

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

SERMON TITLE: The Problem of Pain

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Find the book of Romans and find in my favorite book my favorite chapter in my favorite book, the eighth chapter of the book of Romans. And go to the heart of the book of Romans and find verse 18. In a moment, I'm going to read it. But the message today deals with the problem of pain.

Now, we have pain. There're many kinds of pain: physical pain, obvious, emotional pain, spiritual pain. Man that is born of woman knows pain, and many times we have pain not because of our own choosing. We suffer from wars, we didn't declare and we eat the bitter fruit of plants and trees that we did not cultivate. And if you were to look around the world, around the globe today, you would say there is a problem, and that problem is suffering. There is disease, unbelievable disease. Aids is ravaging Africa and other civilized countries around the globe. There is starvation and hunger. There is war, pillage, hatred, rape, calamities, natural disasters, storms that come suddenly out of nowhere, and we find ourselves right in the middle of it.

Now what does God's Word say? Look if you will at the key verse here in verse 18, *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."* So what you have is suffering. There's no fine print in the contract. There's no denying it. There's no painting the clouds with sunshine and filling the air with the aroma of lavender. Problems are real. Pain is real. There's some in this building today who are suffering quietly, unmentionable pain. And if you don't get some solution, if you don't have some answer, it'll cause discouragement. You'll get discouraged in your Christian life. And worse than discouragement, it might cause rebellion. It might cause you to lift a clenched fist in the face of God and say, "God, how did You let this happen? Why, God, do I suffer as I do?" Or, even greater the question, "Why do my loved ones suffer as they suffer?" And if you're not careful, you can have a spirit of rebellion. Or, if not discouragement and rebellion, just sheer doubt, doubt. When you look at pain and suffering and heartache and fears and tears, you say, "Where's God?" As a matter of fact, the atheists and the agnostics have worked out a little syllogism. It goes this way: we're cast on a three-fold thing here, a question. Perhaps when all of this suffering comes, God really does care, but He has no power. He can't do anything about it. So, therefore, He is sort of a wimpy, impotent God, not worthy of service because He cares, but He can't do anything about it. Or, the other part of the equation is that He has the power. He could do something about it, but He doesn't care. He just lets us suffer, twist like a worm in hot ashes, and He sits up there in His Heaven dispassionately and doesn't care. Or else, there is no God at all, a God who is non-existent, no God at all. And so, the atheist asks us, "Which of these three things when you're in pain is it? A God who cares who can't do anything about it? Or a God who could do something about it but doesn't? A non-loving God? Or is there no God at all?"

Causes doubt. Maybe rebellion. Maybe discouragement. That was not the apostle Paul's problem. Paul had been doing some figuring. Look again in verse 18,

look at it. For he says here in verse 18, “*For I reckon.*” Underscore that word reckon. In the King James Scripture that I’m reading from, “*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*”

Now the word reckon, brothers and sisters, is a bookkeeping term. Paul had been doing some figuring. Paul had been adding things up. Paul had been taking inventory. Paul had come to the bottom line. He had done some reckoning and Paul said, “I am in the black. I’m not in the red; I’m in the black.” Now, how do you figure this? How did Paul reckon?

Well, wrapped around verse 18 is the rest of the chapter, obviously. And in the rest of the chapter we’re going to see three things as we look at the problem of pain, as we try to make sense out of suffering, because we all suffer. And if you’re not suffering right now, sooner or later you will. And I don’t want to be negative about that. It’s just a fact of life. Our bodies are winding down to the grave. Most of us feel just about as good as we’re ever going to feel, and it’s going to get worse. Sorry about that, but, folks, that’s the way it is. “*The sufferings of this present time.*” No need to deny it. So I want to give you three propositions here and help you to understand the problem of pain, maybe help us all to make sense out of suffering.

Proposition number one: **yesterday’s curse brings bondage.** Yesterday’s curse brings bondage. Now, notice. Go forward to verse 20 on through verse 22 of this same chapter. The apostle Paul says, “*For the creature.*” Now, when he says creature, actually the Greek is the creation. That is, everything God created, “*was made subject to vanity, not willingly but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.*” Now, the creation is made subject to vanity. The word vanity means that it does not reach its original conclusion. What happened to the creation is it is subjected to vanity. It is in bondage for the, look, notice verse 21, “*For the creation itself also shall be delivered,*” underscore this word now, “*from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*” Look around. All of creation is in bondage. Pain and pang, moan and groan, tribulation and trouble, problems and perplexity everywhere. Ours is a sick world and it is a sin-sick world. Well, why did this happen?

Well, when Adam sinned, Adam dragged the entire creation down with him. It’s called, “*The corruption of bondage.*” God did not create this world this way. Some people say, “If God created everything, why did God create evil? Why did God create pain?” God did not do that. God is a good God. And when God made a creation, God stepped back and God said, “*It is good, it is good.*” God made everything good. Now, what this good God did, however, is to make man perfect. And when this good God made man perfect, He gave man a gift, and that was the gift of choice. He made man perfect and perfectly free.

Now, don't forget this. You see, because if you don't, you're going to get a faulty syllogism. Here's the faulty syllogism: "God is the author of all things. Evil, pain, and suffering is 'something,' so God is the author of evil, suffering, and pain." You see, that's what some people think, "God made everything. Evil is something. Then God created evil." So we have a problem. It's another problem. But that's not the way the syllogism works. That's not the argument. Here's the argument: God made everything and He made it perfect. When God finished, God rested. God said, "It is good." He made man. He made man perfect, but He made man perfectly free. That is, He gave man a choice.

Why did God give to man a choice? Because God wanted something from man that is unique, special, wonderful, and glorious. He wants man's love. He wants you to love Him. That's the highest good, to love God and to love one another, for God is love.

Now, why didn't God just force us to love Him? Well, forced love is a contradiction in terms. There's no such thing as forced love. Love has to choose. Now in order for the lover to choose to love, he has to be able to choose not to love, or else it's forced love and it's not love at all. So what is the highest good? It is love. Man, therefore, must be perfectly free to choose to love God. But in order to have the ability to choose to love God, he has to have the ability to choose not to love God, or he has no choice at all. And not to love God is evil. The greatest commandment is to love God with all of your being, so, therefore, the greatest sin would be not to love God.

Now, Adam and Eve chose to sin because they were perfect and perfectly free, and when they did, this world that we live in fell into the bondage of corruption. We live in a sin-sick world. The Bible calls it the bondage of corruption. And corruption, like a virus, has corrupted the entire world, and as we're going to see in a moment, we're on board. We're part of it. Well, somebody says, "Well, okay, if Adam and Eve sinned, why didn't God just step in and God stop it? Why doesn't God just kill the devil and why doesn't God destroy evil?"

It would not be good for God to just step in and destroy evil. If God were to step in and destroy evil, God would be destroying freedom. If God destroyed freedom, God would destroy the opportunity to love. If God destroyed the opportunity to love, God would destroy the highest good. So God does not destroy evil. Now, listen, the key point: God defeats evil, and there is a big difference.

The second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, came to this earth to undo what the first Adam did, and on the cross He defeats evil with His death.

Now what is this bondage of corruption that we read about in verses 21 and 22? You think about it. All of God's creation fell. For example, when Adam and Eve sinned, **there came a curse on the animal kingdom**. Put in your margin Genesis 3:14, "*And the Lord God said unto the serpent, 'Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field.'*" Now, the serpent was

cursed above the others, but all of the others were cursed. There is a curse on the animal kingdom. And what the evolutionist calls the law of the survival of the fittest, tooth and claw and fang and blood, all that is, is creation groaning under the curse.

There's also a curse on the mineral kingdom, Genesis 3 verse 17. God said, "*Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.*" Have you ever tried to grow a garden? It's not easy. To grow weeds is easy. There's a curse on the mineral kingdom. "*Cursed is the ground.*"

There's a curse on the vegetable kingdom, Genesis 3, verse 18, "*Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee.*" It's easier to grow weeds, as I've said, than it is to grow tomatoes. Tomatoes, they're not grown naturally and normally. They have to be cultivated. They have to be planted. Weeds, they'll just come up.

There's a curse on the human kingdom. Man was meant to have dominion. Genesis 1, verse 26, God said concerning Adam and Eve, "*Let them have dominion.*" But look around at the people that you go to work with, that you go to school with, that you're in a club with, your neighbors and yourself. Look in the mirror. Man today is morally depraved. His imagination is a garden of weeds. Not since Manhattan Island was sold for \$24 has so much dirt been sold so cheaply today.

Man's mind is morally depraved. Man is emotionally deprived, emotionally disturbed. In Genesis 3:10, Adam's first words after he'd sinned were these, "*I was afraid.*" God put him in a perfect garden, gave him everything he needed, and now he says, "*I was afraid.*"

Man is spiritually diseased. The Bible says in Romans 5 verse 12, "*Therefore, as by one man sin entered in to the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*" Every now and then we say somebody has a terminal disease. Look up here. I want everybody in this auditorium just to lift your hand, everybody. Just lift your hand. All right, everybody with your hand up, you've got a terminal disease. You've got a terminal disease. You are dying! "*Death passed upon all men.*" We all have a polluted gene pool. And being saved does not make you immune. Look if you will in verse 22 and 23, it says, "*And we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*" Now watch this. If you don't watch it you might get discouraged. "*And not only they, but ourselves also,*" not just the pagans, "*but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.*" Our bodies are not yet redeemed. Because our bodies are not yet redeemed, we're not free from pain and suffering. So the point, very, very simple, is yesterday's curse brings bondage. When Adam sinned, he brought all of creation down with him, and we're not immune. This world has a viral infection.

Now here's the second thing I want to lay on your heart. Yesterday's curse brings bondage. **Tomorrow's conquest brings liberty**. Now notice there's going to be a bright tomorrow, "*Because the creature,*" verse 21, "*Because the creature itself*

also shall be delivered, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they," that is, all of the creatures and all of the pagans, "but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies." What does he mean, "the adoption?" Well, a child who is adopted into a rich family, he doesn't get the load until he reaches maturity. I mean, you don't give a child of a wealthy king millions and billions of dollars to spend until he's under a caretaker, till he's old enough. That's what he's talking about now. Tomorrow's conquests bring liberty.

Now all of creation is moaning and groaning and sighing in grief and distress, and really, the ecologists, and I'm pretty much of an ecologist. I believe in ecology. I like clean air and pure water and nice trees, and I believe in being kind to animals. But you can do all you want to do with ecology, but, friend, you're not going to change it. If you think you're going to change it or retrieve it through ecology, you ought to get you a job rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic. The golden age is going to come tomorrow. It is tomorrow's conquest, not today's energy, that's going to change this old world. This world is going to be changed. I mean, planet Earth is going to be changed. There will be a new birth for planet Earth when Jesus comes again.

For example, **the animal kingdom that we talked about is going to be changed.** Put down Isaiah chapter 11, verses 6 through 9, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow shall eat, and the bear shall feed their young one, and the cow, and the bear shall feed. Their young ones shall lie down together. And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child," that is, the little nursing child, "shall play on the hole of the asp," that's a poisonous snake, "and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," I love this verse, "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as waters that cover the sea." When the beasts of the wild shall be led by a child, there shall be peace in the valley for me.

Not only will the animal kingdom be changed, **the mineral kingdom shall be changed.** Put down Isaiah 35 verse 1, "And the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." The Sahara Desert will be like the Garden of Eden.

And the vegetable kingdom is going to be changed. Isaiah 55 verse 13, "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name and for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." That's going to be wonderful.

And the human kingdom is going to be changed. Look if you will in verse 23 now, Romans 8:23, *“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.”* My body is not yet redeemed. I am saved. I’m Heaven-born and Heaven-bound, but I am waiting for the redemption of the body, and so are you. But, friend, our bodies are going to be redeemed, and when we go to Heaven, we’re not going to be towed in by a wrecking crew. We’re going to have a redeemed body.

What’s our body going to be like? It’s going to be like His glorious body. Paul knew that. Go back to Romans 8 verse 18 and you can understand this. Look at it, *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* Why such glory in us? Because He’s going to change our vile body like unto His glorious body. Paul said, “You can’t even compare the glory that we will receive with the suffering that we now know.” He’s going to turn every tear to a pearl, every hurt to a hallelujah, and every defeat into a victory, and every Calvary into an Easter when Jesus comes. That, my friend, is tomorrow’s conquest that brings freedom. First of all, there’s bondage. Then there is liberty, freedom. Now what is the bridge between these two? That’s where we’re living right now.

And so, here’s the third and final thing. It is **today’s comfort that brings hope.** Now, if you miss this, I feel sorry for you. Look if you will in verse 24 of Romans 8, *“For we are saved,”* and the word saved means delivered, *“by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?”* Hope is something that you don’t have in your hand but you know is yours. And, therefore, when we have this hope, we understand that the groans that we endure are temporary. I want to show you something in this passage if you have your Bible open in front of you. I want you to see three times he uses the word groan.

First of all, there’s **the groaning of creation.** Look in verse 22, *“For we know the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”* Everything has decay and, everything is winding down. Everything is decaying. It’s coming apart. All right. And so all of creation groans. Even if you hear the wind blowing through the trees it seems to be in a minor key.

Now, there’s the groaning of creation. And then there’s **the groaning of the Christian.** Notice verse 23, *“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”* I’ve been to the hospital so many times. I’ve seen the precious saints of God writhing in pain, groaning. They’d not sinned. Well, all have sinned, but they’re not there because of their personal sin, because some clenched fist in the face of God. Some of God’s choicest of saints have suffered. We’ve all known them, have we not? And yet they groan.

There's the groaning of creation. There's the groaning of the Christian. Thirdly, friend, there's **the groaning of the Comforter**. Look if you will here in verses 26 and following, "*Likewise, the Spirit,*" talking about the Holy Spirit, "*also helpeth our infirmities,*" that is, we have infirmities, "*for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*" Thank God there's one in the glory who groans. We serve a God with tears in His eyes. We serve a God who loves us, who cares, who said, "*Cast all your care upon Me, for I care for you.*" First Peter chapter 5 verse 7. And there's the groaning of creation, and groaning of the Christian, and the groaning of the Comforter, the Spirit. Why did I say Comforter? He's called the Paraclete. That means one who's called alongside of us. You don't have to bear this alone.

Now, listen to me. The suffering that we know is temporary. All of the suffering you'll ever know is this side of the grave. By the way, if you're unsaved, all of the joy you'll ever know is this side of the grave. The suffering, the groans we endure are temporary. The glory that we have is eternal. Now, very quickly, friend, **we are prepared for glory**. Look in verse 16, "*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we're children of God.*" When pain comes, when suffering comes, when sorrow comes, let the Holy Spirit of God within you bear witness with your spirit that you belong to God. Now, if you don't know you belong to God, friend, you're going to suffer anyway, saved or lost. Man that is born of woman is full of trouble. But, there is this; that we are prepared for glory.

And then **we're predestined for glory**. Look in verse 28 on through verse 30, "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.*"

Wait a minute, Paul. You're supposed to say, "Them He will glorify." No, that's not what it says. "*And He glorified.*" He talks about us being in glory in the past tense. It's as good as done. And what has been settled in Heaven can never be annulled in time or by Hell.

We are prepared for glory. **We are preserved for glory**. And, friend, I want you to know that we can never be separated from our Lord. No fault can condemn us. Look if you will in verses 33 and 34. If you're suffering, let me give you some hope here. Romans chapter 8 verses 33, "*And who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth? Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*"

Friend, I have a dear, loving Savior who's praying for me right now as I'm preaching this sermon. We are prepared for glory. We are predestined for glory. We

are preserved for glory. No fault can condemn us. No foe can conquer us. And no fear need control us.

I must go to the end, so I'm going to pass some material, but look at two of my favorite verses in all of the Bible. And, by the way, if you'd like a free, all-paid, all-expense paid trip to the place of your desire, whatever resort you want to go to, I'll fly you there first class, take care of all of your meals, bring you back home, you stay as long as you like, if you can find anything that Paul left out of this statement here. Now listen to it. He's talking about the God who has not only prepared us and predestined us, but has preserved us for glory. Listen to it, Romans 8 verses 38 and 39, "*For I am persuaded.*" Now here's the way to get your vacation, so listen carefully. "*For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life.*" Anything happens to you what; after you die or while you're living, you already lost your vacation. "*Nor angels.*" What kind of angels? Good angels, bad angels, fallen angels? "*Nor angels, nor principalities.*" That means kingdoms. What kind of kingdoms? Just principalities: earthly kingdoms, Heavenly kingdoms. "*Nor powers.*" That means authorities, governmental authority, military authority, ecclesiastical authority. "*Nor things present.*" Anything that's in the world today. "*Nor things to come.*" Anything that may ever come. Anything that may be created in the future. "*Nor height.*" That means anything in Heaven above. "*Nor depth.*" Anything in Hell beneath. And in case he left anything out, "*Nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.*" Amen! Hallelujah! Praise God! Nothing!

So Paul is sitting there. Paul knew suffering. He knew what it was to have the lash laid on his back. He knew what it was too fast. He knew what it was to be pickled in the Mediterranean when he was shipwrecked. He knew what it was to languish in prison. He knew what it was to need food and water and clothing. But Paul says in Romans 8:18, "*I've been doing some figuring and I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not even worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us.*"

Now, folks, you listen to me. You have a choice. God gave you a choice like He gave Adam a choice. And there's no reason that you should be in Hell when all this is going on. There's no reason you should miss it, because Jesus Christ suffered and bled and died for you and the last Adam, Jesus, has undone what the first Adam did in the Garden of Eden. I'd rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel to have what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bow your heads in prayer. Now, if you're not sure that you're saved, this is your time to get saved, and I want you, I want to lead you and guide you in prayer. Right now you can pray and ask Christ into your heart. Would you pray this prayer if you're not certain that you're saved and you want to know for certain, I promise you on the authority of the Word of God that God will save you today where you are in your seat right now. I'm not asking you to become a Baptist or a Methodist or a Presbyterian or Episcopalian. I'm not asking you give anything or buy anything.

I'm asking you right now to receive someone whose name is Jesus. I take it back. I am asking you to give something. I'm asking you to give yourself to Him.

Would you pray this prayer? "Lord Jesus, thank You that You shed Your blood on the cross for me. Thank You that You paid my sin debt with Your blood. Thank You that You have prepared me for glory. You have predestined me for glory. You are preserving me for glory when I trust You. I do trust You. Come into my heart, come in right now. Wash away my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, and take control of my life and begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, thank You for saving me. I don't look for a sign. I don't ask for a feeling. I just stand on Your Word. You promised and You cannot lie. So by faith now I want to confess that You're my Lord and Savior. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make it public. Help me not to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."