

Groaning For Glory

Romans 8:18-27

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In Romans 8 we learned that when we become a child of God, or a Christian, that we have a new position, a new life, and a new relationship. I want to point out, that was the end of where we stopped last week in verse 17. It says of our new relationship that we are, "...children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Paul had just listed the blessings that we have as God's children and then he makes the statement at the end of verse 17, that the last blessing that we have as God's children is, "...that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." The end of verse 17 is absolutely amazing! It is actually considered a privilege and a blessing and the mark of being a child of God. One of the indications that I am truly a Christian is, believe it or not, suffering for Christ and with Christ. That is a mark of a true child of God. Jesus said, "In this world you shall have tribulation," not the Great Tribulation, which comes from God, but tribulation, which comes from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

There are two different sources of tribulation. The Great Tribulation, which is an altogether different subject, is actually God's wrath poured out upon a Christ-rejecting world, but as Christians, we live in a world that is not our home, so it is hostile to God and to His people. The Bible says, "Everyone who lives godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." This Sunday morning in our study of Peter, we're going to be looking at suffering for His name's sake, and Christ is our example of One who suffered for us. We have a new position, we have a new life, we have a new relationship, and that new relationship involves suffering. The end of verse 17 introduces the theme that runs from verses 18-27. That theme is we suffer with Christ now, but there is glory in our future. We suffer now, and then we will be glorified together with Him. The glory awaits us, but the suffering is now.

In the section we cover tonight, verses 18-27, we're going to see two main divisions. First, we have a new hope, verses 18-25. Secondly, we have a new help, verses 26-27. In these sections that we are going to look at, we're going to see three groans or three groanings. In verse 22, we see that all of creation is groaning for glory. In verse 23, we see that the believer is groaning for glory, and in verse 26, we see that the Holy Spirit, inside the believer, is groaning for glory. We have three groans and glory, and they are amazing to look at.

First of all, we see that we have a new hope and that all of creation is groaning for glory. I don't know if you're a naturalist or if you're into the ecology, but a lot of people are quite minded about the ecology and in taking care of the earth today, but we're going to learn that the world is under the curse, all of the cosmos, the creation, and it will be released from that curse when the Lord Jesus Christ returns and God's people are manifested to be the sons of God. Jesus then reverses the curse, and even creation is going to benefit from the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. We have been watching on the news lately in the United States the flooding in the east and the fires in the west. We see typhoons, hurricanes, earthquakes,

tsunamis, and all of the things that are going on in the world—creation is groaning. It's waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Let's read about it, verses 18-22.

Paul says, "For I reckon..." he's from the south, and he had a southern accent. He says, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time..." (It's hard for me not to read it in a southern accent.) "...are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Why? "For the earnest expectation of the creature..." the King James Bible has creature, but it is creation, "...waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature..." or the creation, "...was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Paul tells us that creation is groaning and travailing in pain. I want you to go back to verse 18. Paul looks at the sufferings of this present world. He introduced suffering at the end of verse 17, and I've already pointed that out. He says, "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Then he says, as far as the sufferings of this world are concerned, that they "...are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed."

I made a joke about the word "reckon." The word actually means to think logically, to think down upon. It would be the word we would use for working out a mathematical equation. I am horrible at math, and I absolutely hate math. I just thought I'd share that with you. Any time I even hear the word "math" I just freak out. It's the most boring thing on planet earth. I know you need it for a lot of stuff like that, but anyway. It means that you think and you work out an equation, you work out a problem, you think down upon it. This word "reckon" is not to be looked at lightly. Paul said, "I kind of went, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, you know. I was thinking very deeply. I looked at all the trouble in the world. I looked at all of the sorrow. I looked at all of the suffering. I looked at all of the pain. I looked at all of the heartache, and I looked at all of the misery." (This morning, when I was studying this passage, I got an inspiration to do a whole sermon on just the second half of verse 17. I can't wait to preach it! All about suffering—how the world views suffering and how the Christian Biblically views suffering.) In the world, it is something you want to avoid. You want to avoid suffering, deny suffering, or you want to get mad at God over suffering. There are all these different ways people respond to sorrow, tragedy, and suffering, but as a Christian, God transforms even our suffering. I think it's awesome that instead of allowing no evil to exist, God chose to bring good out of evil. God will turn things around amazingly, and God will use the sorrow and the suffering to give birth to glory!

We're going to see in just a moment that the whole creation is as if in labor pains. Not a fun thing, right? Any of you women would say, "Man, what I really enjoyed about having children was the labor!" I don't think so, right? "I don't care about the kids, I just want to go through the labor pains!" No. You go through the labor pains so that you can have a child, right? Any of you guys know that when you watched your wife having a baby, she didn't want her picture taken during labor. "Smile!" Click. After that child is born and the baby is cleaned up and in his mother's arms...some of the most amazing pictures I have of my wife are her holding our

children after they were born and she's just radiating with this joy! You know, had I taken that picture an hour earlier, "Yaaaah!" It would've been like freak out! She would've ripped those pictures up. So, when we look at the world right now, we're looking at the world in labor and travail. Jesus even used that concept in Matthew 24, but when Jesus Christ returns, there will be the birth of a new world, and what a glorious world that's going to be. This is why creation is groaning. This is why the believer, the Christian, is groaning. This is why the Holy Spirit is praying inside of us.

Now, all creation is groaning and travailing, but Paul says, "When I think about this, these sufferings of this present world, they are not worthy to be compared." They don't weigh the same as this eternal weight of glory. Hold your finger here for just a moment. I said I was going to survey these verses, but I can't resist. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. Here's another place where Paul says the same thing about, "I reckon that the sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." Here he says, in 2 Corinthians 4:17, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us...," notice not against us but for us, "...a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 18 While we look not at the things which are seen," it's all about our focus, "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." He compares the temporal with the eternal. He compares the present suffering with the future glory, and he said there is no comparison at all. He calls it "light affliction." Paul was shipwrecked, beaten, imprisoned, stoned, hungry and thirsty. You read the list of the sufferings that Paul went through. He was thrown in prison, and he just goes, "Light afflictions. Light afflictions." They work for us a far more eternal weight of glory. Suffering leads to glory. Go back with me to Romans 8:18.

I want to point out that there are three things Paul says about creation. He says, as far as its past is concerned, that it was made subject to frustration. In verse 18, he says that we shall have glory and that the earnest expectation of the creature is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. That's another way of saying that creation is waiting for the second coming, that creation is waiting for the day that the church returns with Jesus Christ. The manifestation of the sons of God happens at the second coming of Jesus Christ when we come back, the church, in our glorified bodies to reign with Christ. Notice what he says there in verse 20. For the creation was made subject to emptiness, "...not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope." When was creation made subject to emptiness or vanity? The answer is Genesis 3. This is why I said this passage is so theological because it happened when man fell in the garden of Eden.

Again, to keep it nice and simple, Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, disobeyed God and sinned. That's what we call "the fall." That's what's known as "the fall" of man. You cannot understand even what is going on in creation unless you understand "the fall" and "the curse." If you want to understand what's going on in creation, in the cosmos, why when you watch the National Geographic program with your little 3-year-old and you see a deer and say, "Oh, look! It's Bambi." Then, all of the sudden a lion Growl and rips Bambi's head off and your 3-year-old goes, "Ahhhh!" They're traumatized, and you have to change the channel real quick. Isn't

nature wonderful? Yeah, right. When you look at the world, you have to realize this is not the world the way God created, designed, intended and planned it. All of creation is under “the curse.” The reason there are thorns is because of the curse. The reason there is sweat and perspiration on your brow is because of the curse. The reason there is pain in childbirth is because of the curse. Pollution, death, decay, the second law of thermodynamics—the downward decay of the world today, all that is going on is a part of the curse. A Christian world view involves understanding God created the world but there is man's sin and the fall through Adam and Eve's sin in Genesis. What did it result in? Vanity. Emptiness. God designed it that way, or allowed that, so that He could bring about a hope, that man would have a hope and a desire for a brave new world, or for a utopian society, or for a new age that man longs for. I think it's innate within us. We long for peace. We long for security. We long for tranquility. We long to live back before the fall in the garden of Eden. I believe, in God's eternal wisdom, that God has designed in redemption such a thing that in the restoration of creation and in the manifestation of the sons of God that we're going to enjoy a higher state and a more glorious state than even Adam and Eve had before “the fall.” That's kind of a mind-blowing concept. You think, “Man, I wish I could've been there in the garden before sin, before “the fall” petting the tigers and the lions, and all of the animals are friendly. I could've rode around on a hippopotamus. It would've just been cool! Free food and fruit. You're walking around and everything is awesome. How awesome that would be!” I believe that in the new world, what God is going to create is going to be better than even what Adam and Eve had. It's going to be glorious! If man started here and then fell, and then God reverses the curse, man is going to be way up above what he was before the fall. All that is implied in the glory and the splendor of God redeeming through the work of Jesus Christ. So, creation's past is that it became subject to vanity.

Creation's future is in verse 21. It will be liberated. I want you to look at verse 21. “Because the creature itself also shall be delivered...,” notice that, “from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” This is what we call the messianic age. This is what you might say is the true new age, the birth of a brand new world that Jesus Christ is going to bring. What a glorious world that is going to be! We view the world as God's creation, but the world is not what God created it to be, but the world will be renewed. At Christmas we sing, Joy to the world the Lord is come, Let earth receive her King. It says in that song that He will make His blessings flow as far as the curse is found. When you get a chance, look up the Christmas Song Joy to the World, and then remember that song wasn't originally written for Christmas. It was written about the second coming of Jesus Christ. It wasn't written about His first coming. It was written about His second coming when the Lord will reverse the curse and His blessings will flow as far as the curse is found.

Notice creation's present groaning in verse 22. We have its past, verse 20, it was made subject to emptiness through the fall. We have its future, it shall be delivered, verse 21, and then we have its present, verse 22, it says, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” It's groaning and it's travailing. It's waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Jesus actually said that in Matthew 24. He said, “These are the beginnings of sorrows.” The word he used literally is birth pains. That's why I mentioned the idea of labor

pains. Labor pains aren't fun, but a child is born. The moment a child is born, the Bible indicates there is joy and that the labor is forgotten. We're going to forget all of the sorrows of the past, and we're going to enter into the joys of the kingdom age when Christ returns.

Not only is creation groaning, but the Christian is groaning. I want you to see that in verses 23-25. Follow with me in your Bible. Paul says, "And not only they, but ourselves..." or literally it would be and not only, referring to creation, "...but ourselves also," referring to the believer, "... which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. 24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." The Christian is groaning in hope. A couple of important points I want to make before I look at these verses, that is, we need to remember that this groaning in the text is not unbelievers but believers who have the Holy Spirit which causes us to groan for glory. Before you were saved and you didn't have the Holy Spirit, you weren't going around saying, "Man, I just want to go to heaven. I just want to go to heaven. This world is not my home." You were all about, "What can I eat? What can I drink? What can I put on? Where's the next party? How can I make more money? What can I do to satisfy me." You were living for your flesh. Now that you've become a Christian, you become other worldly, at least you should be. I believe the more spiritual you are, the more you long for heaven. The more spiritual you are, the more you groan for glory. The more spiritual you become, the more heavenly-minded you become. Some people say, "Awww! You're so heavenly minded you're no earthly good!" If you're truly heavenly minded, you're going to be earthly good, but you're only going to be earthly good in the sense of eternal values. You're going to have an eternal perspective. He now talks about the Christian, and I want you to notice five affirmations.

First of all we have the firstfruits of the Spirit, verse 23. Every Christian has a downpayment, it's called the firstfruits. Now what does he mean by firstfruits? I know a lot of Christians are fruity, but I don't know about firstfruits. God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts. There are a lot of fruity Christians. I've been a pastor for 43 years, I've seen all kinds of fruitcakes. The firstfruits is an agricultural concept. When they would harvest the fields, the first fruit they would ingather was the firstfruit, then they would go back later and reap the rest of their fields. The firstfruit was a foretaste of what is yet to come in the future. This you'll understand. The concept today would be a downpayment. You're going to buy a house, and you put money down. That's the first installment of a lot of money that has to follow for a lot of years. A lot of people are afraid to buy a house, and I understand because you make a commitment and you put your money down. You say, "Here's fifty-thousand dollars," or "Here's eighty-thousand dollars," or "Here's a hundred-thousand dollars down on this home." You sign an agreement to pay so much a month for the next 15 to 20 years. What you're saying is this is earnest money indicating I want to buy this house. I'm going to follow through on this transaction, and this is a sample of more to come.

Guess what the Holy Spirit is? God's downpayment. When you have the Holy Spirit living inside of you, God has given you a downpayment. He is earnest about taking you to heaven. He is earnest about finishing the transaction. The Holy Spirit is proof that you're going to go to heaven. If the Holy Spirit lives in you, you are a child of God, and if you're a child of God, you're

going to go to heaven. How do you know? Because the Holy Spirit lives in you and God has given you a foretaste. Have you ever sampled a little food from the dinner before it's served? Maybe on Thanksgiving you go in and eat a little piece of turkey or take a little taste of the mashed potatoes. You say, "Wow! It's gonna be awesome!" How do you know? "Because I've tasted it!" Guess what? Heaven is going to be awesome! How do you know? I've tasted it! We've tasted it! When you pray and you feel this peace and joy, when you sing to the Lord and when you read His Word, when you gather on Sunday's and Wednesday's in the church and sing songs of worship and you sense His presence. Guess what that is? It's a little foretaste of what heaven is going to be like. That's why people that come to church, they say they're Christians and they say, "I don't like this singing. This really bugs me!" You're going to be bummed out in heaven. We're going to worship God! Amen? King David is going to lead worship on his harp. It's going to be plugged into a Fender amp. The Dude's going to be jamming up there! We're going to be worshipping God for a whole eternity! When we've been there 10,000 years bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when it first begun. Amen? What we're having right now is just a little sample. It's just a little foretaste. The Holy Spirit has been given to us as the first fruit, the downpayment.

Secondly, verse 23, He says, "...we ourselves groan within ourselves," so as a believer we're groaning inwardly because of our physical frailty and mortality, we groan because of our sinful fallen nature, and we groan because we have a fallen world that we live in. Do you ever watch the news and see when there has been a mass shooting or an earthquake and hundreds of people die? Do you ever just groan? Do you ever say, "Lord, when will the evils of this world be healed?" When you read about some fire taking the lives of family members and maybe children dying, or people killed in an automobile accident, or all the deaths that have happened in this flooding in the east lately, how tragic that is and we just groan. We say, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." That's what he's talking about, that we groan inwardly for glory.

Thirdly, I want you to notice in verse 23, that we wait eagerly for our redemption. "...adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." I love this at the end of verse 23. We're waiting for something. What are we waiting for? The "...adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." What does he mean by that? You say, "I thought we were already adopted children of God?" Yes we are, but as I've said many times, salvation has three tenses, past, present, and future; we've been saved, we're being saved, and we will be saved. You know why we're groaning for glory? Because we're not completely saved in the future sense yet. You are saved from sin's penalty and power, but there is coming a day when you will be saved from the very presence of sin altogether! Isn't that awesome? There's coming a day when you will not think a sinful thought. You will not say a sinful word. You will not have a sinful attitude. You will commit no more sins. You will commit no more acts of sin. Your heart will be transformed. You will have a brand new body, and you will live eternally in the heavens with the Lord. Good news, huh? That's an awesome thought! But we're not there yet! You say, "Pastor John, can we make it happen tonight?" I'm groaning right now. "Lord!" The other night my wife and I were watching the news. I looked over at her and said, "Wouldn't it be awesome if the rapture just happened right now?" Couldn't you dig just being raptured right NOW! Come on, Lord! We're groaning for glory. I want to be free from sin. I don't want to wrestle with sin anymore. I want to be

absolutely free from sin. I know I'm justified, there's no condemnation. I know He's sanctifying my life, but I'll never reach that point until I'm face to face with Jesus Christ, and I groan for that. I long for that. We live our lives as Christians in anticipation of that.

Paul says that we're waiting for the redemption of our body. When will that happen? It will happen when we are resurrected or raptured. He says, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." There will be the resurrection of dead saints, and there will be the translation of living saints. When that happens, our bodies will be transformed, and we will be in our eternal state. That's what he's talking about. The whole idea of the body, when I said tonight about the depth of the theology in each one of these passages, is the idea that God is actually going to redeem your body. You have a saved soul in an unredeemed body. One day your body is going to be metamorphosized. It's going to be transformed either in the resurrection or the translation of the rapture of the saints, and you're going to have a glorious body! You're going to have that body that you always wanted, longed for, and anticipated. No more gas. No more heartburn. I'll stop right there. You say, "Are you describing yourself, Pastor John?" I never thought I'd see the day that I would actually have heartburn or indigestion, or I couldn't eat a burrito after 11pm. I used to be able to eat anything, anytime of the day. I can't do that anymore. So, I'm longing for my new body. I'm praying for that new body. There are a lot of things I can't do anymore that I used to do. It's hard to accept, but it happens. We're groaning for glory. We're groaning for that resurrection of our new bodies. What a glorious day that will be!

I love what Charles Hadden Spurgeon says. I want you to listen to this quote. He said, "The righteous are put into their graves. They are all put into their graves weary and worn but such will they not arise. They go to the grave with a furrowed brow, their hallowed cheek, their wrinkled skin, but they shall awake in beauty and glory. The old man totter thither leaning on the staff. The paralyzed comes there trembling all the way. The halt, the lame, the withered, the blind journey in doleful pilgrimage to their common dormitory, but they shall not arise decrepit, deformed or diseased but strong, vigorous, active, glorious, immortal. The winter of the grave shall soon give way to the spring of the resurrection and the summer glory. Blessed is death since it answers to the ends of medicine to the mortal frame and through the divine power disrobes us of the leprous rags of flesh to clothe us with a wedding garment of incorruption." I read that quote at my mother's funeral as I stood in the cemetery and officiated her burial and home going. I love that quote by Charles Spurgeon. We go into the grave decrepit and deformed, wrinkled and diseased, but we shall rise. We will rise in immortality. We will rise in glory. This mortal will put on immortality. This corruption will put on incorruption, and death shall be brought to past. The saint shall be swallowed up in victory. That's the hope of the Christian. That's why I said this whole passage is all about the new hope that we have in Jesus Christ.

We're saved for hope is the fourth statement or affirmation, look at verse 24. "For we are saved by hope," we're saved unto hope, he says, "but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man

seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Titus 2:13 says, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." In Colossians 1:27 it says, "...the hope of glory." In 1 Corinthians 13:13 it says, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity...", and Romans 5:2, we "...rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." The Christian life is all about hope. In the Bible, when it uses the idea of hope, it's not that you have your fingers crossed and you "hope" it will happen. The word "hope" means a settled assurance. That's why in verse 25 he makes the affirmation that we wait patiently. So, tonight you can be sure that you're going to go to glory. You can be sure that you're going to go to heaven and you wait patiently for that with all assurance.

There is a third groaning, and I want to just touch on it, verses 26-27. He says the Holy Spirit is also groaning. Creation groans, the Christian groans, and the Spirit of God is groaning for us in prayer. He says, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities...", or our weaknesses, "...for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings...", there it is, "...which cannot be uttered. 27 And he...", that is, God, "...that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he...", that is, the Holy Spirit, "...maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Every Christian has the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is groaning in every Christian, and we don't know how to pray, but the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. Notice in verse 26 that we do have infirmities, we have weaknesses. One of our weaknesses is that we don't often know how to pray. We don't know what to pray for, so the Holy Spirit will groan for us in words that cannot be uttered.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit helps us. He joins forces with us. He picks us up. He joins hands with us, and He helps us by groaning according to God's Word. He searches the hearts, He knows what the will of God is, and He prays according to the will of God. I said Word of God but I meant will of God because the will of God is found in the Word of God. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit, and He's groaning and praying according to the will of God. There are those times when we don't know what to pray for. We don't know how to pray. We don't know whether God wants to heal somebody or take somebody home. People come to me all the time and want me to pray for some physical ailment. I'm glad to do that, and we should do that, but you know what? God can heal and does heal, but sometimes God doesn't always heal. Maybe God wants to take you to heaven, and you're groaning for glory.

The whole passage that we read tonight is so counter to a lot of the Christian culture that we have in America today. So much of Christianity today is focused on healing, health, wealth, prosperity, being blessed, feeling good. Blessed...yes, but blessed in spiritual things. Just because you're sick, or you're in pain, you may be out of work, and you may not have all the things that you think you should have doesn't mean you're not blessed. I believe that no matter what your circumstances are tonight, you're blessed. We're blessed. We have a hope and we have a help. We have what the world doesn't have. We have a hope and a future, and we have a help right now, the Holy Spirit, who intercedes for us according to the will of God who groans for us. If we suffer with Him, we will reign with Him. If we deny Him, He will deny us. We need to be willing to be whatever God wants. If God wants me to have a malady and an affliction and

He wants to use it to teach me lessons of humility, dependence, and trust—I tell you what will get you groaning for glory, weakness and affliction in your body. It will get you groaning for glory. I tell you what will get you groaning for glory, when you don't have a lot of the earthly comforts. I'll tell you another thing that will get you groaning for glory, when you face sorrows, bereavement, loss, suffering, hardships and hurts. It will not only make you groan for glory, but it will prepare you for glory. God will use you to bring others to glory, and God will use it for His glory. It's a win win win situation all the way around, unless you harden your heart, resist God, and you have values and priorities that aren't godly but are worldly.

One of the hardest things to do to bring contemporary Christianity in America today around to is true spirituality. I'm not saying that we go out and seek to suffer or that we make that our goal in life, but this world is not our home. Don't expect it to be favorable. This world is under a curse. Don't expect that you're going to go through life without loss, bereavement, pain, sorrow, heartache. Just because you're a Christian doesn't mean that you're going to be immune from the hardships of life. It doesn't mean that you're going to be immune from trials. It doesn't mean your marriage is always going to be smooth sailing, your kids are all going to be perfect, that you are always going to get the raise, the car will always start, or your plumbing will never back up because this is a sanctified house, and that's a Holy Spirit-filled dog, it will never dig under the fence. In this world you shall have tribulation, but Jesus said, "Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." Amen?