



Group Discussion Guide

Romans 8:18-39

For groups meeting April 19 evening through April 26 morning.

Suffering – for any reason – is hard. Whether it stems from something we did that was wrong, something we did that was right, or perhaps simply a circumstance that we had nothing to do with ... the pain of suffering is very real. As Paul closed his previous section of Romans 8, he wrote that assurance of our relationship with God comes through the agreement of the Holy Spirit with our own spirit and also from the suffering that we share in with our Savior (vs. 16-17). In the next section of Romans 8, Paul addressed the topic of suffering in greater detail.

First, Paul wrote that the sufferings believers face in this world pale in comparison with the glory we will see in the world yet to come (v. 18). This is an important point, because suffering is indeed part of our world and it does affect each of us. Paul, then, was writing to help believers know how to respond to that reality. In verses 19-21, Paul laid out how creation also is suffering at the present time. He stated that God's creation was subjected to his judgment upon humanity, and His creation will one day "be set free from its bondage to corruption" just as God's children will be set free. His children and creation also have something else in common: both are "groaning" as "we wait eagerly" for future glory (vs. 22-23). For believers, we now have an inward glory through the power of the Holy Spirit, but we must wait for our bodies to experience this glory (v. 23). Paul then wrote about hope versus present experience. He stated that "hope that is seen is not hope," while true hope takes place when we believe what we don't yet see (vs. 24-25).

Just as the Spirit is the "firstfruits" of glory for believers, the Spirit also "helps us in our weakness," (v. 26). Paul explained that even when we struggle to express ourselves to God through prayer, the Holy Spirit "intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" and does so "according to the will of God," (vs. 26-27). He then expressed a promise of God that has served as an encouragement of believers for centuries: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose," (v. 28). This promise echoes the words of Joseph to his brothers in Genesis 50:20, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." Those of us who are children of God love Him and we are called according to His purpose. Not everything we experience in this life is good. However, everything we experience will work together for good. Paul closed this section of the chapter with powerful words about God's infinite knowledge about people and how He continues to work in their hearts. He knows who will choose to trust in Christ and establishes a relationship with them, and He will form those who trust the Savior into the image of Jesus (v. 29). He calls them, justifies them and glorifies them (v. 30).

Verses 31-39 form a conclusion to Paul's stated promises of God to call, justify and glorify the believer. Because God's relationship with believers reaches from "eternity past" to "eternity future," those of us who believe can know that we are secure in Him. Because God is for us, no one can stand against us (v. 31). The Father's gift of the Son demonstrates that God will "graciously give us all things," (v. 32).

Since God gave the greatest Sacrifice of all, His own Son, He will certainly not hesitate to give believers all other things pertaining to and leading to their ultimate sanctification (cf. 2 Peter 1:3).

John A. Witmer, "Romans," in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 475.

Paul wrote that believers in Christ are able to stand secure in the knowledge that based on the sacrifice of Jesus and based on his current intercession for us, no one can accuse or condemn us (vs. 33-34). He then asked the rhetorical question: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (v. 35). These verses are familiar to many believers who have used them as a reminder that the love of Jesus is so powerful that NOTHING can come pull us away from his love. Paul made sure to include attacks from enemies, circumstances of nature and general difficulty in his list of those things that cannot separate us from Christ's love.

He then quoted Psalm 44:22 as a reminder that we who believe suffer for the sake of God's glory (v. 36). Paul reminded his readers that even facing death, God's children are "more than conquerors" because of His love (v. 37). Paul finished with another list, this time including larger concepts such as death, life, angels, rulers (thought to be Satan's servants), anything present or future, powers (perhaps government), height, depth, and finally the all-encompassing "anything else in all creation," (v. 39). None of these would be able to separate believers from God's love given through Jesus Christ. Paul's message was clear: the love of Jesus Christ is greater than anything that would attempt to put up a wall between God and those who have experienced His love.

Discussion Questions

1. Considering what we are currently dealing with in our world, how is Paul's statement in verse 18 helpful for you?
2. In verses 19-22 we learn that God's creation has been forcefully subjected to "futility" and "corruption" due to His judgment upon mankind. What are some examples you see of how His creation has been affected by this?
3. Our future is secure because of the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in each of us who believe, but we are still waiting for "the redemption of our bodies," (v. 23). How can we hope for what we don't see, and wait for this with patience, as Paul writes in verse 25?
4. We all pray in our own way; some are more formal and some less, some silently and some out loud. And when we have a hard time knowing what to pray, the Holy Spirit takes our prayers to the Lord (vs. 27-28) How does knowing this help your prayer life?
5. Consider Paul's statement in verse 28 in light of what he writes in verses 29-30. What does this teach you about how much God cares for you? What does it teach you about His purpose for your life?
6. How can you use what Paul writes in verses 31-39 to help you on your faith journey? What are some key truths that you can take away from this?