

GROANINGS OF THE BELIEVER

By Todd Core

SCRIPTURE

Romans 8:18-27

[18] For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. [19] For the creation eagerly awaits with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed. [20] For the creation was subjected to futility — not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it — in the hope [21] that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage of corruption into the glorious freedom of God's children. [22] For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. [23] And not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the first fruits — we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. [24] Now in this hope we were saved, yet hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? [25] But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience. [26] In the same way the Spirit also joins to help in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with unspoken groanings. [27] And He who searches the hearts knows the Spirit's mind-set, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

OBSERVATION

I don't know about you, but quarantine life has provided me with plenty of groans. Watching the experts on the news debate about reopening the country. Groan. Reading that Major League Baseball is postponing Opening Day. Groan. Finding empty shelves at Walmart when looking for toilet paper or jigsaw puzzles. Groan. Learning that Logan's is closed for good in Lufkin. Double groan. In the midst of so much groaning, it is important that we remember the hope of our faith. In this passage, Paul mentions three types of groaning and several sources of hope in the midst of groaning. Let's take a moment to point them out below:

- In v. 22, Paul mentions that creation is groaning “with labor pains.” We might not think about creation groaning but scripture teaches us that creation was marred by man's sin and has been groaning for renewal ever since. In essence, this virus, the earthquakes, volcanos, and other assorted natural disasters happening in our world are the groanings and labor pains of creation longing to be renewed by God.
- In v. 23, Paul states that believers are groaning within themselves anticipating the redemption of their bodies. Certainly, physical ailments ranging from cancer to the growing frailty of our bodies with age are part of this groaning. Yet, Paul is also speaking about the groaning due to the awareness of our spiritual weakness and wickedness that desires to be removed and redeemed by Christ in heaven.

- In v. 26, Paul shares that the Holy Spirit “intercedes for us with unspoken groanings.” The Holy Spirit groans in prayer to the Father on our behalf. The Holy Spirit knows the depth of our weakness and knows that we are so short sighted and selfish that we can’t even pray for the things we truly need. So, the Spirit groans in accordance with the perfect will of God.
- Those are the groanings found in this passage, but here is the hope:
 - V. 18 – The glory coming to believers far surpasses any present suffering.
 - V. 21 – Creation will be set free from the bondage of corruption and join in the glorious freedom with God’s kids.
 - V. 23 – We await our certain adoption into God’s family being completed. Also, our bodies will be redeemed.
 - V. 24 – We have been saved by our faith in this hope.
 - V. 27 – We have the Holy Spirit praying for us to be in accordance with God’s will.

OBEDIENCE

This passage reminds us that certain types of groanings are normative for followers of Jesus. Our groaning actually indicates that we desire the future redemption and glory more than our current comforts. Certainly, the life of a believer is filled with joy, peace, blessing, goodness, and hope. However, there is an appropriate amount of groaning and longing for “the glory to be revealed.” Come quickly, Lord Jesus! Here are a few steps of obedience based on the truth revealed in this text.

- Are your groans more about earthly desires not being met or more about your desire to enjoy the hope of our faith becoming reality?
- Make a list of “present sufferings” and anticipated joys of the “future glory” to help you have perspective today.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to pray on your behalf when you don’t know what to pray about a difficult situation this week.
- If you see someone groaning in their spirit this week, remind them of the hope found in the future of the believer.
- Praise God for adopting you into His family and pray for children who need to be adopted into a forever home today.

PRAYER

Father, thank You for adopting us! Help us to keep perspective about the trials of today and the glorious future ahead. Teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:12). Allow us to groan and long for redemption so that we may remember the source of our true hope. Come quickly, Lord Jesus! Amen.