come. Let's Pray:

I can see the groaning of creation all around me, in floods and drought, in hurricanes and earthquakes, in famine and pollution, in pestilence and climate change. When the brokenness of the world hurts people, it's easy to share in the groaning. Sometimes I wonder why you don't move more quickly to fix things. Yet I must confess, Lord, that it's easy for me just to sit back in my unhappiness with creation, rather than to join you in the process of mending it. Preserve me from shirking my duty as a steward of your creation. At the same time, Lord, keep me from an arrogance that fails to recognize that you alone can bring this broken world to complete wholeness.

Today I want to pray especially for those who have been victims of natural disasters. I think of many whose homes have been destroyed by recent hurricanes, earthquakes, ice storms, and wildfires. Help them, Lord. Grant them your peace. Continue to mobilize your people to reach out with tangible love to those who are suffering. Amen.

When have you experienced the “groaning” of this world? How are you partnering with God in the renewal of his creation?

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1. What did you hear? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged?
3. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?

Now talk to Jesus.

Adapted from: <https://www.theologyofwork.org/the-high-calling/daily-reflection/groaning-creation-0>

Soul Food Day 2

Psalm 24:1-2 (NIV)

¹The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;

²for he founded it on the seas
and established it on the waters.

Championing Hope in Environmental Crisis

We have been hearing a lot about threats to the environment. Is this merely the opinion of environmental fanatics or is our world facing real crises? Often people tune out the warnings. It's so confusing. It can't be that bad. It's a shame other people are trashing the earth, but what does this have to do with me. There are enough pressing social problems to keep me busy for a lifetime. What good does it do to worry about

the environment? The earth is a big place and one person can do very little. It is understandable that people react this way. But Christians cannot ignore the prospect that the environment is being seriously harmed by our industrial/consumer way of life.

As Psalm 24 tells us, “the earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.” We are called by God to treasure and care for the earth as a sacred trust. Jesus instructed us to “love our neighbor as ourselves.” Harm to the earth brings harm to people, and we are responsible for each other’s well being. God requires that we deal justly with one another. Environmental harm falls most heavily on the poor, and will fall even more heavily on those yet to be born. We are only now coming to recognize many of the ways our industrial/consumer society is harming the earth and its people. One of the most challenging is global warming: a rise in the earth’s temperature because gases that trap heat are being added to the atmosphere by human activity. Global warming has been hard to detect with certainty. Its effects are delayed. It is irreversible on a human time scale. Everything on earth will be affected in ways that cannot be known until they happen. We know that only God can save the earth and fix these large problems, he does invite us into his saving work as his stewards.

Moderns tend to separate the physical realm from the spiritual, the body from the soul. For many reasons moderns forget that Jews and early Christians could never picture Heaven and Earth as separate. The heavens and the earth were one inseparable creation of God, just as dust and Spirit were mingled to create the human being as an inseparable whole (Gen.2:6). The mystery of Christ in creation is that the incarnation joins Heaven and Earth all the more inseparably. God enters creation in Christ, who takes on human creatureliness though he is not created himself. Christ is “eternally begotten, not made”,¹⁸ yet he takes on human creatureliness in every other respect: our locatedness in geographic place, our cultural identity and history, our embodiment and sexuality, our moral accountability, our wills, emotions, and intellect, and even our creaturely mortality (Philippians 2: 5-11). Jesus adopts creatureliness in birth, childhood, adult life, death and resurrection, and in his embodied ascension into Heaven. Thus, the Gospel story gives us a mysterious answer to our why questions and tells us the greatest secret of history (Mark 4:11, 1 Cor. 2:7-10). In Christ, God destroys the power of sin (Eph. 2:16, Col. 2:14) lifts the curse on creation (Rev. 22:3 cf. Rom. 8:20, Gen. 3:17), makes creation holy (John 17:19, 1 Tim 4:5) and reconciles everything in creation to himself (Col. 1:15-20). In other words, in the story of Christ and in true encounter with Jesus, God’s will to reconcile creation is done on Earth, as he had planned in Heaven. In the face of global extinctions and environmental contamination, this Christian hope is unique. Christians can live with courage and grace knowing that Christ will not separate himself from his holy purpose for creation. Christians hoping this scandalous hope know why we find ourselves here at this challenging moment - to live out Christ’s goal of reconciling all things in creation to God (Eph. 1:9-12).

Through Christ, the firstborn of all creation, we have tremendous hope!

Application

1. What did you hear? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged?
3. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?

Now talk to Jesus.

Adapted from:

<https://atyourservice.arocha.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/christian-hope-environmental-crisis.pdf>;
https://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/Gods_World.pdf

Soul Food Day 3

Scripture

Romans 8:18-27 (NIV)

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26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. **27** And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

The Living Word

The Bible is a book of knowledge but it is also a living word. This means that the Bible not only enriches our minds, but it also penetrates our hearts (see Hebrews 4:12). Sometimes when we focus so much on what the Bible says we sometimes miss what God is trying to say to us right now. That is why sometimes we just need to carve our space, often in silence, to mediate on scripture. That is what we will do today: mediate and rest in scripture. We will be there to guide you. Read the scripture slowly and then sit in still silence for one-minute resting in God. We will give you questions you can ask to God, however, allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart what he wants in this time. Let's pray, *Father God guide us we seek You in your word.*

Read Romans 8:18-27

Do you ever groan? Why?

Sit and listen in silence for 1 minute

Read Romans 8:18-27

How does creation groan? How do your groans relate to creation's groans?

Sit and listen in silence for 1 minute

Read Romans 8:18-27

The Holy Spirit groaning on your behalf and on behalf of all creation. Why is he groaning?

Sit and listen in silence for 1 minute

Pray to God

Application

1. What did you hear? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
 2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged?
 3. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?
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Soul Food Day 4

Scripture

2 Peter 3:9-13 (NIV)

⁹ *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.^[a]*

¹¹ *Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.^[b] That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.*

Comfort for Climate Anxiety

Many people are [feeling a lot of anxiety about climate change](#). There are even strikes among school children aimed at raising awareness about the issues. These two words—“climate change”—represent a lot more than a surface reading. “Climate” is the broad word used to describe relative geographical temperatures and weather patterns. “Change” is just that. A change. And that change is causing people around the world to become very worried.

When I speak with friends from other parts of Canada there is often an assumption that the bitumen-based oil-sands (or tar sands/dirty oil if you prefer) cannot be anything but a massive expression of the polluting curse.

I could make an argument in favour of fossil fuels generally. Or I could note that it is fossil fuel that heats my friends’ homes and powers all of the unnoticed networks that supply their needs. Or I could mention the hyper-sensitive procedures the oil extractors now use that aim to reclaim ground in better condition than it was before.

But there are really two key factors which drive me to support realistic thinking about fossil fuels and their circumspect use: people and promises.

First, the oil business is made up of people, dads and mums who work to provide the means for our needs to be met—from stocking our supermarkets to heating our furnaces. It’s a strange sight to see people driving vans to a rally that want to shut down the jobs of the people that gave them their means of transportation.

Our church prays regularly for people who are unemployed. The callous may say—get a different job. But that is where the utopian aspirations bump up against the realities of local compassion. I pray that the oil companies would start hiring again because many families are struggling.

The second factor that makes me think realistically about climate change is the promises of God. Even if God is going to use the climate catastrophe as part of the means of bringing his final judgement, there is a climate security that he has ensured until then. He made a promise to Noah, after the subsiding of the flood and the covenant ratified by the rainbow in the sky. God said:

While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.” [Genesis 8:22](#)

So the earth will remain—for a time. During that interim, we must use the earth's resources responsibly, but use them we must. For if we ignore the resources God has given us, then we run the danger of showing contempt for God as well as our neighbour.

The exhortations of Peter remind us that:

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. [2 Peter 3:9](#)

As many people, especially young people, are being gripped by what is described as “[eco-anxiety](#)”, Christians need to offer an alternative eschatology. Our hope resides beyond this earth. As Peter concludes, since the world will end we ought to live holy lives!! We ought to share God's love to the earth.

Let us be good stewards of the earth, but let us set our deepest hopes on heaven, delighting to see our Lord Jesus face to face for eternity.

Application

1. What did you hear? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged?
3. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?

Adapted from:

<https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/columns/cowboyology/comfort-climate-change-anxiety/>

Soul Food Day 5

Scripture

Romans 8:18-27 (NIV)

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Creation's Groans Are Not Meaningless

When humanity fell into sin, the created order shared somehow in that fall ([Rom. 8:20](#)). It's now “subjected to frustration.” Nature isn't what it ought to be or what it was created to be. It's alienated, both from us (who were meant to live in harmony with nature, as its directors, or rulers—see Gen. 1:29), and from itself. It's become frustrated, not by its own choice, but by “the will of the one who subjected it” ([Rom.](#)

[8:20](#)). This refers to God, since the subjection was accompanied by “hope” of liberation ([Rom. 8:20–21](#)). This is why creation can wait “in eager expectation.”

For now, though, creation is in “bondage to decay” ([Rom. 8:21](#)). It’s caught in a continuous cycle of death and decomposition. It’s wonderful to see how nature’s life-giving quality continually seeks to reestablish itself, bringing new life out of death (e.g., flowers grow from the fertilizer of dead organisms). But everything in nature wears down and dies. And so nature is a realm of pain and suffering. It “has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth” ([Rom. 8:22](#)). There’s relentless pain that comes from first to last, as things decay. In this creation, no experience is untainted by pain, even if it’s only the pain of knowing the experience cannot last.

Creation Will Be Liberated

But none of this is the last word. “The creation itself will be liberated . . . and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” ([Rom. 8:21](#)). Instead of frustration, there will be fulfillment. When we consider the majesty and greatness of the oceans, mountains, valleys, forests, and so on now, it staggers the mind to imagine what the world will be like when it’s free to be itself! And instead of pain, there will be only joy. This is why the best metaphor for the current state of creation is childbirth ([Rom. 8:22](#); [Matt. 24:8](#)). The pangs aren’t meaningless because the world is giving birth to a new version of itself.

This is the future—the fulfilling, renewing, joy-giving future—creation can look forward to since it’s the future God’s children look forward to. This is Paul’s answer to the question about whether our future glory makes our present sufferings worth bearing. Even creation, he observes, urges you to say yes!

We aren’t there yet, but we will be. And in [Romans 8:23](#), Paul points us to something sons of God already have, and something they don’t. We “have the firstfruits of the Spirit.” The firstfruits of an incoming harvest were, quite literally, the first batch—the foretaste of what was to come. Presently, the Spirit is making us internally alive ([Rom. 8:10](#)). He is giving us gradual and internal freedom from the effects of sin and death, slowly making us more like Christ ([Rom. 8:29](#)). But this is only the firstfruits—just a taste of the total freedom from the effects of sin and death in our bodies and spirits the Spirit will one day give us. This will come only when we have what we currently do not and yet eagerly await: “our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” ([Rom. 8:23](#)). Though we’re legally adopted, we’ve not yet received the fullness of family resemblance. We’ve not yet enjoyed the final celebration of our status—but we will.

We know all our best days lie ahead and all our painful days will lie behind us then. And so, even on our worst days and in our hardest moments, we know this: *It is worth it.*

Application

1. What did you hear? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged?
3. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?

Now talk to Jesus.

Adapted from: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/creations-groans-are-not-meaningless/>

houseChurch Material

**Have different readers share the verse from 2 or more translations
Reflect between each reading**

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Application

1. What did you hear during the reading? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
1. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged from the reading?
1. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?
1. Share any of the above discoveries with your houseChurch. Ask each other, "What is your nugget?"

Discussion Questions

1. Many commentators define salvation as healing. In this way, salvation extends to all creation as God brings his healing through the gospel of Jesus. How would you define salvation and what does your definition mean for all creation?
2. What do you think it means when it says 'creation groans'? (See Matthew 24) How is humanity responsible in bringing creation to futility?
3. Salvation through Jesus is here now – which means healing starts now – but it is not fully here – which means creation experiences corruption and decay. How can Christians participate in God's healing? Should we?

Now talk to Jesus