



**Blessed Hope
for
Suffering
Humanity!**

**Berean Series
Bible Studies**

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“We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption (sonship), to wit, the redemption of our body”—Rom.8:22,23.

Only for a short time will any thoughtful person question the declaration of the Apostle — that the human family, taken as a whole, is a groaning creation. He does not include the Church, for reasons which we shall see shortly, yet he points out that the Church also groans under present conditions. As we pass along the streets and hear the strains of music which occasionally come to us from public and private performances, on instruments of music; as we hear the laughter and see the throngs going to theatres, games, etc., we might be inclined at first to say there is a good share of the creation which does not groan much. But, as we look more closely at the facts as they come to us in the daily course, we find that much of the laughter is hysterical, and an offset to tears, that much of the music is paid for on business principles, to

cheer and enthuse others, and some of it indulged in with the desire to drown care.

Similarly, those who attend places of amusement do so, not because they are happy, but because they are unhappy. Groaning in spirit, they are seeking something to drive dull care away—to assuage their disappointments and heartaches. We believe that the experienced in life will generally agree with us that childhood is life's happiest hour, and that with the coming of greater knowledge and responsibility, come cares, disappointments, heartaches and crosses to the world of mankind in general. Let us remember, too, that what we know of the world is in many respects the best, most favoured, and least burdened section.

Looking into the Bible, we are informed respecting the angels and the joys of heaven, and given to understand that no sorrow enters there, nor any tears, nor any dying. We inquire, did not the same God who created man create the angelic hosts? Why, then, should there be so wide a distinction, so wide a difference between the conditions on earth and in heaven, that our Redeemer should teach us to pray that ultimately God's Kingdom should come to earth and His will be done on earth as it is done in heaven? Why does He tell us that

the faithful in the resurrection will be made like unto angels, neither shall they die any more? Why are we not like the angels now? Why do we die? Why are we sick? Why are we imperfect in our mental, moral and physical powers? Why are we deficient in our physical strength? The answer to these questions requires superhuman wisdom. There must be a reason; otherwise, the same just, loving, gracious God would treat His human creatures, His human children, as kindly, as generously as His spiritual. Why is it that all of our blessings are of hope while all the blessings of the angels are actual and present?

“God Looked Down and Beheld.”

Still seeking information, we inquire of the Bible respecting man's condition, why it is as it is and how it came about. We note the prophetic declaration that God “looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those who are appointed to death”—Psa.102: 19-21. This is in full conformity with the Apostle's statement, and adds the further explanation that the groaning is because man is a prisoner and under death sentence. But when did he become a prisoner? When did the death sentence come upon him?

The Scriptures answer that our race was sold under sin—became the slave of sin—and that the experiences of sorrow, degradation, imperfection and death are all parts of the wage of this great taskmaster, sin. The Apostle declares that “the wages of sin is death,” and personifies Sin and Death, representing them as the great monarchs that are now ruling the children of men. He declares that Sin and Death have reigned, and as a matter of fact we know that the whole race is subject to these monarchs—Rom.6:23; 5:14,21. The tomb, into which both good and bad go, is the great prison-house where all are figuratively said to sleep, waiting for the morning of the blessed Millennial Day, when Messiah shall come, and shall deliver the captives from the chains of sin and from the prison-house of death, Sheol, Hades, the grave.

Mark the Redeemer’s words—“I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of death and of Hades (the grave)”—Rev.1:18. Note again the prophetic statement along the same line, referring to Messiah and the work of His gracious Kingdom, when it shall be established. We read—“I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee and will give thee for a covenant

of the people, for a light of the Gentiles—to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison; and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house”—Isa.42:6,7. And again—“The spirit of Jehovah is upon me, because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach the good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound”—Isa.61:1.

Our Lord personally preached from this text, and declared Himself to be the One who would fulfil this prophecy—who would release our race from its slavery to sin and its bondage to death. The assurance of the Word of the Lord is that we have Divine sympathy, and that a Saviour adequate to all the conditions has been supplied by the Heavenly Father, and that the world merely awaits the proper time for Him to act, to strike off these shackles, to unlock the prison door and to let all the prisoners go free from this condemnation.

Origin of Man's Slavery to Sin.

A matter which is so general as to include every member of the race in this slavery to sin and death conditions is very noteworthy, and

it is profitable that we hearken carefully to the Word of God for an explanation for it. The Apostle gives the explanation, saying—"By one man's disobedience sin entered into the world and death as a result of sin, and thus death passed upon all men because all are sinners"—Rom.5:12. Turning back to Genesis we find the Apostle's words abundantly supported by the history of Adam and his deflection from obedience to God and his rejection from Divine fellowship, including his expulsion from Eden, that he might be thus subjected to dying conditions because of his disobedience, his sin. There the slavery began; there the groaning and dying of our race had its start. The Creator's words were—"Thorns and thistles shall the earth bring forth to thee; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art and unto dust shall thou return"—Gen.3:18,19.

Nothing could be plainer, simpler, more easy of comprehension to those who had no human philosophy and smoke of the Dark Ages to becloud their vision. It is most evident that the groaning began with father Adam, and that it has continued ever since, as his posterity has lost more and more the perfection of the image and likeness of God in which

Adam was created, and has become more and more depraved mentally, morally and physically, until now, “there is none righteous, no, not one”; none perfect either in word or deed—Rom.3:10. To will aright may be present with us, as the Apostle suggests, but how to perform all that we will is another matter. As he again declared—“Ye cannot do the things that ye would”—Gal.5:17. The difficulty is that the dying conditions have left us incapable as respects absolute good, and weakened as respects resistance of the temptations of the Adversary. The explanation is sufficient, as is no human speculation on the subject. Thank God that with the explanation, the Bible holds out before us the hope referred to—the hope of the deliverance of our race from this bondage of the prison-house.

Our context notes these facts, saying—“The creature (humanity) was subject to vanity (frailty, imperfection, weakness), not of its own will, but by reason of him that subjected it (by reason of Adam’s transgression).” Nevertheless, we read that this subjection to frailty was not without hope, a good hope, a great hope, a blessed hope, and this in the Bible is called —

“The hope set before us in the Gospel.”

We note the context which declares that

although the creature, mankind, was subjected to sorrow, imperfection, dying, through another—through father Adam—he is not without hope; for “the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption (death) into the glorious liberty of the sons of God”—verse 21. This is a remarkable declaration, for be it noted that it is not referring to the Church, the Elect, the Little Flock, but to the creation, the world in general. Do other Scriptures support this declaration that God proposes ultimately to deliver the human family from bondage to sin and death—from bondage to corruption? Yes, we reply, this was the very statement of the angel promulgated at the time of the announcement of our Saviour’s birth—“I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people”—Luke 2:10.

Moreover, the Scriptures give us a reasonable explanation, not only of why the reign of Sin and Death has been permitted, but of how and where their reign shall be annulled and humanity be delivered. The declaration is that the Lord Jesus paid the penalty for Adam, and that this works not only a release of Adam himself from Divine condemnation to death, but works also the release of all those who came under Divine condemnation

through Adam's sin—the entire groaning creation. All the Scriptures, in speaking of the deliverance of the groaning creation, point to Messiah as the Divine Agency in effecting this deliverance. We have already quoted the declaration of Jesus and the prophets to the effect that He shall open the prison doors and set the prisoners at liberty. We remember also the words of the angel on the subject of good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people, that it was because a Saviour had been born—the anointed Lord, Messiah. Thus, all through the Scriptures, every hope of the race as respects deliverance from sin and degradation to eternal life is based upon Messiah and His work—His sacrificial work, finished at Calvary, and His work of glory during the Millennial Age, which will commence at His Second Advent.

“The Liberty of the Sons of God.”

In the context which has been quoted, the Apostle declares that the groaning creation shall yet be delivered from its bondage to corruption into the liberty of the sons of God. The meaning of this is clear. The corruption came upon all through Adam, the deliverance from that corruption is to come to all through the second Adam. All are to be delivered from

such bondage, however they may use the deliverance, or the privileges of liberty. Those who use it rightly will come into harmony with the Redeemer and with the Heavenly Kingdom, and will be blessed eventually with eternal life. Those who reject it after they come to understand fully, and comprehend its lengths and breadths, will thus be choosing for themselves the Second Death. The liberty of the sons of God, their freedom from corruption, death, is here distinctly shown. The angels are not subject to, not bound by, such corruption, such dying conditions. They, as sons of God, are free from corruption, from death.

Adam, in his original perfection, was a son of God, as the Scriptures declare—Luke 3:38—but he lost his sonship for himself and for all of his race and received instead degradation and bondage to corruption. The hope for Adam and for his race, then, in Christ, is deliverance from the power of sin and death into the liberty proper to them as sons of God. The entire Millennial Age, as the Scriptures show us, will be devoted to this work of setting free the human family from the various bondages of ignorance, superstition, weakness, heredity, and of bringing back all who will, by restitution processes, to the original image and likeness of God, and making them

again human sons of God, like unto father Adam before he sinned, plus a large and valuable experience gained during the six thousand years of the fall, and also through the one thousand years of the raising up — the Millennial Age, the Resurrection Age.

Note the Apostle's argument on this subject in a preceding chapter leading up to our text. After telling that sin entered by one man's disobedience and that it was communicated to all the race, he declares—"For as by the transgression of one many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto many. For, if by the transgression of one, death reigned through the one, much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ. So then, as through one transgression the sentence came upon all men to condemnation, even so through the one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous"—Rom.5:12, 15,17-19, R.V.

How beautifully clear is this statement by the Apostle! We wonder how it was that we so

long overlooked the true import of these words. We perceive that our eyes were holden and blinded by the unscriptural theory that when the Church, the "little flock," the saints, should be selected, all the remainder of mankind would be condemned to an eternity of torture! Since we have gotten rid of that delusion, our eyes are opening more and more to behold the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of God's great plan of salvation, which first deals with the Church during this Gospel Age and subsequently will deal with all the redeemed—all of the children of Adam condemned for Adam's disobedience, and bought with the precious blood of Christ, and to be justified from their condemnation and set at liberty by the great Redeemer when He shall in due time take unto Himself His great power and reign—Rev. 11:15-19.

Why So Long Delay?

The question is frequently asked, why should God so long delay to bring these blessings to the world? If God's Plan indeed be higher and nobler than any of the plans and theories of men, why has it not yet been demonstrated? Why has He permitted the world to remain so long in its slavery to sin and death—4000 years and more before He

sent the Redeemer—about 2000 years since that Redeemer has purchased the world, and yet only a mere handful of the race has, as yet, even heard of the only Name given under heaven and amongst men whereby we must be saved? Why the delay? Does it not contradict God's claim of love and sympathy and power? If He has the love which longs to help the world, does He lack the power? Is He unable to accomplish His good purposes? Or, if He has the power, does He lack the love, the will?

The Scriptures assure us that the love of God is boundless, and that He has already accomplished for mankind a redemptive work at the cost of the life of our Lord Jesus. They assure us, too, that God's love is the same today as it was nineteen centuries ago, that Divine Power is almighty, and that it only waits for the proper time to come to exercise itself for the full accomplishment of the Divine will and for the full blessing of all the families of the earth, through the Messiah, the Redeemer.

The explanation of the delay is fully given in the Scriptures, which assure us that before the Divine Plan shall extend to the world for its blessing and uplift another work must first be accomplished; that God's purpose to bless Adam and his race is a restitution promise and

that the Millennial Age will be “times” or years of restitution, uplifting mankind from the mental, moral and physical degradation into which it was plunged during the six thousand years of the reign of Sin and Death. It will also be a time for blessing the physical earth, and making it the proper home for the perfect race, the footstool of God, filled with His glory.

But before doing this, God purposed a work, if possible, still more wonderful, namely, the selecting of the Little Flock, the elect Church, who, instead of being restored to human perfection, will prove her loyalty to the Lord by her self-sacrifice, even unto death, and be granted a share with Christ in the First Resurrection—a change from earthly nature to Heavenly nature—far above angels, principalities and powers, like unto her glorified Redeemer and Head. This work of selecting the Church has been an important one, and has occupied a long period; and those who now have the privilege of becoming members of this elect Church and joint-heirs with the Redeemer cannot esteem the privilege too highly, but should with the Apostle, count that any loss or sacrifice would be as dross in comparison with the excellency of the blessings promised.

“We, Ourselves, also Groan.”

Turn again to our text and context. Note again how the Apostle differentiates between the Church and the world and the groanings of each. Of the Church he says—“We, ourselves, also groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the deliverance of our body.” The world, without God and without hope, groans in doubt and despair, but the Church—having a good hope as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the veil—cannot groan after the same manner as the world.

But notwithstanding all our hopes, all our joys in the Lord, all our fellowship, one with the other, we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened. All of our joyful anticipations of the future, and our realization of the present that all evil things even are working together for our good and preparing us for the glory to come—all these do not hinder us at times from feeling a measure of the trouble, sadness and discouragement of our earthly environment. Our physical, mental and moral weaknesses at times assert themselves so strongly that we cannot as New Creatures do as we would; we cannot exult in tribulation, even though in our hearts we may rejoice. As the Apostle suggests, we are at

times “in heaviness through manifold temptations”—1 Pet. 1:6. But ours is not an outward groaning, or should not be. As our text suggests, we “groan within ourselves.” It is a subdued groan, a modified one, because of the offset of our glorious hopes.

Note again that the Apostle shows, that while both the world and the Church groan, they are waiting for different things. We are waiting for the deliverance of our Body (not bodies in the plural); we are waiting for the deliverance of the Church as a whole. Some of the members have gone before, but finally the entire Body of Christ, which is the Church, will be completed. Then we shall see our Lord, and will be with Him and share His glory, a united Church, a united Body of Christ beyond the veil. For this we wait, we hope, we pray.

But the world, the groaning creation, knows not of the Divine Plan. Its groaning is of a hopeless character; but we may know what God has provided for mankind even though the world be blind and in ignorance of this. We know that through the Christ, during the Millennial reign, all the families of the earth will be blessed with recovery from death, and with enlightenment and restitution assistances to righteousness and eternal life, and

that only the incorrigible will die the Second Death.

And so the Apostle says that the groaning creation is “waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.” We are the sons of God. As the Apostle says, “now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be (how glorious); but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be likehim, for we shall see him as he is”—1 John 3:2. We see, then, that the world’s hope is in the glorified Church, whose glorious Head is the Redeemer Himself. When this Church shall be exalted in Millennial glory, the world’s time of blessing will begin. Then all the groaning creation shall be liberated and have the opportunity of coming out of the corruption of death, mental, moral and physical, and into liberty and perfection of life as the sons of God, all of which privileges have been secured for them through the merit of the precious blood.

How glad we are that as we approach the New Dispensation the true light is shining from the Divine Word, as well as throughout the realm of nature! How glad we are that we no longer must think of the Church alone as the subjects of salvation, and the world as a whole the subjects of condemnation and eternal torture! How just, how reasonable, how

loving, are the Divine arrangements! To see these things should draw our hearts near to the Lord in appreciative love, and we should worship with the greatest devotion One whom we thus see worthy of praise and adoration.

We are not, however, to expect the world to be able to realize these things just at present. It is not the Divine purpose that they should grasp the Plan until the selection of the Church is complete. As the Master said to the faithful disciples of old, and still says to us, "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God"; but to outsiders, all these things are spoken in parables and dark sayings, that hearing they might hear and not understand. They will both hear and understand in due time, but now is the time for the calling out of the elect, the perfecting of the saints, etc.

Let us, whose ears and eyes have been blessed of the Lord, respond with all gratitude and humility, not merely with outward praise of our lips, but also with our hearts, let us confess His loving kindness and tender mercy; and let this appreciation more and more sanctify our hearts and separate us from the world, its aims, its selfishness. Let us fight a good fight against sin, especially in our own mortal bodies; for even though the imperfec-

tions of the flesh be not counted against the New Creature, begotten of the spirit, nevertheless, the fact that we possess the spirit of the Lord should lead us more and more to desire that perfection which is most pleasing and acceptable to Him, and to strive, therefore, to the extent of our ability; not trusting to the attainment of that perfection, but relying upon the merit of that great Atonement Sacrifice, offered once for all and sufficient for the sins of the whole world.

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