From Groans to Glory

Romans 8:18-30
Key Verse: Romans 8:28
“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.”

It was the summer of 2007 as the NY Giants football team started their training camp. In the blistering summer heat their coach pushed them hard, until they felt like they were about drop from exhaustion. Their head coach was known for his hard-nosed approach and iron will, to him being on time meant that you were 10 minutes early. Drenched by their sweat, teammates groaned, especially the rookies, wondering if the whole season was going to be like this. Every season starts out with the hope of victory, but along the way, players can get discouraged as they run into hardship. That’s why preparation is so important. As the season progressed, the team ran into difficulties, losing so many players to injury and games that they barely got into the playoffs as a wild card. Being a wild card team meant that they would have to play every game on the road in their opponent’s stadium. Most people did not think they would go very far. However no matter how bad the situation got they never gave up but kept their eyes focused on their goal. Eventually they made it to the Superbowl but when they got there they had to face the power house NE Patriots, who were not only undefeated, they were a team that had scored more points than any other team in history. With only 2 minutes left in the game, they were losing and needed a touchdown to win. However that last drive was one that they write stories about. So many times they were at the edge of defeat, they teetered, but never fall over. They came back and won the victory in spectacular fashion. I am not a NY Giants fan but even I have to admit that it was amazing. And when it was over, all the groans they experienced along the way were swallowed up in the glory of victory. And all the hardships that they went through were transformed into exciting stories that became like chocolate on top of their ice cream. It made everything better. And that’s what our passage is about today. When we decide to follow Jesus, we will experience hardship. In reality, all people experience hardship because life is hard. But as Christians, sometimes we will have to endure difficulties because of our faith. And those trials will make us groan. And it comes down to what are you going to do when you run into these hardships. Are you going to give up saying, “it’s too hard?” Or will you regroup and recommit yourself to your heavenly goal? And just like that NY Giants team, I believe that it all comes down to how you prepare yourself before those trials. So let’s learn through this passage how to transform our groans to glory.

Our passage begins today at verse 18 can we read it together, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” Psst, I have a secret to let you in on, living in this world we are going to suffer. Actually that’s not much of a secret because Paul announces it in our first verse. Have you ever wondered why do so many bad things happen in the world? There never seems to be a shortage of them. The reason these things happen in our world is because our world is broke. It does not work the way it should. Take a look at verse 20. “For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of

©2026 IIT UBF. All rights reserved.
Downloaded: March 30, 2026
http://www.iitubf.org

the one who subjected it....” If you’ve ever read the book of Genesis you will learn that God cursed creation because of man’s sin. God said to Adam, “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.” (Gen 3:17,18) God had made a beautiful world and gave it to us to take care of but when we disobeyed God, sin crept into our world.

Over time this curse has wreaked havoc on every man, woman and child but that’s not all, even nature has suffered because of the fall of man. (Gen 3:16) This once beautiful world began to decay becoming full of thorns and thistles. Where there was once abundance, now there is fruitlessness and life is a struggle to survive. When you read internet or watch the news you see the hardships. We have birth defects, diseases and allergies, even our computers can get sick these days. Even teenagers groan and focused on death setting suicide records, full of worry, loneliness and grief when they should be full of life and joy. I believe that all nature is groaning under the weight of this curse. We are consuming our resources and devouring our plant and as we cut down more and more of the forests the animals have fewer places to live. Over time more and more creatures are becoming extinct. Not to mention all the hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes, fires and droughts. Nature groans under the curse but also because of man’s sin. There is the example of Balaam’s donkey. God told Balaam not to go with Balaak to curse the Israelites (Nu 22) but Balaam went anyway to satisfy his greed. While he was going, an angel of the Lord appeared with drawn sword ready to part his hair. However Balaam couldn’t see the angel, only the donkey could. In fear, Balaam’s donkey laid down and would not go forward. Not knowing what’s going on, Balaam got angry and began to beat his donkey. Finally, the Lord opened the donkey’s mouth and she had to explain what was going on. The poor donkey had to suffer because of Balaam’s sin.

So the world is cursed now what? Take a look at verses 19 and 21. “The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. - ...in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.” Creation groans while living in this cursed world yet, strangely it has hope and longs for restoration. It looks forward with hope that one day God will set it free from the horrible curse of thorns and thistles and be brought into a new era of glorious freedom where God’s rule is restored. That is when the children of God are revealed and all of creation will rejoice. The prophet Isaiah foresaw the restoration of God’s righteous rule over man and the world. He prophesied to the redeemed, “You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the fields will clap their hands” (Isa 55:12). Last year in our fellowship several of us graduated, Moses, Ruth, Minah, Vincent, Miriam, Brian, Liz and Jumo. When they crossed the stage and received their degrees, it was a moment of honor and recognition acknowledging their accomplishments. And as each one accepted their diploma, parents and friends clapped and shouted with joy as we celebrated with them. In the same way, creation will celebrate [I don’t know how the hills will sing or the tress clap their hands but they will] and rejoice as the children of God are revealed because that indicates the moment of freedom and restoration is at hand. This reminds me of Genesis 2 when God created the world and everything was ready and waiting for

©2026 IIT UBF. All rights reserved.
http://www.iitubf.org

man to come. And as soon as he did, God sent the rains and life began on earth. There seems to be a connection with the two.

Look at verse 22. “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” A woman giving birth endures excruciating pain because she has hope of bringing a new life into the world. When her baby appears, great joy fills the mother’s heart. We have to have this perspective on our suffering. Of course, it hurts but thank God it’s not forever and that it lasts for only a short while. God uses suffering to restore his creation. Someday, only the men and women of God, saved by Jesus’ blood, will be the stewards of the world. They will rule the creation for the glory of God. There will be no more ungodliness, pain, mourning, or death. There will be no more violence, injustice, or scandals in the news. Instead, there will be peace, joy and righteousness. The words of the prophet Isaiah will be fulfilled, “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them...They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isa 11:6-9). Think of it! The curse will finally be lifted and we will see the glory of God with our own eyes and we will live in a brilliant new world that shines with the light of God. It won’t be dirty and full of trash like our cities. All of creation will acknowledge God, live before him, and serve him gladly. How beautiful it will be to see each of us live purely before God and grow as his children.

Not only does creation have a great and glorious hope but each of us does too. Take a look at verse 23. “Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” When we believe in Jesus we have the first fruits of the Spirit in us. The Holy Spirit puts to death our sinful nature and makes us alive to God. We are maturing day after day, though sometimes slowly. Because the Spirit has begun God’s good work in us, we are happy, yet still, we groan inwardly. Sometimes we groan because of our sins. We groan to be more like Jesus. We also groan because we have mortal bodies with head aches, back aches, sleeping disorders, or any number of problems. These days my grandma is in constant pain from arthritis suffering from old age. I remember when we visited my other grandma in and old folks home. When we entered all the people looked at us hoping that we came for them because no one came to visit them anymore. No one cared about them anymore. They were groaning and looked as if they were waiting to die. When we face the limitations of our flesh, we groan. But God promises the redemption of our bodies. God will give us new bodies that are imperishable, powerful, and glorious. (1 Cor 15) Then there will be no more groaning. We will be perfect inside and out. We will bear the full image and likeness of Christ! Now, we are waiting for this; it is our hope. Someday it will be reality. Our bodies will be strong, healthy and powerful all the time. We won’t even catch a cold. Our minds will be full of inspiration, creativity and imagination. Our spirits will bear the full image of Christ. We will be as humble, gracious, compassionate and holy as Jesus. Look at verse 24. “For in this hope we were saved.” God’s salvation is more than the forgiveness of sins. God saves each person to fully restore us in body, mind and spirit to the image of Christ. God will make each of us a heavenly prince or princess who inherits the kingdom of God. This glorious hope gives us joy and strength as we live

©2026 IIT UBF. All rights reserved.
Downloaded: March 30, 2026 http://www.iitubf.org

in this world. We have victory in the midst of sufferings.

Our hope in Christ is truly glorious and wonderful. However, hope is not always enough. We are weak and sometimes we lose direction don't know what to pray. Even though Jesus taught us how to pray, "Our father in heaven....Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven," still we sometimes get so consumed with our own problems that we can't pray. When that happens we feel completely helpless. Then God gives us his Spirit to help us. Look at verse 26. "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." When we are weak, the Spirit intercedes for us and actually prays for us. And you when the Spirit groans it must be tough. The Spirit helps us to remember God is the Sovereign Ruler of all creation and that Jesus has already won the victory over sin and death and the devil. The Spirit helps us to lift our eyes up from our earthly problems to look at God and see what he is doing. The Spirit renews our souls so that we can pray.

Let's read verse 28. "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." This is one of my favorite verses. This verse is amazing to me and yet it is our basic Christian faith. No matter what happens, no matter how we seem to be doing, God is working for good. Our God creates and Satan destroys but God can still make everything to work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose for them. When I think of this I am reminded of the story of Joseph in Genesis. When Joseph was a teenage boy, his brothers sold him into slavery. He was carted off to a foreign land where he became a slave. And if that wasn't bad enough, along the way he was falsely accused of a crime that he did not commit and he was thrown into prison. Yet God was using all these things for his own good. You may ask, "how in the world can be carried off as a slave and thrown in prison be good for anyone?" If we don't believe in God, then I would say there is no way for those things to be good for us but we have a wonderful God who uses all things for our good, for we can do all things through him who gives us strength. (Php 4:13)

What would it take for a 17 year old boy, the same age of Barnabus and David, to go to as a slave to a foreign country, where he didn't even speak the language, and become the second most powerful man the country and probably the world in just 14 years? I'd say it would take a miracle. But in that situation God was working for Joseph's good. When Joseph would become Egypt's leader, he would need skills to govern the land. He would have to know, military strategies, economics, politics and so forth. How would he get them? Who would train him? God himself would. When Joseph was carried off, whose slave did he become ? Potiphar's. And who was Potiphar? The head of the military. Being in Potiphar's house, Joseph rose to be the 2nd in charge and being around Potiphar he would have learned all he needed to know about the military and who all the leaders were as he served them dinner. And when he was carried off to prison, whose prison was he in? Pharoh's. While there he rose to 2nd in charge and being there he learned politics and made connections to powerful people. On the outside it looks like nothing was happening and maybe Joseph's progress even seemed to be going backwards instead of forward.

©2026 IIT UBF. All rights reserved.
Downloaded: March 30, 2026 http://www.iitubf.org

But our God is an amazing God who causes all things to work for the good of those who love him. And all along the way God was training Joseph to run the country by learning the language, politics, economics, and making connection and knowing the military so that when he ready he was prepared to lead a nation. Several years ago I went through a difficult time at my work. Our department was reorganized and my position was eliminated. I was given a choice to leave or take a lower position. It was a difficult and stressful situation. However God used this for his good purpose. Because of my demotion, I was freed from a lot of responsibilities but I still received the same amount of pay. What we didn't realize at the time, was God was preparing to send us our 4th child. When he came, it was the busiest time of our season. If I had my old position there would have been no way for me to take off of work. But now I was free to take off 4 weeks and help my family when they needed me most.

What did Paul say about sufferings in verse 18? Our present sufferings won't compare to our future glory. And this came from a man who was beaten with rods 3 different times, whipped with 40 lashes 5 times, ship wrecked 3 times, and even stoned and left for dead. Paul suffered because he shared his faith in Jesus. So what happened? Did he live happily ever after? No. In fact he was eventually killed because of his faith. All people suffer that's nothing new, but as Christians we have the blessing of extra sufferings. Lucky you! And you thought that you never get anything extra. Not this time, you get an extra helping of suffering, you will suffer simply because you believe in Jesus. (Acts 5, 1 Pet 4) This may cause us not to want to share our faith, but we should not let that hinder us from sharing our faith in God. That was how God used Joseph when he shared his faith in Jesus.

When we look at verses 29 and 30 we can see the proof of God's love. For God called us to come to him and having called us, he justified us, and after justification he gave us his glory. When God cursed man, the world and everything in it, of course it was punishment for his sins but it was also for redemption. For the punishment was to bring us to repentance for our actions and lead us to God and salvation. God uses suffering to restore his creation. Suffering burns things off that usually distract us from God so he uses suffering to draw us to him. So our groaning will turn to glory when we have faith in him.

Gideon groans because of his job and visa – but think how God is working for him. We may groan but thank God we have help from the Holy Spirit but godless people have no help. So let's thank God for our wonderful God who loves us and works for our good.

©2026 IIT UBF. All rights reserved.
http://www.iitubf.org