

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

[www.twojourneys.org](http://www.twojourneys.org)

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at [twojourneys.org](http://twojourneys.org)

## **Present Suffering, Future Glory**

### **Romans 8:18-25**

#### **I. Surrounded by Beauty and by Suffering**

A. Majestic Creation

B. Constant Human Suffering

C. Handling Human Suffering Essential to Worldview

1. Human suffering a portal to heresy
2. Where is God when I am suffering?
3. Intensely real questions, made fiery by our pain

E. God's Plan for the Physical World

1. Our bodies constantly fight us
2. Our bodies will someday betray us
3. The world is decaying and spiraling down
4. Does God have a plan for the physical world... not just the spiritual one?

#### **II. Context**

A. Total Assurance for Christians: "No condemnation"

B. Careful Distinction between Christian & non-Christian: "For those who are in Christ Jesus"

C. "Life according to flesh" vs. "Life according to Spirit"

D. Indwelling Spirit: Greatest Assurance

E. Exalted Title: “Children of God”

F. But Dark Final Chord: “If we share in His sufferings...”

***vs. 17 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.***

What is the origin, nature, and purpose of this suffering? How shall we bear up under it?

### III. Past: Creation, Subjection and Curse

A. Physical Universe Created Perfect

1. Human philosophies: physical world is evil
2. Bible: Physical world created perfectly good
  - The cosmos declares the glory of God... sun, moon, stars
  - The lofty mountains, rolling hills, sweeping plains, deep valleys, hot deserts, grasslands, savanna, swamps, and icelands all declare the glory of God
  - The clouds, oceans, seas, rivers, lakes, waterfalls all declare the glory of God
  - Palms, oaks, maples, rhododendron, roses, clover, grass, wheat, barley, and rice all declare the glory of God
  - The storks, egret, eagles, falcons, porpoises, sharks, manatees, angler fish, and eels all declare the glory of God
  - The swift leopard, powerful bison, massive elephant, graceful gazelle, blind mole, and shy chipmunk all declare the glory of God
  - And when God created as the crown of this physical universe a man and woman in His image, they too declared the glory of God

***Genesis 1:31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.***

B. Physical Universe Subjected to Humanity

1. The earth and its fullness were directly subjected to man

***Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."***

2. The cosmos and its fullness were not... but yet they were created for man

### C. Physical Universe Cursed Because of Humanity

1. Adam and Eve fell into sin

2. The universe was still subject to them

3. HOWEVER... the universe was subjected to a curse because of man

***Genesis 3:17-19 To Adam he said, "...Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. <sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."***

4. Death entered the world through one man... and this death spread to physical creation

***Genesis 3:21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.***

5. Sin spread and multiplied, and soon the whole earth was judged because of human sin

### **Noah's Ark and the Flood show God linked physical creation to human sin**

6. Even clearer in Revelation

- Earthquakes rend the surface of the earth
- Stars fall to the earth like ripe figs from a tree
- Rivers, lakes, seas, oceans poisoned
- Every living thing in the sea dies
- Trees, grass burned up

7. Therefore, redemption will also affect physical creation as well

***Matthew 27:45 From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.***

***Matthew 27:50-51 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment...the earth shook and the rocks split.***

8. Thus at present the physical universe is under a curse

**vs. 19-22** *The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*

- a. creation waiting
- b. creation subjected to futility (frustration, vanity, emptiness, purposelessness)

God did the subjecting!! The Creation had no desire to be subject to futility, but God did it because of the link He has established between man and the universe

**Ecclesiastes 1:2-8** *"Vanity! Vanity!" says the Teacher. "Utter vanity! Everything is vanity." <sup>3</sup> What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun? <sup>4</sup> Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. <sup>5</sup> The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. <sup>6</sup> The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. <sup>7</sup> All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again. <sup>8</sup> All things are wearisome, more than one can say.*

- c. death and decay rule everything under the sun

**vs. 20-21** *For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay*

- i) "decay" means "corruption"
- ii) the principle that metal rusts, parasites consume, living things dies and rot, oxygen and water attack everything under the sun
- iii) sunlight itself causes cells to be destroyed... aging caused in part by radiation from sunlight
- iv) death is in us and all around us
- v) the moment you are born you begin to die... the same is true of animals

**Ecclesiastes 3:19-20** *Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over*

***the animal. Everything is Vanity. <sup>20</sup> All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return.***

vi) FOOD CHAIN is vanity... smaller animals eaten by larger animals; larger animals eaten by man; man eaten by worms when he sinks into the grave

#### IV. Present Suffering, Future Promises

***vs. 18 “I consider that the suffering of this present age is not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”***

##### A. Present Suffering

##### 1. Physical universe GROANS and LABORS

***vs. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.***

##### 2. Humans groan as well

- Infants die in third world countries from lack of nourishment
- Healthy boys and girls die in tragic accidents
- Men and women suffer the ravages of diseases: malaria, pneumonia, AIDS, multiple sclerosis, cancer, heart disease
- From the hospital bed comes the lamentable cry of pain and suffering
- From the graveside too, the mourners turn away inconsolable... death has won another victim and there seems to be no answer, no comfort
- Death and decay, corruption and suffering seem to rule everywhere
- How much more the suffering from wars, terrorism, earthquakes, hurricanes, famine, drought, pollution

##### 3. Surprisingly, children of God groan too!!

- a. God has not spared us the suffering
- b. we are subject to it too

***vs. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.***

- c. we have the indwelling Spirit, but yet our bodies waste away?? How can this be??

- Children of God, will all the rights and privileges thereto appertaining
- YET we lie on a hospital bed and cough up disgusting, vile phlegm
- Children of God, temple of the Holy Spirit is our body
- YET we gasp for life's final breaths, incurable as modern medicine stands by powerless
- HOW CAN THIS BE??

d. so we groan inwardly

#### B. Future Promise #1: Our Glorification

1. FUTURE SALVATION: Already, Not Yet

2. "We have the Firstfruits of the Spirit"

a. we have the Spirit NOW, already, or we're not children of God

*vs. 9 And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*

b. more than that, we have been raised from the dead spiritually

*vs. 10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.*

*2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...*

**Your new creation spirit** lives and will live forever... it will survive the sickness, the hospital stay, the grave pronouncement that your tumor is inoperable

**Your new creation spirit** will survive the last few painful weeks in hospice, and your last breath

**Your new creation spirit** will survive judgment day and it will wait patiently

3. BUT "firstfruits of the Spirit" implies a full harvest later

*Ephesians 1:13-14 Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance*

What is that full amount? The "REDEMPTION OF OUR BODIES"

4. CHRIST'S RESURRECTION: Our resurrection bodies promised

**vs. 11** *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

a. basis: union with Christ

**Romans 6:5** *If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.*

b. Christ's promise

**John 14:19** *Because I live, you also will live.*

**John 11:25-26** *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.*

c. Christ's achievement: firstfruits

**1 Corinthians 15:20-23** *But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

5. Future Glory

**vs. 18** *"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed IN us."*

a. not merely glory we shall see, although plenty of that

**NASB** *"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."*

I disagree with the venerable NASB here, for the very next very speaks of the "revelation of the Sons of God"

**vs. 19** *"For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God."*

b. how will we "be revealed"??

Word is "apokalupsis"... "unveiling", "revelation"... just like the book of Revelation

**2 Corinthians 4:7** *But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.*

***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.***

c. we shall not only “see” glory... we shall “be” glory

***vs. 29-30 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.***

Perfectly conformed to the person of Christ... perfect in spirit, perfect also in body

Thus physical resurrection in glorified bodies is the completion of our adoption as sons of God

***vs. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.***

The “redemption” of our bodies = resurrection... bought back from ravages of sin and death, redeemed from the corruption of the grave

***1 Corinthians 15:50-55 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup> Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- <sup>52</sup> in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. <sup>53</sup> For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. <sup>54</sup> 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." <sup>55</sup> "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"***

Our resurrection bodies will glow, will shine, with a glory and a radiance that comes from God

***Mathew 13:43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.***

C. Promise #2: The Perfection of the Physical Universe

***vs. 19-21 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.***

1. When the Children of God are all redeemed, the universe will get its turn
2. Creation liberated from bondage to decay
  - a. thus, like us, it must die first
  - b. present physical creation must be removed to make way for perfection

***Hebrews 1:10-12 "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. <sup>11</sup> They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. <sup>12</sup> You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed***

***2 Peter 3:10 t 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.***

3. Creation brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God

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

***Revelation 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.***

The New Heaven and New Earth are the home of righteousness, a place of perfection totally free from all death and corruption

## V. Application: Suffering in Hope

### A. Already, NOT YET!!

1. Christ the first fruits
2. BUT each come in their turn
3. Final enemy is death, and death has not yet been defeated
4. Hope presently enjoyed is no hope at all!

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

B. How Shall We Then Live?

1. Consider the Promises

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

Consider = reckon, weigh it out in your mind... proper approach to suffering comes from proper thinking

2. Believe the Word

3. Hope in God

a. not earthly “hope”

Illus. “I hope it doesn’t rain on our church picnic” “I hope my children come to visit me when I am old” “I hope our team wins the state championship”

b. Biblical hope

Biblical hope is a glorious certainty promised by the Word of God which just hasn’t happened yet

4. Persevere in Suffering

a. wait patiently

b. allow suffering and perseverance, groaning and pain to do good work in you

**Romans 5:3-5** *Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*

c. consider again that these are small problems, temporary

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

***2 Corinthians 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. <sup>18</sup> 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.***

d. meanwhile, groan!

***2 Corinthians 5:2-4 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, <sup>3</sup> because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. <sup>4</sup> For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened***

i) don't deny that it is painful

ii) don't play mind games that it doesn't crush you to the core

Parents who lose a child to disease or accident, don't try to minimize the grief you feel... Jesus wept at Lazarus's tomb

Diagnosed with terminal cancer, don't pretend it's not shocking

Seeing your once strong body gradually lose its power and vigor, don't deny that it's painful to age

Paul himself spoke of Epaphroditus's deliverance from illness

***Philippians 2:27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.***

5. Love the Children of God

a. understand why the delay... SALVATION FOR OTHERS!!!

***Ephesians 1:13-14 Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.***

***2 Peter 3:9, 15 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. ... Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation***

God is waiting generation after generation until all the chosen children of God come to faith in Him... meanwhile, this present age must continue, filled with all the sorrows of the curse

b. understand the future of your brothers/sisters in Christ

**C.S.Lewis, The Weight of Glory** *“It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbour. The load or weight or burden of my neighbour’s glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken. .... It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities... that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendours.”*

- c. help them in suffering
- d. be humble in their presence
- e. love what God is doing in them