

## Lesson 20: Secure Hope IIa

### Romans 8:18-27

<sup>18</sup> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

(1) <sup>19</sup> For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation **groans** and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

(2) <sup>23</sup> And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves **groan** within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. <sup>24</sup> For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

(3) <sup>26</sup> In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with **groanings** too deep for words; <sup>27</sup> and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.

NASB

### Introduction

“Why?” is the question of human suffering. “Why are you making me go through this Lord? Why did you let this happen? Why me? Why us? Why now? Why don’t you do something God? Why? Why?”

That’s what I wanted to know when Brenda suffered through a miscarriage before the births of our daughters. Why did you let this little one die Lord? Why allow life to begin and then end so quickly?

I learned a few things through that period of suffering. I learned that we had a lot of support from our Christian community. From our church, our staff team, from our friends and ministry supporters. I also learned that Christians can be really bad at writing sympathy cards. The intention of the cards was loving, but the words so often missed the mark of comfort. A common comment we received was, “Trust God. He will bless you with children.” It is a positive sentiment. Maybe even true. But we were not sad because we thought we might not have children. We were sad because a child had died. I saw in the notes a tendency of Christians to explain away the suffering, to give answers, to teach. “It’s God’s plan.”

“Well, I know it’s God’s plan because everything is God’s plan, but that does not do anything to address the heaviness in the center of my stomach.”

I was learning that I really did not want an answer to the question, “Why?” I wanted empathy. I wanted people to give me a sign that they saw my sadness, that they cared I was hurting, and that it is okay to grieve. Paul says in Romans 12, “Mourn with those who mourn.” That’s what I wanted.

That’s not to say we should not give some thought to the why of human suffering. We most definitely should. As Christians we badly need to develop our theology of suffering. As we do, we need to develop both our understanding of the intellectual questions of suffering and the emotional experience of suffering. Both are necessary for a biblical understanding of suffering.

C. S. Lewis addresses the intellectual and emotive aspects of suffering and pain in two very different books. In 1940, during World War II, C. S. Lewis wrote an intellectual answer to the question, “If God is all loving and all powerful, why does he allow so much suffering and evil?” That book is titled, *The Problem of Pain*. I highly recommend the book, though I recommend it be read while you are not going through grief. The intellectual answers to the “Why?” help much more when we have wrestled with the issues during a more neutral or objective period in our lives. Years after publishing *The Problem of Pain*, C. S. Lewis married American writer Joy Davidman. They came together later in life, Lewis being in his 50s and she in her 40s. After 4 years of marriage, Joy died of cancer. A year later, C. S. Lewis released a book called *A Grief Observed*, describing his journey through grief. *A Grief*



*Observed* provide one Christian man's reflection on the experience of his pain. I also recommend that book. It's a very different book. The first addresses the intellectual issues of suffering. The second addresses the emotional experience of suffering. We want to see both through God's eyes.

In Romans 8:18-27 Paul addresses both intellectual and emotive realities of suffering to help us understand that life in the Spirit does not mean life free from pain. We will start with two foundational issues in verse 18 and then address the three groanings that follow. I am going to pick up back in verse 16 from our last lesson to get the full context.

### **Two foundational truths of Christians suffering**

[Read Romans 8:16-18]

*(1) Christians suffer (18)*

We start with this truth. To be united with Jesus Christ is to share in the suffering of Jesus Christ. Coming to Christ is not a means of escape from the pain of this broken world. God's plan for us does not include blanket protection from wasting disease, from the abuse of sinful people, from the pain and death of our children or from the consequences of our own sin. When Jesus Christ entered into this world, he made himself vulnerable to sickness, to injury, to abuse, and death. God does not save us out of these things. To serve as a witness for Christ, God has decreed that we will live in the same world as those to whom we would witness.

We do experience protection from pain in our relationship with God. Living righteously according to the wisdom of Scripture protects us from a lot of bad decisions and the consequences of sin. Living in the community of believers adds to that protection. And God does at times answer our prayers for safety and help. But at times he does not. And we are promised this here. Suffering is part of the plan.

If God's plan was to answer our prayers of deliverance every time we suffered, Paul would never have written that we rejoice in our tribulations. He would have written that we rejoice that God keeps us from experiencing tribulation. Of course, we should pray like Jesus prayed, "Take this cup from me." But we must not be surprised that sometimes God will decide not to take away the cup of suffering. And then we again pray like Jesus, "Not my will, but your will be done." Sometimes that will, that plan, is for us to suffer. Why? Maybe to wake us up. Maybe to provide for us the growth that could not come otherwise. Maybe to enable us to serve others who hurt and be witnesses in a broken world.

In September of 2017 Hurricane Harvey unloaded 27 trillion gallons of water on Texas and Louisiana, destroying 40,000 homes, mostly in the Houston area. Days after the hurricane, in his September 11 podcast of *The Briefing*, Albert Mohler reported on an article in the New York Times by a reporter astonished by the Christian response. This is from Albert Mohler:

Kevin Sack reports from Wharton County, Texas; He tells us about Jeff Klimple, "head bowed and eyes clinched, [who] had locked his meaty mechanic's hand into the trembly, creased fingers of his 80-year-old mother, Angie. She, in turn," we are told, "held the right hand of her 24-year-old granddaughter, Natalie."

Natalie is holding hands with someone else, and they are engaged in prayer. Why? Because Mrs. Klimple was amongst those whose homes had suffered a great deal of damage in the floods associated with Hurricane Harvey. And those with whom she was praying are those who, in the name of Christ, had gathered to help this woman not only because they were members of her family or members of her community, but because just in the name of Christ they cared. As Sack tells us,

"In all, there were 17 Texans linked in a ring on Angie Klimple's front yard last Saturday afternoon, a circle of prayer broken only by the hay wagon that would soon carry away the putrid, sodden remnants of 50 years of her life."



Kevin Sack writes about an army of Christian volunteers, not only from Texas, but from elsewhere in the United States, who'd gone to the aid of those in Texas who suffered from Hurricane Harvey, and that same army — not necessarily the same people but driven by the same urgency — will be soon streaming into Florida as well.

Sack goes back to Mr. Klimple's prayer as he prayed, "I thank you, Lord, for the things that you've given us, the grace and mercy that [we've taken] for granted."

Then Sack writes, "Since the days of the Bible, all manner of natural disasters — floods and earthquakes, pestilence and famine — have tested the devotion of the faithful and provoked the most fundamental theological questions. Is God benevolent or retributive or both? Why is there so much human suffering and why does it afflict the righteous as well as the unrighteous? Does everything," he writes, "in fact happen for a reason, and if so what divine purpose could there possibly be in leaving an old widow like Mrs. Klimple homeless?"

Speaking to those who were helping her in the wake of the disaster, Mrs. Klimple said, "We'll be all right with the help of the Lord."

Mrs. Klimple's own Christian worldview was evident when she also said, "When I first saw it all, it upset me," speaking of the destruction of her home. She said "But then I thought, you know, I needed to clean the house anyway. Too bad I just dusted everything."

According to Sack, "She nodded at a new set of volunteers who were prying out drywall and disinfecting the house with bleach. They were what mattered. 'When I saw the crew that came in, all those wonderful people and friends, I was just so thankful. ... 'I feel like the Lord's trying to bring people together. He wants us to be nicer to each other.'"

Clearly, the 80-year-old widow at the center of this story situates her own story within the Christian story, and in this Mrs. Klimple was not alone. As a matter of fact, the story in the *New York Times* expresses quite genuine amazement at so many people in Texas who had indicated that their faith was not only not shaken by the hurricane but was actually deepened.

As Sack writes, "Many of those in the prayer circle allowed themselves to wonder, but not for long. There was too much to do. And nothing that had happened, not the deaths or destruction of homes or loss of crops and livestock, had shaken their faith. In fact," he writes, "to a person, they said the flood and its aftermath had strengthened it."

(<https://albertmohler.com/2017/09/11/briefing-09-11-17/>)

When we accept our suffering as part of God's story, the Spirit works through the suffering to deepen our faith and witness to the world. Foundational truth number one is that Christians suffer.

*(2) Christians hope in the glory of God (18)*

Romans 8:18 gives us a second foundational truth for our theology of suffering. Christians hope in the glory of God. That is, we have deep conviction that God's glorious wisdom and power and love will be revealed one day in a new world, in justice achieved, in all things made right. And we believe that we will be drawn up into and included in his glorious resolution of all things.

Paul says, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." When Paul says this, he is not speaking from an ivory tower. Paul has suffered. He knows what it is to be ostracized from his community, rejected, threatened, beaten, imprisoned. He knows what it is to be hungry and go without; to be cold and miserable. And when Paul reflects on these sufferings, when he considers the truth about them, he does not consider them to compare with what he expects to follow after.

We are on a road to something unbelievable. We are going to be drawn up into the glorious resolution of everything. The glory of God is the fame of his good name. We participate in his fame when He says, "These are my children whom I adore. These are my children, see how they resemble me!" The glory of God is also the light of his magnificent character. He alone shines in unwavering



justice and self-sacrificing love. And he will make all things right. He will love us unconditionally and eternally. He is drawing us further up and further into his character, into his glory.

Paul's conviction that our suffering does not compare to the glory to be revealed does not at all require that we make light of human suffering. He does not downplay our suffering. He holds that suffering up before the glory to come, and the light of that glory dispels the darkness of our pain and trials. In one sense this all that need to be said, "Evil will be swallowed up, every tear wiped away, so persevere and rejoice."

Yet, this is not all that God has to say on the matter. After reckoning that our sufferings do not compare to the glory yet revealed, Paul goes on to describe the groaning of our present reality.

There are three groanings. The first is in 8:19-22.

### **The Three Groanings of Romans 8**

#### *(1) The Groaning of Creation (19-22)*

[Read Romans 8:19-22]

"The creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now." Paul does not see the creation as possessing soul and mind and emotion. He personifies the creation to emphasize the brokenness of our world. Paul is teaching us here that the plight of the physical realm mirrors the plight of mankind. Back in the beginning Genesis 1 tells the story of God creating an environment and then populating that environment. God orders his work on each day in a parallel way to reveal this theme. On day one God calls forth light. Then on day 3 he populates the realm of light with the sun and stars. On day two God separates the waters above and the waters below, creating the environments of sky and sea. On day four he populates the sky with birds and the sea with fish. On day three God separates earth from water creating the environment of land. On day six he populates that environment with all kinds of animals. Then taking the environment as a whole, light, sky, waters and earth with all the creatures filling them, God creates man and woman to represent him, to be his image as the rulers of creation. And as the preeminent display of God's glory, man and woman take their place over a kingdom created especially for them.

Now, when Adam and Eve sinned, God decreed that the environment he created would fall into corruption along with its king and queen. God did this in his wisdom. I suppose one of the reasons he did so was to constantly remind man of his need for salvation. Mankind already resists the idea of his need for a savior. The brokenness of our world continually prods us into looking outside of ourselves for help. God knew that a perfect environment would be no aid in helping man escape his own corruption. Paul writes of God's decision that, "the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it." God not only removed his Spirit from man. He removed his hand from the creation. Our world is not what it was meant to be. It suffers under "slavery to corruption." As mankind is corrupted, so too the creation. As broken people, we live in a broken world.

And we know it is broken. Everyone knows something is wrong. Cancers eats away the body. Viruses mutate and spread. Mudslides wipe out whole villages. Children die senselessly. Tornadoes and earthquakes and hurricanes rip up the land. Animals render and tear. There is a "not rightness" about the place in which we live. It is as though the very creation itself "groans as if in the pains of childbirth."

#### *(2) The Groaning of we who have first fruits (23-25)*

[Read Romans 8:23-25]

So, just as the creation groans, we who have the first fruits of the spirit, that is, we who are truly born again in Jesus. We groan. Paul does not expect that we would just paint on a happy face. He does not expect that our union with Christ means we will always live in joy and peace. He knows that we are going to groan. We groan at the brokenness of our world and the pain that brokenness brings. We groan at the pain that comes from the human evil that surrounds us; we groan at hunger,



sickness, injustice, oppression, loneliness, depression rejection, violence, rape. We read the news. We consider society. We look at families. And we groan. Not only this, it is not only the world on the outside of us that causes us to groan, we groan because of our own inner world. We groan because of the woundedness of our soul and the images in our minds. We groan because our own sin and depression and loneliness and woundedness. We who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we groan.

Paul's vision of grace so far has built up expectation for those of us who have been transferred. We have been transferred from the realm of Adam, flesh, sin and death to the realm of Jesus, Spirit, obedience and life. And most of Paul's language of grace points towards victory over sin and transformation in this life. We are in the Spirit and have our minds set on the things of God. His resurrection power is in us. His Spirit calls out with our spirit, "Abba, Father!" We are children of the king and citizens of a new realm. It is victorious. It is transformational. It is wonderful.

And yet here, in this passage of Scripture, Paul teaches us here to acknowledge the tension of our reality. We are already and also not yet. Our transformation is not complete. We are called to engage in the struggle of becoming. We may have been transformed from worms to caterpillars. But we are not yet butterflies. The outcome is guaranteed. We are going to get there. But right now, we are still caterpillars struggling in our cocoons, hoping one day to fly. Our full glory is not yet revealed. In the cocoon of this present life, we still struggle as we participate in our becoming of what we've been created to be.

So, when we look at the text, we notice Paul's already/not yet language. He can both say in 8:24 that "we have been saved," and back in 5:9, "we shall be saved." Or in 8:15, "you have received a spirit of adoption," and in 8:23 we are, "waiting eagerly our adoption." In 3:24 we are justified by the "redemption of Christ," and in 8:23 we wait, "the redemption of our bodies." Certain things are already true about us. We are declared righteous. Already true. And we are united with Christ. Already true. These present realities guarantee for us things to come. We have a secure hope in what will be. But the things to come are not yet, leaving us in a state of tension. Using the language of adoption, it is as though the papers have been signed. The legal work is done. You are adopted, stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit as a guarantee. But we have not yet been brought to our true home. Our adoption has not yet been fully completed. With the language of redemption, we have been bought by Christ, redeemed by his death on the cross, but we have not yet experienced the redemption of our body. This is a great cause of groaning. The sinful habits of our mind and heart continue to plague us in the weakness of our current flesh. One of our greatest hopes is the flinging off of this inglorious body to be dressed in a new and glorious home, without the desire of sin.

We do not wish for these things to be true. Wishing is too weak a word. We hope. Not hope in the sense of wishing. We hope with a sense of conviction. We hope with an assurance that comes from the spiritual sight of faith. We know what we hope for. We have not yet seen it, but we know it to be true. And this secure hope we have gives us strength to persevere as Paul says, "with eagerness." WE have a readiness to get this groaning over with, to leave this broken world behind, to leave this broken body for the glory that waits for us!

*(3) The Groaning of the Spirit*

[Read Romans 8:25-27]

The creation groans because it is broken. We who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan because we are broken. The Spirit groans because he is broken. No, that's not right. The Spirit is not broken. The creation's broken. We're broken. The Spirit's not broken. So, why does he groan? Why does the Spirit groan?

Once when I asked this question a student responded, "The Spirit groans because he is grieved by our sin?" That threw me off, because that is not what I think is going on here. I thought about it. Paul does admonish the Ephesians in 4:30 to not grieve the Holy Spirit. So, it is possible to imagine the Spirit groaning because of our sin. But that is not what is happening here. The context here is pain and suffering in our already/not yet. Some of that suffering is from within and some from without.



The pain we feel moves us to pray. But sometimes we don't even know how to pray rightly about our pain. We just are groaning and calling out. We don't even know what to say. It's just emotion. And so, the Holy Spirit of God picks up the prayer for us, not just in words, but he picks it up with emotion comparable to our own, in a groaning too deep for words he intercedes for us to the Father.

This is empathy. The Spirit of God feels what we feel and groans with us in our pain. This is truly incredible. If anybody has the right to say, "Get up and shake it off," it would be God. God sees the whole broad perspective. He sees the joy set before us. He sees the eternity of heaven. And I can imagine God saying, "It's just cancer. Death is entry into true life. What are you worried about?" Or, "It's only 70 years. I know you have chronic pain. I get that. But it's only 70 years. That's nothing compared to eternal life. Your suffering is light. It's passing compared with the glory to come. Maybe you are lonely, maybe you're lost, maybe you're sad. Have you not read that 'to live is Christ and to die is gain?' You are going to come home and never be lonely again, never be sad again, never be lost. So, get up. Shake it off. Keep going. Act like a Christian. Believe." If anybody could say that, God could say that. And he would be right. And he would be just. But he doesn't. Not here. He doesn't say that. He sees the whole picture, and he doesn't just brush away the pain of our present. We groan. And so, he enters into our groaning with us. He does what he tells us to do. He mourns with those who mourn.

That makes me think of a 10 year old boy who comes home in tears because the love of his life has just broken up with him, through a text. And it's hard not to smile as he is so overcome. It's hard not to say, "Don't worry. There will be plenty more loves." You know he will be over it in a day or a week. You could say those things. "Shake it off. You'll get over with it. Here, have a snack." Or you could, for the moment, enter into his pain with him. You could recognize his sense of rejection. His disappointment. His loss. You could say, "I am really sorry, champ." And give him a hug.

That's what's happening here. In our context of weakness and brokenness and physical limitation, God hears our groaning, and even though he sees the big picture and knows it's momentary and light in comparison, he chooses to groan with us in our pain. And it is not merely a pretend groaning. The Spirit who groans with us is the Spirit of God, one with Jesus as Jesus lived this life on the earth and as Jesus went to the cross. He knows what it is to be rejected. He knows what it is to have one of his closest friends betray him. He knows what it is to have everyone run away and leave him alone. He knows what it is like to be spit on, to be beaten, to be laughed at, to be abandoned, to be whipped, to be crucified. He knows what it is like to die. He even knows in some mysterious way what it feels like to be abandoned by God, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." So, when he groans with us, his groans are real. He understands, and he enters into our pain. And if the Spirit of God is willing to enter into our groaning, then he is telling us that it is okay to groan. Yes, the fruit of the Spirit is joy. And yes, the fruit of the Spirit is peace. But those do not exclude the rightness of groaning when the pain of the world overwhelms or when the pain inside rises up. We might take a lesson from the book of Psalms. How many of our songs on a given Sunday lament the pain we feel? How many Psalms in the Old Testament song book were laments? Over 70. Almost half of the 150 Psalms are cries of the heart. We need a place as Christians. Even in the newness of the glory of grace to groan, to cry out, to express our sorrow, to hurt.

## **Conclusion**

*Who? not Why?*

I began this lesson with the question of the sufferer, "Why Lord?" There is a place for the question "Why?" in suffering. However, making "Why?" the central question of suffering can drive a person away from God towards despair and bitterness. The "Why?" becomes a wedge hammered into our soul, prying us away from God.

To walk through suffering as a Christian, we do not need to be able to answer the "Why" question. We don't need to know why. But we do need to be able to answer the "Who" question. "Who is my God?" These are some things I know about my God. Do you know this about your God? Can you say



this? My God is good. My God is in control. My God sees me. My God loves me. My God has a plan for me. My God has suffered for me. My God is with me. And my God groans in compassionate empathy even as I groan.

Paul began his consideration of suffering in chapter 5. He wrote there in verse 3-4, “We exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope.” And if we just focusing on the progression that has benefit. It calls us to a positive kind of Christian grit. We will face our tribulations because the hard times give us a chance to persevere. And we want opportunities to persevere because that is how our character is tested and strengthened, proven. And when we see the strength of our character in Christ, our hope is affirmed in us. It’s affirmed in us. We need that kind of grit. But what motivates us to continue through life. Is not just our self-development. It may work sometimes that we have this vision that if we just stick it out we’ll become stronger. But there is a deeper motive here, a more important motive, a more lasting motive.

Before the progression Paul says, “We will exult in our tribulations.” That’s a word for rejoice and to boast. After the text he says that hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts. See, we are motivated by the “Who.” Our exultation, our rejoicing, comes because we have seen God, and we know God, and we love him. The process of our suffering is bearable because we are walking with him and for him and we are going to go home to be with him. It’s our love for him that does not disappoint our hope. It’s our sense of relationship with God that motivates us. It’s the who that is in our suffering. Paul reaffirms these truths in chapter 8. He reaffirms that we will suffer, first of all. The process of tribulation is a guaranteed component of the Christian life. He also reaffirms that our hope does not disappoint, because we have a vision of the glory of God to be revealed. We are not disappointed. We have a solid, attractive, desirable hope. We know we are going home. But then he adds in here, not only does the love of God work in our hearts to sustain us, but the Spirit adds his groans to ours. He is with us in our grief and he mourns even as we mourn.

Because we have entered into relationship with God, and we know who he is, we can accept that this process of suffering is part of the plan. We affirm in our hearts the truth of Romans 8:28, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.” The text does not say that God makes all things good for those who love him. Everything’s not made good. It says that in the end he works together all things for the good. We can accept this because we are those who love God. Because of the “Who” in the midst of suffering. We trust his plan even when that plan includes pain.

Let’s end our lesson with the parable of the doughnut from William Barton

*The Doughnut*

Now I entered the Kitchen and would have passed through. But Keturah was there; so, I waited: and she cast many things into a Great Bowl, and she stirred them with a Great Spoon.

And I asked her, saying, “What do you have in the Bowl?”

And she said, “Sugar and Spice, and all that’s nice.”

And she took the Dough out of the Bowl, and she rolled it with a Rolling-Pin; and she cut it into round cakes. And in the middle of every cake was there an Hole. And a great iron pot hung above the Fire, and there was Fat in the pot and it boiled furiously.

And Keturah took the round Cakes of Dough and cast them in to the Iron Pot; and she poked them with a Fork, and she turned them, and when they came out, the smell of them was inviting, and the appearance of them was exceeding good. And Keturah gave me one of the Doughnuts, and Believe Me, they were Some Doughnuts.

And I said, “What is the purpose is the Hole? If the Doughnut be so good with a part Punched Out, how much better if the Hole also had been Doughnut?” And Keturah answered and said, “You Speak as a Foolish Man, who is never content with the goodness that is, but always



complains against God for the lack of what is not. If there were no Hole in the Doughnut, then though the Cake were Fried till the Edges were burnt yet would there be uncooked Dough in the middle. You would then break your teeth on the outer rim of every Doughnut, and the middle part would be Raw Dough.”

And I meditated much on what Keturah had told me. And I considered the Empty Spaces in Human life; and the loneliness of its Vacancies; and how men’s hearts break over its sorrows. And I pondered in my soul whether God doth not use these so that lives would not be brittle and unformed.

And I spoke of these things to Keturah, and she said, “My lord, I know not the secret of these mysteries. Yes, my own heart aches over some of the Empty Places. But he who does not use the good things which he has but complains against his God for what he lacks, is like a man who rejects a Doughnut because he does not know the Mystery of the hole.”

~from *Parables of a Country Parson*, William Barton.

### Reflection Questions

1. What stands out to you as important, confusing, interesting or strange in verses 19-21?
2. Christians live in the tension between what is already true and what is not yet true. Thinking back over Romans and considering verses 23-25, what are some things that are already true of you in Christ and some things that are not yet true?
3. How does the tension of what is already/not yet contribute to the struggle and groaning of being a Christian?
4. What is the connection between the glory of verse 18 and the hope of verse 24? What do you notice about hope in this passage?
5. What stands out to you in verses 26-27 regarding the groaning of the Spirit? Why is the groaning of the Spirit significant?
6. Why is the “Who?” question more important than the “Why?” question during periods of pain and suffering? What has been your experience?