

THE WHOLE CREATION WILL BE FREED FROM STRUGGLING AND SUFFERING ROMANS 08:18–27

Introduction

This is one of the most glorious promises in all of Scripture. God is going to free *all creation* from struggling and suffering.

- I. The believer suffers and struggles in this life (v. 18).
- II. The creation suffers and struggles for deliverance from corruption (vv. 19-22).
- III. The believer suffers and struggles for deliverance from corruption (vv. 23-27).

I. Romans 08:18 Believer's Suffering and Struggles

The believer suffers and struggles in this life. The word “suffering” means all the forms of suffering which the believer experiences throughout life. It means...

- the suffering that comes from persecution
- the suffering that comes from the struggle of his spirit to overcome the sinful nature and the world

Very simply, suffering means the struggle waged by our spirits to overcome all that is experienced in this life, all that is involved in the sinful nature and the world (See Gal. 5:16-18). It is the spiritual struggle discussed in Romans Chapters 5-8, and so descriptively illustrated in Chapter 7. It is the weight and agony of fighting to overcome...

- sin and corruption
- abuse and persecution
- weaknesses and shortcomings
- deterioration and decay
- disease and pain
- unregulated urges and desires
- aging and loss

The genuine believer struggles against everything that keeps him from living abundantly and eternally. His sole passion is to bring everything under the control of Christ and to be conformed to the image of Christ. Therefore, he struggles to overcome the flesh and the world with their aging and corruption, sin and death. No matter what suffering is required, the believer bears it in order to overcome and gain the victory of eternal life and its glory.

Note that the believer is to suffer with Christ “in order that” (*ina* — Greek) he may be glorified with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Suffering prepares the believer to participate in the glory of Christ. It is the necessary condition for exaltation. Suffering and struggling are a refining process through which the believer must pass (1 Pet. 1:6-7). It refines the

believer by forcing him to expand his trust in God more and more. Suffering drives a believer to cast himself more and more upon the care of God; therefore, the believer moves closer and closer to that perfect trust and care in God. He will never achieve the perfect trust and care in God, but he will come to know it when God transports him into the very Kingdom of Heaven itself. Suffering enlarges, purifies, expands and ennoble the believer. It makes him more and more like what he will be when he actually lives face-to-face with God. This future glory *transcends immeasurably* the suffering and struggling of this present world.

⇒ The future glory shall be revealed “in” us; it shall become part of our very nature and being. Glory shall radiate and shine forth from our resurrected bodies.

Rom 8:18 *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

Col 3:4 *When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

Eph 1:18 *I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.*

2 Tim 2:10 *Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*

1 Pet 5:1 *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed.*

⇒ The future glory shall be an *eternal* glory that outweighs them all (just imagine such a weight, a weight beyond all measure, surpassing all measurements and calculations).

2 Cor 4:17-18 *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

⇒ The future glory shall far exceed anything we have seen or heard or longed for in our hearts.

1 Cor 2:9 *However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”.*

1 Pet 5:4 *And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*

⇒ The future glory shall be so glorious it will reflect through us to others, making us ministers of glory.

2 Cor 8:23 *As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honour to Christ.*

Eph 3:10 *His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.*

=> The future glory shall make us just like Jesus in all that He is.

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Phil 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

II. *Romans 08:19–22 The Creation*

The creation suffers and struggles for deliverance from corruption. The word “creation” refers to everything *under* man: animal, plant and mineral. All creation is pictured as living and waiting expectantly for the day when the sons of God shall be glorified. The words “eager expectation” (*apokaradokia*) mean to watch with the neck outstretched and the head erect. It is a persistent, unswerving expectation, an expectation that does not give up but keeps looking until the event happens. Note three facts revealed about the universe in which man lives.

1. Creation is subject to corruption. This is clearly seen by men; and what men see is constantly confirmed by such authorities as the botanist, zoologist, geologist and astronomers of the world. All of creation, whether mineral, plant or animal, suffers just as men do. All creation suffers hurt, damage, loss, deterioration, erosion, death and decay — all creation struggles for life. It is full of “frustration” (*mataios*), that is, condemned to futility and frustration, unable to realize its purpose, subject to corruption. Note the two things said about creation in this verse (v. 20).
 - a. Creation was condemned to frustration — futility and a feeling of disappointment — by God. Creation did not willingly choose to be condemned to corruption. The world was made to be the home of man, the place where he lived. Therefore, when man sinned, his world was doomed to suffer the consequences of sin with him. Man’s world was cursed right along with him. (See Gen. 3:17-19; Isa. 24:6-13, pt. 1.)

Gen 3:17 To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.”

Isa 24:4-6 The earth dries up and withers [for], the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth’s inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left.

Jer 12:4 How long will the land lie parched and the grass in every field be withered? Because those who live in it are wicked, the animals and birds have perished. Moreover, the people are saying, “He will not see what happens to us.”

Thought 1. Just picture the enormous hurt and damage and decay that takes place in our world. Think about...

- the disease and savagery of the animal world
- the hurt and damage that so easily happens in the plant world
- the destruction and deterioration that takes place in the mineral world

Think about the earthquakes, tornadoes, storms, diseases, starvation, attacks and struggles for survival that take place. And these are only a few of the myriad happenings that show the corruption of the world.

- b. Creation has been subjected to corruption “in hope.” The news of Scripture is glorious: the situation of the world is neither hopeless nor final. Creation has the same *hope of redemption and of renovation* as man. The world was made for man, therefore all creation shall be ultimately delivered from corruption just as man shall be delivered from corruption.
2. Creation shall be delivered from corruption. This is the wonderful news of the glorious gospel. Note a most significant point: whatever happens to man is bound to happen to his world. Man is the summit of God’s creation; therefore, all that is under man is intertwined, interwoven, and interrelated to him. Man and his world are one and the same; they are dependent upon each other. This is enormously significant: since man and his world are interrelated, it means that the world will experience whatever man experiences. When man fell, his world was bound to fall with him. But this is the glorious news as well. When man is liberated from corruption, his world shall be liberated as well. God had to subject man’s world to man’s fate, but God also had to subject man’s world “in” hope. Creation will experience the glorious hope of *living forever* with man, of being completely and perfectly renovated. There will be a “new heavens and a new earth” (see Psa. 96:11-13; 98:7-9; Isa. 11:6-9; Rev. 5:13).

2 Pet 3:10-13 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

Rev 21:1 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. (see Heb.12:26-27)*

Isa 65:17 *“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”*

Isa 66:22 *“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the Lord, “so will your name and descendants endure.”*

3. Creation groans in labour for deliverance. Note that all creation suffers together: all creation is interrelated, intertwined and interconnected. The whole universe is dependent upon its various parts for survival. The earth could not survive without the heavens, and the heavens would have no purpose apart from God's creation of man and his earth. This does not mean that man is to be egocentric or egotistical. It simply means that man and his earth are the focal point of God's unbelievable creation, of His eternal plan and purpose. Being the *centre of creation* before God is not a truth to make man proud, but to make him humble — a truth to cause him to bow in worship and praise, appreciation and thankfulness. Being the summit of God's creation is not a gift of privilege, not presently, but of enormous responsibility.

Note the word “groaning.” The picture is that of a woman giving birth. Creation experiences “birth pains of childbirth” under its struggle to survive. And note: it has been experiencing the “birth pains of childbirth” *until now*, that is, from the fall of man up until this present moment.

In conclusion, the whole scene of these four verses is that creation awaits a renovated world. Creation resents evil and struggles against decay and death. It fights for survival. It struggles against the bondage of being slaughtered or changed.

The idea expressed is that creation awaits the Day of Redemption: anxiously, expectantly, longingly and eagerly awaits for its deliverance from corruption. Creation moans and groans and cries for the unveiling of the Son of God.

Rom 8:21 *That the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.*

2 Pet 3:13 *But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

Rev 22:3-5 *No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.*

III. **Romans 08:23–27 Deliverance from Corruption**

The believer suffers and struggles for deliverance from corruption. Note four facts.

1. It is the first-fruit of the Holy Spirit that delivers and saves man. The term first-fruit means either the presence of the Holy Spirit or the fruit of the Holy Spirit: life, love, joy, peace (Gal. 5:22-23). When a believer is truly saved, he possesses the Holy Spirit and bears the fruit of the Spirit. He actually begins to live abundantly and eternally, and he experiences the fullness of God's Spirit: His love, joy and peace. Experiencing these causes the believer to groan and ache...

- for the perfection of the Spirit's presence and fruit.
- for the day of adoption, the day when he will actually move into the perfect presence of God.
- for the redemption of his body.

The believer is stirred by the taste of the Spirit and of His first-fruits, stirred to groan for their perfection. He groans and aches to be delivered from the sufferings of this world and released into the glorious *liberty of perfection* with God.

1 Cor 15:44 *It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

1 Cor 15:49 *And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.*

1 Cor 15:50, 53-54 *I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."*

2 Cor 5:2 *Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.*

Rev 21:4-5 *"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

2. It is hope that delivers and saves man. Hope saves us, for it is hope that keeps us seeking after God and His redemption. We hope for redemption; therefore, "we wait for it patiently" (see *Hope*, Rom. 8:24-25).
3. It is prayer and the Holy Spirit that delivers and saves a man. As the believer faces the sufferings of this life he has the greatest resource imaginable: prayer. He has the right to approach God whenever needed, and to ask God for the strength to walk through and to conquer the suffering. That is what prayer is all about.

Two significant things are said about prayer.

- a. Believers do not know how to pray as *they should*. Note the word "we." Paul includes himself in this, which is to say no believer knows how to pray. By nature we are weak, lacking the power...
 - for prolonged concentration
 - to avoid distractions
 - to stop all wandering thoughts
 - to prevent emotional changes
 - to govern varying affections
 - to know what lies in the future, even one hour from now

- b. to know what is really best for us and our growth in any given situation
- c. The Holy Spirit helps our weaknesses. It is true that He helps us in all our weaknesses, but the point of the present passage deals only with prayer. Note: it is assumed that we are praying in this verse. The Spirit is not going to force us to pray. It is our responsibility to pray: to take the time to get alone and pray. When we do this the Spirit begins to act both *upon* and *for* us.

Note this also: the Spirit helps us in our weakness. Whatever our particular weakness is, it is that weakness which He helps. If we are truly sincere and are wrestling to pray, then the Spirit helps us to control concentration, distractions, wandering thoughts, emotional changes and affections. How? As we struggle to pray by controlling our sinful nature and its weakness, the Holy Spirit takes our mind and emotions and...

- quiets and silences them
- draws and pulls them
- stirs and excites them
- directs and guides them

He leads us to pray as we should, controlling and subjecting the sinful nature and concentrating upon the prayer.

Note another fact: the Holy Spirit Himself “prays for us with groaning that cannot be expressed in words.” Sometimes the struggles and sufferings of life become so heavy we just cannot bear them. At other times, matters of such importance grip our hearts to such an extent that words are impossible. Emotions become too much for words. We become lost in the presence of God. Every genuine believer knows what it is to be speechless before God and left groaning in the Spirit. Every true believer has experienced...

=> God’s indescribable gift

2 Cor 9:15 *Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!*

=> inexpressible and glorious joy

1 Pet 1:8 *Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.*

=> words that cannot be expressed or shared

2 Cor 12:4 *Was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.*

The point to note is that the Holy Spirit takes these great moments of prayer and helps us in our “groans” before the Lord. We are not able to utter words; therefore, the Spirit intercedes for us with groans that cannot be uttered.

Eph 6:18 *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

Thought 1. The believer's great need is to come before God — and to come often — in such intense prayer.

1 Chr 16:11 *Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.*

Mat 7:7 *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”*

Luke 18:1 *Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.*

4. It is God who delivers and saves a man. Note the three things said in this verse.
 - a. God searches the heart of us all. There is no exception. He knows exactly what is within our hearts. He can read and understand what our groans and needs are. Not a need will be missed.

1 Chr 28:9 *“And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.”*

Psa 44:21 *Would not God have discovered it, since he knows the secrets of the heart?*

Jer 17:10 *“I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”*

- b. God knows the mind of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit prays for us according to the will of God; therefore, God knows exactly what the Spirit is requesting for us. There is perfect agreement between the Holy Spirit and God the Father.

John 16:13 *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

- c. God will answer our prayer and meet our need. He will deliver and save us, causing the very best thing to happen.

John 15:16 *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”*

John 16:23-24 *“In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”*

John 16:26-27 *“In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.”*

Rom 8:28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ■*

ROMANS 08:24 –25 HOPE (ELPIS)

*For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. **Romans 08: 24-25***

Assured expectation, confident knowledge, inward possession, spiritual surety. Note the statements of definition again, for they are packed full of meaning. The believer's hope cannot be defined as the world defines hope. The believer's hope is entirely different from the world's hope or desire or wish. The world desires and wishes for what it can see, and they may or may not be able to get what they long for.

The believer's hope is entirely different in that it deals with spiritual things and the believer will unquestionably get what he hopes for. The believer's hope is based on the *inward experience and witness of God's Spirit*. The believer knows that God's Spirit lives within him, and he actually experiences the things of the Spirit *now*. Granted, his experience is but a taste; the things of the Spirit are *not yet perfected* in his life, *but they do exist*, and they are present in his body. He already possesses the things of God while in the human body. His hope of salvation is a present experience — he is saved now — he already has a taste of salvation. The believer's hope to be saved is a living reality now; therefore, his hope is a *sure* hope. To the genuine believer, hope is the absolute assurance of things promised, but not yet seen.

He has absolute assurance because he already experiences the things of God. They are already an *inward possession*, a *spiritual surety*, an *assured expectation*, a *confident knowledge*. Note four facts about hope.

1. God has chosen for us to be saved by hope and not by sight. If we were saved by sight, we would not hope in God. If we could actually see and experience perfect redemption and salvation now, then there would be nothing more for which to hope. The result would be catastrophic: we would not be drawing close to God, believing and trusting Him, nor looking to Him to provide a perfect salvation for us. There would be *no liberty and freedom between God and man, no love and trust established*. There just would be no relationship and no fellowship between God and man, not based on a *free moral love, trust and belief*.
2. God is after one thing: our being patient in hope, that is, our persevering in hope. Why? The more we *hope* for salvation and redemption, the closer we draw to God. And, above all else, God wants us to draw near Him: fellowshiping, believing, trusting, loving and hoping in Him.
3. The path of hope is the only way God could choose for salvation. For only as a man hopes in God will he draw near to God; and in reality, the more a man hopes

in God, the closer he draws to God. The more he hopes, the more he will trust, believe, love and depend upon God. And this is exactly what God is after; it is His plan and purpose for man and his world.

4. The believer's hope is expressed in several glorious ways. Note that God Himself is called "the God of hope" (Rom. 15:13).
 - a. The hope of "the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 23:6).
 - b. The hope of the promise (Acts 26:6-7).
 - c. The hope of Israel (Acts 28:20).
 - d. The hope that is the object of faith (Rom. 4:18; see Acts 26:6-7).
 - e. The hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:2; Col. 1:27; Tit. 2:13).
 - f. The hope that saves us (Rom. 8:24).
 - g. The hope that causes believers to endure afflictions (Rom. 8:25; 1 Th. 1:3).
 - h. The hope of believers that comes through the Scripture (Rom. 15:4).
 - i. The hope which is a gift of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13).
 - j. The hope that is one of the three essential traits of the believer (1 Cor.13:13).
 - k. The hope in Christ (1 Cor. 15:10; 1 Tim. 1:1).
 - l. The hope of righteousness (Gal.5:5).
 - m. The hope of God's calling (Eph. 1:18; 4:4).
 - n. The hope which the lost do not have (Eph. 2:12).
 - o. The hope of the gospel (Col. 1:23).
 - p. The hope of salvation (1 Th. 5:8).
 - q. The "good hope" which God gives (2 Th. 2:16).
 - r. The hope of eternal life (Tit. 1:2; 3:7; see Acts 2:26).
 - s. The "blessed hope" of the Lord's return (Tit. 2:13).
 - t. The hope that stirs diligence and gives full assurance (Heb. 6:11).
 - u. The hope set before believers (Heb. 6:18).
 - v. The hope which anchors the believer's soul (Heb. 6:19).
 - w. The hope that stirs belief (Heb. 11:1).
 - x. The "living hope" of the believer (1 Pet. 1:3).
 - y. The hope that stirs believers to purify themselves (1 Jn. 3:3). □