

Romans 8:18-25

Creation Groans

Paul frames his statement about man's relationship to creation in the context of rebellion, authority and the impact of that rebellion. Last week we talked about God's purpose in subjecting the earth to futility in hope. We are going to pick that discussion back up and look a little deeper at that futility, at the real problem of the age, and consider just how our thinking about and responses to the groaning of the earth are only making the problems worse.

I. OFFICIAL NARRATIVE

- a. We are told that man is destroying the planet, that overpopulation and greenhouse emissions are the root of all our problems. To be fair, a very quick internet search reveals that things are definitely awry... In the first part of 2022 alone:
 - i. Heat waves in Europe - killed over 16,000, costing approximately 20 BILLION dollars

- ii. August floods in Pakistan affected 33 million people, and one instance alone killed over 935 people cost - 10 billion
- iii. As of October the US has experienced 15 different Billion dollar weather disasters...

1. Pearl river overflow in MS left Jackson with no drinkable water in July. As of the end of September they were still on a boil mandate...
2. Flooding in June ravaged Montana, Idaho and Wyoming including Yellowstone, closing the park for the first time in 30 years...
3. Record fire season,
4. Record Hurricanes
5. Tornadoes abounding... 1229 as of October

a.(which is actually BELOW the annual average of 1333) but of course the media spins it to cause fear... acknowledging that while the total is down, the number of days with over 30 in a day is up... "thus things are worse"

- b. How do we think about these things? The culture and the world call us to cut carbon emissions, reduce population, eat bugs, cripple economies and end agriculture. They tell us that these disasters are a result of our actions on the planet... they tell us that we have the power to change the environment with our tactics and our efforts...
- i. For one of the articles I read, there was a comment pointing to things like "hunger stones" becoming visible in the Elbe River in Germany and the Czech Republic. These stones mark low water levels and are inscribed to predict famines... one stone inscribed in 1616 says "if you see me, cry"...
 - ii. The author used #ActOnClimate and concluded that "there is no time to wait"... Now, this fits the official narrative that makes these things modern and our fault because of industry... but consider that the stone was marked in 1616... but just wait, this means that long before fossil fuels and greenhouse gasses were an issue of pop, pseudo-science, water

levels had been at these levels, and often enough that they had seen a pattern and marked a stone...

c. The real issue is that man IS responsible for the current condition of the world. But just not in the manner that those in power want us to believe. It is not our use of fossil fuels that has created a world which is seemingly out to destroy us all, but our rebellion against the Creator of the Universe in the Garden of Eden... There is a focused effort to keep us scared and reactive to the news of all the disasters, because the narrative is about control, it is about the ability and the power of man to chart the course of his own destiny... the aim of social engineering is all about that objective. The problem with that goal is that God is the only one who has the ability, the power and the RIGHT to chart our destiny. As Creator, God has a design for us to follow, a mandate for us to obey and a relationship for us to engage in... He alone is the One who can show us the path which will set us free from the curse of sin, and as a result set creation itself free from

the bondage of our rebellion. And beloved, understand that creation LONGS to be free, in fact, what we see as climate crisis is really just the groaning of the earth...

II. CREATION GROANING

a. Sin is an unnatural thing...

i. Man was created for fellowship with God

Genesis 2:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name.

This was not because God did not know, nor because God was out of creative juice, nor because God was bored or tired of the whole thing. This was because God has always been gracious enough to allow us to labor alongside Him and to actually, actively participate in His work of creation, and management OF that

creation! It is no different for the gospel, for the evangelism of the world nor for the manner in which He calls us to pray for things that He could clearly do alone...

Genesis 3:8–10 (NKJV)

⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

Two things to note here, one, God was in the habit of walking among us in fellowship. Two, our actions broke that fellowship.

- ii. We broke that fellowship and attempted to exalt ourselves into the place of God
- iii. As a result, the authority which had been vested to us, carried over into consequences for those who were UNDER our authority. Death became a reality and mankind would

experience sickness, disease and death; Adam and Eve's relationship was cursed with strife and tension that carries over into marriages today; their children were guilty of fratricide... but more than that, long before those things came to fruition, Adam and Eve themselves destroyed the purity of creation itself. Our sin was the vehicle by which the whole of creation was cursed.

b. The curse of sin

Genesis 3.14-19

- i. A world out of control
 - ii. Death entered creation, animals began to eat other animals
 - iii. Thorns and thistles, being born instead of food...
 - iv. The ground itself in rebellion against the authority of man...
- c. This slavery is a terrible reality and the whole of creation longs to be free from the bondage of corruption, which our actions put it under...

III. THE LABOR OF THE EARTH

a. Groanings...

i. It should come as no surprise to us that the world lashes out at us.

- Fire to flood
- Hurricanes to droughts
- Famine to pestilence
- We are the cause of our own worst plagues... (and this is not even to mention the absolute abomination of actual man made plagues...)

ii. But we are NOT the cause as if our direct action:

- like driving a car
- heating your home
- eating a steak
- or [**heaven forbid**] having a baby!)

is breaking the earth!

iii. We **are** the cause in that sin has corroded and eroded the foundations of the authority which causes the earth to move and act in an orderly and consistent fashion.

b. False answers

i. When we mislabel the cause (and often the nature) of the dilemma it should come as no real surprise that we are wrong about the cure.

ii. All of man's answers depend on man's ability. The tower of Babel reborn. We will erect a structure unto the heavens itself and therefore make a name for ourselves. We see this in government, in the scientific community, in sport, in popular culture and in business... in any sphere where man operates and has the ability to make a name for himself, he is laboring to do just that. People desire to be "known", they labor to be respected as someone worthy of being revered. This is why actors testify before congress about science... think about that for a moment... actors,

instructing politicians about science. Wrong person, wrong question, wrong answer...

IV. THE POWER OF BABEL

Genesis 11.1-9

a. Consistent with our creation mandate

- i. We were told to exercise dominion and subdue the earth...
- ii. We were told to bring order from the chaos, to act in a manner that was creative and constructive...
- iii. We were given great and amazing power to accomplish what God told us to do... notice what God said, "now nothing will be withheld from them..." this is all about the authority that has been given into our hand as stewards over God's creation... NOT as masters of our own world
- iv. This creation mandate, and the charge to rule over the earth and subdue it is the divine echo that makes us different from the animals that we are to rule.

- b. Inconsistent with our creation mandate
 - i. But we were also told to spread out over the whole earth and subdue it unto God, NOT congregate in cities building power for ourselves and defying our Creator...
 - ii. We were not told (nor allowed) to raise a monument to our own power and greatness, ignoring the fact that God alone is worthy of making His name great in all the earth.
 - iii. The abuse of the power and authority given us is still the same sin that we engage in regularly...
 - iv. Rather than exercising our authority over creation with an eye to stewardship and creation with an emphasis on redemption, we labor to overturn what God has decreed as our task and exalt the physical creation itself (of which we are to be stewards for the glory of God and the display of His nature) as the end all of our existence deeming it as the highest possible good for us to leave creation unchanged, undisturbed and above all, unused.

c. Rebellion and authority

- i. Pride is rebellion, we have been created to submit to the authority of God. Made in His image and bearing His mark... we have not made ourselves, nor are we the masters of our own world or destiny.
- ii. When we exalt ourselves and lift up the voice of hubris and selfishness it is jealousy against God that drives us. For all authority is derived from somewhere. God alone has authority in Himself. And even that is derived from His own nature. All of our authority is derived from God.
- iii. Authority is a sacred trust, and we have broken that trust; however, it still remains our duty to labor under that authority which we have cast off...
- iv. It is this ongoing rebellion which fuels the groaning and labor of the creation. For of all God's creation, man alone is in rebellion. The earth is doing what God created it to do. And if the earth is on God's side; then it is against US!

V. THE LONGING OF THE EARTH

- a. Creation groans for the revelation of the sons of God

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

- b. Creation groans for the coming of Christ and the restoration of all things

2Peter 3.10-13

- c. Creation groans for those who have been given the task of exercising the creation mandate of subduing the earth to actually fulfill their calling and begin to bring order from the chaos

VI. THE HOPE OF THE PROMISE OF GOD

- a. Sin destroys everything it touches. It taints everything that we would build, everything that we would do, everything that we would think.

b. It is a simple fact that any answer which does not submit to the God of the Bible is wrong and doomed to fail miserably. It is clearly evident that schemes unravel, and the edges fray, you don't have to be a conspiracy nut to understand that there IS a conspiracy. I am not saying how well organized nor how far reaching it might be, but all of mankind is conspiring to remove God from His place. God will, in the end, triumph and all of man's schemes will fail...

c. Consider this Messianic Psalm

Psalm 2

d. Here is the promise. God will send a deliverer. That deliverer is His Son who will ultimately subject all things to Himself and unto His Father in Heaven. That deliverer HAS come... we celebrate His birth this month, and His name is Jesus. He will one day return to finish the work that He has begun. Until that day He has left this

world in our charge and commanded us to labor to bring all things under the banner of His name.

- i. When we allow the things of this world to frame the discussion on the wrong question we are failing in that mandate.
- ii. When we pretend that man has the ability to stop the groaning of the earth with his schemes that continue the rebellion we are deceiving ourselves
- iii. When we go along with the naked emperor and praise his stunning new clothes, we are part of the problem
- iv. When we quietly submit to the silencing of our voice, and the stilling of our hands for labor that honors God we have joined forces with the enemy
- v. The gospel is our weapon, the gospel is our theme, the gospel is our hope, the gospel is our joy. And the earth groans with longing, waiting with earnest expectation for the day when that is made clear...