



## **Romans 8:17-28**

### **The Groan before the Glory**

Pastors are often called upon to deliver "bad news" to families. I will always remember the night that I went home after work and had to tell my family that Chet Bitterman had been murdered by the M 19 in Colombia. For forty seven days our family had been praying every night at our family devotions for the release of Chet. I was deeply saddened by the news of his death. Even before we had a chance to begin our evening meal our oldest daughter Paula was asking if I had word about Chet. I said, "Chet went home to be with the Lord early this morning." Her response was, "No! No, dad, that can't be. We have been praying for him." God answered our prayers. He just didn't answer them the way we would have.

In a prayer letter he and Brenda sent out before he was kidnapped by the M 19 and held captive for 46 days Chet quotes Ester Field's poem:

Things don't just happen to us who love God;  
They're planned by His own dear hand.  
Then molded, and shaped, and timed by His clock!  
Things don't just happen; they're planned.

What does the Apostle Paul say to the cries of Job? In Romans eight he declares that our present suffering, be they ever so many and severe fade into insignificance, when compared with our future glory. This whole great chapter is meant for true believers in Christ. It provides great assurance for the struggling saint.

There is assurance for the believer even though he is called upon to suffer for His Lord.

- There is assurance in the fact that we have received the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9, 11).
- We are being led by the Spirit (v. 14).
- We have been adopted (v. 15).
- We have the inner witness of the Spirit that we are the children of God (v. 16).
- We are heirs of God (v. 17a).
- We have the assurance that nothing in this world happens outside the will of God. There are no failures (8:28).

### **PAUL ASSURES US OF A GREAT SALVATION.**

*There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (8:1).*

There is no judgment against anyone in Christ. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

in Christ Jesus."

Why? Because Christ has borne that judgment for the guilty. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (5:8). Christ was judged guilty in our stead. He bore our judgment and condemnation and suffered our penalty. The moment we believed on Christ God the Father declared us just in His sight. We have been acquitted. But there are some other things that happened at that exact moment.

***We have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who bears witness that we are the children of God (8:9, 16).***

God "adopted" us and as His children we are members of a new family with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of the new family. Our old family relationships with Adam no longer have any legal standing over us. "However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (v. 9). Moreover, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (v. 16).

Holy Spirit was given to us as a "first fruit." He is a pledge or guarantee that we who have the Spirit shall be saved in the end. Philippians 1:6 "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." What God began in your life He will finish.

***God gives an inheritance to us (8:17-18).***

The believer is a joint-heir with Christ. We shall inherit all that God has and all that Christ is and has we will share. We will have the privilege of sharing in all things with the Son of God. In everything we will exalt the name and the person of Jesus. Have you claimed your inheritance?

"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (vv. 16-18).

When we talk about our being sons of God we are not speaking of the same relationship that Jesus has with His Heavenly Father. Christ is the heir as the unique Son of God. All things that the Father has are His. Jesus is unique in that He is the Second Person of the Trinity. However, we are adopted children of God. We are not becoming gods as one of the modern cults teaches.

One of the eternal blessings the Heavenly Father has in store for us is the

One of the eternal blessings the Heavenly Father has in store for us is the inheritance possessed by Jesus Christ is to be our possession, too. Jesus told His disciples, "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me" (John 17:22). One day these old worn out bodies are going to be resurrected and glorified just like His.

One of the martyrs wrote in his diary: ". . . to gaze and glory and give oneself again to God . . . what more could a man ask? Oh, the fullness, pleasure, sheer excitement of knowing God on earth! I care not if I never raise my voice again for Him, if only I may love Him, please Him . . . . If only I may see him, touch His garments and smile into His eyes" (Jim Elliott of Ecuador).

However, for the time being we face the pressures of this life.

### **THE PRESENT SUFFERING (8:17)**

This life God has given us in Christ is not without its struggles. The true believer struggles to bring everything under the control of Christ and to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Did you notice how verse 17 ended? Paul writes, "if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*" (v. 17b). Suffering is going to be a part of the road test. Becoming a Christian does not mean you are going to have a life of ease and be exempt from its pressures. Indeed, because you name the name of Jesus you will experience trials, persecutions and tests. Suffering, hurts, pains are part and parcel to life. We are not exempt. It is unrealistic and unhealthy for a person to think everything must go his way with ease and comfort. Too many Christians have been sold a false bill of goods. Life is a dose of reality. Life isn't always fair. It was never meant to be fair.

#### ***We will suffer as believers.***

Paul makes that very clear in verse 17. We will suffer with Christ. Mystically we share in His suffering by experiencing affliction and struggle in our own lives. No, it is not a suffering for the atonement of our own sins. That would never do because we are sinners. Only a perfect, sinless sacrifice would ever be accepted by God to cover our sins. Christ offered that perfect sacrifice to God the Father on our behalf. Ours is a suffering of fellowship and oneness with Him.

Struggling and suffering are a refining process through which every believer must pass. It forces us to trust in God. He pulls away our false securities. It enlarges, purifies, expands and ennobles the believer. It makes us more like what we will be like when we actually see Jesus face to face. Hurts pains persecutions are used by God to get our attention. C. S. Lewis said pain was God's megaphone. He gets our attention through our suffering and He uses it to teach us great spiritual lessons. Then He can use us to minister to a hurting world.

John H. Jowett told young preachers going into the ministry, "Preach to the hurting pew and you will always have a congregation."

#### ***Where do you hurt today?***

If you are hurting you can identify with Jesus. Is there some emotional pain too tormenting to endure? Are you going through some physical suffering that has become unbearable? Are you facing emotional and mental nightmares? Are you facing a civil war in your family or friends? Is there a spiritual war going on in your

nightmares? Are you facing a civil war in your family or friends? Is there a spiritual war going on in your bosom so intense that if the rest of the world only knew it would stand in horror?

May I invite you to come to the Suffering Savior? He understands. He knows. The amazing thing is that He was the innocent sufferer bearing your guilt and punishment for you on our behalf. "He [God] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). That we will never understand. We can only come to Him and receive His grace and mercy and forgiveness. Only one who suffered as an innocent substitute could ever understand His suffering on our behalf. Our judgment is behind us. However, it stands before those who have never trusted Christ as their savior.

Why do we suffer? Paul writes, "if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (vv. 17-18). The ultimate goal of suffering is the outcome. What is the benefit of suffering? Paul says it is the joy of glorification. The Lord uses our trials and tribulations to purge us of sin, to bring us closer to Himself, to conform us to the image of His Son, and prepare us to minister to others who are hurting. When we can see only the wound and feel the pain we fail to see the purpose in it. When we yield ourselves to God He takes the chances, changes and circumstances in our lives and uses them for His glory and our ultimate good.

### ***Our future glory***

Paul stresses the fact that our suffering now is short in comparison to the future glory with Christ in heaven. The suffering here is temporary. However, the glory to come is eternal.

Look what is in store for us in John 14:1-3. Jesus said, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also." The Apostle John reflected on those words of Jesus and later wrote, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). When we focus our eyes upon Jesus and what He is doing for us in preparation for that great day then our suffering for Him is of short duration. The New Testament writers saw Jesus viewing His suffering in the same manner. He endured the pain so He might receive the glory in heaven. Peter wrote, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation" (1 Peter 4:12-13). Read the two letters of Peter for more on the suffering of the believer for Christ.

### **PAUL ASSURES US OF A GREAT SANCTIFICATION.**

Suffering causes us to groan for something better than what we have presently.

### ***Our sanctification does not come easy.***

Paul says there is evidence of this groaning all about us. There is evidence from the groaning of creation (v. 19). "For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now"

of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now" (vv. 19-22).

Several things stand out in this paragraph. This groaning is only temporary in comparison to the glory of eternity (v. 19). This groaning is the consequence of the fall of man when Adam sinned (v. 20). The groaning is not the end, but the means to an end (vv. 20-21). God's goal is to prepare us for eternity. This groaning is universal in scope (v. 22). Nothing in the universe is exempt from the fall of man. It too longs for its redemption.

Remember what happened when Adam and Eve sinned and creation suffered from their disobedience? Read Genesis 3:16-19. Nothing in the universe is exempt from the fall. All nature's destiny is linked with the future destiny of the sons of God. Creation anxiously, expectantly, longingly, and eagerly with outstretched neck awaits our day of redemption. The language Paul uses is beautiful. Creation is seen with outstretched necks, longingly awaiting the coming of the Redeemer. It is the attitude of a man who scans the horizon with the head thrust forward, neck outstretched, eagerly searching the distance on the horizon, with a throbbing, vivid expectation. You have been there as you anxiously awaited the arrival of your lover or friend or family member. Creation groans for the unveiling of the Son of God. Isaiah 11:6-8 gets exciting when examined in the light of our redemption. No wonder creation "groans" for that day to arrive! So do we, if we love Him. It is beyond our comprehension, but won't it be worth our wait when He comes!

Paul gives the illustration of a woman in labor who quickly forgets the pain of childbirth once the child is born. Even so the groan of creation will fade from memory once we are ushered into His glory. It makes you want to sing, "Come, Lord Jesus come! Even now, come!"

### *There is the groan of the saints.*

"And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" (v. 23). It is the groan of waiting for Christ's return. Do you get homesick for heaven? Do you long for His appearing? Do you anxiously long within your heart, "Even so, come Lord Jesus?"

We already have the first fruits of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:3). We received Him when we believed on Christ as our personal Savior. He is the down payment as we expect more of God's blessings in time to come. He is the heavenly indweller bearing witness and empowering us.

The "adoption" and "redemption" of our body is an equivalent expression of resurrection and glorification. The full salvation is ours now, but all its full benefits will not be received until Christ returns in glory, and our bodies are raised from the dead.

We get attached to this life and we tend to want to cling to its attractions. God uses the pressures of life, persecutions and sufferings to wean us off the glitter of this world.

We groan over our depravity, sin and limitations (7:24-25). "For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it" (vv. 24-25).

We groan over the spiritual guerrilla warfare between the flesh and the Holy Spirit that is taking place within us. There is this intense spiritual struggle that takes place within every one of us. Sometimes it seems as if our sinful, fleshly selfish nature is winning, and at other times the Spirit is winning. Do you groan to be rid of the indwelling sin, temptations and pressures from the world?

indwelling sin, temptations and pressures from the world?

The saints of old groaned longing for the day of the Lord. Abraham wandered about longing for that city whose architect and builder is God. David groaned within over his sin and longed for a heart that was after God. Isaiah groaned over his sinful lips. Jeremiah cried over a sinful, wayward people. Jesus groaned over the unbelief of Jerusalem. Paul groaned over his indwelling sin, and the glory to come.

We groan over life as it is now with its suffering. Far too often we fail to get eternity into the picture. We groan for something better. We do not groan as those who have no hope. No where is that hope expressed more profoundly than before an open casket of a believer at the graveside. Because He lives we too shall live. This groaning will fade when we are ushered into the brightness of His glory.

We long for our complete redemption –our glorification. One glorious day we shall be just like Christ. We long for the day when Christ shall come! What we are now in Christ makes us hungry for more. One day we will be completely delivered from sin and our bodies will have become transformed so we will resemble the glorious body of the Lord Jesus himself. Paul reminds the believer, "For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked" ( 2 Corinthians 5:2).

***We are not alone; we have a Helper (8:26 -27)***

There is the groaning of the Holy Spirit within us (v. 26-27). "The Spirit is helping us in our weakness." "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*" (vv. 26 -27).

Holy Spirit is committed to God's will for our lives. When we do not know how to pray, as we should the Spirit intercedes for us according to the will of God. Do you ever feel too weak to pray? Do you ever wonder how to pray? Do you ever wonder what to pray for, or what to say? Have you ever come to the place in which you can only groan, you can not even find the words to say?

Paul prayed for the Holy Spirit to give encouragement to believers in Ephesians 3:14-19; Phil. 1:22-24. His own thorn in the flesh is an example and encouragement to us (2 Corinthians 12:7).

The Holy Spirit loves us so much He longs for the day when we will be free of sin and will glorify God forever in perfection and joy. The Spirit prays that the deeply hidden needs of our hearts, needs that we sometimes do not even recognize, may be met in Christ. He knows our hearts better than we do.

Romans 8:34 reminds us that Christ is in heaven and He is presently interceding on our behalf. We have two divine intercessors praying for us right now: Christ in heaven, Holy Spirit on earth within us.

***We have assurance that God is in control of our salvation (8:28).***

If all of that isn't enough Paul says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose" (v. 28).

Nothing in this world happens outside of the will of God. Nothing. There are no future failures. There are no losers. There are no loose ends in the final plan of God. In His eyes we are winners if we are walking in His Spirit.

Here are some questions I need to ponder often. What can I learn when I feel I have blown it, or things go wrong? What is God teaching me in this situation? How can I learn from it? What is He saying to me in this? What is the Holy Spirit doing to make me more like my Master?

You may feel extremely vulnerable and wonder how you will endure in your present situation. Here is hope my friend. We don't groan alone. We have the Spirit of Christ within us. The weaker we are the greater is His power and help. Your groanings reach the throne of God and He cares.

One of my friends said recently, "The greater the groan the greater the glory."

Where is the groan in your life? Are you trying to bear it alone? Is the burden weighing you down? Do you need a strong shoulder, and a warm heart? Why not hand it over the Savior? The only qualification is a need, a hurt, a pain, suffering, persecution, tribulation, pressures in life. And it sounds like you qualify. Hand it over to Christ and He gives you His strength and life.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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