

"If you are interested in stories with happy endings, you would be better off reading some other book. In this book, not only is there no happy ending, there is no happy beginning and very few happy things in the middle. This is because not very many happy things happened in the lives of the three Baudelaire youngsters. Violet, Klaus, and Sunny Baudelaire were intelligent children, and they were charming, and resourceful, and had pleasant facial features, but they were extremely unlucky, and most everything that happened to them was rife with misfortune, misery, and despair. I'm sorry to tell you this, but that is how the story goes." (from A Series of Unfortunate Events by Lemony Snicket. You can visit the website here, but you probably won't enjoy it :- (<http://www.lemonysnicket.com/index.cfm>)

You may feel at times that being a Christian is like being one of the Baudelaire children in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. The Christian life has its share of trials. In fact, as we see in Romans 8, they are an essential component of a life lived under the influence of the Holy Spirit. In other words, it's not just the least spiritual people who face difficulties, it's also the most spiritual.

Trials are an essential component of the Spirit-filled life; we can be confident as we face them.

- I. We can be confident that our present groaning will lead to future glory. 8:18-25
- II. We can be confident that the Holy Spirit is rightly interceding for us. 8:26-27
- III. We can be confident that God is working behind the scenes for our good. 8:28

- I. We can be confident that our present groaning will lead to future glory. 8:18-25

A. 8:18 The future glory will far outshine the present difficulties. The difference is so great there is no comparison. This future glory will exceed our present troubles in two ways:

- i. In Magnitude: Consider the difference between scales at the P.O. v. scales that weigh trucks. Our trials may seem heavy now, but once the glory is revealed, we'll see that it will be measured on a Post Office scale compared to the glory that gets weighed on a scale that weighs trucks.
- ii. In Duration: These trials are temporary – no matter how long they may last. Once the glory comes it will never end. My guess is that it will only seem to get better and better. We will never tire of it. And how long is anything compared with eternity?

2 Corinthians 4:17 (NKJV) For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

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B. 8:19-22 All of creation is caught in the same bondage of corruption and will be delivered when we are. When Adam sinned, this earthly creation fell along with him.

Romans 5:12 (NKJV) ... through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, ...

- i. It's not just people that die – Nature is in the same bondage to death and corruption.

“The doctrine of the cosmic fall is implicit in the biblical record from Genesis 3 (where the ground is cursed for man’s sake) to Revelation 22 (where there shall be no more curse); ... Man is part of nature, and the whole nature of which he forms part was created good, has been subjected to frustration and futility by sin, and will ultimately be redeemed. ... the redemption of nature is here seen as coinciding with the redemption of man’s body—that physical part of his being which links him with the material creation.” (Bruce)

- ii. Creation eagerly waits even as we eagerly wait. The verb for “eagerly waits” is used seven times in the New Testament, each time in connection with the events related to Christ's return. (Rom. 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Cor. 1:7; Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28).

*1 Corinthians 1:6-8 (NKJV) ⁶even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, ⁷so that you come short in no gift, **eagerly waiting** for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Hebrews 9:28 (NKJV) so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who **eagerly wait** for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.*

- iii. Looking forward, since God’s program of salvation for people is one of a new Creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15), the physical world will also be re-created.

Revelation 21:5 (NKJV) Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” ...

This is what we are groaning for, hoping for and waiting for, as it says in 8:23-25. This is our ultimate destiny. This is, in a sense, why we were saved. The transformation of this physical reality will take place in two stages.

- a) First will come the **renovation** of the present cosmos. This will happen in conjunction with the return to earth of the Lord Jesus and the establishment of the messianic kingdom on earth. The OT has a lot to say about this. (Isa. 11:5-9; 35:1-2, 5-7; 65:20, 25; Amos 9:13).

*Isaiah 65:25 (NKJV) The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
The lion shall eat straw like the ox, And dust shall be the serpent’s food.
They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,” Says the LORD.*

- b) The second stage will be more of a **re-creation** – the forming of “a new heaven and a new earth” (See also *Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*)

*Isaiah 65:17 (NKJV) “For behold, I create **new heavens and a new earth**; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.*

*2 Peter 3:13 (NKJV) Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for **new heavens and a new earth** in which righteousness dwells.*

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II. We can be confident that the Holy Spirit is rightly interceding for us.

8:26-27

A. Our Problem: We do not know what we should pray for as we ought.

- i. We don't always know what's really best for us. If we do know, we probably don't know how to get there.
- ii. We don't know what God might want to do for us – in accordance with His gracious will.
- iii. To a great extent we are ignorant of God's perspective.
- iv. We are surrounded by calamity, exposed to temptations and weakened by disease. Sometimes it feels like one big *Series of Unfortunate Events*.

In these circumstances, if left alone, we might never know how to pray. Our prayers might never be anything but one big extended “He-e-e-e-l-p!!!”. (See also *Barnes' Notes on the NT*)

B. God's Solution: the Spirit himself intercedes for us.

- i. What we could never express is perfectly communicated in the most intimate interaction of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit groaning and the Father understanding the groans. This is certainly beyond the grasp of our finite minds, but there's more:
- ii. Christ's intercession! See **8:33-34** where Jesus is also interceding for us. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are both interceding for us before the Father. Perhaps there is some relationship – some common principle operating here among the Persons of the Trinity – that is connected to Christ's comments encouraging us to pray together here on earth:

Matthew 18:19-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

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III. We can be confident that God is working behind the scenes for our good.

8:28

A. **All things work together for good** They cooperate; they all contribute to our good.

- i. Trials turn our hearts away from this world and point us to heaven.
- ii. Trials teach us the truth about our frail condition so that we look to God for strength.
- iii. Trials produce a submissive spirit. a humble heart, a patient and tender disposition.

Hebrews 12:11 (NKJV) *Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

- iv. God uses even bad things to achieve good ends: Joseph in Egypt, the Cross.

B. **To those who love God** This principle is not true for all people:

- i. The Christian becomes more pliable in God's hands by receiving afflictions as they should be received, and by looking for the ways God might use them.
- ii. The sinner becomes more hardened by resisting his trials, and refusing to submit to God's will in the midst of them.

Conclusions:

- **As believers we can expect difficulties.** In this passage Paul assumes that sufferings will be a part of our normal Christian experience. He assumes we will have trials, but that it will be possible for God to use them. The point is not to pretend to be happy about our pain, but to have a more positive outlook because we know that God can use our difficulties for our good. God's goal is not to always make us happy, but to make us holy, and prepare us for eternity in His service. Hardships can become great teaching tools. Tough times can build perseverance. Suffering can shape our character and make us more useful in our Master's work.
- **As you face difficulties, know that God is on your side in the midst of them.** Too often people think they face trials because God is angry with them. This can then cause them to turn against God, who was never angry with them to begin with. This is a very real satanic deception to get people to turn away from God. Use difficulties as a time to turn to God for help, guidance and strength.
 - What if Joseph would have become bitter in Egypt?
 - What if Jesus would have refused the cross because it was too difficult?
- **Let difficulties remind you that you are not made for this present world, but for future glory.** Our real home is with Christ. This should give us a different perspective on our life here on earth. Let heaven fill your thoughts. Try to look at your life from God's perspective and to seek what he desires. The more we regard the world around us as God does, the more we will live in harmony with Him. Very importantly, we must not become too attached to what is only temporary. We were saved for something far better than this.

(See also: *The Handbook of Bible Application*)

John 14:1-3 (NKJV) 1“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

Philippians 3:20-21 (NKJV) 20For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Trials are an essential component of the Spirit-filled life; we can be confident as we face them.

- **Our present groaning will lead to future glory.**
- **The Holy Spirit, along with Jesus Christ, is rightly interceding for us.**
- **God is working behind the scenes for our good.**

Revelation 21:1-5 (NKJV) 1Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

5Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”