

exploreGOD

"WHY IS THERE PAIN AND SUFFERING?"

ROMANS 8:18-25

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. Hebrews 6:19-20, *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.*

Romans 8:18-25 points toward an answer to the vexing question, "Why is there pain and suffering?" and speaks to the believers' hope for future glory—both in the face of "present sufferings" (v. 18). Verse 20 is key; it looks back to the fall of humanity to answer the vexing question and looks forward to the liberation of creation from its bondage to decay and the glorious freedom of the children of God to describe the future glory.

Verse 20 implies that human beings are the reason why there is pain and suffering; they introduced it into the world (Ge 3:1-24) and are the perpetrators of the preponderance of it. C. S. Lewis writes: "Christianity asserts that God is good; that He made all things good and for the sake of their goodness; that one of the good things He made, namely, the free will of rational creatures, by its very nature included the possibility of evil; and that creatures, availing themselves of this possibility, have become evil" (*The Problem of Pain*, 69). It is, after all, human beings who are responsible for inflicting pain and causing suffering in the world; the evening news testifies to that fact daily. Nevertheless, while every person contributes to this pain

Free choice is the origin of evil.

– Norman L. Geisler

and suffering—no one is morally perfect—every person does not contribute equally to it. Paul puts it this way, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Ro 3:23). Some, however, fall farther short than others!

Norman L. Geisler agrees. Human beings are the reason why there is pain and suffering. He writes: "The power of moral free choice in this world entails the ability either to choose the good God designed for us or to reject it. The latter is called evil. It is good to be free, but freedom with regard to good and evil makes evil possible. Free will is good in itself, but entailed in that good is the ability to choose the opposite of good. God made free creatures, and if it is good to be free, then the origin of evil is in the misuse of freedom . . . God is credited with giving the good thing called free will, but He is not to be blamed for the evil we do with our freedom. Remember: 'God made mankind upright, *but men have gone in search of many schemes*' (Eccl. 7:29). In brief, God made the *fact* of freedom; we are responsible for our *acts* of freedom. The fact of freedom is good, even though some acts of freedom are evil. God is the cause of the former, and we are the cause of the latter" (*Chosen but Free*, 34-35).

But could God not prevent people from abusing free will; after all, isn't he omnipotent? This is a good question to which Lewis offers this intriguing answer. He writes: "We can, perhaps, conceive of a world in which God corrected the results of the abuse of free will by His creatures at every moment; so that a wooden beam became soft as grass when it was used as a weapon, and the air refused to obey me if I attempted to set up in it the sound waves that carry lies or insults. But such a world would be

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one in which wrong actions were impossible, and in which, therefore, freedom of the will would be void; nay, if the principle were carried out to its logical conclusion, evil thoughts would be impossible, for the cerebral matter which we use in thinking would refuse its task when we attempted to frame them" (33).

But if pain and suffering resulted from the first misuse of free will, could God not have removed its consequences, as well as, the consequences of every misuse of freedom ever since? Again, good question to which Lewis offers another intriguing answer. He writes: "It would, no doubt, have been possible for God to remove by miracle the results of the first sin committed by a human being; but this would not have been much good unless He was prepared to remove the results of the second sin, and of the third, and so on forever. If the miracles ceased, then sooner or later we might have reached our present lamentable situation: if they did not, then a world, thus continually underpropped and corrected by Divine interference, would have been a world in which nothing important ever depended on human choice, and in which choice itself would soon cease from the certainty that one of the apparent alternatives before you would lead to no results and was therefore not really an alternative" (71). And since freedom must mean freedom to choose between alternatives, having none precludes freedom.

"Houston, we have a problem"—one of our own making. Fortunately, Paul can say, "the one who subjected" the creation to frustration following the fall, "subjected it, in hope . . ." (Ro 8:20). Humanity created a problem that God could not, would not, and did not simply dismiss but purposed to resolve. His resolution is promised somewhat vaguely in Genesis 3:15 but is spelled out more clearly in Romans 8:20 and 23. To the serpent God said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." To us Paul explains, in the future "the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay" (v. 20) and we ourselves will receive "our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (v. 23). All this when Christ returns.

"Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Re 22:20). In the meantime, we should "hope" for what God has promised and "wait for it patiently" even in the face of "our present sufferings."

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

Romans 8:18-25

18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons 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 glorious freedom 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 as sons, 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 he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

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

- * Circle "sufferings" in v. 18.
- * Circle "glory" in v. 18.
- * Circle "in" in v. 18.
- * Circle "creation" in v. 19.
- * Circle "frustration" in v. 20.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 20, 24, 25.
- * Circle "the one" in v. 20.
- * Bracket "in hope" in v. 20.
- * Circle "hope/s" in vv. 20, 24, 25.
- * Underline "bondage" and "freedom" in v. 21.
- * Box "as" indicating comparison in v. 22.
- * Bracket "of the Spirit" in v. 23.
- * Circle "adoption" in v. 23.

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. Define the meaning of "present sufferings" and of "glory" in verse 18.
2. Creation is *personified* in verse 19. How so, and so what?
3. According to verse 20, "the creation was subjected to frustration." By whom and why?
4. Put what "subjected to frustration" means in your own words.
5. What do you infer regarding creation from verse 21?
6. Creation is *personified* again in verse 22. How so, and so what?
7. Explain the *significance* of the expression "firstfruits of the Spirit."
8. Believers await their "adoption as sons." Aren't we already God's sons and daughters? Explain.
9. To what does "the redemption of our bodies" refer? Explain.
10. **Discussion:** Talk about the significance of "hope" for "present sufferings."

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

Romans 8:18-25 follows on the heels of Paul's statement in verse 17, "Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." The Greek grammar used here does not establish a *condition* but states a *fact*. In other words, there is no question as to whether believers will share in Christ's glory; they will. They are assured of their future inheritance in spite of any present suffering. On this thought one author writes: "A final thought about adoption is that it involves an inheritance (v.17). In line with current legal provisions that enabled even a slave, once adopted, to inherit his master's possessions, Paul teaches that the Christian follows a similar course: a slave (to sin), a child, then an heir (vv. 15-17; cf. Gal 4:6, 7). How unexpected and how breathtaking is the gracious provision of God!" (Everett F. Harrison, "Romans" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:93). Not only are the terms "suffering" and "glory" repeated in verse 18, but the verse also begins with a Greek conjunction, left untranslated in the NIV but rendered "for" in the ESV, implying further its connection to the previous verse. In it Paul compares "our present sufferings" to "the glory that will be revealed in us" and concludes that the one is not worth comparing to the other. In other words, sufferings endured in this life pale in significance compared to the splendor of the future life, a life undisturbed by anything hostile or hurtful. Then in verses 19-25 he goes on to defend and elaborate on this conclusion. One commentator says as much when he writes: "The 'for' introduces this verse and, indeed, the entire paragraph that follows, as an elaboration of the sequence of suffering and glory attributed to believers in v. 17b" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 511).

Paul elaborates on "glory" with respect to creation in verses 19-21. He personifies "the creation" in verse 19 to underscore the magnificence of what the future holds in store. The word translated "eager

expectation" is a picturesque term describing a person leaning forward out of intense interest or craning their neck to see what is coming. One paraphrase renders the verse, "The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own" (Phillips). In verse 20 the apostle explains that God subjected the creation to "frustration" in the past, which likely refers to the "curse" placed on the ground by its Creator following the original sin. To Adam he said, "Cursed is the ground because of you," implying that its productivity would be frustrated. Then he explained: "It will produce thorns and thistles for you" (Ge 3:17-18). Creation was subjected to frustration as a result of human sin in the beginning but not to the exclusion of hope. From the beginning there was hope, hope that one day creation would be "liberated from its bondage to decay." In a nutshell, creation looks forward to restoration not annihilation.

Then the apostle elaborates on "glory" with respect to believers, who have the "firstfruits of the Spirit," in verses 22-25. The transition from the creation to believers is facilitated by the idea of "groaning." Not only has "the whole creation" been groaning, but believers also "groan inwardly" in anticipation of future glory. For believers glory includes their "adoption as sons," which entails the reception in full of their inheritance, and includes "the redemption of [their] bodies," which entails their resurrection. Here is what Paul wrote earlier to the Corinthians regarding the resurrection: "The body 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" (1Co 15:42-44). Believers are saved "in this hope" that when the Lord returns they will have a resurrection body like Jesus' resurrection body for "in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then when he comes, those who belong to him" (vv. 22-23). In the meantime, they wait patiently for what they do not yet have.

The Message of the Passage

Wait patiently for the hope you have in Christ for your present sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory God has in store for you when creation is liberated from its bondage and you receive your inheritance and your resurrection body at Christ's return.

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

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the first two "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

“Why Is There Pain and Suffering?”

(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 18 **sufferings** "These 'sufferings of the present time' are not only those 'trials' that are endured directly because of confession of Christ—for instance, persecution—but encompass the whole gamut of suffering, including things such as illness, bereavement, hunger, financial reverses, and death itself" (Moo, 511).

v. 18 **glory** Cf., 2Co 4:17. The meaning of the word is difficult to capture in words. The English word frequently refers to "admiration, praise, or honor" or to "great beauty, splendor, or excellence." Contrasted with "present sufferings," in this context it likely refers to the future liberation of creation (v. 21) and the redemption of our mortal bodies (v. 23). Note the similar contrast: "The body that is sown 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" (1Co 15:42-44).

v. 18 **in** Cf., "to us" (ESV). "The most natural meaning of the Greek preposition *eis* (TEV *to*) would seem to be that of 'to' or 'for,' although there are definite instances in the New Testament where it does have the force of 'in.' If the usual meaning is given to this preposition, the present passage indicates that at the end of time God will reveal his glory 'to' or 'for the benefit of' his people" (Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans*, HFT, 23). Since the context refers to the disclosure of the sons of God (v. 19) and the redemption of our bodies (v. 23), "in us" (NIV) is preferable. "It is not a glory of which we are to be mere spectators" (John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 301).

v. 18 **frustration** "In relation to this earth this is surely Paul's commentary on Gen. 3:17, 18" (303). "The subhuman creation itself is not what it should be, or what God intended it to be . . . the word probably denotes the 'frustration' occasioned by creation's being unable to attain the ends for which it was made. Humanity's fall into sin marred the 'goodness' of God's creation, and creation has ever since been in a state of 'frustration'" (Moo, 515). "The word is therefore appropriately used of the disappointing character of present existence, which nowhere reaches the perfection of which it is capable" (William Sandy and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, 208).

v. 20 **the one** "The one who subjected the creation is not named. Some early Fathers assumed that Adam is in view. Others (e.g., Godet) incline to the notion that Satan is meant. But by far the most natural interpretation is that which postulates God as the one who did the subjecting" (Harrison, 10:94).

v. 20 **in 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 . . . freedom** Creation will be liberated "from its bondage to decay" to enjoy "the glorious freedom of the children of God," who have been liberated from their mortality (v. 23). "The idea of creation 'being set free' strongly suggests that the ultimate destiny of creation is not annihilation but transformation. When will this transformation take place? If one adopts a premillennial structure of eschatology (see Rev. 20:4-6), then it is tempting to apply the language Paul uses here to that period of time. But we cannot be certain that Paul has the millennium in mind because there is some evidence that the language he uses could also apply to the eternal state (see, e.g., the description of 'the new heaven and new earth' in Rev. 21:1-22:7)" (Moo, 517). "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)" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Romans," 2015 ed., 116, www.soniclight.com).

v. 22 **firstfruits . . . Spirit** In this expression "of the Spirit," is a genitive of apposition, which means "namely, the Spirit." "Like the first fruits, God's gift "of the Spirit" at the commencement of the believer's Christian life is His pledge that He will complete the process of salvation. Even though He has redeemed and adopted us, there is more of redemption and adoption for us to experience in the future (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30; 1 John 3:2)" (Constable, 116). "In 2 Corinthians i. 22, v. 5 and Ephesians i. 14 the same teaching about the Spirit is conveyed by the use of *arrhabon*, 'pledge' or 'earnest' (the word employed in modern Greek for an engagement-ring, as the pledge or earnest of the coming marriage)" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, TNTC, 173).

v. 23 **adoption** The Greek term [*huiothesian*] was originally a legal technical term for adoption as a son with full rights of inheritance. "The 'adoption' here is the full manifestation of believers' status as sons [and daughters] of God (cf. verses 14, 15), their entry upon the inheritance which is theirs by virtue of that status. 'The redemption of our body', the resurrection, is a theme on which Paul had recently enlarged in 2 Corinthians iv. 7-v. 10. The same hoped-for occasion is called 'the day of redemption' in Ephesians iv. 30, where believers are said to be sealed with the Spirit in view of it" (174).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Unfortunately our kids are going to suffer. It may be as simple as a skinned knee on the playground or losing a loved one but they all will experience pain and hardship. It's the result of living in a fallen world. As parents, how can we help our kids navigate suffering? (1) Listen to them. Sometimes our kid's problems seem trivial to us. You and I know that a hard loss on the ball field is not the end of the world but it feels like it to them at the moment. Empathize and let them know it's ok to be upset about being hurt or experiencing loss. (2) Teach them about eternity. There is more to life than what is happening right now. God is unfolding a great big story of redemption and today is just a little paragraph in it. (3) Remind them that suffering is normal. It's not the world God designed for us to live and there is hope for our future. God is in control. He holds all things in His hands "and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him." (Ro 8:28) The beautiful story of Joseph is an encouragement to us when we suffer. Take some time and read it as a family this week. Genesis 37-50. "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good..." (50:20) What a gift it is to give our children an eternity perspective!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Romans 8:18-25

1. Fill in the blanks. "I consider that our present _____ are not worth comparing with the _____ that will be revealed in us. (v18)

2. According to verse 25, how are we to wait?

What Do You Think

Think about a hard time you have recently gone through. What made it hard? What made you feel better? Read Psalm 68:19. How does it make you feel to know God will daily bear our burdens?

What R U Going To Do

You may not be experiencing a hard time right now but someone around you may be. Look around to see who needs encouragement. Write them a note and tell them you are praying for them.

Core Comp

Hope - I can cope with the problems of life and death with the help of Jesus.

Memory Verse

Psalm 145:2 - Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.

KIDPIX COUPON

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

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

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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 *Psalms 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 *Psalms 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 *Psalms 95:1-7*

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

Prayer *Psalms 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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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.