

The Harvester



Preparing Souls

To Serve The Lord



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What Are We Waiting For?

By Brian R. Kenyon

It is with great anticipation we wait for things that excite us. For example, a child gets very excited and looks forward to her birthday party to the point of it being on her mind and the constant subject of her conversations, especially as the day draws near. A high school or college student also greatly anticipates his graduation, especially when there is a good paying job awaiting! As Christians, we have something far greater to anticipate! In Romans 8:18-25, Paul gives us three aspects of our future that should definitely excite us and give us something worth waiting for! In fact, a key Greek word in the context (*apekdechomai*, ἀπεκδέχομαι) occurs three times and is translated, “eagerly waits ... eagerly waiting ... eagerly wait” (Rom. 8:19, 23, 25, NKJ). This word means to await expectantly; to desire very much with, as one commentator puts it, a “rapid beating heart” (Newman and Nida 159). The word occurs in only five other verses (1 Cor. 1:7; Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 3:20). What then are we as Christians waiting for?

Waiting for Glory

To begin, Paul writes, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). The word “glory” basically means radiance or brightness, and has a wide variety of meanings. Here, it refers to the state of being in the next life, participation in the radiance of God. Christ is said to possess glory. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus reminded the two distraught disciples, “Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” (Lk. 24:26 cf. Jn. 17:5). Paul

acknowledged that “God was manifested in the flesh ... [and] Received up in glory” (1 Tim. 3:16). Peter also spoke of the “glories” associated with Christ (1 Pet. 1:11, 21; 4:13). Jesus definitely wants us to participate in His glory. In fact, part of that for which He prayed on our behalf was, “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me” (Jn. 17:24 cf. Jn. 17:22). Indeed, God’s faithful will one day share in His glory (2 Cor. 4:17; 2 Thes. 2:14; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:1, 4)!

In comparison with the glory that awaits, our present suffering pales away to insignificance (Rom. 8:18b)! Paul knows what it means to suffer for the cause of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 6:4-5; 11:23-28), yet he continues faithful. His use of the “present time” in Romans 8:18b implies that suffering is only temporary, having to be endured only for a limited duration. Though it may seem at times unbearable and un-get-over-able, it soon (compared to eternity) will pass. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). Paul is not minimizing suffering, but he is maximizing glory! That same glory awaits us!

Fall 2013 Schedule

Is posted on page 4

Classes are open to anyone who desires to learn more about God’s word. Why not take advantage of this tremendous opportunity to learn? Bible knowledge and its application will help everyone, no matter his or her occupation in life!

Waiting for the Resurrection

Paul continues,

For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; ²¹because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. (Rom. 8:19-23)

Paul gives two groups who eagerly await the single future event that will involve the “revealing of the sons of God” and the “adoption, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:19, 23). The first group is identified as the “creation [creature, KJV];” the second as “we ... who have the firstfruits of the Spirit.” There are two common views concerning the “creation.” First, some consider it to be the church, God’s spiritual creation (cf. Col. 1:15-18, where Paul shows Christ to be preeminent over both creation, verse 15, and new creation, the church, verse 18). However, the main weakness of this view is the contrast Romans 8:23 (“we”) makes with Romans 8:19-22 (“the creation”). The word translated “but” (*alla, ἀλλά*) in “but we...” (Rom. 8:23) is the strongest single word way of making a contrast in the original language. If the “creation” were the church and the “we” were Christians, then the God-inspired contrast would be meaningless since Christians

are the church! Attempts have been made to define “we” as the apostles and/or first century Christians who had the ability to perform miracles (based upon a miraculous view of Holy Spirit indwelling in Rom. 8:9), but if that were the case, then, among other things, the promises associated with the Holy Spirit in Romans 8 would only apply

to the apostles and/or first century Christians who had the ability to work miracles! The second view, which fits the context much better, is that Paul is figuratively personifying literal creation. That is, in the same way that “rivers clap their hands” (Ps. 98:8) and “mountains and the hills ... break forth into singing” (Isa. 55:12), “creation” can “eagerly wait for the revealing of the sons of God”!

Creation was indeed “subjected to futility,” not because of its own fault, but because of humanity’s sin. When God announced the punishment to those directly involved in the first sin, among the things He told Adam was, “Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life” (Gen. 3:17). Later, when Lamech named his son Noah, he said that “This one will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed” (Gen. 5:29). Both passages connect the curse placed on creation with Adam’s sin. Thus, if creation’s curse is due to Adam’s sin, then the undoing of that curse will have to depend on Christ’s ultimate salvation, commencing at the “revealing of the sons of God ... the adoption, the redemption of our body”! For this event the creation not only awaits, but also has an “earnest expectation [anxious longing, NAS; eager longing, ESV]” (from *apokaradokia, ἀποκαραδοκία*). This refers to the state of straining one’s neck for a glimpse; to watch eagerly with outstretched head (same word as in Phil. 1:20). In a figurative sense, creation is looking forward to being put out of its misery, which will only come when this age is brought to an end!

Creation not only awaits the ending of this age, but, likewise, all Christians eagerly await the resurrection (Rom. 8:23)! “We ... who have the firstfruits of the Spirit” refers to Paul and the faithful first readers of his epistle and, by implication, would also apply to faithful Christians today. “Firstfruits” in the Old Testament were the initial portion of the harvest that was consecrated to God (Ex. 23:19; 34:26). It was a pledge that the rest was coming. In like manner, the Holy Spirit is given by God as a pledge that Christians belong to Him and a guarantee of the inheritance to come. Elsewhere, Paul said,

...[Y]ou were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (Eph. 1:13-14 cf. 2 Cor. 1:22)

Though Christians have the “first fruits of the Spirit,” we are presently still part of the “bondage of corruption” (cf. Rom. 8:21), but this is not the end—we cannot wait for the resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-58), which is also termed the “redemption of our body” (Eph. 4:30; Heb. 11:35)! Though we enjoy the blessings

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of adoption into the family of God now (Rom. 8:15; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5), the full realization of that inheritance will not be enjoyed until the resurrection!

Waiting for Fulfilment of Hope

Paul concludes,

For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. (Rom. 8:24-25)

Though our salvation is characterized by hope, that hope is not what saves us. Hope cannot be measured with the senses. If it could, it would not longer be hope! Since complete salvation is yet future, commencing at the resurrection, we must wait for it in full expectation of receiving it. Paul said that "having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit. 3:7 cf. 1 Thes. 5:8). Our awaiting the fulfilment of hope is to not to be done idly, as if we were waiting in a doctor's office thumbing through magazines. Rather, it should be accompanied with "perseverance [patience, KJV]." Our ability to persevere is refined by suffering (Rom. 5:3-4; 15:4; Jas. 1:3-4), and involves actively serving God (Rom. 2:7; 2 Thes. 3:5; Heb. 10:36; 12:1; Rev. 1:9; 14:12). We cannot see salvation but we can patiently live our lives knowing we will possess it when Jesus returns!

Conclusion

What are we waiting for? We are waiting for glory, for the resurrection, and for the fulfilment of our hope! These three terms are basically saying we are waiting for heaven! Are we prepared and ready to share in God's glory, to rise with Christ incorruptible, and to reach final salvation? If not, now is the time to prepare. If so, let us continue with patience, laboring in the Lord, knowing that "our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

Works Cited

Newman, Barclay M., and Eugene A. Nida, E. A. *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1973.

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| Tuesday | __ 8:30-12:00 | Church History: General (241) | Franson | 3 |
| | __ 1:00-4:15 | Revelation (259) | Bauer | 3 |
| Wednesday | __ 8:30-12:00 | English I: Grammar (124) | Kenyon | 3 |
| | __ 1:00-4:15 | Christian Evidences (224) | D. Stearsman | 3 |
| Thursday | __ 8:30-12:00 | Logic (270) | Kenyon | 3 |
| | __ 1:00-4:15 | Computers and Churches (287) | Wheeler | 3 |
| Friday | __ 8:30-12:00 | Preacher and His Work (107) | Wheeler | 3 |
| | __ 1:00-4:15 | Pentateuch (164) | Elledge | 3 |

| Extension Classes | | | | |
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