

• *Expecting to receive an inheritance...*

1. The coming glory far outweighs the sufferings of the present

2. The entire creation is looking forward to this day

• *Creation is bound up with the human race*

• *Both will be perfectly restored*

• *Creation is like a woman in the midst of giving birth*

• *Soon creation itself will give birth to a new world altogether*

3. The Holy Spirit gives us a foretaste of what is coming

• *Sharing the longing for final deliverance*

Paul is working out his point that the Christian will never know condemnation¹. We are released from the Mosaic law. We live in the Spirit, and are heirs of God expecting to receive an inheritance. It is this last point that is taken up in Romans 8:18–25.

1. The present life has many troubles in it but Paul wants us to know that the **coming glory far outweighs the sufferings of the present age**. Paul says: ¹⁸*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy of the coming glory that is to be revealed to us.* The way to face the troubles of life is to compare them with the glory that is to come. Paul says 'I reckon'. It means that there are times when he deliberately meditates upon the glory that is coming. He weighs up what is happening to him now with what he is laying up as treasure in heaven.

2. **The entire creation is looking forward to this day.** ¹⁹*For the eager longing of creation is for the revealing of the sons of God.* Creation is like a person waiting for something that he or she desperately wants to happen. Creation is part and parcel of the human race. When the human race was perfect, creation was perfect. When the human race fell, creation fell. When the human race was redeemed, creation was redeemed¹. And when God's people are perfectly restored, creation will be restored. The day of the resurrection for the human race and the day of glorification for God's people will also be a day for the glorification of the universe. Creation is waiting for its physical perfection. We do not share its glory; it shares our glory.

²⁰*For the creation was subjected to futility, not wittingly but through Someone who subjected it in hope.* It was not 'natural' for the world to be fallen. Its fallenness was imposed from outside by God as a judgement upon it. But the day of release from bondage is on its way. ²¹*Because even the creation will be released from its bondage to corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* ²²*For we know that the whole creation is groaning and labouring in birth-pangs up to the present time.* Again the apostle is treating the creation as a person. Paul uses Greek words which mean 'groan in all its parts together' or 'labour in birth-pangs with all its parts in pain'. All the parts of creation are groaning like a body which is aching in every limb. Creation is like a woman in the midst of giving birth. She is in spasms of childbirth and is experiencing great distress. But as she is in the midst of pain she is full of expectation. She knows that she is about to give birth. The very creation is experiencing pain. It is groaning and struggling and yet something new is on the way. Soon creation itself will give birth to a new world altogether.

3. **The Holy Spirit gives us a foretaste of what is coming.** ²³*And not only that, but we also ourselves who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we also ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for adoption, that is, the redemption of our body.* ²⁴*For we were saved in hope, and hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for something that he is seeing?* ²⁵*And if we hope for what we do not see, we are welcoming it with perseverance.*

The Christian shares in the longing of creation for final deliverance. He is right with God and is rejoicing in a happy relationship with God and yet he also knows the downward pull of having an unredeemed body. The Holy Spirit gives him a foretaste of coming glory. Yet on the

¹ 8:1

¹ see
Colossians
1:20

• *A foretaste of coming glory*

• *Groaning for the final phase of our redemption*

• *When we will be released from the presence of sin – our bodies redeemed*

• *Trials and troubles now – but glory to come*

• *There is an aspect of our redemption which we have not yet reached and we are eagerly awaiting it*

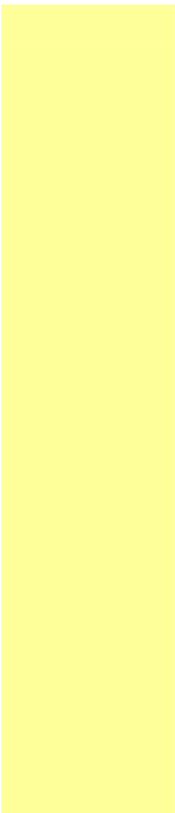
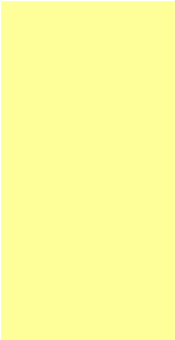
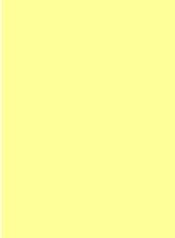
• *We have not experienced this yet*

• *But we live with a certain hope and persevere*

other hand he groans because his body is still fallen. As the cosmos longs for its final glorification, so the Christian has many weaknesses that arise from the body. If he is spiritually discerning, he too longs for a day of physical resurrection. 'Firstfruits' is a word which reminds us that, in the Mosaic law, the first crop of everything that was harvested was to be given to God. The Holy Spirit is the 'first sample' of everything that God is going to give us in final glory.

We 'groan' because of the unredeemed part of our being. There is a longing within us to be rid of sin and to get to this sinless glory. There is a final phase of our sonship. Paul speaks of our 'waiting for adoption'. True, we are the children of God now! Yet there is a final blessing that comes because we are God's children, a final phase of our redemption. We have already been redeemed from the guilt of sin. We are progressively being redeemed from the power of sin. Finally we shall be redeemed from the presence of sin. The fall of humankind will be finally reversed. The consequences of sin will be obliterated. The final phase of salvation is the redemption of the body.

Many Christians are earthly-minded. For many, the horizons of life are full of earthly gains and earthly pleasures. But Paul's view of life is that if we are godly we shall experience trials and troubles. We are to realize that we are saved 'in hope'. There is an aspect of our salvation that has not yet come to us. We are heirs with Christ. There is glory to come, even in the physical universe, but it has not come yet! We are saved in hope. It means that there is an aspect of our redemption which we have not yet reached and we are eagerly awaiting it. We are saved but we are in a position of expectation and anticipation of a further stage of salvation – the deliverance of the body from all the ravages and consequences of sin. We walk by faith. We do not see the new heavens and new earth, we have not yet got to the point of experiencing our glorified bodies. Faith leads to expectation. Expectation depends on faith. Don't delude yourself with a view of the Christian life, says Paul, that seems to think we are in glory already. There is a 'super-spirituality' that is not godly at all. The kind of 'faith' which claims entire sanctification or sinlessness or perfect health or perfect 'prosperity' is going too far. Hope that is seen is not hope. We are welcoming it with perseverance but it is not here yet. Our heart is to be one step ahead of where we are right now. Our concentration is not so much on where we are as where we shortly will be. We are travellers. Soon we shall be in a different world altogether. By faith we are there already. The glorious **liberty** of the children of God is on its way. What do a few sufferings matter?



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