

Words of Encouragement: Revealing the Sons of God

The bible is bursting with the promises of God at the turn of nearly every page. We often find encouragement in these as they are woven throughout scripture. However, there are a few longer passages, such as Romans 8, that have become deep wells of encouragement for Christians. Here Paul tells us that “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set [us] free from the law of sin and of death.” (v.2) He reminds us that nothing can possibly separate us from God’s love. He quickens our faith in God, who uses even the most dire circumstances for his glory and conforms us to the image of Christ. He encourages those with spiritual ‘growing pains’ that even the Spirit himself groans on our behalf. We can draw great strength from these powerful promises.

Nestled among these promises for Christians is the following reference toward creation: “For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.” (v.19) Paul doesn’t elaborate a great deal, but consider these words: Paul has just tied the future of all creation back to the stature and ability of a group of people called “the sons of God.” Now, theologians tell us that there are three great mysteries of the Christian faith. And this isn’t one of them—but it has mesmerized me. “All creation is waiting for...” *“Ah, excuse me, can you please repeat that? I thought I just heard my name.”*

In so many words, Christian, you did hear your name. John 1:12 tells us this: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” In other words, ordinary people like you and me who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ have become the very sons of God—and it’s people like us that creation longs to see revealed. All of creation is yearning for believing men and women to come into the full measure of what God has prepared for us. In other words, God has established a place for us, a role for us—and all creation knows it. Creation itself is waiting for us to make good on what God has determined. In a corporate sense, all creation is looking to us! If our ears are open, we will indeed hear our own names resonating in that verse.

Creation looking to us? Now why would that be? Could it have anything to do with Gen 1:26-28 where God said that men and women were to rule over creation? Could it have anything to do with the fact that the ground (over which we were to rule) was cursed because of *our* sin in the Garden? (Gen 3:17) Could it be that when earth’s delegated ruler fell, all that was subject to his headship and rule fell by association? Could it be that the creator has not absolved us of our rule over this creation despite our sin? Could it be that God has held creation subject to man even through his fallen state, and that in the redemption of humanity creation finds its greatest hope? Could it be that there is anticipated in scripture a people who will rule with righteousness and justice in all the earth?

It is compelling that God repeated to Noah after the flood the same commission that he had originally given to Adam before the fall. (Gen 9:1ff) Evidently the curse of Genesis 3 did not reverse or alter God’s subjecting creation to the headship of humankind. Rather, God’s pronouncements in Genesis 3 merely set the parameters, the “standing orders” or “rules of engagement,” for his creation under a fallen head. And from Romans 8:20-21 we know that “the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” God has determined in his wisdom that the restoration of creation referred to in scripture will be brought about by the agency of the redeemed community serving under their righteous head, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, the Second Man. (1 Cor 15:45-47) In fact, the final picture of the renewed creation that the Bible gives is found in Revelation 21 & 22 where John speaks of a garden-like city, lit by God himself. In the fullness of time, creation has become not merely a garden, but a garden *city*—a jewel of nature and human culture. The cultural marks of man (a city) are not forsaken, but embraced.

Like it or not, humanity is center stage in God’s dealings in history and the created order. Creation is looking to us. Are we ready? Are we fit to rule righteously? Perhaps Mordecai’s advice to Esther hits near the mark: “Who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14)