

ROMANS – LIVING BY FAITH
THE CHILDREN OF GOD & THE SPIRIT OF GOD – Chapter 8

LESSON 27 – GROANING AND GLORY – Romans 8:17-27

Many people are familiar with only one type of groaning... their own at the end of a hard day of work. Groaning is actually much deeper and more spiritual than that. We spent our last lesson talking about suffering that Paul discusses in verses 17-18. Paul tells us that the groanings or sufferings we endure in this life are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in us.

Even though we have to suffer in this life, our future glory is what guides us through our groanings. Paul identifies three specific kinds of groanings here in verses 19-27.

The Groaning of the Creation

The word for groaning that Paul uses three times here in chapter 8 literally means, “to sigh because of an undesired circumstance.”

When Paul talks about the creation in verses 19-22, he is talking about the things God created in Genesis with the exception of mankind...animals, trees, mountains, rivers, plants and so on. Paul describes this part of creation as an audience waiting for the children of God to come into their true glory.

The groaning of creation began with the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. Sin coming into the world affected not only mankind but all of creation and all of this creation groans and labors waiting for the day when it will be delivered from this corrupted world. Jesus Himself talked about this when He spoke of the renewal of all things in Matthew 19:28.

Paul describes the present condition of creation as being frustrated. Creation is frustrated because it is unable to fulfill the purpose for which it was created. Look around at how creation is deteriorating. The harder we try to preserve the creation, the bigger the problems become. This frustration will ultimately come to an end when the new heaven and new earth are in place.

The Groaning of the Christian

Not only does all of creation groan, but Christians groan as well. There are three negative and three positive reasons why Christians groan.

Three Negative Reasons

1. We groan because of the presence of sin in the world. We see not only the effects of sin on our own lives but on the lives of those around us...so we groan. We groan in our spirits because of disappointment and sorrow. We groan physically in our pain and limitations. All of this groaning is a result of sin being present in our world.
2. We groan because of the power of sin in our bodies. In our desire to be holy, we groan because of the intrusion of sin into our lives. Paul talked about the struggle and influence of sin on us back in chapter 7.

Romans 7:24, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?”

3. We groan because of the practice of sin by those around us. This is not an attempt to blame others for our troubles; it is simply a statement of reality. We often suffer innocently because of other people's sin.

Three Positive Reasons

1. We groan because we have been given the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us that the giving of the Holy Spirit to Christians is the first guarantee of our complete salvation that is to come.
2. We groan because we look forward to our adoption being final. While we are God's children now, it is not made fully complete until we are in His presence. We long for the time we will be in His presence forever.
3. We groan because we anticipate the redemption of the body. Our bodies are the center of our physical weakness and the home of our sinful nature. No wonder we groan. We groan knowing that one day these bodies will be redeemed and changed into those glorious and perfect bodies He's promised us.

Philippians 3:20-21, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."

The Groaning of the Comforter

Finally, we see that the Holy Spirit Himself groans but does so on our behalf. When we are under such pressure and feel such pain that we can't express it, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

The Believer's Study Bible says this about the Holy Spirit's groaning...

"The Holy Spirit is present within the Christian to assist in those moments of moral, physical or emotional weakness. Frequently a disciple confronts difficulties so insurmountable that he cannot even approach prayer skillfully. He knows that he must approach God, but he has already said all that he knows to say to God. In those instances, the promise is that the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

For us, as Christians, to survive among the many challenges in this world, we must keep an eternal perspective. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that allows us to do so.

From Groaning to Glory

Even though ultimate glory is a future reality for us, we can experience some of that glory here in this life by practicing three disciplines in the Christian life.

The Priority of Hope

"True Christianity is not primarily concerned even with deliverance from hell, and punishment, and all the things that trouble and worry us. That really belongs to the past. True Christianity sets its affection on things which are above, not on things which are on the earth. It is that which says, 'We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.'" – Martyn Lloyd Jones

The Perspective of Eternity

One of the blessings of our groaning is that we are forced to focus on eternity. This eternal focus will positively affect our present life. This world is not a good place and we won't be surprised when things go wrong here. An eternal focus reminds us that what really matters is our love for God and our faithfulness to Him.

The Presence of the Holy Spirit

Knowing that the Holy Spirit is helping us bear the burdens of this life will help us keep our eyes fixed on the glory that ahead.