

Everything is going to be made right when Jesus Christ comes back.
See Jn. 14:1-3

3. We Can Be Hopeful About Heaven

"We know that the whole of creation has been groaning in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves... groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved." vs. 22-25.

Even if Jesus doesn't come back in our lifetime we're going to be with the Lord anyway. Col. 1:5 1 Cor. 15:42-44, Revs 21:1-4

4. The Holy Spirit Helps Us In Our Weakness

"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 with groans that words cannot express." vs. 26-27

If you are in a situation, where there is much heartache and you don't know how to pray, remember that the Holy Spirit prays for us. He looks past our words, into our hearts to bring our inexpressible longings to God the Father. See also Hebrews 4:15-16

5. God Has A Purpose Behind Our Problems

"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." vs. 28.

Paul doesn't say all things are good. God's will is not always done. God uses everything for His good purpose, to help us become more and more like Christ. See vs29.

CONCLUSION - Four things to remember all the time in the midst of your troubles:

1. **God sees everything I'm going through.** Nothing catches Him by surprise.
2. **God cares about everything I'm going through.** The Bible says that Jesus feels for us.
3. **Everything that happens to me is part of God's permissive will,** not His perfect will.
4. **God's purpose for our life is greater than any problem we will ever face.**

Q. What has this passage taught you about suffering? Can you trust in the promise of God's care and greater purpose behind all suffering?

Finding Hope to Hold Onto

Romans 8:18-29

Suffering is a fact of life - almost everyone suffers at some time. The Bible does not attempt to provide explanations for all the suffering in the world. Some of our questions must wait until we get to heaven. Instead the Bible gives us **comfort** and a **promise** that God will help us cope with our hurts and suffering.

This next section of Paul's wonderful chapter has some very helpful things to say about finding hope in the midst of suffering.

I. Key Words in This Passage

i. Hope (six times)

"For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope." vs. 20

In the beginning the world was **perfect** but it has been **going downhill** ever since.

ii. Wait (three times)

"We wait in eager expectation." vs. 19

iii. Groan (three times)

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth." vs. 22

Q. Creation is often personified in the Bible e.g. 'as declaring the praises of God' or 'crying out in witness to Christ' but here in verses 19-22 Paul depicts creation as 'in travail'. What does this say to us about how God views His world?

Creation groans because things aren't the way they ought to be. **We groan** because we are not as we ought to be and **God groans** because He has such empathy with us, in all our suffering. (See vs. 26) This is Paul's answer to people who ask the question, "Where is God when I hurt?"

II. Sources of Suffering - Romans 8:19-22

1. Situation Gen.3:17-19

(Jesus) *"In the world you will have trouble."* John 16:33

In the beginning the world was perfect but sadly it is not perfect any more.

The cosmos is now subject to the principles of decay because of human sinfulness. Life will never be entirely comfortable this side of heaven.

2. Sinfulness

“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.”
Romans 5:12, also 6:23

We can look anywhere in the world and find evidence of suffering brought about by human sin. Numbers 14:18 speaks of the effects of sin on the generations that follow.

Q. What are some examples of suffering, inflicted by others on innocents that particularly distress you?

3. Self

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”
Gal. 6:7

(Pogo) “We have found the enemy and he is us.” We refuse to listen or learn.

4. Satan

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him. Stand firm in the faith because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings” 1 Peter 5:8-10.

Evil manifests itself through problems, disease, distress, depression and death. Hebrews says the devil holds many people captive. (Heb.2:14-15)

5. Salvation

*“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trials you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed...So then those **who suffer according to God's** will should commit themselves to their faithful creator and do good.”* 1Peter 4:12 -16 & 19

Sometimes it's God's permissive will for us to suffer when we haven't done anything wrong. God doesn't cause suffering but He allows it because He knows that He can bring a greater good from it. See also Phil. 1:29, Heb. 11:25

Q. What do these verses say to the advocates of the ‘prosperity Gospel’ who insist that suffering is a reflection of our lack of faith? What do you think?

III. The Key To Coping With Suffering - Romans 8:18

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

Key word: Consider (Seriously look at what suffering is all about).

See also 2 Cor. 4:16-18, James 1:2-3, Romans 5:2-5

Key Phrase: Having a right perspective

The biggest temptation we face, when we have a problem, is to focus on ourselves and develop a myopic viewpoint that says “Why me?” Paul teaches us to look beyond our pain to find the hope to help us cope.

A famous American cardiologist has said *“Hope is the medicine I use more than any other. Hope can cure nearly everything.”* Hope comes from having the right perspective.

“Therefore we do not lose heart [hope]. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 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.” 2 Cor. 4:16-18 See also James 1:2-3, Romans 5:2-5

Q. How does our perspective on life help or hinder us when the going gets tough? What would help you to survive the cruelest suffering that life could throw at you?

IV. What Is Our Hope In Suffering? - Romans 8:18-28

1. Remember It's Only Temporary

*“I consider that our **present** sufferings ..”* vs. 18. Our measure is eternity. 1 Peter 1:6 says that there are seasons in suffering.

2. Jesus Christ Is Coming Again

*“For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one that subjected it, **in hope**.”* vs. 19. Titus 2:13 calls Jesus' return *“the blessed hope”*.

“That the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom the children of God.” vs. 21.