

DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME VIII
HOPE
JUNE 26, 2022

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: What do you think are some good reasons why God may allow us to suffer?

Key Text: *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”* ¹⁹ 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. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” (Romans 8:18-25)

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly and brought it home. One day a small opening appeared in the cocoon. He watched the cocoon for several hours as the butterfly struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making progress—the butterfly seemed to have gotten as far as it could, and it could go no further. The man decided to help the butterfly in its struggle. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon...and the butterfly emerged easily. But as the butterfly emerged, the man noticed it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. He expected that the wings would dry out, enlarge and expand to support the swollen body, and the butterfly would be able to fly. But neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It never was able to fly. The man didn't realize that the restricting cocoon and struggle were required for the butterfly to be able to fly. By pushing its way through the tiny opening, fluid would be forced from its body and wing. Only by struggling through the opening could the butterfly's wings be ready for flight once it emerged from the cocoon.

In today's text, Paul reminds us that God has a purpose for our pain. Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If God allowed us to go through our life without any obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as we could have been—and we could never fly. Every setback is actually a setup for greater growth, blessing, and usefulness for God's glory. Through faith in God, our tests can become testimonies!

1. Our current suffering will not compare to our future glory in Heaven.

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” (v.18)

Paul is not minimizing our suffering; rather, he puts it into eternal perspective.

Our suffering cannot compare to the glories that will be revealed to us in the future as heirs with Christ. Suffering is the path we walk as we move to blessing and to glory.

Discuss: When have you grown as a result of a personal struggle?

2. All of creation suffers under our sin, so all of creation yearns for redemption as we do.

“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.” (v.19-22)

Because of sin, all that God has made is now sin-ravaged and suffers in frustration and futility—a warped and weak struggling existence. God did not create the world this way. The animals, trees, oceans, and sky did not choose an existence of futility; rather, the world has become this way as a result of Adam’s sin (Gen.3:14, 17-19). As a result of the pain and death that all creation suffers from because of human sin, all of creation longs for Christ’s return when suffering will be replaced by glory. Just as we—the children of God—will receive new, glorified bodies, all creation will be redeemed and experience existence as “*the New Heavens and the New Earth*” (Rev.21-22). Creation is waiting and yearning for God’s children to be revealed in glory (v.18) because that’s the day all will begin to be made right (v.19).

Discuss: Where do you see the negative consequences of sin in nature?

Discuss: Why do you think Paul compares creation’s longing for redemption at Christ’s return to a pregnant woman’s groaning in pain of childbirth (v.22)?

3. Our hope, which brought us to faith in Christ, leads us to yearn for full redemption of both our soul and body.

“And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” (v.23-25)

Along with creation, we yearn for Christ to return so we can be with our heavenly Father in body, soul, and spirit! Our adoption is complete (v.23); now, we’re just waiting for our Father to come and pick us up so that we can be with Him.

Discuss: Read and discuss the Bible-based article (or watch the brief video) “What Will We Look Like in Heaven?” at www.gotquestions.org.

Discuss: What are you most looking forward to in Heaven?

For Further Study:

Free online commentary of Romans at www.enduringword.com

“Did the Fall Have Consequences on Creation?” article at www.answersingenesis.org

Heaven by Randy Alcorn