

How the Gospel Reframes Affliction

December 31, 2023 ▪ Brad Manley

Our afflictions are not _____. (vv. 8-25)

Our afflictions do not render us _____. (vv. 26-27)

Our afflictions do not _____ the purposes of God. (vv. 28-30)

Romans 8:18-39

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Personal Reflection or Group Discussion Questions

Open: What was something difficult that happened this year that caused you some disappointment?

Read & Discuss: Romans 8:18-39

1. In verse 18, Paul says the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. How does knowing this help you cope with difficulties you encounter in life? What could you do to help keep this truth in mind as you face challenges?
2. According to verses 19-23, the whole creation groans under its “bondage to corruption,” while also experiencing the pains of childbirth (v. 22). What are the implications of this childbirth imagery for the future of the creation? How should this help us think properly about life now?
3. Six times the word “hope” appears in verses 20, 24 and 25. How is hope an integral part of our salvation? From verse 25, what does this hope produce in us? How have you experienced this?
4. Verse 26 tells us the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in our weakness. What two truths make it possible for the Spirit to pray effectively on our behalf, according to verse 27? In what way does this ministry of the Spirit encourage your own prayer life?
5. How do the facts of verses 29 and 30 support the statement of verse 28? (*Note: A better translation of “for” in verse 29 is “because.”*) How does this passage help you to think differently about the burdens of your life? Why is it important to let God define the word “good” in verse 28?
6. Verse 31 says that “God is for us.” How is that proved in verses 32-34? How are you personally encouraged by these verses? Why would these truths be critical for a new believer to know?
7. Paul is confident regarding the durable nature of God’s love for us (vv. 35-37). Do you share his confidence? Explain. What can you do to further deepen your assurance of God’s love?

Apply: What truths in this passage encourage you as you reflect on the past year and anticipate 2024?

Pray: Ask God to cause us to go through 2024 with a proper perspective on life and its challenges.