

Romans 8:19-23

Part 1

Romans 8:18-23

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

In verse 18 we have just learned that we are to *reckon* something, to *weigh something out* against the balance of suffering we will inevitably encounter in this fallen world as *sons of God*—and that “something” is our *future hope of glory*.

These sufferings, as we have discussed, are the things we encounter due to living in a fallen natural state, in a fallen natural world. They are the inevitable consequences of sin upon creation, and have been something mankind as a whole has shared in, to some degree, since the fall itself.

We see Jesus Himself actually make two very interesting statements which relate to *the sufferings of this present time* in the Gospels. And while these statements are not directly speaking to this issue, they are related. The first of these is in Matthew chapter 5:

Matthew 5:44-45

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

While Jesus does not refer to the sufferings themselves here, what He is making reference to is the natural order from which both good and bad arise. This of course is not the point of the passage in its immediate context—the point is for Israel to learn to have the same selfless love for others as God Himself has had toward humanity—it is a lesson in *godliness*, in other words. But we see from this passage that even though God is not blessing evil men here on the basis of *who they are* or *what they are doing*, what He is doing is allowing them to partake of His *common grace* in natural creation by upholding those natural laws and simultaneously withholding His judgment. God of course has every right to judge sinful man *immediately*—and yet He doesn't.

Jesus here shows us that while men continued on in their ignorance and sin, which are a *direct offense to God*, God Himself actually allowed the natural course of this world to continue, so that all of mankind would benefit from the natural order put in place. In not suspending the natural course of the world *for bad*, neither does He always do so *for good*. And while we have seen certain exceptions to this (such as Israel under the Old Covenant, or Sodom and Gomorrah), as a general rule, God *has* upheld the natural order of creation. The miracles Christ and the apostles performed, as with all miracles in the Bible, were given to *validate a message*—they were not given as a pattern for us to indefinitely seek after or follow; they are not the norm or standard, but rather, they are the *exception*.

The sufferings of this present time are the result of the natural laws that God has put in place, just as God's *common grace* is the result of those same natural laws. *He has so tempered our present world together in such a way as to demonstrate both His grace and goodness and the pain and consequences of our sin so that we would ultimately look to Him.* And so while suffering and loss is a direct result of the natural order, there are also things that result from that same natural order which we *benefit* from.

Another one of the passages that indirectly relate to *the sufferings of this present time* is found in Luke 13:

Luke 13:1-5

1 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?

3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Jesus here makes the case that these men didn't suffer such things because they were worse sinners than others—that these were not acts of *God's judgment*, in other words—but that *all men*, if they do not *repent*, if they do not *change their mind* about some things, will likewise perish, because God's judgment is *certain*, and it is, as we have said before, *without partiality*, as God is no respecter of persons. Obviously, in the context of the gospels, Jesus, as a *minister of the circumcision*, was ministering to Israel specifically in the fifth and last phase of judgment, per the Old Testament Law, as detailed for us in Leviticus 26. Jesus was warning them of *the prophesied wrath of God* that was to come upon *them*—upon *national Israel*—as well as upon the entire world, as they were being prepared to enter into those last days leading up to the return of Christ as *the Son of Man* and the establishment of His earthly kingdom. This of course did not happen, but was temporarily suspended so that God could fulfill a hidden purpose relating to *the Church, the Body of Christ*.

And so there are things that happen simply by virtue of living in this fallen world, with fallen men. Clearly Jesus is indicating that these tragic events were not God's judgment. Natural disasters, accidents, persecutions—these things are all characteristic of the present world, but they are not things that God Himself is *directly* involved with in the sense that He is actively causing them; in actuality, they are simply a result of the natural laws He has put in place.

And so we have come to see the nature of the world in which we live, that God has actually allowed man to experience such things so as to provide him with an experiential education in what sin and rebellion is, and what it produces, which is the pain and death that so characterizes this present world. And yet on the other side of the same coin, God has allowed enough of His light to shine through in the natural world to demonstrate His goodness and grace.

Now, we have also considered how the Old Covenant made with Israel contained within it *literal, physical* provisions, for either diminishing *the sufferings of this present time*, or amplifying them, based upon Israel's *performance*, and how we today do not have any such covenant with God which states such terms. *We* are under the operation of *grace*, and while this *does* provide for certain things, it does not provide for the physical *lessening* or *worsening* of natural suffering.

We know that God in fact has forgiven us *all sins*—past, present, and future—and imputed to our account the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and has given us a new identity in Christ Himself *spiritually*, in which our sanctification is based, and from which all of our freedom flows, and that because of these basic elements of “spiritual fitness” (our justification and

sanctification), we thus have a *status* before Him as *sons and daughters*. Because of this, we know that *nothing that we encounter in this life is God punishing us*, either for our own sins, for the “sins of our fathers,” or for the sins of our nation.

We also discussed the dynamic that the dispensation of grace in which we live adds to this present time: that God, as long as He is operating according to what Romans calls *the gospel of Christ*, is actually offering free terms of salvation to His very *enemies*, and thus, He is not intervening in the world physically to stop or punish wicked men, but is willing rather to save *them*, unlike certain instances in the past, where God actually *did* physically intervene and judge men because of their wickedness.

And so, we are supposed to *reckon* that these sufferings we encounter as a result of the fall—the sufferings we encounter as a result of living in *fallen bodies* in a *fallen natural world*—are *incomparable* to the glory which is to be revealed in us at our future manifestation as *sons of God*. This future glory is to be our hope in the midst of whatever it is we go through in this life.

As we know, that *hope* is not “hope” in the sense that we are *unsure* as to whether it will happen or not but desire it to, but it is *hope* in the sense that *we know with certainty it will*, and that because of this *confident expectation of glory*, we are able to contextualize the pain we go through in light of God’s greater purpose, and we are therefore ultimately able to find meaning and purpose in it, so that we are able ourselves to endure those things, and that, through this process, we actually develop within us the traits of *patient endurance* and *godly contentment*—traits, or *virtues*, that God the Father actually desires us to possess.

The 19th century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote in his book *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887) the following statement:

“What really raises one’s indignation against suffering is not suffering intrinsically, but the senselessness of suffering.”

In this book, he argues that suffering is not only tolerable, but *valuable*, *if* there is an underlying purpose to that suffering, and that it actually causes individuals to become stronger, rather than being driven to despair by the feeling of senselessness that a life without purpose ultimately produces.

Nietzsche no doubt was a *godless, reprobate humanist*, who rejected the words of God and the truth of scripture, but his assessment here rings true and ironically accords with what our very doctrine not only *addresses*, but also *offers a solution to*, which is the apparent *senselessness* and *purposelessness* of human suffering.

We have spent the last several lessons trying frame the issue of human suffering in light of scriptural revelation, so that we can see it from the vantage point of God Himself, so that we can

actually begin to approach *the sufferings of this present time* with the same outlook and perspective towards them as God the Father does, so that we approach them therefore from a *godly* outlook, as opposed to the outlook we all have naturally by default, in our flesh. This is certainly counterintuitive and entirely contrary to our carnal nature, but it is something that is necessary for our foundational establishment as *sons of God* in this world.

To properly make that cry of *Abba Father*, one must not only understand some aspect of God's greater purpose, but also *count the costs* associated with the fulfillment of that purpose. This is exactly what Jesus told the remnant of Israel in Luke 14, that if they truly wanted to be His disciple, they needed to first count the cost, because this would require them to bear their own cross, both figuratively, as well as in some cases even literally.

Now while we are not the subjects of that passage, the same is true for us here. The cry of *Abba Father* is the intelligent cry of a son who has seen the greater purpose, and the costs associated with fulfilling that purpose, and yet chooses of his own free will to submit to God anyway. And when I say "an intelligent cry," that is not to say one must be intrinsically smart, but that in order to properly make that cry requires an *understanding* of something—it requires an *intelligence* about God's purposes and even the costs associated with it.

Now, while we have discussed some of the more general aspects of God's greater purpose for us, it is unlikely this is something that can fully be done without understanding the remainder of Romans chapter 8, but I have at least touched on the subject matter to acquaint us with these concepts. But with the following verses which we are about to encounter, what we are going to learn about more specifically is what that greater purpose involves. This will also give further context as to what our future hope of glory itself will entail, as that glory is going to be manifested in relation to God's purpose.

Before moving into the next section, I want to clarify one thing in relation to this issue of *our future glory*.

It is *Christ in us* that is the hope of glory, and I don't want there to be any misunderstanding in regards to this. Because of our *justification*, we obviously can *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*, as Romans 5:1-2 tells us. But this glory is not specified to be a glory that is revealed *within us* as Romans 8 says. We learned in Romans 6 however that when we trusted the gospel, we were not only *justified*, but we also received a new identity spiritually *in Christ*. Thus, our very spiritual nature and identity itself has gone from death to life, from Adam to Christ. It is this *new spiritual identity in Christ* that we received the moment we believed that is going to one day be revealed in every single believer. Whether you ever learn to live out of that resource or not, it is permanently there, and it will one day be revealed as the glory it truly is.

But, we have also discussed how there are going to be *differing levels of glory* revealed in the saints, depending on where we are at in terms of our *edification*. And so to clarify this point, I

want us to remember what “edification” even *is*. Edification is the process of being “built up,” as we see within the word itself the same root as the word *edifice*, which means *a building*. God is essentially *building us up* in the inner man, through a structure of doctrine, to progressively conform us to the image of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider Galatians 4:

Galatians 4:19

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you...

Though Christ is in every one of us, and thus we are *all* appointed to *glory*, God is also trying to conform our very *souls* to His image *here and now*. These Galatians were attempting to perfect themselves by the works of the Law, rather than living out of grace, and the spiritual identity and provisions God made available to us through Christ. It is clear the Galatians were saved individuals, as Paul says, they had *begun in the Spirit* (Gal. 3:3), and yet Paul was *travailing*, he was *laboring*, to have Christ *formed in them*. This is the practical forming of the character of Christ in their soul, through the doctrine—but it is still Christ. It is not them becoming a better version of themselves. It is them taking on the character and wisdom of the Son of God.

And so, the glory that is revealed in us is not our own glory—it is not something that results from our own works or self-effort, but is a reflection of the level to which Christ Himself was formed in us through the progressive revelation of doctrine found in our epistles of Romans through Philemon.

I want us to also briefly consider Colossians chapter 1:

Colossians 1:27-28

27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus...

The riches of the glory is Christ, and the hope of glory is Christ. You see it’s all about Jesus Christ. Christ being formed in our soul is the objective, and the level of Christ developed in you is what is going to be put on display at our future manifestation. Every saint will be purged by the judgment seat, and thus only what is of Christ will remain, but those who are edified here and

now will receive *the reward of the inheritance*, because they've been equipped for that reward, or, that placement, as sons.

In both cases however, it is *Christ* who is going to be glorified and exalted, not ourselves. Did you receive a new position and identity in Christ when you got saved? You did. And this will result in *glory*. But is that all that God is trying to accomplish? Isn't He also trying to edify us unto *godliness* in a practical sense, providing us with doctrine for our perfecting, to conform us to the image of His son? *He is*. And this also results in glory.

And so, with all of this, I want us to now begin looking at the following verses.

Romans 8:18-23

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Scripture here begins verse 19 with the word *For*, again connecting the concept of our future glory with what's to follow. As I said, it's hard for us to properly make that cry of *Abba Father* in the inner man without first seeing some aspect of God's greater purpose, and the glory associated with that purpose.

And so what the scripture here begins to do is shed light on that purpose for us, to give purpose to our very destiny itself, which will help establish within us the very hope we will need to develop the patient endurance and godly contentment God desires to form in us.

Our future glory, we see from verse 19, is apparently connected to what Paul calls "the creature." Now, if you have a new Bible translation, it will not use the word *creature*, but will instead use the word *creation*. This is one of those passages where the King James Bible stands out amongst all others as unique, and I believe that it alone gets this passage correct, and we will see why this is so in a moment.

Romans is *the* foundational epistle to the Body of Christ, and so you would expect for all of the most pertinent, foundational elements of our doctrine to be found within it, even if only in seed form, and in fact you do; and this passage contains is one of those very issues.

This is similar to how we saw, with the doctrine in Romans chapter 5, that *much more* than merely being justified unto eternal life, we shall also, *in addition*, be saved from the wrath of God through Christ. If God commended His love toward us while yet His enemies, now that we are justified by the blood of Christ, much more then, being at present time *justified, saved, delivered*, we *shall also be* saved from God's wrath in the future. If you are presently justified you have already been saved from God's judicial wrath—that is the entire essence of justification, that you've been declared righteous. And yet there is a future salvation from wrath yet to come.

And so we saw how these verses in Romans 5 actually contain within it the doctrine of the pretribulational *catching up* of the church, or, *the rapture*, in seed form. It does not explain *the catching up*, but what it does is exclude us from participation in *any form* of God's wrath, not just wrath for our sins at a future judgment, but wrath in this life, on this earth, as well as wrath in the ages to come.

Well, with our present passage in question in Romans 8, we see also, *in seed form*, a foundation for the doctrine of our *heavenly* hope.

Some see the doctrine from Israel's scriptures very clearly detail a future inheritance on the earth, and because of this, and because of how new Bible translations obscure the doctrine of this passage, they conclude that the Body of Christ must *also* have an inheritance on the earth in the ages to come. And yet that is not the case.

And so, before we go any further, we need to define what *the creature* itself *is*. And in order to do this, we need to look at several verses together.

In verse 19, we have the word *creature*.

In verse 20, we have the word *creature*.

In verse 21, we have the word *creature*, and it is "the creature itself *also*."

Now in verse 22, we have the phrase *the whole creation*.

And then in verse 23 we have the statement "And not only *they*."

And so in verse 21 we have the words, *the creature itself also*. The use of the phrase *itself* here is not arbitrary, but it is singling in specifically on this particular thing, this “creature,” because there is more in view here than just the creature, thus it is the creature itself *also* shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption. The word *also* literally means “in addition to.”

In verse 22 then we have a switch from the word *creature* to the word *creation*, and the word *creation* here is used specifically in relation to “the whole creation.” And so, as I’ve said before in regards to situations such as this, does scripture know how to use the word *creation*? It obviously does. So why then the use of this particular word *creature*? Of course, I’m coming from a Bible-believing perspective; I believe every word of my Bible. And because I believe it to be entirely correct and without error, I don’t need another one, and I don’t need Greek manuscript evidence. The underlying Greek word here for *creature* is the same exact word used for *creation*. But maybe the translators of the King James Bible understood something about the different ways in which that word is being used here based upon, not only the immediate context, but also the extended context of the Bible. And I believe that to be the case.

Verse 21 says *the creature itself also*, because it is setting *the creature* in contrast to *the whole creation* in verse 22. Thus, scripture is distinguishing the creature from the whole creation. Now, if it is the “whole” creation, that obviously leaves nothing out. It is the whole thing. Thus, whatever “the creature” is, it is not *the whole thing*, but rather, it is some particular aspect of creation, it is a specific part of creation.

Now, as we look at verse 23, we see that scripture says in reference to *the whole creation*, “and not only *they*.” And so verse 23 is referring to the whole creation as “they.” And so ask yourself the question, what does the word “they” mean? The word *they* is a third-person pronoun which refers to *two or more people or things*. We know that this “they” of verse 23 is not a reference that includes us, because it says “And not only they, *but ourselves also*...”

If it is “but ourselves also,” then the “also” means we are in turn something additional to the “they.” There is the “they,” and then there is “ourselves also.” There is *the whole creation* which is composed of two or more things, and then there is *us*. This “they” then is a reference to two or more things outside of ourselves.

Now, there are only two subjects mentioned in this passage outside of ourselves—what scripture calls “the creature,” and then what it calls “the whole creation.” If you will notice, all three of these are preceded by the definite article *the*: *the* sons of God; *the* creature; *the* whole creation. Thus, scripture has something very specific in view with all three of these.

The *creature* is set in contrast to *the whole creation*, thus, the creature itself must somehow differ from the whole creation. The creature must be a particular aspect of the whole creation. It cannot be something entirely removed from the whole creation, because the whole creation

encompasses all created things, and the creature obviously must be a created thing. Thus, the creature is a specific part of creation.

Verse 22 also shows us the plural nature of *the whole creation* in that it says “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain *together* until now.” How can you say the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain *together* unless there is more than one aspect to it?

What modern translations do, and what the modern thought behind this passage *is*, in part due to these translations, is that this entire passage is just simply speaking of creation in some general sense, that it is speaking of the fallen state of the earth and of man, but what this passage actually sheds light on is the fact that there are actually two aspects of creation which have suffered consequences due to sin and rebellion. And this is not new information for us.

Verse 22 says “*For we know* that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in Pain together until now.” And so we already actually know some things, though we might not realize that that is what this passage is talking about.

We all understand that God created both heaven and earth, and that both realms have been corrupted as a result of sin. This is no surprise. We have actually detailed the fallen nature of the earthly realm as we’ve considered the subject of the sufferings of this present time. But, as we explored the concept of our future glory and the various roles of authority within the heavenly realm, we went back and looked at how actually there was something inherently wrong with the heavens as well, that there were beings who were in rebellion up there, and that, because of that rebellion, God actually did something to those heavenly places themselves, similar to how He placed a curse upon the earth.

Now, we have actually already seen *the creature* show up in the book of Romans, though we didn’t detail it there. Consider Romans chapter 1:

Romans 1:21-25

21 *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

22 *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,*

23 *And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*

24 *Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:*

25 *Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*

Now, what Paul is alluding to no doubt is the history of mankind in general, but he is actually specifically referencing a passage of scripture here. Paul is alluding to Moses' warning to the Israelites in Deuteronomy chapter 4:

Deuteronomy 4:15-19

15 Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire:

16 Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female,

17 The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air,

18 The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth:

19 And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

We see in both passages, man's idolatry begins with the graven images of *man*, then begins to devolve into *birds and beasts*, then devolves yet again to *creeping things*, things which creep upon the earth such as snakes or insects. But notice the final step in both passages is for man to turn his eyes *up*, to the *host of heaven*, and worship *them*. We typically read the phrase *the creature* in Romans 1 as if it is simply referring us back to man, and to birds and beasts, and to the creeping things themselves. But when we compare this passage with Deuteronomy 4, we see that the final step in man's idolatry was to then begin to look up and worship something else altogether: the sun and the moon, the stars, even *the host of heaven*. That is why Romans 1:24-25 says "Wherefore God *also* gave them up," who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature. It was *also*, or something *in addition to*, because it was the final step in mankind devolution, having rejected the knowledge of the true God.

And so, whatever the creature *is*, it obviously has something to do with the heavenly places—with the sun, the moon, the stars, even the hosts of heaven. But we will explore this in more detail in the next lesson.

And so, you see within this passage in Romans 8 a way to distinguish between one aspect of creation and the entire thing. But you do not get that in other bibles. What they do is make *the creature* and *the whole creation* the same thing, so that you lose the specificity of what this

passage is actually talking about, and thus you lose the specificity of our hope and calling, because it is *the creature specifically* which is waiting for our manifestation.

If you want to say that the King James Bible is wrong then that's fine if that's what you choose to believe, but again, this translation uniquely stands out among others in a way which drastically opens our understanding. There is something to be said for that. You can say it's wrong, but you cannot say that both it and the new translations say the same thing—because they don't. Both cannot be true simultaneously, because the content of what is being taught here simply isn't the same. In the words of Jasper James Ray, *God wrote only one Bible*. He didn't just inspire ideas, He inspired *actual words*. And we either have those words, or we don't.