

## Introduction

In 1998 I had a Mike Haley, a guest minister, preach at our church in Kennesaw, and he preached on the storms of life. It was an outstanding message, and I still remember his introduction. He said he was going to speak to three groups of people: 1) those who were going through a storm, 2) those who had just gone through a storm, and 3) those who were going to be going through a storm. That covered everybody in the room. While I thought the message was outstanding, there were some in our congregation that did not appreciate the word at all. Their theological belief was that Christians do not have to go through storms and suffering. They believed that God gives advance warning and guidance to Christians so that they do not have to go through storms. Therefore, in their mind, the message that was shared with our congregation was totally inappropriate. Since Mike had spoken out of Acts 27 about the storm and shipwreck that the Apostle Paul went through, there was nothing unbiblical in his message; it was spot on. Our passage today begins with saying that if we are heirs of God and fellow heirs of Christ, we will suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. It is very clear that believers will indeed suffer with Christ. Our passage today is about suffering with Christ. We will look at the sufferings of the world and the suffering of believers. Second, we will look at the groanings of the world, the groanings of believers, and the groanings of the Holy Spirit. Finally, we will look at God's plan to end the suffering and glorify us.

## Suffering with Christ

1. Sufferings
2. Groanings
3. God's Plan

(Rom 8:16-25) "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, {17} and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. {18} For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. {19} For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. {20} For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope {21} that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. {22} For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. {23} And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. {24} For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? {25} But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it."

(Rom 8:26-30) "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; {27} and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*. {28} And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. {29} For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to *become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; {30} and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."

## 1. Sufferings (Rom 8:16-18)

There are two sufferings that are mentioned in our text. There is the suffering of all creation, and then there is the suffering by believers. There are many types of suffering in the world. When Jesus began His ministry, people were bringing all those who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them. All of creation suffer from the pains of diseases, and to ease the pain and suffering, doctors prescribe pain killers. In addition to these physical sicknesses and diseases, people suffer from losses, either of loved ones, or possessions. There are others that suffer from physical abuse, such as Jesus, when He was punished and crucified. There are those that suffer because their parts get old, stiff, and worn out, and cause pain. There are those that suffer from the loss of loved ones. All of creation suffers from one thing or another.

(Matt 4:24) “The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.”

### a. Suffering by believers

In Romans 8:16-17, Paul is speaking about believers. “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.” Then he said that we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ; these are believers. Then, Paul added, “if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.” Part of the Christian life is suffering with Christ. The good news is that we are also going to be glorified with Him.

(Rom 8:16-18) “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, {17} and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. {18} For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

When the apostle Paul was saved on the road to Damascus, the Lord showed Ananias how much Paul was going to suffer for His name. This chosen instrument of God, was not going to suffer because of sin, unbelief, lack of faith; it was part of God’s plan for his life. Paul was going to suffer for the name of Jesus. Christians are not exempt from suffering. If you are suffering, don’t accept condemnation or accusations about your lack of faith or sin. When Paul considered the sufferings of this present time, he was speaking from first-hand experience, and he did not consider the sufferings of this present time to be worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

(Acts 9:15-16) “But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; {16} for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.”

When I consider the life of Paul and the things that he personally went through, that is quite the statement. In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul gives us a glimpse of some of his trials. He received thirty-nine lashes on five different occasion. He was beaten with rods three times. He was stoned once and left for dead. (See Acts 14:19, where Paul was stoned at Lystra.) He had been shipwrecked three times when he wrote to the Corinthians. Paul’s shipwreck in Acts 27 was his fourth shipwreck. Paul was in all kinds of dangers in his travels. He went through all kinds of labor and hardship, had many sleepless nights, was in hunger and thirst, and was often in cold and

exposure. Paul also suffered from a sickness or weakness and entreated the Lord three times to take it away. Paul was also imprisoned for many years, and the prisons at that time were not the most pleasant places to be. Paul was a man of God and he suffered many things. However, his sufferings were not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed to us.

(2 Cor 11:24-27) “Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. {25} Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. {26} *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; {27} *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.”

Jesus, the Son of God also suffered. In Matthew 16:21, He told His disciples that He was going to Jerusalem and suffer many things, be killed, and then raised up. After He had risen from the dead and was walking on the road to Emmaus, He explained that it had been written that the Christ would suffer and rise again. Jesus knew in advance that He was going to suffer.

(Matt 16:21) “From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.”

(Luke 24:46) “and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,”

In 2 Corinthians 1:5, Paul wrote that the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance. For those today that preach that believers do not suffer, the Scriptures are clear that this is not the case. The sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance.

(2 Cor 1:5) “For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.”

Peter spoke about suffering in his letter. He exhorted us to bear up under sorrows when suffering unjustly, and said that this *finds* favor with God. There are times that Christians are persecuted for their stand for Christ. Peter’s encouragement is for us to be strong and persevere when we suffer unjustly. Sometimes we suffer the consequences of our own wrongdoing, and Peter warned us not to suffer for committing sins. If we suffer, it should be for doing what is right.

(1 Pet 2:19-20) “For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. {20} For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.”

#### **b. Suffering of all creation: (Rom 8:20-22)**

Last night, at eleven thirty, I rolled over in my sleep, and when I did I moved my right arm. I felt a severe pain in my right shoulder. It felt like something was torn apart, and pain was excruciating. There was no heavy lifting or straining; my shoulder and arm just went into a wrong position. This was not suffering for the name of Christ. This suffering is from a body that is getting older and subjected to futility. This was a suffering common to all creation.

In verse twenty-two Paul said, "For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now." It is not just believers who suffer, but all of creation suffers.

(Rom 8:20-22) "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope {21} that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the **glory** of the children of God. {22} For we know that the whole creation **groans** and **suffers** the pains of childbirth together until now."

A number of years ago we had a dog that was attacked in the middle of the night by coyotes. I ran outside and chased the coyotes away, but not before our dog got severely wounded. The dog was in much pain, and groaned and whimpered day and night. Karen took him to the vet to see if anything could be done, but was told that he had so many internal injuries that he would be unable to do anything. To keep the dog from suffering, he recommended putting him down, which we did. Unfortunately, all of creation suffers, including people and their pets.

It says that the creation was subjected to futility by God. Futility means vanity or emptiness. When sin entered the world, creation suffered a tremendous loss; there was an emptiness and futility. The book of Ecclesiastes is about the futility and vanity of life. Solomon repeatedly wrote that everything under the sun was vanity. For life to have purpose, it must be lived for God. Everything else under the sun is vanity and futility.

(Eccl 1:2) "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity."

(Eccl 2:17) "So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind."

All of creation was subjected to futility and suffers. Second, we see that the creation is in slavery to corruption. Where there is corruption, people suffer. This is true in business, church, government, and families; where there is corruption, people suffer.

There is a connection between the pains of childbirth and the origination of our suffering. Paul wrote that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth until now. This is in reference to the curse that the Lord put on creation when Adam and Eve sinned. God said that He would greatly multiply the pains of childbirth. All of creation is suffering the consequences of their sins. The ground was cursed and instead of fruitfulness, it was going to have thorns and thistles and it was going to require the sweat of our face to eat bread. The whole creation is suffering because of the curse given to Adam and Eve.

(Gen 3:16-19) "To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." {17} Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. {18} "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; {19} by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

## 2. Groanings

We have seen that all of creation suffers, and that this suffering does not exclude believers. If we are heirs with Christ, we will also suffer with Christ. The response to all of the suffering by all of creation and by believers is groanings. The Greek word is *stenazo*, which means to groan, moan, or sigh. There are three different groanings in our passage. There is the groaning of all creation. There is the groaning of believers. Finally, there is the groaning of the Holy Spirit.

### a. Groaning by all creation (Rom 8:22)

I can understand how all of creation was subjected to futility and suffers because of the curse. I have a harder time understanding how all of creation groans. We had some fun last week trying to figure out what the groaning of a tree or rock would sound like.

(Rom 8:22) “For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.”

As we have aged, we have discovered a different type of groaning. When you get up from laying down or sitting, it is quite natural to let out a groan. When you lay down after being up all day, it is quite normal to let out a groan of relief. Sometimes when a person stretches they let out a groan. There are lots of little aches and pains that we did not have as children or young adults, and we groan in all of these things. These are not complaints to God, just natural expressions of groaning.

In Isaiah 55:12, we are told that the mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy, and that the trees of the field will clap their hands. If the mountains, hills, and trees can express their joy, it would seem possible for them to also groan in the time of suffering.

(Is 55:12) “For you will go out with joy and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, and all the trees of the field will clap *their* hands.”

In Luke 19, Jesus was entering into Jerusalem and the crowds were putting their coats on the road, waving palm branches, and shouting Hosanna, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.” The Pharisees in the crowd told Jesus to rebuke His disciples. Jesus responded that if they became quiet, the stones would cry out.” If rocks can cry out in joy and praise, then they can also groan at the sufferings, pain, and futility.

(Luke 19:39-40) “Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.” {40} But Jesus answered, “I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!”

Karen delivered ten children, and she experienced the pains of childbirth, something that I have not personally experienced. I have witnessed it, and also how she dealt with the pain. We went through Lamaze class for her first pregnancy. Over time, Karen developed a different method of enduring the pain of childbirth. She had me pray through each contraction. I called it laboring in prayer. I picked different topics to pray about in advance and we prayed through them. That seemed to work incredibly well. I remember when she was going through labor with one of our children at Florida Hospital in Orlando, Florida, and a nurse was brought a group of interns to the maternity ward at the same time Karen was just about to deliver. After observing how calm

Karen was, she turned to her interns and said, “This is not normal. Most women are groaning loudly because of the pain.” She turned abruptly and took her group to the next room. We don’t know how all of creation is groaning, but it is groaning.

### **b. Groaning by believers (Rom 8:23)**

We saw in Romans 8:17 that if we are heirs with Christ we will also suffer with Christ. As believers, we will suffer, and it is quite natural for believers to groan in their suffering with Christ. We live in a day where some people would rather shrink back in their faith and convictions rather than take a chance at suffering. It is important for us to stand in our faith and not shrink back, even if that means that we suffer and groan.

(Rom 8:17) “and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.”

In verses twenty-three through twenty-five, Paul talks about groaning within believers. Even though Christians have the Holy Spirit, and the first fruits of the Spirit, they still groan. The Bible tells us not to grumble or complain, so there is a difference between the groans of anguish and complaining about the pains and futility. A groan is an acknowledgment of pain or discomfort; it is not a complaint or grumble. A grumble is complaining to God about the pain, suffering, or situation. A person who groans may have joy, but a grumbling person rarely has joy. It is okay to groan, but we are not to be grumblers.

(Rom 8:23-25) “And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves **groan** within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. {24} For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? {25} But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.”

### **c. Groaning by Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26)**

In verse twenty-six, we find that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. Why does the Holy Spirit groan? He groans on our behalf. God sees our weaknesses and He helps us in those weaknesses. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us. God loves us and He is for us. I greatly appreciate that the Holy Spirit intercedes for me.

(Rom 8:26-27) “In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; {27} and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.”

We also know that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father and is interceding for us. In verse thirty-four, Paul wrote that Jesus is at the right hand of God, and is also interceding for us. Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are interceding for us. We don’t know about Jesus’ intercessions for us, but we do know that the Holy Spirit is interceding with groans too deep for words.

(Rom 8:34) “who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”

### 3. God's Plan:

We see God's hand in the suffering, groaning, and in the glorifying. Our text began by saying that if we are heirs with Him, fellow heirs with Christ, we will suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. There is a purpose behind the suffering, and it is with the goal of glorifying us with Christ. Paul said that the suffering was not worthy to be compared to the glory that is to be revealed.

(Rom 8:17-18) “and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we **suffer** with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. {18} For I consider that the **sufferings** of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the **glory** that is to be revealed to us.”

We know that it was God who subjected all of creation to futility. God subjected everything to futility because Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God was not going to allow sin to remain forever, so He subjected everything to futility until the time when it would be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. When will it be set free? It will be set free at the revealing of the sons of God, which is also when we will be glorified with Christ.

(Rom 8:19-21) “For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. {20} For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in **hope** {21} that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the **glory** of the children of God.”

Paul expounds on this a little further in verse twenty-three, saying that this period of suffering and groaning will last until our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. This is when we will be glorified with Christ. So, we suffer and groan, but we wait eagerly for this day of adoption and redemption.

(Rom 8:23) “And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves **groan** within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”

God subjected everything to futility until the day when the sons of God will be revealed. The Holy Spirit and Jesus are interceding on our behalf during this time of suffering. They are interceding according to the will of God for us. They are groaning with us. Next, we see that God is causing all things to work together for good for us that love God. God is sovereign, all powerful, omniscient, and uses everything in our lives and works it out for good in our lives.

(Rom 8:28) “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.”

God tells us to give thanks in everything for this is God's will for us in Christ Jesus. Sometimes we go through difficult chapters or seasons and it may seem difficult to give thanks. But, this verse really helps, because no matter what the circumstances, He promises to work it together for good in our lives. The condition is that we love God and are called according to His purpose. We must be believers and we must be loving Him with all of our hearts, and when we do this, we can have assurance that He is working all things together for good in our lives.

Sometimes what we think is good is not necessarily what God is looking for. God has a plan for our lives and it is to be transformed and conformed to His image. He is working all things together for good, which is to be conformed to the image of Jesus.

(Rom 8:29) “For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;”

God wants the bride to be without spot or wrinkle. He is looking for a pure and spotless. We sometimes focus on what God wants us to do or where He wants us to go, and His focus is on who He wants us to be. We are to be Christ-like. We are to be His re-presentatives and witnesses here on earth (Acts 1:8). We are to be His ambassadors (2 Cor 5:20). He does not want us to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we can prove what is good, acceptable, and perfect (Rom 12:2). His will is the good that He is working out in our lives. It is His will that the Holy Spirit and Jesus are interceding for us about. And His will is for us to be holy, just as He is holy. In Ephesians 1:4, Paul wrote that God “chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.” That is God’s will and what He is working out in our lives.

(Eph 1:4) “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.”

God subjected everything to futility. He is praying for us. He is working all things together for good in our lives. It is God who has called and justified us. Finally, it is God who will glorify us. Even though we may suffer and groan, we see God’s merciful and loving hand in all of it.

(Rom 8:30) “and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also **glorified**.”

### **Conclusion and Applications**

God tells us that all of creation was subjected to futility. God wants us to live a life of fulfillment and purpose. Jesus came that we might have life and have it abundantly. If you have sensed an emptiness within and a lack of purpose, let me encourage you to invite Christ into your life. We were created to have fellowship with God, and because of our sins, we have been separated from God. Jesus came so that our sins could be forgiven, and we could have fellowship with God. If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died for our sins, was buried, and rose again from the dead, and you would like to make Him Lord of your life, I invite you to pray with me.

Jesus, I do believe that You are the Son of God, and that You died for our sins, and were raised from the dead. I ask You to come into my life and forgive me of my sins. I submit my life to You, and follow You the rest of my life. I pray this in Jesus’ name.

There may be others today that have been suffering. God knows what you are going through, and Jesus is at the right hand of the Father and is interceding for you. The Holy Spirit is groaning with you, and interceding for you. God is compassionate and is a God of comfort. If you have been suffering, I want to pray for you.

Jesus, I ask You to comfort those who have been suffering. I ask You to strengthen them. I ask You to help them remain steadfast in the midst of their suffering. I ask You to give them stamina

and perseverance. I ask You to fill them with hope. I ask You to fill them with Your joy, even in the midst of what they are suffering. I ask this in Jesus' name.

#### Q & A

- What is something that you are suffering in? How has God strengthened and encouraged you in this time?
- What kind of groans do you most identify with?
- Why did Paul not consider the suffering worthy to be compared to the glory to be revealed to us? Do you think most people have the same understanding of that glory?

**Introduction** (Rom 8:16-30)

**1. Sufferings** (Rom 8:16-18, Matt 4:24)

- a. Suffering by believers (Rom 8:16-18, Acts 9:15-16, 2 Cor 11:24-27, Acts 14:19, Acts 27, Matt 16:21, Luke 24:46, 2 Cor 1:5, 1 Pet 2:19-20)
- b. Suffering of all creation: (Rom 8:19-22, Eccl 1:2, 2:17, Gen 3:16-19)

**2. Groanings**

- a. Groaning by all creation (Rom 8:22, Is 55:12, Luke 19:39-40)
- b. Groaning by believers (Rom 8:17, 8:23-25)
- c. Groaning by Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26-27, Rom 8:34)

**3. God's Plan:** (Rom 8:17-21, 8:23, 8:28-30, Acts 1:8, 2 Cor 5:20, Rom 12:2, Eph 1:4)

**Conclusion and Applications**