

Romans 8, part 2 – Groaning Conquers

We are victorious, even as we groan and wait for better things to come.

For now, we all groan

The present time = all of creation groans with us, waiting for the resurrection.

Rom 8:17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

*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.*

First, Paul is assuring us that though we are called to suffer in this life, we must keep things in an eternal perspective.

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.

How do we suffer in this life as believers?

- At a minimum, we suffer from the curse on creation. Our bodies are dying even as we live. Work is frustrating. Everything decays. Plumbing breaks. Food spoils.
- We suffer because of the sin of others. Evil done to us either incidentally or intentionally. Many have suffered horribly because of the sin of another.

- We suffer persecution. This is minor for us here now, but in many parts of the world, people are being killed for being a Christian.
- I can't give an answer as to why some people suffer more than others. I do know it isn't because God loves some more than others.

2 Cor 4:17 For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

This is something we have to believe by faith. **But for now, we all groan...**

- Creation's groaning is **cosmic** and affects everyone.
- Believers' groaning is the **conscious longing for resurrection and glory**.
- The Spirit's groaning is **divine intercession beyond human speech**.

Creation groans because of the curse of sin:

This is a collective and cosmic groaning.

***Gen 3:17** And to Adam he said, ... cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.*

***Isa 24:5** The earth is defiled by its people; they have transgressed the laws; they have overstepped the decrees and broken the everlasting covenant. 6 **Therefore a curse has consumed the earth**, and its inhabitants must bear the guilt...*

Why? God has a plan of redemption in the works.

*8:20 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**.*

Until when?

19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

We groan, but in hope

*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.*

Why do we groan now? We are subject to the curse on creation which subjected all of us to death. There is no getting out of here alive, except for those who are here when Christ returns. But we groan in hope of **receiving perfect resurrected bodies when Christ returns at the end of this age and death is swallowed up in victory.** It is the groaning of those who have to suffer while we wait for something better.

Php 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

1 Cor 15:51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

This is our great hope!

Finally, God groans with us, and for us.

The last use of this word groaning is special.

*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.*

Is this referring to speaking in tongues as a personal prayer language? No, I don't think so. But I think the same principle applies when we pray in tongues by the Holy Spirit.

*1 Cor 14:14 For if I pray in a tongue, **my spirit prays** but my mind is unfruitful. 15 What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.*

*1 Cor 14:28 But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and **speak to himself and to God.***

When we are groaning internally, and groaning in prayer, the Holy Spirit within us takes those deep things in our hearts brings them up before our Father God praying for us perfectly according to his will.

So as we go through life's difficulties, let this be our first response. To go to God in prayer, with or without words, either with groanings or praying in tongues, knowing that the Holy Spirit of God is there helping us. Praying FOR us with perfect understanding to the Father.

Look Ahead

Did you ever wonder – what is the Holy Spirit praying FOR me? We can't know specifically, but the next few verses give us some understanding of the big picture.

*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**.*

First – We know that God is working all things for our good. Even the hard stuff, the awful stuff will be worked for our good in the end.

What is the condition for this promise? **Called according to his purpose**. All of these promises are for those who are in Christ. If you have surrendered your life to Jesus, that is you. You no longer are a slave to the flesh, you are no longer married to legalism, you belong to Jesus, and the Spirit of God is in you setting your mind on the things of the Spirit.

Second – God has set us a destination. It is for us to be **conformed** to the image of Jesus. Now this doesn't mean we will look like him physically, but our heart, our desires, our way of thinking, our actions, and our character will become more and more like Jesus. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Some of this happens by means of suffering and difficulty. But this is where we walk by faith and not by sight.

Php 2:13 For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

Third – Our final destination includes **Glory**. Let's be honest about things, authentic Christianity is a mixed bag. We have the foretaste of the Holy Spirit and his work in us on this earth. We may see God do even miraculous things in our lives, like a healing or divine provision. But we walk by faith knowing that God has glory in store for us; eternal glory!

2 Cor 4:17 For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

Examples

Last week we talked about Joseph, and how God used a horrible, traumatic experience to bring about a divine deliverance from horrible circumstances. Because Joseph maintained faith that God was working, he kept looking ahead to the future and stayed faithful to God. Today, let's look at Job.

Job was (by his accounting anyway) a righteous and upright man. He was subjected to horrible suffering all at once. His possessions ruined, his children killed, his physical body afflicted. And on a side note, his wife was left there to taunt him in his worship.

In the end, God restores his earthly blessings, double of everything he had lost, including a new family of children (which points to the fact his first family would also be received back in eternity).

But the most significant part of this story is how Job (and us too) got a revelation of the majesty and character of God. Job is written like a 3 act play, and the majority of it has Job and his friends questioning why Job is in the predicament he is in. Job questions why God was being so unjust. Then God shows us to answer.

Job 38:1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

2 "Who is this who obscures My counsel by words without knowledge?

3 Now brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall inform Me.

4 Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.

5 Who fixed its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched a measuring line across it?

6 On what were its foundations set, or who laid its cornerstone, 7 while the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

8 Who enclosed the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, 9 when I made the clouds its garment and thick darkness its blanket,

10 when I fixed its boundaries and set in place its bars and doors, 11 and I declared: 'You may come this far, but no farther; here your proud waves must stop'?

This goes on for a full 4 chapters as God helps Job see how shallow and narrow his understanding truly is. (If you have never read the book of Job before, sit down one

evening and read it. Or listen to it. You could listen to the whole thing in about 3 hours (2 hours if you play it back at 1.5X speed), so basically like a long movie.)

Interestingly enough – God doesn't answer Job's question – why is this happening? But he shows Job that the "why?" question is irrelevant for the God of all wisdom and power.

Quoting Ryan Dykshoorn's favorite verse:

Ps 135:6 The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.

God is FOR us

These verses show us the awesomeness of God, and the power of his sovereign will. This can seem very scary, and make God seem hard and cold and distant. But we must keep the perspective also, that God is FOR us.

*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**.*

When bad things happen in life, and of course they will, this perspective will revolutionize your ability to keep your head and make it through victorious.

God is for us – we are prone to think when things go wrong that God is against us, but that is not the case! We have to walk by faith in this truth – God IS for us.

God desires to graciously give us all things – God did not withhold his very best from you, Jesus! He demonstrated his love by sending him to die in your place. Based on that you can be sure that he wants to give you every good thing.

Jesus IS interceding for us – Jesus is our high priest, in the presence of God, perfectly making our needs known to the Father and actively working on our behalf for our best, to conform us to his image, and to lead us into his glory.

This is the biblical view of suffering as a follower of Jesus.

- **It isn't punishment** (though God may bring correction thru circumstances)
- **It isn't pointless** – God is using our suffering for our good and his glory.
- **It is temporary** – there is much greater glory ahead
- And **we don't go through it alone** – the Holy Spirit is with us.

In between, there is the love of God.

Chapter 8 ends reminding us about the inseparable power of the love of God.

*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.***

Remember this fact – God IS love. He doesn’t just act in love, or have love, or give love, he IS love.

*1 John 4:16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. **God is love**, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*

Love is older than the creation itself. **God didn’t create love as part of the universe, rather love in its purest form created the universe.** We note that the Trinity describes God as having been forever in relationship before he created the world. He didn’t create us to have someone to love, he created us out of an overflow of love. This is very intentionally reflected in how a husband and wife come together in love and new life is generated from that. Again, we remember that we love because God loved us first. And this means EVERYTHING!

I want to take a moment here to thank God for all he’s done.

- He died for me when I was yet his enemy.
- He made the perfect path of salvation that allows a wretch like me to become a child of God.
- He sent his Holy Spirit to earth, to live inside of my heart and bear witness that I am a child of God.
- That Holy Spirit groans with me, interceding on my behalf.
- God is with me. God is for me. He desires to conform me to become like Jesus.
- God’s love will never leave.
- My destination is glorious.