

# NEW CREATION: EVERYTHING NEW

(Romans 8.18-30)

## Introduction

Just a quick announcement before we begin, from the Lost Property department, if I may. If you have lost a wad of £50 notes, bound together by a rubber band: good news! ...I am pleased to report that someone has handed in the rubber band!

You might recognize that as a line from *Spider Man 2*. And if you've seen that film, you'll know it's all about a young man named Peter Parker with special powers who uses them to double up as Spiderman in his spare time.



In fact, *Spiderman 1* and *Spiderman 3* are pretty much about the same sort of thing as *Spiderman 2*. But in the second film of the trilogy Peter Parker starts wondering about his true identity.

Does he still want to be this amazing hero of New York City, jumping from building to building, rescuing damsels in distress and foiling the evil plots of evil psycho terrorists?

Or would he prefer a quiet life, where he can date his heart throb, Mary-Jane and settle down? There is a pivotal scene in the film where he looks at himself in the mirror, confused and demoralized. "Who *am* I?" he asks.

Even if you don't currently need to work out how you deal with your superhero alter ego issues, the question "Who am I?" is one of the most important you can ask yourself. It's one of life's basic questions, the existential

questions, that self-aware human beings occasionally ask themselves.

## Your Portrait in Christ

If you were to look in a special mirror, one that God held up in front of you, in which everyone sees themselves inside and out *as they really are*, what would you see?



If you are a Christian believer, because of Jesus, you would see the image of someone for whom there is a 'not guilty' verdict for the sins of your past. No condemnation.

You would see somebody freed from the tyranny of sin and death. You would see someone new, able to be led by the Holy Spirit. You would see someone loved from all eternity, a child of God, adopted to be an heir with Christ of all the riches of heaven.

Looking closer, you would see that God has given you all you need to be sure that you belong to him. Your eternal security is anchored in him, stretching back into eternity past, before time began - and before you existed.

In short, you would see someone foreknown by God and chosen by him from before the creation of the world to be like Jesus. You would see that God himself is on your side and that, therefore, nothing can bring you down. You would see the image of someone whom God has declared to be inseparable from his love and more than an overcomer.

The Bible says all that about *you*. This is a portrait, with a true likeness, of who you are in Christ. And all of that is from the magnificent chapter of the Bible we call Romans Eight.

Embrace it. Live and breathe it. This is *the* source of true and real self-esteem. This is the *one* eternally unshakeable foundation for your life.

But it's not the full portrait. Romans 8 doesn't just say that the resurrection of Jesus Christ changed the state of your heart and secured your soul's future. That's too small a thing.

Romans 8.23 says, "We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we eagerly wait for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in *this* hope we were saved."

In other words, we all grumble a bit as we grow old and become wrinkly, go grey, lose our teeth, get a bit deaf, can't read without reading glasses and get stiff joints.

But the Bible says, "We do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." (2 Corinthians 4.6).

We are, by faith, a new creation; new men, new women. You might say, "Well, I don't feel like I am after all these weary weeks of lockdown" but it's the truth, bear with me! Bottom line; God says *on the inside*, you're all getting younger every day.

So much for your portrait in God's mirror, which is vividly detailed, Scripture is clear about what's happening to you. But what about the background? What is happening to the universe around you?

The Bible says that Christ is making *all things* new. It started with the resurrection of Christ but it doesn't stop there. He is actually going to transform and eventually completely renew *everything* - from the physics of subatomic particles to the dynamics of that vast expanding void we call deep space. God is creating a new earth and new heavens.

## **1) The Frustration of Old Creation**

In a little section right in the middle of Romans 8, from verse 18-25, there's a significant change of focus. This short section is a bit like a camera that suddenly shifts from a close up shot through a zoom lens to a wide-angle panorama view.

Up till verse 17, the focus of Romans 8 is on your heart and what God has done in your life. But then it pans out so you see what is happening in you against the backdrop of massive change to the whole of the created order.

What's happening? What we see is this;

Verse 19: "The creation waits in eager expectation..." Verse 20: "The creation was subjected to frustration..." Verse 21: "The creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay..." Verse 22: "The whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." What's all that about?

Cosmologists tell us that our sun has already consumed over half of its hydrogen and helium and one day it will burn out completely, making life on earth impossible. Stars die every day. (Don't worry too much; experts think that there are still about 3.5 billion years' worth of fuel left in our Sun).

Closer to home and right now, our oceans are becoming more and more polluted as we continue to dump more and more plastic and sludge into them. Our consumption of fossil fuels and our demand for cheap rainforest timber puts carbon into the atmosphere and takes oxygen out of it resulting in a greenhouse effect. The earth is warming up.



The icecaps at the poles are melting at a record rate. Ocean levels are rising. The behaviour of currents and winds is changing. As a result, we are noticing that the weather seems to be getting more extreme, and every week dozens of species become extinct.

Every year, hundreds of square miles of good land are lost to the advancing desert. The protective ozone layer in the upper atmosphere is punctured with huge holes.

That's what Romans 8 means by frustration, groaning, decay, corruption and curse. Science has been giving us the data for decades now. But God was telling us about this *millennia ago*, before modern research was even conducted, let alone analysed.

More than that, God has told us *why*. Genesis 3 tells us, very vividly, that human disobedience towards God had, not just personal, but global consequences.

The earth became a corrupted, dysfunctional, out of order and broken planet from the time the first humans disobeyed God. And this is why, after the fall, God said to Adam, "Cursed is the ground because of you." Sin messes up *everything*.

## 2) The Promise of New Creation

But the Bible teaches that God is the Chief Executive of a universal recycling company. God is going to transform planet pain into planet paradise.

The prophet Isaiah saw a vision of this and he described it in these poetic terms; "The wolf will live with the lamb... and a little child will lead them... and the lion will eat straw like the ox... and young children will put their hands into the viper's nest."



In Romans 8.21 we learn that our entire messed up creation is one day going to be liberated from deterioration and decay. That will be a thing of the past.

This is what Jesus means in Revelation 21.5 when he says, "I am making everything new! Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

So when you look in the mirror, be positive; not just about what God has already done for you, but also about what he's going to do *everywhere*; make

all things new.

Did you know that hope is a very important factor in how healthy you are? I read a report a few years ago about a study conducted among 122 men who had recently suffered their first heart attack. Of the 25 individuals 'most pessimistic about their condition' 21 died within five years. Of the 25 most optimistic patients, only 6 died in the same timescale. According to that study, the sense of hopelessness causes a 300% increase in mortality rate.

More than any other medical factor (including BMI, pulse, diet, exercise, blood pressure and cholesterol levels) hopelessness, according to this research, was the greatest factor in premature death. The author of the report ended by noting that maybe it's better to cheerfully eat full English breakfasts than pessimistically eat broccoli. Quote *him* on that, not me!

"Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed!" You have every reason to be the most optimistic, most positive, most confident people on earth.

### **3) What About the Environment?**

Maybe there's a question arising in your mind that sounds something like this: If the world is decaying (because of sin) and God is going to make it all new again anyway, (because of the resurrection) why should we be concerned about pollution and plastic, and global warming, and climate change, and other environmental problems? Isn't God going to sort everything out in the end?

But we need to listen to the other things God says to us about the earth.

The Bible says that God made the heavens and the earth. "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." It all belongs to him, not to us; but we have been entrusted with the task of looking after it. It's when we forget that the earth is the Lord's that we end up abusing and neglecting it.

What do you think are the top three reasons people are so careless about the way they treat the world? Forgetfulness? Laziness? Lack of awareness perhaps?

I think the *root* cause of environmental damage is because people ignore God and forget that this is *his* world to tend - not ours to trash. Things go wrong when we act as if we are the center of the universe. We end up not even thinking about the problems we're leaving for future generations.

And so the greatest need of humanity is to have the heart changed from within so that God is at the centre of our vision and not us - and that happens when we give our lives to Christ.

If you have never done that, ask Jesus to come into your heart today. God loves you, and life's greatest joy is knowing him. If you don't believe me ask someone who *does* know him.

## Ending

As I close then, look again in the mirror – God's mirror. While people watch the deterioration of our natural world and fear the worst, and look at themselves aging and get depressed, God offers us another perspective.



Look in the mirror. See a background world that belongs to God, that he will make new from top to bottom.

Look in the mirror. Yes, you're looking older than you did five years ago - but look at the *inside* - where you're getting younger every day.

Look in the mirror. See a precious child of God, made whole in Christ, forgiven of all sin, adopted into his wonderful family, delivered from sin and death, and on your way to eternal glory.