

David Wells: *What, then, is the nature of petitionary prayer? It is, in essence, rebellion—rebellion against the world in its fallenness, the absolute and undying refusal to accept as normal what is pervasively abnormal.*

God Remembers
What the Story of Christmas Teaches Us about Adversity
Jerry Cisar — December 14, 2014

Text: Romans 8:18-23

Introduction: Adversity: the Cause of Our Groaning

A. Subjected to Frustration and Enslaved to Decay

Frame: *“[Natural evil] includes anything that brings suffering, unpleasantness, or difficulty into the lives of creatures. Earthquakes, floods, diseases, injuries, and death are examples of natural evil. Moral evil is the sin of rational creations (angels and men).”*

LIVE THE STORY

The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community. The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- Read the text from Romans 8:18-23. Are there experiences you've had that this text in some way describes or explains?
- When and how did “the bondage to decay” begin?
- When did God subject the creation to “frustration”? What evidences in the world can you see that confirm this truth? In what sense did God subject the world to frustration “in hope”?
- What can we learn from Joseph's life about the purposes of adversity? ...from Psalm 38?
- Explain the following in light of what Joseph tells his brothers: *“Man intends; God superintends. Satan intends; God superintends.”* (Genesis 45:5-8; 50:19-20)
- Read the texts from Job in which groaning is mentioned (Job 24:12; 30:25-27; 31:38). How do these contribute to our understanding of how either creation or we as believers groan?
- What does Hebrews 2:14-18 tell us about how the incarnation was the means through which Jesus Himself experienced the fallenness of the fallen world?
- How do these truths comfort you? How do they call you to act in the midst of a world that is groaning?

B. Adversity Causes Groaning

- i. Job 24:12
- ii. Job 30:25-27
- iii. Job 31:38

I. The Causes of Adversity

A. What is creation's bondage to decay?

- i. Romans 8:2
- ii. Genesis 2:15-17
- iii. Genesis 3 Adversity entered the world.
 - a) Genesis 3:16-19

b) Adam subjected world to decay through his sin.

B. When and why did God subject creation to this frustration?

i. What is this “*frustration*” or “*futility*” (ESV)?

a) D. Moo: “*the word probably denotes the ‘frustration’ occasioned by creation’s being unable to attain the ends for which it was made.*”

b) This is the Greek word used in the LXX in Ecclesiastes, “*vanity, vanity...*” or, “*fleeting, fleeting.*” Hence, *meaninglessness*.

c) Ecclesiastes uses the same Hebrew word as the name, “*Abel*”.

ii. When and Why?

a) Genesis 3:23-24

b) Genesis 3:15

II. The Purposes of Adversity

A. God's Hope of True Redemption: *Joseph and His dreams*

i. Genesis 30:22

ii. Genesis 37:20-22, 26-27

iii. Joseph was forgotten in prison. (Genesis 40:23)

iv. Joseph was remembered (Genesis 41:9)

B. Now God's purpose in all of this is revealed by Joseph.

i. Genesis 45:5-8

ii. Genesis 50:19-20

a) *Joseph's hardship was intended by his brother to accomplish evil. And it was successful in one sphere, but it was intended by God to accomplish something much bigger—the saving of many lives.*

b) Romans 8:28

iii. God always has redeeming purposes in our suffering.

iv. Sometimes adversity is discipline.

a) Psalm 38:1-10

b) Psalm 38:21-22

III. Christmas and God's Response to Adversity

A. Joseph's Dreams

i. Matthew 1:20

ii. Matthew 2:13, 19-22

B. Jesus experienced the fallenness of the fallen world.

i. Before Jesus could suffer for us—in our place, He had to first suffer with us—in our experience.

ii. Hebrews 2:14-18

C. In Jesus we groan still, but with hope. (Romans 8:23)