

## STUDY GUIDE

**NEW VISION**  
**SURVIVALIST**  
**GLORY**  
**ROMANS 8:18-25**  
**02/05/2017**



### MAIN POINT

We can persevere in hope because, in view of eternity, these sufferings are light and momentary.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Think back over a difficult time in your life. What predominant emotions did you feel during that time?**

**What is something you wish you could have heard during that season of suffering?**

**At the time, how did you think God felt about your situation and what did you think He was doing? How was that different from what He actually had planned?**

We all suffer. We're all frustrated, bothered, or pained with something, especially if we're making strides for the Kingdom. If you aren't suffering right now, then you will be! Whenever we suffer, it seems the only thing we can think about. But Paul says something radical: that our perspective is wrong. In the light of eternity, we should view the cost of suffering with Jesus Christ now as insignificant ("not worthy to be compared"), in view of "the glory" that lies ahead for us (cf. 2 Cor. 4:17). We can persevere in hope because, in view of eternity, these sufferings are light and momentary. This suffering will end! But there's more, Paul is saying that it is a glory not simply revealed *to you*, but upon you and *in you*. Paul is speaking of our own glorification. That glory, which we ourselves will be made to share in when He comes, will cause everything that we have endured now to pale in comparison. Until then, we can cling to Romans 8:18!

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 8:18-23.**

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**What does this passage have to say about personal and global suffering?**

**Read 2 Corinthians 11:22-27. What made Paul the appropriate teacher on suffering?**

**What can we learn from Paul about the attitude God wants us to have as we face suffering?**

In the passage at hand, Paul was not concerned with answering the question of why Christians suffer. Rather, he wanted to put suffering in perspective. Paul considered the sufferings of this present time negligible when compared to the glory that will one day be revealed to us in heaven (see vv. 18, 30). At that time, our salvation will be complete, and we will be like Jesus (see 1 John 3:2). Our future glorification will be the time when God delivers forever His people from sin's presence. Not only believers but creation itself, according to Paul, eagerly waits with anticipation for that day of glorification and freedom from sin's dominion, a day when God's sons will be revealed.

**How have you experienced the groaning of creation recently? What news stories have given evidence of this reality?**

**Read Revelation 21:1-5. What is the goal of all redemption?**

**What do you think it will be like to live without fear, pain, or death, and with the continual and direct presence of God?**

As a result of God's final redemption, every Christian and creation itself will be set free from the bondage of corruption. The earth will far exceed even the garden of Eden in its perfection. Because of sin, creation has never reached the perfection God originally intended. Sin brought the curse of death to the physical universe, but the day is approaching when a new order will be in place. The children of God one day will live in the perfect freedom of a sinless universe.

**From what aspects of life on earth do you most look forward to being set free?**

**Read verse 23 again. The Holy Spirit acts as the firstfruit, or down payment, for our future glorification. What do you know about the Old Testament principle of harvest firstfruits?**

**How does this concept enhance your understanding of what else lies ahead for Christians? Explain.**

In the Old Testament God commanded His people to give a portion of their harvest that ripened first as an offering to Him (see Ex. 23:19; Neh. 10:35). By giving this offering, the Israelites acknowledged that all the harvest was from God and belonged to Him. By giving the firstfruits to God, the Israelites offered in faith, confident the rest of the harvest would surely come.

**What are some of the key benefits of having the Spirit within you?**

**How has the Holy Spirit's presence changed the way you view the present sufferings of this life?**

God's gift of the Holy Spirit to believers is His pledge to us that He will surely complete our salvation. Even though we have been adopted into God's family and redeemed by Christ's blood, we will experience more of the power and privileges of adoption and redemption in the future (see Eph. 1:13-14; 1 John 3:2). When will this occur? It will happen when Christ returns and glorifies our bodies by making them immortal (see 1 Cor. 15:44).

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 8:24-25.**

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**According to Paul, how are we to live in the meantime while we wait for our future glory?**

**How do you know the future glorification you read about in Scripture will actually happen?**

## What does Paul teach about Christian hope?

Our salvation ushers us into an entirely new present and future. Paul described the regeneration of the entire created order and then affirmed it is in this hope we were saved. Christians may long for the complete fulfillment of God's promise, but Paul pointed out this is the nature of hope. If what we hope for is seen, then it is not hope. Lack of fulfillment does not mean God is not working; it simply means we must embrace hope. Hope is a powerful medicine, and the good news is that no Christian is ever without hope.

### APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Does hope come easily for you? Why or why not?**

**How does the promise of future glory help you live more positively in our broken world?**

**How can we encourage one another to live in hope and patience as we face our present sufferings?**

### PRAY

Lead your group in prayer, thanking God for His work on the cross that is the ultimate example of His unwavering love for us. Thank Him for His continued faithfulness to His children. Pray that no matter what we face this week, we would be able to cling to the promises of Romans 8 and trust in His love for us.

### COMMENTARY

#### ROMANS 8:18-25

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8:18. Paul knew firsthand a degree of suffering that most of us cannot imagine (see 2 Cor. 11:23-28). He must have wondered about the reason for these difficulties and perhaps wondered if somehow he could avoid them. He came to an inescapable and rational decision that his sufferings were not worth comparing with the glory that would be his in the future. Paul knew his ultimate destination was heaven. The reward of heaven would be for him far better both in terms of quality and of duration. He would not allow his focus in this life to be consumed by his suffering. He was always striving to keep an eye toward his ultimate reward.

8:19. The "glory" that will be revealed to us became the occasion for Paul to think about the redemption of all creation. By our sin, we have brought a great corruption into the world. Sin has stained everything. God's concern and plan is to make all things right again, reflecting anew His original plan. Paul personified creation to indicate the extent of this redemption. God will cleanse every form of evil from His creation. God's preeminent example of this regeneration is His sons who will be revealed. One day God's children will be made perfectly into what God intended for them. We do not know exactly what all this will mean, but the beauty reflected by God's children will resonate with the beauty of God's entire universe. In this sense creation waits with anticipation, looking forward to the day when all of God's creation will perfectly reflect His original plan.

8:20. For the creation was subjected to futility refers to the corruption of nature because of sin. Genesis 3:17-19 describes the ruin that resulted from Adam and Eve's sin and provides the imagery for Paul's use of futility in this verse. The word can also be translated as "vanity" or "emptiness." It describes accurately the contrast between the fullness God intended and the emptiness that resulted from sin. Creation was stained by sin. Creation did not spin out of control, going off on its own, but was still subject to God. He remained sovereign though sin corrupted. God

forced humanity to endure the consequences of sin because He would not allow sinful humanity to live in a perfect creation. For this reason, creation had to suffer as well. God did this, however, in hope. He had a plan to return to His original design.

8:21-22. The bondage of corruption again reflects the images of Genesis 3:17-19. Just as sin enslaved humanity, it also bound creation and prevented the fulfillment of its purpose, testifying to all that God is. Though nature still testifies to "God's eternal power and divine nature" (1:20), we can only imagine what will happen once it is set free from all of sin's effects. This freedom coincides with the glorious freedom of God's children. Though wrong seems powerful, it is limited. Paul consistently had reminded his readers that suffering, affliction, and difficulties of every kind are not the last word in God's plan. Nor do they represent a frustration of God's plan. Joy will come.

8:23. To have the Spirit as the firstfruits means to have the down payment on this future glory and joy. God's Spirit is present in Christians, God is at work in the creation, and His promises are being fulfilled. We know these truths, yet at the same time we groan within ourselves as we strain forward to the glorious future. The presence of sin pains Christians precisely because we have a clear hint of what God will bring about. We groan because we long for God to bring His plan to completion. Paul focused here on the redemption of our bodies. We experience the effects of sin in various ways. Sin takes a physical toll on us, and in fact physical death itself is a result of sin. Where we feel sin's effect most acutely, we also will experience God's blessing. Redemption means "purchased from bondage." God will liberate our bodies, restoring us to divine health that is both spiritual and physical.

8:24. Our salvation ushers us into an entirely new present and future. Paul described the regeneration of the entire created order and then affirmed it is in this hope we were saved. In English the word hope may refer to an uncertain possibility, as in hoping our team wins or a disease is cured. The Greek word has an altogether different meaning. Paul referred to Christian hope, which has no uncertainty. It is still in the future, not fully realized; but its reality is beyond question. Our future is secure because of what God has done through Jesus Christ. This is our certain hope.

8:25. Christians are saved, as the previous verse stated, but we look forward to the full realization of the meaning of being saved. We hope for what we do not see describes the abiding mind-set of a Christian. We eagerly wait describes our yearning. The necessary strength to embrace hope and continually wait is found in the word patience. Difficult circumstances may seem to be direct evidence for either God's lack of care or lack of ability. But this is not the case. Difficult circumstances simply call for our need to endure. Endurance and victory are often precisely the same.