

Suffering

Romans 8:16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children (*teknon*) of God,

Romans 8:17 and if children (*teknon*), heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

The topic of suffering was last taught a year ago. This topic is again in focus because it is included in chapter 8. It is perhaps fitting to review this topic frequently. There are a multitude of sufferings in the world. They span a spectrum of difficulties. There are small sufferings. Attack of the mosquitoes. There are attacks that cause physical death. They are all around us. As a result, there are repeated questions concerning why? Here is what I said last year:

“The Bible is an answer book. It doesn’t specifically address each situation you find yourself in. But it contains principles that can be applied to any human situation. But those principles are not helpful if they remain in the Bible. We must learn and understand those principles before we can apply them.”¹

So we will review this topic repeatedly.

Starting in verse Romans 8:16...

The Holy Spirit testifies with our spirit. Here is a clear indication that there is a human spirit. Saying, “Spirit Himself” and “our spirit”

¹ <https://www.springvalleybiblechurch.org/Audio/Romans/notes/20250504Romans290.pdf>

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emphasizes that there are two spirits referenced here. God the Holy Spirit and our human spirit.

It is the human spirit that provides us the capability to process spiritual information. As said before, with a human spirit we are “restored” to our full humanity. Adam died spiritually. His human spirit was no longer operational. It was dead. At the point of faith in Jesus Christ we regain a human spirit.

The point of verse 16 is that as believers we are children (*teknon*) of God.

Robby Dean makes the point that most of the translations punctuate these verses such that “heirs of God” and “heirs of Christ” are synonymous terms. They are not. Robby Dean emphasizes that children of God is the result of faith in Jesus Christ. Suffering after salvation is not part of the salvation package. Let me suggest four reasons to support Robby Dean’s argument.

1. **Logic of salvation.** If you were to assume that the two inheritances were the same, then you are left with a logic error. Salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone. But if you now add suffering as a requirement of salvation then you are left with a contradiction. Salvation would then be both by faith alone plus suffering. Consider this. Salvation is accomplished in a point in time, the point of faith in Jesus Christ. But suffering is something done post-salvation in the Christian’s life. So, on the basis of the definition of salvation these two inheritances are different.
2. **Two different inheritances.** Continuing from the first point, why would Paul identify two different inheritances and yet say they are the same? Not impossible but improbable.
3. **Flow of argument for believers.** What many Bible commentators seem to do is conflate (i.e. mix) salvation and the Christian life. But

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we see Romans chapter 8 as comparing the believer living according to the sin nature and the believer living according to the Holy Spirit. Heirs of God is for all believers. Not all believers will suffer while depending upon God the Holy Spirit.

4. **Grammar of *de* (adversative).** We have encountered Paul's use of conjunctions to guide us through his arguments. Here Paul uses the conjunction *de* twice: once in front of inheritance of God and once in front of inheritance of Christ. It can indicate continuation of an argument or a contrast. Here it shows a contrast between the two inheritances. Below I format this passage to highlight the conjunction *de*.

We are children of God

IF:

But (*de*) children also heirs, heirs indeed of God

But (*de*) (heirs) of Christ if indeed we together suffer (present active indicative) (with Him) that (purpose) that we might be glorified together (with Him)

This is an important point. In chapter 8 Paul is explaining the Christian life. The purpose of our life is to glorify Christ.

Suffering is a multifaceted multidimensional topic. Different Bible teachers will teach this topic using a variety of categories. Indeed, Robby Dean came up with two different sets of categories when dealing with these verses in the same lesson.

Below I have merged several lists into one.

1. One of the most obvious categories of suffering is for divine discipline. Job's friends accused him of suffering because of personal sin. That was not true, but they identify that as a category of suffering.

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Job 1:22 Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

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Job 2:9 Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!”

Job 2:10 But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

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James 5:11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and *is* merciful.

Job’s three friends explain that if someone sins, they will be punished.

Eliphaz:

Job 4:7 “Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright destroyed?

Job 4:8 “According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity And those who sow trouble harvest it.

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**Job 4:9 “By the breath of God they perish,
And by the blast of His anger they come to an
end.**

Bildad:

**Job 8:4 “If your sons sinned against Him,
Then He delivered them into the power of their
transgression.**

Eliphaz:

**Job 15:20 “The wicked man writhes in pain all
his days, And numbered are the years stored
up for the ruthless.**

**Job 15:21 “Sounds of terror are in his ears;
While at peace the destroyer comes upon him.**

Paul concerning partaking of communion while out of fellowship:

**1 Corinthians 11:27 Therefore whoever eats
the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an
unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body
and the blood of the Lord.**

**1 Corinthians 11:28 But a man must examine
himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the
bread and drink of the cup.**

**1 Corinthians 11:29 For he who eats and
drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if
he does not judge the body rightly.**

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1 Corinthians 11:30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.

The solution is to realize we are out of fellowship, acknowledge it and get back to walking by faith.

Now there are other reasons for suffering.

2. We suffer because we are descendants of Adam and live in a “fallen” world.

Genesis 3:17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life.

Genesis 3:18 “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field;

Genesis 3:19 By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.”

3. We suffer because we make bad decisions. Proverbs gives us an insight to laziness.

Proverbs 6:6 Go to the ant, O sluggard (or lazy one), Observe her (feminine) ways and be wise,

Proverbs 6:7 Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler,

**Proverbs 6:8 Prepares her food in the summer
And gathers her provision in the harvest.**

Proverbs 6:9 How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?

Proverbs 6:10 “A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest”—

Proverbs 6:11 Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man.

There are cases of people who spend large sums of money on a luxury car but then suffer for years because there is little money left over for the basic necessities.

4. We suffer because of association with someone else who has made bad decisions. Children suffer because their parents made bad decisions. Perhaps they lost a job and now the family is in poverty.

1 Chronicles 21:1 Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.

1 Chronicles 21:2 So David said to Joab and to the princes of the people, “Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, and bring me *word* that I may know their number.”

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1 Chronicles 21:7 God was displeased with this thing, so He struck Israel.

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1 Chronicles 21:14 So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel; 70,000 men of Israel fell.

There are stories of married couples in which one of the spouses spent money as if it grew on trees. For those in the military especially, this can impact the status of a security clearance or even of jobs.

5. “Unbelievers suffer to provide gospel opportunities. There is the example of the Corinthian jailer.

Acts 16:25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

Acts 16:26 and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened.

Acts 16:27 When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

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Acts 16:28 But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!”

Acts 16:29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas,

Acts 16:30 and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

Acts 16:31 They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Acts 16:32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.

A great catastrophe can motivate someone to immediately consider the question, “What happens when I die?” There are stories of deathbed conversions. Other catastrophes can cause people to ask the same question.

6. We suffer as motivation to seek God in our time of trouble.

Philippians 3:7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Philippians 3:8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for

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whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,

Philippians 3:9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,

Philippians 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

Philippians 3:11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

7. We suffer so that others may benefit from our successful dealing with the suffering by use of promises plus faith.

2 Corinthians 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

2 Corinthians 1:4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

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They say that misery loves company. But from a Christian perspective, love, our code of conduct, seeks to comfort those in misery.

8. We suffer in the angelic conflict as witnesses to angels.

Ephesians 3:8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,

Ephesians 3:9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things;

Ephesians 3:10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

...

1 Peter 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

1 Peter 1:7 so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

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1 Peter 1:12 It was revealed to them (Old Testament prophets) that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

We are always being watched. God watches. Angels watch. People watch.