

SKID ROW BUM

I was a Skid Row Bum before Mercy and Grace overcame me - From Skidrow to the Halls of Glory.

Death is but passing from Grace to Glory for the child of God.

“For 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 ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” Rom. 8:22-23.

By Del Wray, Pastor

I was a skid row bum. From a skid row bum to a son of God in the twinkling of an eye is my testimony. Destined to serve the Son of God from the Great City the New Jerusalem for a thousand years telling the lost of the world's only Saviour expanding throughout all eternity. I was a skid row bum! I was born a skid row bum like every person who has ever walked on planet earth. Whether they're willing to admit it or not, why then the Great Expulsion? You didn't have to teach me to do wrong; wrong behavior came naturally to me. Later in life I had to find out that I was born wrong. My parents' had to teach me to do right. And my heavenly Father had to teach me I needed to be born again. I can hear many in the church today screaming: "I wasn't born wrong, I wasn't born on skid row, and I was no skid row bum." The church today in the world as we know it doesn't have the slightest idea of what kind of birth brought them into this world. David did! That's the problem! Man does not know his supreme enemy, himself! That's man's dilemma. Humankind cannot envision them as being lost, as being incapable of bettering themselves in need of some outside power, in need of God. And that has been man's greatest problem ever since creation. David the psalmists said, *“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”* Ps. 51:5. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. It was mans' "spirit," that fell or as they say, "sin separates man from God" "God is a Spirit" *“and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth”* God left man to fend for himself, "expulsion from the garden" no longer in communion with his Creator Isa. 59:2. The man became a prisoner within himself, imprisoned in his own body, imprisoned by sin, imprisoned to die. "We daily are dying." The moment a baby is born that baby begins its journey to the cemetery. It may sound mean but it is true. We all have a date with death unless the rapture occurs first. God help us! Nothing is forever down here.

Nothing is forever. Briefly, if I may, let me explain: The Bible is the only Book, by the Bible I mean the Word of God, the only way God speaks to man today. God first, gave it to the Jews for its preservation. And then in grace, God used a Jewish missionary by the name Paul the Apostle who passed that grace on to we gentiles that we might know Him and be able to come to Him. The greatest gift that humankind has ever been granted. It

is His Word, His form of communication that we may know Him and His Word will never pass away Luke 21:33. The King James Bible for all English speaking people! It is in that Book that we have the good news about an age of grace, during which the Lord opens His arms to all that would come to Him and that age is now about to close after nearly two-thousand years. We know God is a Spirit and man is a spirit, he has a spirit, he is triune, he is a spirit, soul, and body. When we are born our "spirit" is alive entombed in a death chamber awaiting release, either to return to God or to the spirits of the damned? That "spirit" is the real person, even though it's unseen it is the real you and I. Jesus made the statement, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" then he said, "No man hath seen the Father at any time." Isn't that strange? No man has seen this writer at any time, either. You've seen the body that he is housed in but you have never seen this preacher a day in your life. Because I am a "spirit" I am inside this body. The "breath of life" that God breathed into Adam, our first parent, is that "spirit", and being descended from Adam. We all were born with that "spirit" and that "spirit" has been entombed in a death chamber ever since the fall. Thus, actually, we all were born on death row we all are death row inmates. From what I've just said is it possible that one can his own condition and begin to see how far sin has damaged and befallen humankind?

At birth, man is born wrong. We were born in sin we were born with sinful natures. Sin is innate; it is an instinct in all of us. It is natural. It is as natural as sleeping or eating. Sin dominates us dominates the whole man totally until the new birth supernaturally is affected in our lives. This second birth is as real as the first. Until God's Spirit moves into that death chamber and is sealed to man's spirit men are helpless and hopeless. The best man who has ever lived "at his best state," Ps. 39:5, "is altogether vanity" in this world and he will die and go to hell without the indwelling Spirit of Jesus Christ. God's Spirit changes that deathly place, that chamber, skid row or death row into His Tabernacle where He communes with the spirit of man and becomes our great benefactor and protector. We are His Temple and His workmanship by which He continues His ministry through us. He walks in and with us. It is His ministry His walk, not ours. It is His grace and His grace alone that partners with our spirit that allows a co-laboring relationship. Rom. 8:16.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:"

This happens where there was once a death chamber. God in union with a man once again, His Spirit joined with the real you and me, our spirit. Never to be separated again! Now, right here separates the men from the boys, the spiritual from the carnal. Opening the door to man's real problem his own sinful nature. The man has never learned the truth about his own self, his own nature, to the depth and to the degree to which sin has befallen him. The man still having to contend with his fallen nature even though Christ has moved in. Sin affecting man so severely that he can never help himself, undone, lost, and separated from His Creator.

"It's not who you are, it's what you are, A SINNER."

Man's spirit has been corrupted, turned inside out, imprisoned and exiled from his Creator.

"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" Isa. 59:2.

It is man's spirit, the real man that God uses the word "SIN" to describe. He also uses the word "heart" to develop more on His description of the real man, the spirit of man. That spirit is often called "nature" our human nature in the Bible. Mans' heart is totally depraved, deceitful above all things, desperately wicked and also the foul fruit coming from it is described as filthy rags and it is not to be trusted. The names God uses for the spirit of man unchanged are SIN, HEART, FLESH, NATURE and the OLD MAN.

Satan's greatest deception upon mankind has been his ability to convince mankind that when the fall took place back there in the garden, when sin entered the world, that it was not as destructive to creation as the Bible, as God said it was. He's deceived men into believing sin was not that bad and that men could improve upon their fallen nature.

CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY

"It's hard to believe that someone would die in the place of a good man, but Christ went the extra mile and "died for the ungodly" Romans 5:6-10. That is exactly the point of God's love. That sin and ungodliness were so repulsive to God. That He would rather die than let us keep living like that. That Hell was so horrible that He rather die than let us go there."

Only after the redemption of our bodies can we realistically say "we are God's creation." Here in this document is laid out the greatest failure of the church and the greatest failure of believers throughout all of history which has been perpetrated on mankind and against God. Satan has stolen our birth rights.

By making, we believe we are better than we really are. The man is nothing without God.

The sadness and sorrow shown on the daily news are often so unbearable to watch that we must turn our eyes away. And, it is not only humanity that is suffering, but "the whole creation," animals, trees, oceans, and even the air we breathe. Over the past one hundred years, this entire planet has been especially compromised by the carelessness of man. We need only point to the Gulf oil disaster to show the pain being endured by every element of creation which will have devastating effects for generations to come.

God's Plan to Put an End to All of Mankind's suffering:

Some have asked, "If God has the plan to put an end to all this suffering, what is He waiting for?" The Apostle Paul in our theme text provides the answer. The poor groaning creation is waiting for the adoption, the manifestation of the sons of God, Romans 8:19-23. This word manifestation is taken from the Greek word 'apokalupsis' which means revealing. Until the sons of God are adopted and revealed the whole creation must continue to wait for relief from their pain and suffering.

Who Are the Sons of God and Why Should the Creation Wait for them?

The Apostle Paul explains who these sons of God are when he states earlier in Roman 8:14-17 *“As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”* Simply put, the sons of God are those who are willing to lay their lives down with their Master, to be “dead with him” and thereby prove to be faithful through all the trials and tests that God has permitted to come upon them. These sons make up what is termed the body of Christ, the little flock, the Church, Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 12:12; Matthew 16:18; Luke 12:32. They follow their Master, who, *“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him,”* Hebrews 5:8-10.

Like their Master, his followers must also learn obedience by the things which they suffer, proving worthy to receive the position in heaven to which they will be exalted. The faith and character of these sons of God must be developed, tested and perfected. *“The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ,”* 1 Peter 1:7.

These trials upon the sons of God are preparing them to live and reign with Christ in his Kingdom, dispensing blessings, teaching righteousness and bringing healing to the world which has been in crisis since the fall of Adam in the Garden. The Church, when complete, will be able to say to those raised to live again upon the earth that they understand every ill that the world has endured. Jesus’ followers have trusted in Him to cover their sins and help them to overcome their weaknesses even while living in this present world dominated by sin and selfishness. *“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world”* Philippians 2:14-16; Revelation 2:10.

Therefore, before the waiting time is over and the poor groaning creation can receive the promised relief from all of its troubles, the body of Christ needs to learn sympathy for the suffering that has been endured for six millennia. Jesus, their example, had also become sympathetic as he endured his trials. “Our High Priest is not one who cannot feel sympathy for our weaknesses. On the contrary, we have a High Priest who was tempted in every way that we are but did not sin” Hebrews 4:15. There is no better way to strengthen and encourage the hearts of others than to have endured the same kind of trial. As every support group will testify, the most effective healing comes from a sympathetic partner who has “been there and done that.”

This work of perfecting the sons of God has been going on throughout the Christian era. Christians have lived in a hostile world, filled with opposition to their stand for truth and righteousness, and God has promised these a reward for their faithfulness: *“It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we*

shall also reign with him..." 2 Timothy 2:11, 12. Going back to Romans 8, the Apostle points out in verse 18: *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."* Thus, these sons of God are fully committed to Him and are willing to submit to the refining work of their Heavenly Father. *"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when ye encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience, but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing"* James 1:3- 4.

For what is the whole creation waiting?

The entire creation is waiting for and longs for a better day, one without the groaning, travail, pain and the sorrow of death. Both the Old and the New Testaments are saturated with words of promise and hope. All the prophets spoke of the "restitution of all things" Acts 3:21. *"And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come..."* Haggai 2:7.

Despite the extreme suffering, mankind has experienced generation upon generation; something constructive will come from it. God realizes the enormity of human suffering, and, from a time *"before the foundation of the world,"* He planned for the resurrection of all who have ever lived, and an opportunity to gain everlasting life 1 Peter 1:19-20. Because *"God is love,"* He intends to turn these cursed conditions into an opportunity to teach mankind the extreme consequence of sin and rebellion, 1 John 4:7; Genesis 3:17. Experience with Satan's evil world will teach mankind the everlasting lesson of trust, loyalty, and obedience to our all-wise Creator. *"It is a difficult exercise which God has imposed upon the sons of Adam to develop themselves by it"* Ecclesiastes 1:13. Note that God does not cause the evil, but has permitted it for a period of time. He is unwilling that any should perish, but wills, on the contrary, that all shall have an opportunity to turn to Him that they may have everlasting life 2 Peter 3:9; 2 Timothy 2:3, 4. It is for this very purpose that Christ's Kingdom will be established in great glory and with full power. In due time, it will bring the salvation for which the poor groaning creation has so long waited. It will come with the manifestation of the sons of God in Kingdom power and glory Romans 8:19.

These sons of God will have a special mission to do in the near future. They are spoken of as heirs of a great promise given to Abraham. This promise declared that all the families of the earth, the poor groaning creation, would be blessed. *"...if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"* Galatians 3:29. Abraham's seed, Christ, and his Church will have the privilege of sharing in the work of the Messianic Age. This work will bring about the completion of the covenant to Abraham which has promised a full opportunity to everyone who has ever lived to partake of the blessings provided through their redeemer. The world of mankind, raised to live again, will be instructed so that they might walk up the highway of holiness to atonement with their Creator, back into full harmony with Him 2 Timothy 2:5, 6. Then all will fully appreciate the wisdom, justice, loving mercy and power of God. What a magnificent plan of salvation when *"Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain*

and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God” Luke 3:5-6.

The Waiting time Almost Over

At some point in the near future, this time of waiting for the refining work of the sons of God will be over. The Scriptures state that there will be a full number Romans 11:25. Matthew quoted Jesus in his parable of the wheat and the tares: “In the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to, figuratively, burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” Matthew 13:30. He also stated that “the harvest is the end of the age” Vs. 39. This illustrates the end of the Gospel Age, the Christian era, when the Church, those who were willing to suffer with Christ during this nighttime of sin, will be complete.

This elect body of Christ is spoken of in Acts 15:14-17: “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, [at the second advent] and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: [set up the kingdom of God] That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things that the residue of men [those who did not accept Christ now] might seek after the Lord...” **God’s work since the death of Jesus has not been to convert all humankind at this time, but merely to take out or to call out a people for his name.** In His Kingdom, all the residue of men, who are not of these called out ones, will have their opportunity to seek the Lord by the guidance of Christ and his completed Church. Like him 1 John 3:2 they shall be compassionate priests, understanding judges, and benevolent kings Revelation 20:6; 1 Corinthians 6:2. Together, as the composite body of Christ, they will fully understand the sin-sick, mentally warped, emotionally scarred and physically marred world of mankind. It will be the joyful task of Christ and his Church to help bring mankind up to the highway of holiness Isaiah 35:8.

“Though it Tarry, Wait...”

The prophet Habakkuk stated: “The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come.” Habakkuk 2:3 The Scriptures assure us that “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” Psalm 30:5. Our faith can be strengthened in the promise that God has a loving reason for everything He plans and purposes to do. At this time, He has permitted the exceeding sorrows of a world left on its own and under the present ruler of darkness, Satan. When God finally says, It is enough, peace be still, we can rest assured that there will be great changes in the earth, and all will begin to see that the permission of evil was both educational and preparatory to the ushering of mankind into the ages of blessing to come, wherein “all the families of the earth will be blessed” Genesis 28:14. Each will have a full, fair opportunity at that time to gain the knowledge necessary to grow to perfection and to attain everlasting life through their great redeemer and his reigning Church Isaiah 26:9.

God's Compassions Fail Not;

It takes extreme faith now to believe that there will be an ultimately beautiful end to all of the tragic stories, to believe that God is not indifferent to every sorrow. God commissioned Jeremiah: "Tell the people about my sorrow and say: 'May my eyes flow with tears day and night, may I never stop weeping, for my people are deeply wounded and are badly hurt. When I go out in the fields, I see the bodies of men killed in war; when I go into the towns, I see people starving to death'" Jeremiah 14:17. "In all their afflictions, He [God] was afflicted" Isaiah 53:9. It is comforting to know that when a man suffers God suffers, and with Divine foreknowledge, His wisdom has planned for the eternal welfare of all, and His Divine love and power will attain that end.

In the not far distant future, all those who have died will come forth from their graves to be reunited with their loved ones. Though God's plans are misunderstood now, in due time His merciful character and government will be vindicated Luke 21:21-32. The Apostle John describes this time in Revelation 21:1-4: "And I saw a new heaven [spiritual rule] and a new earth [new social order upon earth under this benevolent heavenly government]: for the first heaven [corrupt spiritual systems] and the first earth [society oppressed under the leadership of Satan] were passed away... And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem [Christ and his Church], coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

This is the hope of the poor groaning creation that has been waiting for the sons of God. It will be a glorious time with grand opportunities for every man, woman, and child to learn to know the Lord, to obey him, and to grow to mental, moral and physical perfection. This does not mean universal everlasting life regardless of obedience, for the Scriptures declare that such as refuse to profit by these glorious opportunities granted them shall be destroyed from amongst the people in the second death, "*They shall be as though they had not been*" Obadiah 16; Acts 3:19-23. We believe that this will be rare, however, for the Scriptures indicate that the majority "*shall return [from their graves], and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads...*" Isaiah 35:10. Thus, will God's loving plan bring all the willing and obedient into harmony with Him in a Universe free from fear, oppression, pain and death.

"And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the Vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Isa. 25:7-

Joy Cometh in the Morning

No more natural disasters: “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain...” Isaiah 11:9

No more evil: “No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast...” “And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie...” Isaiah 5:9; Revelation 21:27.

No more dying: “Death where is thy sting, grave where is thy victory.” “...and there shall be no more death...” 1 Corinthians. 15:55; Revelation 21:4.

No more works of Satan: “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” 1 John 3:8.

No more homelessness or starvation: “They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit. They shall not plant and another eat” Isaiah. 65:21-23.

No more sickness: “And no inhabitant will say I am sick.” “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing” Isaiah 33:24; Isaiah 35:5.

No more wars: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war any more” Micah 4:3.

No more sadness: “...good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” “...they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” Luke 2:10; Isaiah 35:10.

No more fear: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them” Isaiah 11:6.

We all must admit skid row was our origin and the streets of gold are our destiny.

FROM SKIDROW TO THE NEW JERUSALEM