

WALKING THROUGH ROMANS - PART 15

ROMANS CHAPTER 8 - FUTURE GLORY: HOPE IN THE MIDST OF PRESENT SUFFERING

We're walking through Romans. This is Lesson Fifteen, and we are continuing in Romans chapter eight. This lesson focuses on future glory - hope in the midst of present suffering.

The driving question that carries the entire book remains: Has God remained faithful in a fractured world? Paul continues answering that question while addressing the brokenness, suffering, and uncertainty experienced by humanity.

In the previous lesson, Paul explained that the Spirit accomplishes what the law could never accomplish. The law revealed God's standards, but it could not give humanity the power to live according to those standards. Through Christ, believers are no longer defined by condemnation. Through the Holy Spirit, they receive the power to live according to God's will.

That truth leads to another important question: If believers truly belong to God, why do they still experience suffering?

Romans 8 now turns from the believer's present relationship with God toward the future hope God has promised. Paul does not deny that suffering is real. He teaches that suffering will not have the final word. Present hardship must be viewed in light of God's continuing work of restoration.

Paul describes three voices groaning together: creation, believers, and the Holy Spirit. Creation waits for renewal. Believers wait for the redemption of their bodies. The Spirit helps believers while they wait for God to complete what He has promised.

Future glory means that God will renew creation, raise and transform believers, make them like Christ, and bring them into full life in Christ's presence. Paul directs the reader beyond present pain toward that promised future.

BUCKET ONE - ROMANS 8:18-21

Paul begins by placing present suffering beside future glory. He does not minimize hardship or suggest that believers should ignore their pain. Instead, he changes the perspective from which suffering is viewed.

Paul declares that the sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed. His point is not that present suffering is insignificant. His point is that what God has promised is far greater than what believers are presently enduring.

The word glory comes from the Greek word *doxa*. It refers to God's manifested splendor, honor, presence, and beauty. In this passage, future glory points to the time when God will renew creation, transform believers, and bring them into full life with Christ.

Paul then explains that creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God. In this part of the argument, creation refers to the world surrounding humanity - the earth, plants, animals, and the broader physical universe.

Paul treats creation and believers as connected but distinct. Creation is waiting for the full transformation of God's children to be revealed because humanity's brokenness affected more than humanity alone.

Paul connects the suffering of creation to the consequences of human sin. Humanity's disobedience introduced brokenness that affected the entire created order. The earth, living creatures, and the wider physical world now experience decay, destruction, and death.

Creation did not choose this condition. Paul says it was subjected to futility - a state of frustration, decay, and inability to reach its intended fullness. Yet creation was subjected to this condition in hope.

The hope is that creation itself will one day be set free from its bondage to decay and share in the freedom God has promised His children. As believers move toward their complete redemption and full union with Christ, the created order also moves toward restoration.

Paul's argument shows that everything under God's created order is connected. Human sin affected creation, but God's redemptive work will also reach beyond individual human lives. God is moving both believers and creation toward renewal.

Present suffering may shape our experience, but it does not determine our destination. What we are going through now is real, but it is not the conclusion of our story. God's future is greater than today's struggle.

BUCKET TWO - ROMANS 8:22-25

Paul now shifts from creation's longing to the believer's experience. Creation groans, but believers also groan while living in a world marked by suffering, weakness, decay, and mortality.

Paul compares creation's groaning to labor pains. Labor pains involve real suffering, but they also point toward the arrival of new life. In the same way, the suffering of creation points toward the renewal God has promised.

Believers also groan inwardly even though they have received the Holy Spirit and already belong to God. Their relationship with God does not eliminate every experience of pain, weakness, or suffering in the present world.

This means being connected to God does not make believers immune to the human condition. They may belong to God and still experience inward pain. They may possess the Spirit and still encounter weakness. They may have faith and still face the reality of physical mortality.

While groaning, believers wait for the completion of their adoption, which Paul describes as the redemption of their bodies. Believers have already been brought into God's family through the Spirit, but they are still waiting for that relationship to reach its full completion.

The redemption of the body means that God will raise and transform the believer's physical body so that the believer can live fully and forever with Christ. Present pain, weakness, decay, and mortality will not remain forever.

Paul therefore presents God's saving work as an entire process. It begins when a person enters a relationship with Christ, continues as that person grows in Christ, and reaches completion when the believer is fully transformed in Christ's presence.

Paul calls the Holy Spirit the first fruits. In the ancient world, the first fruits were the first portion of a harvest. That first portion provided assurance that the full harvest would follow.

In the same way, the Spirit is God's present gift to believers and the guarantee that God will complete what He has already begun. The Spirit's presence is evidence that the current experience of salvation is moving toward something fuller.

Believers experience God's saving work both presently and in the future. They belong to God now, and they are still waiting for the complete transformation God has promised.

Paul then explains hope. Biblical hope is confident expectation grounded in God's promises, not uncertain or wishful thinking. Hope looks forward to what has not yet been fully experienced because it trusts the God who made the promise.

Hope says, "I am not merely wishing; I am expecting." The Spirit's presence gives believers confidence that God will finish what He started.

Hope does not remove the need to wait. Hope gives believers the confidence to wait patiently because God's finished work will be worth the waiting. The pain of the present is not the end of the story.

BUCKET THREE - ROMANS 8:26-27

Paul now turns from what believers are waiting for to how God sustains them during the waiting. Believers groan because of present suffering, but they do not groan alone. The Holy Spirit is active even in their weakest moments.

Paul acknowledges that believers do not always know how to pray as they should. There are moments when suffering, confusion, grief, and weakness make it difficult to know what to say.

The word weakness refers to human frailty, limitation, and inability. In this passage, weakness includes the believer's inability to fully understand the situation or clearly express what is needed in prayer.

Human limitation does not prevent God from hearing or helping. Instead, it reminds believers that they must depend upon the Spirit. Some experiences cannot be solved by human analysis, intelligence, or words alone.

Paul says the Spirit helps believers in their weakness and intercedes with sighs too deep for words. The Spirit does not replace the believer's prayer life. The Spirit enters the struggle, helps carry the burden before God, and communicates what the believer cannot fully express.

God searches the human heart and knows the mind of the Spirit. The pain that may be difficult for the believer to explain is fully understood by God because the Spirit intercedes according to God's will.

The Spirit's intercession also brings the believer's desires into alignment with God. Human prayers can be shaped by entitlement, confusion, comparison, or desires that are outside God's purpose. The Spirit intercedes without error and directs the need toward the will of God.

When a believer's thoughts are confused and words are incomplete, the Spirit communicates the deepest need in a way that is perfectly aligned with God's will.

This is why closeness to Christ and sensitivity to the Spirit matter. As believers draw closer to God, they become more open to the Spirit's help, direction, and intercession.

When the words of our lips fail, God's presence does not. Believers can trust that the Spirit is already present, helping them and carrying their deepest needs before God.

BUCKET FOUR - ROMANS 8:28-30

Paul concludes this section by directing the believer's attention beyond present suffering toward God's larger purpose. The waiting, weakness, and groaning described throughout the passage do not mean that God's plan has been interrupted.

Paul declares that all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Paul does not say that everything believers experience is good. Suffering, loss, injustice, pain, and death remain painful realities. His point is that God is able to work through all of those realities for the good of those who belong to Him.

The good Paul describes is not limited to comfort, success, convenience, or favorable circumstances. The larger good is becoming more like Christ.

God works through every part of a believer's life, including the painful parts, to shape that believer into the image of Christ. Suffering can become part of the process through which believers identify more deeply with Christ and develop Christlike character.

The word called comes from the Greek word kletos and refers to those whom God has summoned into relationship. The word purpose refers to a deliberate plan or intention. Believers are not wandering through life without direction. God has intentionally called them into relationship and is moving them toward His purpose.

Paul describes God's plan through five actions: God foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified believers.

God foreknew them - He knew them beforehand. God predestined them - He determined that they would become like Christ. God called them - He summoned them into relationship. God justified them - He placed them in right standing. God glorified them - He will raise and transform them, make them like Christ, and bring them into full life in Christ's presence.

Paul presents the work of God as a continuing movement from relationship toward complete transformation. Present suffering does not cancel that movement. God remains actively at work even when believers cannot see how every part fits together.

When life becomes difficult, believers should not only ask God to bring them out of it. They should also ask God to grow them through it.

The leaning of life can produce lessons for life. Even suffering can become part of the process through which God prepares believers for greater maturity, deeper dependence, and fuller life in Christ.

FINAL TAKEAWAY

Romans 8:18-30 teaches that suffering is real, but suffering will never have the final word.

Creation groans while waiting for renewal. Believers groan while waiting for the redemption of their bodies. The Holy Spirit groans with believers and helps them in their weakness.

Present suffering may shape the experience, but it does not determine the destination. God has promised future glory: He will renew creation, raise and transform believers, make them like Christ, and bring them into full life in Christ's presence.

Hope is not wishful thinking. It is confident expectation that God will finish what He has begun.

God does not declare that every experience is good. God promises to work through every experience for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Has God remained faithful in a fractured world? Paul's answer is yes. God is present in the waiting, active in the suffering, working through the Spirit, and moving believers toward the future He has promised.

We may be groaning now, but the Spirit is helping us. God is still working, and suffering can never have the final word.