

ROMANS

From Wretchedness to Righteousness

Study 13

Romans 8:18-27

Fighting Sin With The Spirit

Patient in Suffering (Romans 8:18-22)

Verse 18-21

Romans 8:18-21

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. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

1) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer(s), which can be more than one. Verse 19 mentions “present sufferings” and verse 20 mentions “creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it.” Which of the following statement is true according to the video lecture?

- A. The frustration and sufferings are present on the earthly life because of the curse in Genesis 3:17
- B. We are to share in Jesus’ sufferings to also share his glory (Romans 8:17)
- C. Suffering is certain in a fallen world
- D. Suffering stops after you become a Christian
- E. Suffering has no purpose
- F. Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope (Romans 5:3)
- G. Suffering causes people to look for deeper meaning-this shows God can redeem suffering and give meaning in life
- H. The Ultimate good came from suffering

Quick Verse Reference

Genesis 3:17-19

To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’

“Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat food from it
all the days of your life.

Romans 8:17

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.

Romans 5:3

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;

Verse 22-25

Romans 8:22-25

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits 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. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

2) a) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer(s), which can be more than one. “The whole creation” in verse 22 includes:

- A. God
- B. Kampung chicken
- C. Choy Yun chicken
- D. Free range chicken
- E. Genetically modified chicken
- F. Non-Christians
- G. Non-practicing Christians
- H. Practicing Christians
- I. Rich people
- J. Poor people
- K. Plants
- L. Bacteria, Fungi and other small microorganisms
- M. Created non-living things (Eg. river, water, metal, oxygen, sand, moon, sun, etc)

b) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. “Groaning as in the pains of childbirth” in verse 22:

- A. Refers to the pain of suffering only
- B. Combines suffering with hope and a joyful outcome

Background Information

“Creation is about “life” and “living things” coming into existence and these are supported by non-living things. (eg. metals). The word “decay” refers to the slow process of the end of

living things, and destruction of even non-living things. Apart from Satan (or even before Satan became Satan) in your list, everything was created for a purpose and for "life" as God is LIFE. So "decay" is an indication that something has gone wrong. Liberation of "decay" means liberation from the power that intends to make "life" into something which is against God's plan. Yes, I think all creation "yearns" to be set free from the power that causes decay and to have the power of the fullness of life. Of course, the word "groan" refers to "consciousness." So Paul is not saying the non-living things "groan" but Creation is personified as a being that yearns to be free from sin-decay."- Dr Sunny Tan, ThD (ABGTS), Previous Academic Dean of Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary

Help in Time of Need (Romans 8:26-27)

Verse 26-27

Romans 8:26-27

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. 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.

3) a) Fill in the blanks. Some people think that the "wordless groan" in verse 26 refers to speaking in tongues. According to the video lecture, fill in the pros and cons of this theory.

Groaning = speaking in tongues?	
Pros	Cons
Spirit inspired prayer that is not intelligible	Not all Christians have this
	Its intercession not worship
	Groans metaphorical: Groans in creation not audible so neither are these groans
	Spirit is groaning not man...inaudible

b) Discussion question. Will God and Holy Spirit give us what we want and pray for all the time?

No, because we do not know all the circumstances to know what is best for us, and other believers.

Background Information

“It is not a bad but a very good sign if the opposite of what we pray for appears to happen. Just as it is not a good sign if our prayers eventuate in the fulfillment of all we ask for. This is so because the counsel and will of God far excel our counsel and will.” - Martin Luther

Glory in Future (Romans 8:18-22)

Verse 18-23

Romans 8:18-23

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. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

4) a) Fill in the blanks. According to verses 18-23 and the video lecture, what are some of the things that will happen in the future?

Verses	Things that will happen in the future
18	glory that will be revealed in us
19	creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed
21a	creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay
21b	brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God
23	we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

Background Information

“It is the attitude of the soldier who in the thick of battle is not dismayed but fights on stoutly whatever the difficulties.” - Morris on perseverance

b) Reflection question. All creation and humanity will be redeemed not replaced. Go one round and share if you look forward to the redemption.

Background Information

"If we let Him... He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful; but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what He said." - C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

Case Studies

Case 1

Henrietta Low had joined a tour to Kyoto in Japan but unfortunately her tour bus overturned and wound up crashing over a bridge. Henrietta was badly injured and paralyzed from her waist downwards. She was brought back to KL and lost her job. Her husband left her and her grown children grew more and more distant from her.

She had attended the Church of Subang Jaya where the pastor came to pray for her and told her to have faith in God. If she had faith she will overcome her illness and walk again. He quoted from Romans 8 that she is a son of God. She has to claim the victory because Isaiah 53 says that by His stripe we are healed.

Henriette was puzzled about "And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:23 ESV)

She questioned

"How come the pastor said she was a son of God and yet the verse says 'we eagerly await our adoption'

How come he said we have the Spirit and yet the verse says we have the 'first fruits of the Spirit'

How come she has faith but still cannot walk? Doesn't Christ give victory? Isn't she healed by Christ's stripes in Isaiah 53?"

7) a) Discussion question. Use what you have learned about Romans 8 to help answer Henrietta's questions. You may use the model answer to help you.

The root is bad theology. There is a "now and not yet" theology about things we will have, whether the adoption, renewal and redemption.

Model answer

Paul says the connection between living and thinking is a tight and close one. Literally, he Rom 8:23 says that we await our "adoption" even though v.15 says we already are adopted. How can this be? It means that we are legally adopted, but on that last day, when we get the

fullness of the family resemblance in our body and soul (because sin will be eradicated), we will be “revealed” as children of God as written in “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God”(Romans 8:19 ESV). It will be a formal celebration and a final healing. And that day can also be looked at as the day of our fullest “adoption.”

We are told that the Spirit of God is the “first fruits.” Now the first fruits of an incoming harvest were eaten to get a “foretaste” of what was to come. We know that currently, the Spirit of God is making us internally alive (8:11 – “your spirit is alive because of righteousness”). The Spirit is giving us gradual, internal freedom from the effects of sin and death in our spirits. But if this is only the “first fruits,” it means that the Spirit will eventually give us complete, total freedom from the effects of sin in death in our bodies-and-spirits. It means that we will be perfect — free from any blemish or weakness or flaw in body and soul. There is an already and not yet dimension to our Christian lives. We are justified and regenerated by the Spirit. The final victory over sin has already been won on the cross. However the current world and our lives goes on marred by the ravages of sin and death. For the creation waits with eager longing 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 will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.
(Romans 8:19-22 ESV)

Paul describes in vivid detail the state of the world we live in. It is a world in travail and bondage eager to be released in the final day. Creation will be set free from bandage and corruption. Henrietta’s body will be set from from paralysis and corruption. There will be a final glory that she as a child of God will be entitled to but it is not now. The Spirit helps us hold on and persevere through our suffering now and uses the suffering to transform us to the likeness of His Son.

If we let Him... He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful; but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what He said.
– C.S.Lewis, Mere Christianity

b) Discussion question. Her pastor told her that the reason she was not healed yet was because she did not have enough faith, so she must attend more faith and healing rallies. What do you think about this?

This is judgmental and places more guilt on the person who suffers and displays lack of understanding on the realities of living in a fallen world as described by Paul.

c) Discussion question. Another pastor told her that it was her fault that she wanted to spend her money lavishly and go to Kyoto whilst the money could have been spent on helping the poor. Hence, now she has to suffer the consequences of her sin. What do you think about this?

This is judgmental and places more guilt on the person who suffers and displays lack of understanding on the realities of living in a fallen world as described by Paul. Going to Kyoto is an area of freedom and not necessarily a sin and there is no way the pastor could know that this was the cause.

d) Discussion question. Another friend told her that another friend of hers had a series of accidents and found out that she had unknowingly bought an old mantelpiece that was cursed as it came from a haunted house. She should look for any antiques and get rid of them. What do you think about this?

This is plain superstition but you would be surprised that a church worker in FBC shared this in public many years ago!!!

e) Discussion question. Another pastor came and told her she had hidden sins of unforgiveness towards her relatives who looked down on her when she was poor. It was her inner hatred that brought this catastrophe. She must seek forgiveness from them to be healed. What do you think about this?

Seeking forgiveness and reconciliation must be motivated by the desire to please God as part of her ongoing relationship, but not done in order to clear the decks for an unwilling God to heal her.

f) Reflection question. Look at Romans 8:23-27. How does the Spirit help in prayer? Have you experienced this? Describe your experience.

Background Information

The general ministry of the Holy Spirit in prayer is much neglected. Yet we are clearly told in Scripture that our access to the Father is not only through the Son, but by the Spirit (Eph.2:18). The Holy Spirit's inspiration is as necessary as the Son's mediation if we are to

gain access to the Father in prayer...

It seems to be this. Sometimes, when believers do not know how to pray in words, they groan without words... 'we find ourselves brought to silence by the very intensity of our longings...' These unutterable sighs or groans are not to be despised, as if we ought to put them into language. On the contrary, when we thus sigh with inarticulate desires, it is the Holy Spirit interceding on our behalf, prompting these [deep longings].

– John R.W. Stott

Meditation

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him

(Romans 8:16-17 ESV)

- What wrong attitudes do I need to repent of
- What is it in these verses that bring comfort.