

2:42LifeGroups

GROWING TOGETHER IN THE GOSPEL

Life Group Study Guide

Suffering and Glory

Introduction and Review

In our study of Romans 8, we have been learning that we believers have assurance of salvation because of the Holy Spirit within us. As *the Spirit of life*, he frees us from sin and death (8:1-13). As the *Spirit of adoption*, he assures us that we are children of God (8:14-17).

Now we come to a new section beginning in 8:18. This section deals with a perplexing question: doesn't our suffering smother our hope of assurance?

To that implied question, Paul gives this answer: Instead of smothering hope, *suffering fuels hope*. And here's why: the Holy Spirit within us reminds us that we are destined for future glory—a glory so immense that it makes the present suffering pale into insignificance.

To show how suffering actually fuels our hope, this sermon focuses on two important concepts throughout 8:17-30: *suffering* and *glory*.

1. **For believers, suffering is the path to glory (8:17).**
2. **This glory eclipses suffering (8:18).**
 - a. How great is this glory? It is . . .
 - . . . so great that we, all creation, and the Holy Spirit, groan for it to come (8:19-27).
 - . . . so great that God orchestrates all events to accomplish it (8:28).
 - . . . so great that God planned it from eternity past (8:29-30).
 - b. What is this glory? It is our being conformed to the image of Christ (8:29)

Discussion & Application

1. Read Romans 8:17-18 and 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. Name some wrong ideas about suffering that we tend to hold on to. In light of these passages, how does God want us to think about our suffering?

2. As believers in Christ, our suffering is radically different than the suffering of unbelievers: we are *co-sufferers* with Christ. This does not only mean that Christ is with us in our suffering. It also means that our suffering, like Christ's, leads to a greater purpose. In fact, it leads to a purpose so great that we can endure suffering with joy. Read Hebrews 12:1-2. What is true about Jesus' attitude toward suffering that should also be true of *our* attitude toward suffering? (*Suggested discussion: Name three practical ways you can remind yourself of Christ's attitude in this coming week. Name three practical ways you can encourage other believers who you know are suffering.*)

3. The glory we are destined for—the glory that overwhelms our present suffering—is perfect Christlikeness (8:28), “the redemption of our bodies” (8:23). In short, it is that longed-for day when we will be “glorified” (8:17 and 30). If this glory is so immense that the creation groans for it (8:22), and the Spirit prays for it (8:26-27), how can we show that we value it that much *right now*? What kinds of things do we tend to value *more* than Christlikeness?

4. Read Jude 24-25. Suppose you stood before God's presence *without* being blameless? What kind of experience would that be? How does that highlight the importance of becoming perfectly Christlike?

5. If you have some position of influence (parent, teacher, church leader, etc.), what are some specific ways you can encourage your people to pursue Christlikeness?