

## FREE AT LAST

### "GOOD GRIEF" ROMANS 8:18-27

"Life is hard, then you die." Woody Allen said it—but he was probably not the first. David Gerrold added, "Then they throw dirt in your face. Then the worms eat you. Be grateful it happens in that order." Woody Allen also said, "Life is full of misery, loneliness, and suffering—and it's all over much too soon." Hard to believe he's a comedian.

None of us are strangers to suffering. As Christians, we experience all the afflictions "common to man" plus those unique to Christ followers. Paul writes: "The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children, and if children, also heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ—seeing that we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him" (Ro 8:17-18 HCSB). Our anguishes run the gamut of suffering; for instance, pain, privation, sorrow, sickness, bereavement, bankruptcy, and death itself, not to mention the trials we endure because we confess Christ in a hostile world; for instance, persecution, intimidation, ridicule, discrimination, isolation, and ostracism.

So why don't we Christians just give up? The answer is hope—not based in the banal notion that "things can't possibly get any worse," but in the certainty of future glory and resurrection. We "who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved" (Ro 8:23).

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***For in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.***

— 1 Corinthians 15:22

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## This Week's Core Competency

**Hope** – I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

In Romans 8:23, Paul refers to "the redemption of our bodies," which we, "who have the firstfruits of the Spirit," will experience in the future in connection with "our adoption to sonship." One commentator explains: "In v. 24 Paul expresses the paradoxical nature of his gospel. It is a matter of 'already' (we were saved) and 'not yet' (in hope). Salvation begins to happen to the believer in this lifetime, with 'were saved' referring to the event of conversion, but the story of salvation is not over until the redemption of the body. Only then is the full extent of grace and transformation experienced. By definition, asks Paul, who hopes for what they already see? Notice the emphasis on seeing. Paul is thinking of the visible transformation, even to human flesh, which will transpire (see 1 Corinthians 15). Thus this life is the time of waiting patiently for what is hoped for but not yet seen (cf. Heb. 11:1, where hoping and not seeing are also paired)—the resurrection of believers into a new form of bodily existence, like that which Christ already is experiencing" (Ben Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 225).

The hope we have in Jesus Christ is the hope that our mortal bodies will be redeemed when he returns; that is, our mortal bodies will be raised immortal like the body Jesus now has—a resurrection body. The body of Jesus that came out of the tomb on resurrection Sunday was the body that went into the tomb on Good Friday. Otherwise the tomb would not have been empty. The body that came out was Jesus' body, but it was different. It was

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It was immortal. It was a body of flesh and bones (Lk 24:39)—no empty shell—a human body but with different traits and capabilities. We will have a body like his resurrection body (1Co 15:20-23); that is our hope.

In 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, Paul tells his readers, "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown [cf., "dies" v. 36] is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." While Greeks and Romans in the first century believed in disembodied life after death, only Jews, apart from the Sadducees, and Christians believed in life after, life after death. Only Jews and Christians believed in an embodied life following death and resurrection (Dan 12:2).

In verses 51-57, Paul goes on to explain: "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'

'Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?'

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

## day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

### Romans 8:18-27

18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who

*have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*

*26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.*

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- \* Circle "consider" in v. 18.
- \* Circle "creation" in vv. 19, 20, 21, 22.
- \* Circle "children" in v. 19.
- \* Underline "subjected to frustration" and "bondage to decay" in v. 20.
- \* Circle "hope" in vv. 20, 24, 25.
- \* Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 20, 23, 24, 25, 26.
- \* Box "as" indicating *comparison* in v. 22.
- \* Circle "firstfruits" in v. 23.
- \* Bracket "adoption to sonship" in v. 23.
- \* Bracket "the redemption of our bodies" in v. 23.
- \* Box "in the same way" indicating *comparison* in v. 26.
- \* Circle "wordless groans" in v. 26.
- \* Circle "he" in v. 27.

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day 2

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Put the meaning of verse 18 in your own words.
2. *When* will the "children of God" be revealed in glory?
3. The creation (excluding humanity) "was subjected to frustration" (v. 20). *What* does that mean, and *when* did that happen?
4. What *hope* is there for creation?
5. Creation is *personified* in verse 22. How so?
6. Explain how Paul uses the *metaphor* of childbirth in verse 22.
7. Describe what the "redemption of our bodies" involves.
8. Explain the *comparison*, "in the same way," in verse 26.
9. **Discussion:** Talk about the Holy Spirit's role in prayer.

**EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Romans 8:18-27 follows hard on Paul's allusion to suffering in verse 17b. According to verse 1, "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." According to verse 9, believers "are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit." And according to verse 16, "the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God children." But what about suffering? Doesn't it cast a shadow across all that Paul has said? How can believers continue to see themselves as God's dearly beloved children and continue to look forward to sharing in Christ's glory in the face of suffering? Does suffering not contradict, or at least call into question, the reality of Paul's pronouncements? In the words of one commentator: "The exposition of the future glory to be enjoyed by the believer is necessary to answer this objection. In a sense, what Paul is saying in vv. 18-30 is that the Christian must go the way of his Lord. As for Jesus glory only followed suffering, so for the Christian (cf. v. 17c)" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 509).

In verse 18, Paul says, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed" (Ro 8:18). Think of the "glory" of creation—the breathtaking grandeur of the Great Orion Nebula, the Messier 10 cluster of stars, and the Aurora Borealis, not to mention the awesome splendor of Everest, the Grand Canyon, and Victoria Falls. Think of the "glory" of the greatest works of art—Michelangelo's David, Leonardo de Vinci's Mona Lisa, Velazquez's Las Meninas, Picasso's Guernica, and Van Gogh's The Starry Night. The glory of all of these will pale in comparison to the grandeur of the children of God in their resurrection splendor. In the words of one writer: "We must, Paul suggests, weigh suffering in the balance with the glory that is the final state of every believer; and so 'weighty,' so transcendently wonderful, is this glory that suffering files in the air as if it had no weight at all" (Moo, 511). It is the revelation of this glory of the "sons of God" (i.e., "children" understood collectively as "sons," v. 21) that creation personified, animate and inanimate excluding humanity (vv. 20, 22-23; see Witherington, 222-23), awaits with "eager

expectation," as if by craning its neck to see what is coming. You see, following the fall, God subjected creation to "futility" (Ge 3:17-19), the kind described in Ecclesiastes, namely, "that weariness and despair of spirit which cannot see beyond the stultifying repetitiveness of life, the endless cycle of decay and corruption, the worthlessness of a lifelong effort which may be swept away overnight by a storm or be parched to nothingness in a drought, the complete insignificance of the individual in the tides of time and the current of human affairs" (James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 38a, *Romans 1-8*, 488). He subjected it "in hope" (Ge 3:15) with a view to creation's liberation, for creation is not destined for annihilation but renewal (2Pe 3:13; Rev 21:1).

Verses 19-25 support in some way what Paul says in verse 18, but commentators disagree as to the way (see Moo, 513). I take it these verses focus on the incomparable, transcendent greatness of the glory "to be revealed" in connection with the liberation of the creation "from its bondage to decay" (v. 21) and the believers' full-and-final "adoption to sonship" and "redemption," namely, "the resurrection of their bodies" (v. 23). God subjected the creation to frustration following the fall, but he did so *in hope* with a view to its ultimate liberation as well as that of humanity. The fall of humanity and the frustrating of creation go hand in hand, as do the redemption of humanity and the liberation of creation. "As man fallen into futility required a world given over to corruption and decay as his appropriate setting, so man liberated from both sin and the flesh will require an incorruptible setting for his resurrected embodiment (cf. 1 Cor 15:42-50)" (Dunn, 488). In the interim (cf., "right up to the present time"), the creation groans like a woman in labor to deliver a new creation from the womb of the old, and believers, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly in anticipation of a future resurrection. This hope sustains them in times of suffering (cf., v. 17).

In verses 26-27 Paul says "in the same way" hope sustains us when we suffer, the Holy Spirit helps us when we pray. One commentator succinctly expresses Paul's meaning in these words:

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"Our failure to know God's will and consequent inability to petition God specifically and assuredly is met by God's Spirit, who himself expresses to God those intercessor petitions that perfectly match the will of God" (Moo, 526). While we may be unaware of the Spirit's intercession, God "knows the mind of the Spirit," who conveys our longings in accordance with the

divine will. Clearly, the Spirit's "wordless groans" are not unintelligible to God. "Barth observes that God 'makes himself our advocate with himself, that he utters for us that ineffable groaning, so that he will surely hear what we ourselves could not have told him, so that he will accept what he himself has to offer' (*A Shorter Commentary on Romans*, p. 102)" (Harrison, 96).

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

### *The Message of the Passage*

*The hope we have for incomparable glory in the future and the help we have from the Spirit now when we pray enable us to patiently endure our present sufferings.*

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22.

Describe how Hope helps you cope with the hardships of life and death.

Creation will be liberated from bondage to decay. Explain the significance of that.

How does knowing that the Spirit helps you affect you when you pray?

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## notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 18 **consider** "There is a gravitas here which can best be brought out with a slightly expanded translation: 'I am firmly of the opinion that,' 'It is my settled conviction that'" (Dunn, 467-68).
- v. 19 **creation** "V. 23 clearly enough contrasts believers with creation, and this seems to rule out inclusion of believers here. V. 20 seems to rule out non-believers as well, or even humanity in general, since at least Adam was not subject to such futility or suffering without a choice" (Witherington, 222-23). "With the majority of modern commentators, then, I think that creation here denotes the 'subhuman' creation" (Moo, 514).
- v. 19 **children of God** Lit., "sons of God" (ESV, NET, NKJV). "Sons of God" is the better translation because the gender-neutral rendering, "children of God," obscures Paul's allusion to the believer's "adoption to sonship" (v. 15). "The believer's status has been transformed not only from slave to freedman (see on 6:16) but also from freedman to adopted son" (Dunn, 452)—with all the rights and privileges thereof.
- v. 20 **subjected** . . . Cf., Ecc 1:2. "In relation to this earth this is surely Paul's commentary on Gen. 3:17, 18" (John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 303). "Because of the Fall, God subjected the whole creation to 'futility' or 'frustration.' Consequently it never reaches the perfection that He originally intended it to achieve. Probably God is in view as the one 'who subjected it,' though Satan and Adam were instrumental in that action" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Romans," 2017 ed., 128, [planobiblechapel.org/constable-notes](http://planobiblechapel.org/constable-notes)). "Perhaps a better translation than 'futility' would be 'ineffectiveness,' inability to reach its goal and *raison d'être*" (Witherington, 223).
- v. 20 **hope** "Paul probably has in mind the *protoevangelium*—the promise of God, given in conjunction with the curse, that 'he [the seed of the woman] will bruise your [the serpent's] head' (cf. Rom. 16:20). The creation, then, though subjected to frustration as a result of human sin, has never been without hope; for the very decree of subjection was given in the context of hope" (Moo, 516).
- v. 21 **bondage to decay** Cf., "slavery to corruption" (NASB). Believers have been liberated from slavery to sin (6:6-7, 18) and slavery to the law (6:14; 7:4-6). "There is also a slavery to corruption, the complete inability to escape from the physical deterioration and dissolution which characterizes the created order (and on which sin has capitalized). And believers are still part of that created order; like creation as a whole, they have not yet been liberated from that slavery. Paul's confidence, however, is that those in Christ will assuredly enter into that fuller liberty—the liberty of the splendor God always had in view for man when he created him; confidence too that creation will share that liberty" (Dunn, 488). The liberation of creation will begin with the coming of the kingdom. "In view of prophecies concerning creation's restoration during Messiah's earthly reign, that time was probably in Paul's mind (e.g., Jer. 31:12-14; 33)" (Constable, 128). And it will culminate in a new heaven and earth (Rev 21:1).
- v. 22 **as** "The groaning of the creation looks back to its subjection to frustration (v.20), whereas the pangs of childbirth anticipate the age of renewal. In other words, the same sufferings are at once a result and a prophecy. Christ spoke of the renewing of the world and called it a 'rebirth' (*palingenesia*, Matt 19:28)" (Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:94).
- v. 23 **firstfruits of the Spirit** Cf., "the Spirit as the firstfruits" (NLT). "Believers' possession of the Holy Spirit is not only evidence of their present salvation (vv. 14,16) but also a pledge of their future inheritance—and not only a pledge but also the down payment on that inheritance (see 2Co 1:22; 5:5 and notes; Eph 1:4)" (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on 8:23). "The gift of the Spirit is but the beginning of that process which will end with the resurrection, the redemption of the body" (Dunn, 490).
- v. 24 **adoption to sonship** "The 'adoption' that, in vv. 14-17, we were said already to possess is here made the object of our hope . . . Christians at the moment of justification, are adopted into God's family; but this adoption is incomplete and partial until we are finally made like the Son of God himself (v. 29). This final element in our adoption is 'the redemption of our bodies'" (Moo, 521). "Between the two [i.e., initial and final adoption] there stretches the course of sanctification; but only at the final adoption will the child of God be fully conformed to the likeness of God's Son (v.29; cf. 1 John 3:2). As the physical body is admirable suited to life in this world, the promised spiritual body [i.e., resurrection body] will be seen to be wonderfully congruent with the realm of light and freedom and limitless movement. But most important of all, it will be like the body of him who has provided redemption from sin and death. This is the Spirit's work of glorification" (Harrison, 95).
- v. 26 **wordless groans** Cf., v. 27b. Hope helps us in our sufferings and so does the Holy Spirit. "We should not confuse these 'groanings' with praying in tongues. This passage promises all Christians God's help, not just those who had the gift of tongues. Furthermore, the Scriptures never connect the gift of tongues with intercessory prayer. This verse seems to be saying that the Holy Spirit prays for us, not that He prays through us to the Father" (Constable, 130).

### Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Many people, including children, wonder why our loving God allows so much suffering in the world. My kids endured suffering when my young nephew died several years ago. These are hard circumstances to live through, much less parent through. How can we lead our kids to lean into their loving Heavenly Father when suffering inevitably comes? First, let your kids know that all suffering is because we live in a sinful world. Your present suffering may not be the result of your personal sin, but suffering exists because sin does. We should not be surprised when suffering comes (1 Peter 4:12-13) but can take heart knowing God is still in control. Next, I would remind your children that one day, all suffering, loss, and disease will end. We are promised restored bodies and creation in eternity. Revelation 21 assures us that all crying and pain will end. Lastly, God will use suffering to build Christ-like character in us. As we just learned in Romans 5, "suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character and character, hope." The Psalmist also says "it was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees" (119:71). Suffering and trials will come, if not in their childhood, certainly down the road. What a blessing to have the privilege of pointing our little ones to the Father and speaking truth into them now. When trials do come, they will trust the Father and persevere.

#### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Romans 8:18-27.

1. What does Paul say about our present sufferings in verse 18?
2. What will happen to creation?
3. What is our great hope?

#### What Do You Think

Do you struggle with your prayer life? How does it help you to know that the Holy Spirit talks to God for you when you don't know what to say?

#### What R U Going To Do

Draw a picture of the most beautiful creation scene you can imagine. It's hard to imagine that creation will be even more beautiful than it is now in eternity. Post the picture to remind you of our future hope.

#### Core Comp

Hope - Coping with the problems of life and death with the help of Jesus

#### Memory Verse

Romans 8:5 - *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.*

### KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse \_\_\_\_\_, completed *Scrolls* \_\_\_\_\_, brought Bible \_\_\_\_\_, brought a friend \_\_\_\_\_.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

#### 2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** Ephesians

#### 6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

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**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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