

God's Love Through His Creation

Romans 8:18-25

Romans 8 is one of the most theologically rich and deeply encouraging passages in the Bible:

“For there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1)

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress or persecution or famine, or nakedness, or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” (Romans 8:35-36)

“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39)

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We need to know this because it often doesn't feel this way. We experience great suffering and struggling and we feel it personally and deeply. We live in a realm of groaning.

*How are we to make sense of this suffering and groaning that so often dominates our lives? Paul puts two words together to explain our struggling with the hardship and brokenness of life: groaning and glory. **We are groaning for glory.***

I. Paradise Lost: We groan because in love, the God who originally made us for a glorious purpose in creation has frustrated our ability to achieve our God-given purpose in this life. We groan over paradise lost. (Romans 8:18-20)

“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it...” Romans 8:20

“O sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams

That bring to my remembrance from what state I fell, how glorious once above thy sphere.”

John Milton, Paradise Lost

“The ‘vanity’ (futility) to which creation was subjected would appear to refer to the lack of vitality which inhibits the order of nature and the frustration which the forces of nature meet with in achieving their proper ends.” John Murray

Creation reminds us of how far we fell when as humanity we fell into sin and suddenly the glory of creation was contaminated by sin and condemned to futility by God.

a. We were made for Worship: Creation was made to display God’s glory and to cause us to delight in Him. We were made for worship.

- **Creation was made by God for God’s joy, pleasure and praise.**

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will (pleasure) they existed and were created.” Revelation 4:11

John Piper: “It seems to me that creation praises God by simply being what it was created to be in all its incredible variety. And since most of the creation is beyond the awareness of mankind (in the reaches of space, and in the heights of mountains and at the bottom of the sea), it wasn’t created merely to serve purposes that have to do with us. It was created for the enjoyment of God.”

- **Creation was made for creation’s delight in God’s glory.**

“Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord from the heavens;

praise him in the heights!

Praise him, all his angels;

praise him, all his hosts!

Praise him, sun and moon,
praise him, all you shining stars!
Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of the Lord!
For he commanded and they were created.
And he established them forever and ever;
he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.” Psalm 148:1-6

- **Creation was made so that we as the chief of creation would delight in God and worship Him above all.**

“O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?” Psalm 8:1-4

- b. We were made for Fellowship with God: Creation was made to supply humanity’s needs and cause us to depend upon Him. It was to give us daily life and bread as we lived in daily joyful dependence upon God.**

“O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom have you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
Here is the sea, great and wide,
which teems with creatures innumerable,
living things both small and great.
There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.

These all look to you,
to give them their food in due season.
When you give it to them, they gather it up;

when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

When you hide your face, they are dismayed;

when you take away their breath, they die

and return to their dust.

When you send forth your Spirit, they are created,

and you renew the face of the ground.” (Psalm 104:24-30)

Sin has interrupted our fellowship with God and so God has hid his face from us. We groan because we no longer enjoy in creation uninterrupted fellowship with God.

c. We were made for Stewardship: Creation was made to be stewarded by humanity and cause to reflect God’s glory.

“And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Genesis 1:28

We groan because creation was given for humanity to steward as image-bearers of God. We were made to reflect God’s glory by being his administrators of all creation.

“Our work in God’s image begins with faithfully representing God. As we exercise dominion over the created world, we do it knowing that we mirror God. We are not the originals but the images, and our duty is to use the original—God—as our pattern, not ourselves. Our work is meant to serve God’s purposes more than our own, which prevents us from domineering all that God has put under our control.”

We groan because that original paradise of uninterrupted worship, fellowship and stewardship has been broken by sin. God has restricted it so that we might seek after God.

II. Paradise Gained: We groan because of the hope of God’s redemptive purpose in creation. We groan because in Christ we know we are destined for something more the renewal of all things. (Romans 8:18-25)

“The groaning is complemented by the expectation of that which will bring the process of redemption to its completion. It’s not just the groaning under the burden of imperfection of the present but groaning for the glory yet to be revealed.” (John Murray)

a. Creation was temporarily subjected to frustration in order that God might mercifully bring many sons to glory out of frustration. (8:18-21)

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the

sons of God. For the creation was subjected not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

Futility is designed to produce humility.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them.’”

b. Creation was universally subjected to frustration in order that God might mercifully bring many sons to glory out of frustration. (8:22-23)

“For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we await eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” (8:22-23)

Our suffering becomes an instrument to bring others to Christ. This universal problem has a singular solution: To put your faith in Christ.

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God...” (1 Peter 3:18)

c. Creation was purposefully subjected to frustration. God’s intent was that we would serve one another in love in hard and broken places with hope and with patience.

“For in this hope, we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” (Romans 8:24-25)

When we understand that God has subjected all things temporarily to frustration for the purpose of bringing humanity back to himself by faith, we can be assured of our hope in Christ and be wait and work patiently that others might know and trust Jesus.

Here is our hope: Christ groaned in His suffering yet without sin so that we might come to God through him. Jesus groaned on the cross for us. Jesus groans in His presence for us. He will return and remove all suffering and groaning.

“...looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2