

The Triumph of the Gospel in the New Heavens and the New Earth

by John Piper

This sermon delves into the profound love of God in Christ, as measured by the magnitude of evil and guilt, the depth of suffering, and the gift of heaven obtained through the scream of the damned. It emphasizes the purpose of the universe to magnify the worth of Christ's sacrifice, highlighting the eternal significance of the cross and the scream of the damned in revealing the horror of sin and the glory of God's grace.

Scripture: Romans 8:18, Ephesians 1:6, 2 Corinthians 4:17, Revelation 5:12, Isaiah 65:17

Topics: "God's Love", "The Significance of the Cross"

Description

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Transcript

Before I launch into where I'm going, let me try to say what I feel like the Lord is doing. I didn't hear all the conference talks, but I've heard enough and I know enough about heaven and hell and cross that I think I can sum up in about three or four minutes here what I think the main message is that we're all about here. And I might just decide to sit down after that, we'll see.

I really don't want to detract from what you just heard. There are four ways that you can measure the love of God in Christ heard in the scream of the damned. Four ways to measure it.

Number one, you measure love by the magnitude of the evil from which the beloved is rescued. That's one way. And that is hell and that is infinite.

Second, you measure love by the magnitude of the guilt or the ill-desert that you had to overcome to love the beloved. In other words, the greatness of how much they don't deserve is a measure of the love you have when in spite of it, you die for them. That's the second way you measure, and our ill-desert was infinite.

The third way you measure the love of God behind the scream of the damned is the depth, extent of the suffering of the act of love itself, which we just heard about, and that was infinite. And the third way that you measure the extent of the love behind the scream of the damned is the magnitude of the gift obtained in the suffering for you, and that is heaven and that is infinite. I think those are the four ways by which we measure how we are loved in any circumstance.

And all four of them are infinite, and they all point to the infinite value of the scream of the damned. Now, it's bigger than this. And the quote you just heard from Spectacular Sins is my effort to get at it.

Hell exists. Sin exists. Wouldn't be any hell without sin.

Heaven exists. Cross exists. Everything exists to magnify the worth of the scream of the damned.

Everything. That's the point of the universe. It's bigger than that.

Some people think that Christ died for us as a means to an end. Merely. Like heaven.

Forgiveness. Justification. Propitiation.

A mean. And it's left behind. Means are left behind.

And you go to ends. Not that way. What we will mainly do forever in heaven is magnify the worth of the scream of the damned.

That's the point of the book of Revelation. I have heard well-schooled preachers and book writers say that all that is horrible, sinful, painful in this life will be forgotten. Not to overstate it.

That's a damnable sentence. Calvary will not be forgotten. And it is the most horrible, most sinful, most agonizing event that ever was.

It will be the center of heaven forever. And we will with our mouths be singing that song forever. I hope if this conference gives you one thing.

It will be hell exists. Cross exists. Sin exists.

Heaven exists. You exist. Universe exists.

In order to magnify the worth of the scream of the damned. Give you one verse to hang that on. Ephesians 1.6 We are predestined in love through Jesus Christ according to His will unto the praise of the glory of the grace of God.

And I would just ask you. If that's what we were destined for ultimately. The praise of the glory of the grace of God.

What was, the and always will be the apex of the revelation of the grace of God. And the answer is the scream of the damned. On the cross.

I'm done. Go home now. This message that I had prepared feels so out of place.

And it fits. But tone wise. It's going to be a hard job to stay here.

And I really believe we should stay here. So I'm in my brain saying Lord. Fix this.

So that we stay here. So pray for me. Because it is possible.

Since all things exist to magnify the worth of the scream of the damned. This has got to fit. So much for the introduction.

Thank you. Have I prayed yet? I didn't pray. I got one more thing to do and then I'm going to pray.

Ask for help. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed to us. For the whole creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

For the creation was subjected to futility. Not of its own will. But by the will of Him who subjected it in hope that the whole creation would be set free from its bondage to decay.

And obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not the creation only.

But we who have the first fruits of the Holy Spirit groan inwardly as we wait for our adoption. The redemption of our bodies. In this hope we were saved.

But who hopes for what he sees? But if we do not see it, we wait for it with patience. Now Lord, that's what I want to try to unpack for a few minutes. And it was bought by the screen.

There would be no new heavens and new earth. No freedom of the glory of the children of God. Singing on a renewed planet under renewed galaxies.

There wouldn't be any without the scream of the damned. And we wouldn't know what to do rightly there if that memory were not key. So I ask for a cross-centered, Christ-exalting, scream of the damned, honoring exposition of this text.

Let's get the big picture before us. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. A few verses later, he creates man and female in his own image.

And then in verse 31 of Genesis 1, it's all very good. And then in chapter 3 of Genesis, Adam and Eve rejected the supreme worth of God in favor of the fruit of the tree. And they and all of their posterity and the entire natural order from one end of the universe to the other was subjected to futility.

Overreaction? You want a measurement of the horror of one sin? Verse 15 of chapter 3, hope immediately is announced. I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring. He will bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

And that hope is expressed in what I just recited in Romans 8.20. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope. What hope? That the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. So, he created the universe, man and a woman, and it was perfect, very good.

No sin, no suffering, no human death at all. Just perfect. And after one sin, the whole creation became what we see.

Every single human being since then except three, two have died. Elijah and Enoch. The exceptions are not the point.

Every human has died, understand me. Animals suffer, rivers overflow and inundate hundreds of city blocks and cedar rapids. Avalanches bury skiers, tornadoes suck the life out of little boy scouts.

Tsunamis kill 250,000 in a night. Philippine ferries capsize, killing 800 people in a moment. AIDS, malaria, cancer, heart disease kill millions.

Monster tornadoes do whole midwestern cities. Droughts, famines bring millions to the brink and over the brink of starvation. Freak accidents happen to ways you would not want to describe.

And little babies are born with no eyes, six legs, horrible deformities. That is because of one sin. The universe was subjected to futility and corruption in hope.

What a plan is in that one. Why? Now this is very important I think for you to answer. Why did God subject the natural order to such horrific realities when nature did nothing wrong? Souls did something wrong.

Adam and Eve's volition did something wrong. The earth didn't do anything wrong. Why is the earth bursting with volcanoes and earthquakes? Animals didn't do anything wrong.

What's the deal with this universal subjection to corruption when one man and one woman sin one time? And the whole natural order goes wrong. Disorder everywhere in the most horrible ways. Most of us are protected from most of the time.

What a kaleidoscope of suffering in this world. Century after century. Here's my answer.

I don't know any other possible answer biblically. God put the natural world under a curse so that physical horrors would become vivid pictures of the horror of moral evil. That's it.

I don't know if there was any other reason. Cancer, tuberculosis, malformations, floods, car accidents, happen so that we would get some dim idea of the outrage of moral evil flowing from our hearts. And you say, why did he do it that way? Well, ask yourself just an honest question.

How intensely outraged are you over your belittling of God compared to the engagement of your emotion when your child is hurt or your leg is cut off or you lose your job or some physical thing happens and everything in you rises? No! How often does your heart say no with the same emotional engagement at your own sin? Not very often. Not very often. Therefore, what God is doing is saying, I know that about fallen man.

I will display the horror of his sin in a way that he can feel. Why Jesus, when the tower fell on the 18, said simply, unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. What was that? The point of the falling of the tower and killing 18 people was your moral evil.

That was the point. All physical evil has one point. Sin is like that morally and we don't have the wherewithal to feel it appropriately.

Therefore, we're going to get some help from the physical order. That's the point of the world we live in. It's pointing to the horror of moral evil.

Oh, that we would see and feel how repugnant and offensive and abominable it is to prefer anything to God. You do it every day almost. I do.

Adam and Eve brought the universe into this present horrific condition by preferring their own way and fruit to God. All the physical evil in the universe is not as bad as that one act of treason. All of it, summed up for all the centuries that it exists, is not as bad.

So you can see now. I'm going to say something about the screen of the dam. You can see how this history, if that's true, this history that we live in, these millennia of pain, this conveyor belt of corpses is all about the magnitude of that sin which is all about magnifying the worth of the one who screamed so we wouldn't have to bear it.

It's all about Christ. Cancer is about Christ. Tsunamis are about Christ.

Dead children in a driveway in Texas are about Christ. I preached this on the fourth anniversary, this truth, not this sermon, this truth. I preached this on the fourth anniversary of 9-11 at our church.

We thought, well, a good way to do outreach would be let's give out little folders in all the neighborhoods and say, this pastor is going to tackle the problem of evil and it's going to be the supremacy of Christ and 9-11 or something like that. So this was the truth I preached. Next Sunday, in the little round prayer room at the North Campus, one of our women was there.

She's one of my heroes. And we just pray. We don't talk in that room.

We just bow and pray for half an hour before the service. And she comes regularly with her boy. Now seven, or is he a little older? We're losing track.

She's going to watch this tape and wonder why I don't get it right. It's all right. She loves me.

She'll forgive me. And she wouldn't even mind if I mentioned his name. His name is Michael.

Michael is seven, eight. And he has the mind probably of a six-month-old. And he has seizures every few seconds.

He's done everything that man knows to do. We've done everything by way of prayer and obtained prayer of faith. And he is that way and probably will be that way the rest of his life.

That's not what they bargained for, right? Same as their whole life. She was in the prayer meeting. And here's the prayer.

I wrote it down. Dear Lord, help me to feel the horror of sin the way I feel the horror of my son's disability. And I just wanted to leap and say, she got it! Yes! And she did.

She's gotten it so many times. I look at her. She usually sits in the back.

The stroller here with him jerking around is at the back. And she's there. And I'm looking right at her time after time after time.

And she gets it! Oh, how deeply she gets it! She couldn't survive if she didn't get it. And I just want you to know that she is one of the great rewards of the pastoral ministry. Now, parents, what do you say to them about creation? What do you say about their children like that? Let me read these verses again.

I'm at Romans 8. This is what you say. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the

revealing of the sons of God.

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope. The devil didn't do this because he didn't have any hope for us. In hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

But we know that the whole creation has been groaning together until now. I'm going to stop there. I have four observations about the remainder of this text that are relevant for that mom and for you as you're dealing with the suffering in your life and the suffering of your relatives and the suffering that you will face very soon.

Observation number one. God promises that there will be liberation from this creation, from its futility, liberation of this creation from its futility and its bondage to corruption. There will be liberation of this creation from its futility and bondage to corruption.

Verse 21, the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption. This is a promise that there will be a new earth, a new heavens and a new earth. There will be continuity between this earth and the age to come, the new earth.

It says the creation itself will be set free. If you're going to replace the earth with another earth, that one we totally annihilate and start over with another one, it's a strange way to describe it if you say this one will be set free. So I don't assume that there's an exchange.

Like in eternity, we live on a planet that doesn't exist today. We don't. We're going to live here.

Is that okay, Randy? We're going to live here and it's going to be new. It's not like new, I get a new car. That's a different car.

It's like I feel like a new man. Same man, new. Second observation.

The liberation of the natural order from its bondage to corruption will be a participation in the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Now this is going to be really good news to this mom and I want you to feel it as hugely good news purchased by the scream of the dam. Verse 21, the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and the whole creation will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

The creation will obtain the freedom of the children of the glory of God. Here's a mistake. One might be tempted to say to this mom or any of you who are walking through similar sufferings.

Met a young man last night right over here. I don't think he'll mind me saying this. I hope this sounds like incredibly good news to him who was in an accident and his arm doesn't have the full use of it.

You're sitting out there right now. I hope this lands on you with incredible joy and hope and all of us are going to be that way someday, sooner or later. You say to this mom, the natural order is going to be renewed.

It says so right here in the Bible. Your body is a part of the natural order. Therefore, you, a child of God, are going to be caught up into the renewed natural order and be free from all of your disabilities.

That's wrong. It's not what it says. That would be okay.

That would be good news. It's just not good enough. It's not what it says.

Well, what does it say? It says it's the other way around. We will already, as the children of God, be glorious and new and the creation will have to be worked on as an appropriate playground for us. The creation will obtain what we have, the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

So, God makes us the priority. He raises us. He gives us totally new bodies and then He says, Alright children, I'm going to fix this universe so that it is totally suitable for you.

Now get the implication of this for this mom and this boy. All their lives they will spend getting this boy somehow adjusted to this creation in which he doesn't fit very well. And I'm telling her, by faith and by the scream of the damned, someday Michael will have no more seizures.

He will be granted a level of maturation that brings him to his peak beauty and magnificent intellectual and emotional maturity. He will be given the use of all of his limbs and when he has that freedom, God will say, Michael, now we will get a universe ready for you. Let's see.

What shall we make of this universe so that it is perfectly suited to you? You no longer have to be adjusted to it anymore. That's what I say to her. And that's what I would say to any of you with disabilities.

Oh, what good news. Let me tell you a story. I don't know why I did this, except that it was in me to do.

There's a man in our neighborhood. I won't say his name. If you saw him on the street, unless grace were upon you, you'd cross the street to move to the other side.

Almost certainly. And if you had little children with you, they'd scream and they'd run the other direction. This man is the most deformed man in his face I have ever seen.

This would be Beauty and the Beast, worse than the movies make it. Maybe almost. I mean, it is so bad.

I saw him on bicycles first. And I thought, he's got a mask on. He's got a mask on and he's going to some kind of thing.

And then it happened off and I said, that's not a mask. It's just a huge, horrible gnaw. He always wears dark glasses.

And he lives in a building that I have to walk by on the way to church every day. So I saw him one morning, on a bike going by, and I went to the staff meeting. It was just a few minutes.

I was on the way. I said, I just want you to pray. I don't know this guy.

I've never met this guy. I want to meet this guy. And here's what I'm going to do if I meet him.

If he's walking toward me, or in front of me, and not on a bicycle, I'm going to get right in front of him and I'm going to say, Hi. Okay, now we'll shift from what I'm going to do. This happened.

He's walking down the street in front of Dunn Brothers Coffee. Walking. And I'm walking home from church.

Everything in me was free. I mean, I'm not usually free at these moments. I step right in front of him.

I doubt that he's ever talked to anybody on the street. I don't know. But I just talked right in front of him.

I put out my hand. I said, Hi. My name's John.

He took my hand. I looked him right in his glasses. Assuming he was looking at me through those glasses.

He said, My name's John. I'm Pastor Bethlehem right around the corner. And I want you to know something.

I love you. I don't know why. I just feel it.

And Jesus loves you. And brother, that face must be so hard to live with. I can't imagine what you've dealt with.

And I'm sorry. May I give you some good news? Jesus Christ loves you. Died for your sins.

So that when you die, you're going to be made so handsome in the new heavens and the new earth. You will not regret the pain of this life. So it's that.

He was totally receptive to me. Thank you very much. I said, Do you believe in Jesus? He said, Yes.

Now, I don't know if that's true. But that's where we are so far. I've seen him several times since then on his bike.

My associate, David, saw him the other day. He said, Now I've met the guy. You know who you're talking about? I love funerals better than weddings.

I heard somebody say that the other day. Me too. Because I've got such incredible good news.

These wedding people, they think they already have the best news. They don't. They just don't know about it.

But the people at the funerals, they've lost everything. And now I can get to them with the best news in the world. This person, if they know Jesus, they're coming out of the grave.

And we're coming out with them. That's worth preaching on the street and anywhere else. This creation, observation number two, say it again.

Liberation of the natural order from its bondage to corruption will be a participation in the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We, the children, will be decked out first with our new bodies. And then God will bring the universe into an appropriate form so that we have a place to play and work and make and relate and sing about the scream of the devil to his magnificent glory forever.

Third observation. Well, two more, and they're shorter. The arrival of the new liberated creation is compared to a birth so that there is not only continuity with this world, but also discontinuity.

You're going to have your body new. We'll be on this planet new. Don't worry.

He can do things with your body you haven't dreamed of. Just like he will be able to do things with the horrific destructive forces of this world and make them serve the children of God. Verse 22.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. I don't want to push it too far, but Paul used that analogy. I'm going to push on it.

The whole creation, that means tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, cancers, labor pains during birth, are all global earth birth pangs to bring forth the new planet. That's what they are. I think the implication of that is that, and there are several, but I'll just give you one.

The implication of that is that there's continuity and discontinuity because what a mom gives birth to is human continuity, but it isn't her. That's why I said I don't want to push this too far because you're going to say that's a contradiction of what you just said. I know it is, but you use analogies that way.

You try to get at a truth, and one of the truths implied is as the globe heaves to bring the new age into existence, what will be brought forth, there will be discontinuity as well. What you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or some other grain, but God gives it a body as he has chosen to each kind of seed its own body. What is sown is perishable.

What is raised is imperishable. What is sown in dishonor is raised in glory. What is sown in weakness is raised in power.

It is sown a natural body, it. I'm saying that so you hear the continuity. It is sown a natural body.

It is raised a spiritual body, the same it, but so different. Discontinuity as well as continuity. No more night.

No more sun. No more moon. No sea.

No marriage. I just wrote a book on marriage. We really wrestled as to what to call it, and I took the advice of my son who's here somewhere.

We're calling it this momentary marriage, a parable of permanence, because Jesus said in the resurrection there will be no marriage. The parable of marriage is temporary, and it points to something permanent, namely Christ and his church. No night, no sun, no moon, no sea, no marriage, spiritual bodies, a world wrought through fire, and yet real continuity, some kind of sun, some kind of moon, some kind of sea, some kind of marriage, some kind of body, recognizable.

See my hands and my feet. It is I. Touch me. You see, a spirit doesn't have flesh and bones as you see that I have.

And when he said that, he showed them his hands and feet, and while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, have you anything here to eat? And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it, and he ate it. So we will eat fish if you like fish, and if you don't like fish, there will be some kind of glorified pizza. I am virtually certain, and it will be totally healthy.

There will be no guilty consciences whatsoever in the age to come, and everybody will have a palate perfectly tailored to what is there, and what will be there will be tailored to your palate, because Jesus in his resurrection body ate fish precisely to demonstrate what kind of future is in front of you. God didn't create the universe to throw it away. On the trash heap of platonic spirits, he created the universe and ordained the fall and redemption and the scream of the damned and the echo of hell in order to magnify the worth of his son's sacrifice.

How shall I wrap this up? We wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies, for in this hope we were saved. So my fourth and final observation is the hope of having redeemed bodies in the new creation is secured by, I'll just adjust the wording here, the scream of the damned. It's secured by the saving work of Christ on the cross.

Let me read 23 and 24 again. We wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies, for in this hope we were saved. We were saved unto a hope, and that hope will include every disabled Christian leaping, running forever.

And they will say with the apostle Paul, I count the sufferings of those years, that vapor's breath, as unworthy to be compared to what I now experience. In fact, just to make sure that we see the justice in it all, I think 2 Corinthians 4 implies that the sufferings of the saints intensify their capacities to enjoy the age to come so that those who are most disabled will be ahead of me in the enjoyment of their limbs in the age to come. And I, in my sanctified, humble soul, will not resent that at all, but will find in their superior capacities for physical joy a part of my joy.

That's a little bit of Edwards thrown in. That's the way he talked about the degrees of happiness in heaven. We will not resent those ahead of us, and we will not gloat over those behind us.

Those who are ahead will have greater grace to delight in bringing those behind further, and those who are behind will have greater grace to enjoy those who are ahead. And what a more beautiful heaven it will be because of diversity than sameness in degrees of happiness. I close.

The ultimate reason that there is a new heavens and a new earth is not that there might be new bodies or saints. That's true. That's one of the reasons.

But the reason there's a new heaven and a new earth is because when God conceived of a universe of material things, He conceived of everything. It will be created perfect. It will, by my decree, fall.

I will labor patiently for thousands of years with a people recalcitrant, showing the depth of human sin. And I will, at the center and apex of my purpose, send my Son to bear my wrath on my people. And then I will gather a people who believe in Him for myself.

And then I will return, and I will cast all of the unbelievers into hell, which will demonstrate the infinite worth of my glory and the infinite value of my Son's sacrifice, which they have rejected. And I will renew the earth, and I will make my people so beautiful and then tailor this universe for them with this purpose, that when my Son is lifted up with His wounds, they will sing the song of the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world in the mind of God who planned it all. Therefore, be it resolved.

Therefore, be it resolved. We will endure any suffering. We will endure any assault, any slander, any reviling, any disease, precisely because we have a great reward in heaven, namely, Jesus Christ crucified.

So Father, let that resolution grip this conference. And may that resolution to suffer anything, endure any persecution, because we have a great reward in heaven, may it be rooted in all that they have heard in these messages. O God, let there be a spiritual informing and shaping and renewing of the minds of your people and the awakening of the minds of those who need to be born again still.

And let this renewed mind awaken renewed affections for the King of kings and the Lord of lords whose magnificence and glory is unlike any other king in the universe. It reaches its apex in the scream of the devil.

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