

## “GROANING, WAITING AND HOPING.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church

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### Scripture Texts: Romans 8:22-25

#### Introduction.

Let me remind you of where we have come from and where we are in Romans.

First, we spoke of sin and the wrath of God against all unrighteousness.

Then we spoke of our justification by faith so that sin would not condemn us.

Now Paul is speaking of our sanctification by the Holy Spirit so sin won't reign in us.

And we are getting hints or glimpses of our glorification which means sin will not be.

Speaking about the Holy Spirit Paul says:

**Romans 8:15-17** You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 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.

Having the Spirit of adoption makes us heirs with Christ, heirs of Christ's inheritance, heirs of Christ's glory, heirs of heaven.

**Provided.** Provided we suffer with Christ so that then we may be glorified with Him. Provided we stand with Christ, stand for Christ, stand up for Christ, provided we take up His cross and follow Him.

Let me tell you a story from my childhood. It was 1964 about this time of year, I was sitting in my third grade classroom in Toledo, Oregon. It was the time of the presidential election. Anyone remember who was running? Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater. Our teacher did a mock election with secret ballots. Our class voted 24 to 3 for LBJ.

Then she asked who the three were who voted for Goldwater. I don't remember if the other two raised their hand, but I didn't. I don't know if it was embarrassment or shame or being in the minority or being thought stupid, whatever the reason I didn't stand up for Goldwater, I didn't honor him, I didn't suffer for him. Now we are talking about an eight year old and politics.

But I have never forgotten it, and it illustrates the point of our willingness to suffer with Christ. Kids, are you ever embarrassed or ashamed of your parent's faith, of their stand for Jesus, of what they say or post on social media? Are you ever quiet, afraid to be in a minority to stand up for Jesus or your faith in Jesus?

What about any of us? Are there times when we don't want to suffer from any association with Christianity or the church or Jesus? Are there times we hide or remain silent or don't raise our hand or speak up? Do we honor or dishonor Jesus with our words or actions?

Are there times we don't want to daily take up our cross and follow Jesus?

If we refuse to identify with Jesus at work, at school, at home, then we are refusing to suffer and we will not inherit the blessings of the sons of God. If we don't suffer, there will be no glory. If we suffer with Him we will be glorified with him. Train children to suffer, to take up cross.

To encourage us in this Paul makes a remarkable statement, stunning really, if it is true.

**Romans 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Paul reminds us that whatever suffering we experience, whatever we might have to give up, whatever lost popularity, whatever shame or embarrassment we might have to experience, whatever loss of street cred or loss of position or importance, being made fun of, all of that is nothing, nothing compared to the glory we will receive when Jesus is revealed in all His glory.

To prove it Paul gives three proofs, three groanings, someone has called it a symphony of sighs. Three proofs of how great the glory is and how the coming glory will far outweigh all the sufferings of this present age.

**Vss. 19-22, the groaning of creation.**

All of creation is groaning. All your dogs and cats, cows and horses, seaweed and salmon, spiders and bugs, trees and bushes, mountains and hills. Creation groans and suffers under the curse of sin in a fallen world like a woman in the pains and travail of childbirth.

That image says two things about creations groaning. First, it says it is really bad. Just ask any woman after giving birth for the first time. No matter how much and how well she prepared for it, I guarantee you it was way worse than she anticipated.

It is interesting when the writers of Scripture want to say something about how bad some suffering was they compare it to the anguish and pain of a woman in labor (Psalm 48:6; Jeremiah 6:24; 30:6-7; Micah 4:9).

But the second thing that image says is creations groaning is not in vain, it is not senseless or without a great and glorious outcome, a happy and joyful fruit. This reinforces the proof of vs. 18, no suffering can compare to the glory, and all suffering will be worth it.

Creation is not content with its present condition, it longs to be renewed, to be restored to a far better condition. It is as if creation knows the story of the fall, redemption and glory, as if creation knows that its current state of misery and corruption will come to end with the return of creations Creator and Lord. Creation groans and waits and hopes in confidence of a greater glory to come.

### **Vss. 23-25, the groaning of Christians.**

This brings us the second groaning, the groaning of the church, of Christians, of us, and second proof that the eternal weight of glory to come far exceeds our current suffering.

If creation groans and longs and waits and hopes, how much more should we who know the Gospel and the plan of redemption, we who know the Creator and Savior, who feel deeply our own sin and corruption and know there is a promised day coming when we will be delivered.

If creation has been groaning and longing and waiting for thousands of years, how much more should we groan and wait in the brief course of our short life.

If senseless creation which is devoid of wisdom and knowledge and understanding, burns with a desire for the coming glory, how much more should we who have been indwelt by the Spirit.

***But Christians have a greater reason to groan because we have the firstfruits*** of the Holy Spirit. If we have the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit why does that produce groaning? Shouldn't the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit produce something more like the fruit of the Spirit in us? You know, love, joy, peace.

Like the illustration of the woman in labor, the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit produces a negative and a positive groaning, a knowledge of sin and a knowledge of what is to come.

The life of the Christian is a life of groaning. What is repentance, but spiritual groaning. We groan like Paul, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (7:24).

We groan over indwelling sin.

We groan over Satan’s constant attacks, accusations, condemnation and temptation.

We groan over the afflictions and disease of our bodies and minds.

We groan over the evil and wickedness that fills our world.

But the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit also produces a positive groaning, an eager longing for the fullness of the Spirit and what the Spirit promises us.

This gracious invasion of our hearts by the indwelling of God is a foretaste of what is coming, an anticipation of a greater harvest to come. It is guaranteed. We groan for that day when we will have the Holy Spirit in all His fullness. The groaning is great because the glory is so great.

As creation is eagerly longing for the revealing of the sons of God, so we with the Holy Spirit are eagerly awaiting our full and final adoption as sons and the redemption of our bodies.

Right now our status as children of God is a daily battle, a daily struggle, as we wrestle with our bodies of death awaiting our bodies of redemption.

Right now we look no different from the unregenerate. Our bodies are like other men and we are still subject to sickness, corruption and death. Although we are regenerated by the Spirit, there is still a law in our members warring against the law of our minds making us captive to the law of sin (7:23). RH

***But we have hope.***

Why does Paul state the obvious, that hope that is seen is not hope? Everyone knows that, Paul. Hope and possessions never go together. I don’t hope to have clothes to wear, food to eat, a house to live in, a church to be the pastor of. I have that.

The problem is we don’t want to have hope, we want what we hope for now. We want to have hope without having to have hope. We are not patient enough to wait with hope.

There are two emotions in this text, groaning and hope, and there is no hope without groaning.

Think about the things you groan for in your husband, wife, kids, to be what you want them to be. How hard is it to live by hope when you see your husband, wife, kids sin and fail and fall short? How hard is it to live by hope as you watch your body slowly break down and not work and fail and hurt.

Hope is a challenge. We want sight, not faith, we want tangible, touchable, seeable, now. I don't want to have to live by hope. I don't want to have to live waiting for what I want. I don't want to be denied. I don't want to wait for things to go better and be better. I don't want to live in a country where things don't go the way I want. I don't want to have to just look forward to heaven and redemption and glory.

Are you willing to live a life of hope, a life where your best is future, not now?  
Are you willing to live a life where you don't have your best life now?

This hope is not wishful thinking, or the kind of hope that hopes it happens while not being sure or certain. This hope is the guaranteed kind of hope, resting of the faithfulness of the One who promised it. A guaranteed hope is the kind of hope you can wait patiently for.

God has ordained for us a world in which in the present moment we suffer and groan and wait. He has called us to bear the cross before we receive the crown.

Do you know how hard it is to preach about this to people who listen to Praise 106.5 all day and just want to hear what is positive and encouraging?

We are done a huge disservice by preachers and teachers and churches who paint a rosy picture of this life, who promise us health and wealth here and now. They are liars, false shepherds.

The Christianity they sell is just a baptized version of our nice comfortable middle class American lifestyle. Then when things go bad, we say this isn't what I signed up for. We want a Christianity where we are blessed and all our prayers are answered what way we want, like on the Trinity broadcasting network. We want our best life now.

We talk about sin and suffering here, but, and there is always a but. The sin and suffering are nothing compared to the glory that is to be revealed, that is announced and proclaimed and promised by the Gospel.

The Christian life is characterized by a patient endurance and a steadfast hope for that glory that which has not yet been fully revealed but is promised and guaranteed to come.

**Romans 5:3-4** We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

**Romans 15:4** Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

### **Implications and application.**

How then shall we live? How should we view this world of ours? How should consider this short existence of ours on this planet? What or who should we put our hope in? The person you vote for? I don't put any hope in the person I voted for, I don't put my hope in you or even me. I put my hope in Jesus Christ and no one else. But it is a daily struggle to remember to do that.

We see around us a world in decay and trouble, bodies slowly deteriorating, souls tempted to sin, news that is confusing and makes no sense. We see in part, as through a glass darkly.

But with patient hope consider what is to come, what will be, a new heaven and a new earth, a perfect world, with new resurrected bodies, where there is no sin, no temptation, no misery, no tears. Look and wait with eager longing.

Imagine what that will be like, a day like no other. A day of complete liberty and freedom, a day of perfect redemption, with the Spirit in His fullness indwelling us, in a glorified body full of power and ability, and a perfect environment without the effects of sin.

**I John 3:1-4** See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. ... 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

As we read in our assurance, think more about how things will be than how things are.

**Colossians 3:2-4** Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.