

ROMANS 5-8: Living Your Life God's Way

When It Feels Like Your Sufferings Never End

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Hello, men. I'm Pat Morley. Welcome to Man in the Mirror Bible Study. Today, we're going to be talking about the subject *When it feels like your sufferings will never end*. Please turn in your bibles to Romans chapter eight, verse 18.

Wow. When you look around, there is a lot of groaning going on in the world today and not for no reason, right? I know that it just seems like it'd be nice if we could find asylum in some kind of idyllic country where pain and suffering had been outlawed, had been banned, but of course that's not our reality. Suffering is with us every day. It seems, like frankly, about one out of every three talks I give has something to do with suffering. And that's because the bible talks so much about it. I've had my fair share. I know you have had yours as well. Everyone suffers. Everyone groans.

When I was in my mid-30s, I wanted to be reconciled to my father and mother. I had run away from home at an early age, quit high school in the middle of my senior year, joined the Army, and I wanted to be reconciled with my dad. One day I invited him to lunch on his birthday and he said yes. We had a beautiful time. It became an annual tradition.

A few years after we started the tradition, one day as we were walking out of the restaurant, I'm not sure why I did it, but I just said, "Here, Dad, let me give you a hug." And before I knew it, he had moved in on me and he had wrapped his arms around me and he was hugging me like a grizzly bear and he just let out this deep primordial groan. And after what seemed like an infinite 30 seconds, we drew back from each other and we both had these warm salty tears running down our cheeks. I said, "I love you, Dad." And he said, "I love you too, son," and a reconciliation took place that day. It was a beautiful moment.

I'm not sure how to fully describe what happened, but my dad did not have a father to mimic. He didn't have a father who built stories into his life. And so I just have this sense that there were centuries of pain that bubbled up in that singular moment where we embraced and a release took place, a release that was the result of the sufferings of this world.

I want us to talk about that today. In our texts, we're going to see that three things are happening. The whole creation groans, we groan and the Holy Spirit groans. First, let's talk about why creation groans.

WHY CREATION GROANS

We begin with this summary statement in Romans chapter eight, verse eight. "I consider that our present sufferings," Paul writes, "are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." He's acknowledging that there are these present sufferings. We call it suffering because it hurts. And then he goes on to say that, "They are not worth compared with the glory that we will be receiving." Well, what is that glory? That glory is our adoption as sons, as Brett talked about in the last message on Romans, the Abba father, our adoption as sons. And then also we have the first fruits of the spirit, but I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself. With regard to suffering, you should try to escape it if you can,

but you should also know that there's no need to be surprised when it happens, because it happens to everybody.

Verse 19. "For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed." It's kind of like this. When it says creation waits in eager expectation, it's like you're straining your neck. You're looking forward. You're trying to see something you don't yet see. That's what it is like to be an eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.

Verse 20. "For the creation was subjected to frustration or futility or meaninglessness." I've talked about this before, if you've been in the bible study with me. This word frustration that Paul uses is the Greek word that the translators of the Old Testament into the Greek, they use this same Greek word for Solomon's word, vanity or meaningless. In other words, for the creation was subjected to meaninglessness, to vanity, to futility, to frustration ... watch this ... "not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it."

God is the one who has subjected the world to frustration. Now, he did not do that directly. It's Adam's sin that caused it. But nevertheless, God is sovereignly orchestrating all things for his own glory. And it's not by the world's choice, but it's by the choice of God that the creation has this suffering built into it. Why is that?

Reading on. "In hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its to decay and brought into the glorious freedom and glory of the children of God." Our God has subjected the creation to futility, not because of any other reason than his deep desire that you and I would be liberated from our to bondage to decay and reconciled to God. And so there's some sense in which that all of the sufferings that we have are actually part of the grace of God. I like to call the brutality of grace. Sometimes it's very painful, but God is doing it for our good.

Then in verse 22, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present moment." There you have it. The whole creation is groaning right now as though in the pains of childbirth. You've heard me say before, earth is heaven's womb and we are all in gestation.

Why does creation groan? Creation groans because God has subjected his creation to frustration so that people will be liberated. We see it throughout other texts in the scriptures. Second Peter 3:9, "God is patient with you not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance." Matthew 18 verse 14, "God is not willing that any of these little ones should perish." First Timothy two verses three and four, "God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." Ezekiel 18 verse 32, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked."

Men, don't be misled. Everyone groans. I was meeting with a man recently. And even though I know because I work with men as a vocation, I know that everyone groans, after about 30 minutes of this man speaking, I kind of was thinking, "Wow, this man really ... he really has his life together. All of his kids are doing great. His wife is doing great. His business is doing great. He's doing great." He almost had me convinced.

But then as I began to ask some questions and as he began to trust me more and more, then suddenly, he began to reveal some things about his son that weren't going right, his daughter that weren't going right. And in fact, his daughter had literally been in a relationship with a man who was trying to marry her so that he could get the inheritance that the daughter was about to receive, and all of these groanings that he was going through. But when you talked to him, you didn't get the impression that he had any troubles at all. Just remember this. Everybody you meet, everybody you know, everybody in your life besides you, of course, too, everyone groans. Acts 14 verse 22 says, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."

Let me give you the Big Idea for the day. **Don't be misled. Everyone groans and groaning is good.** Why is it good? Because it's the grace of God that is drawing the whole world to be liberated from their bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of light.

That's why creation groans. Now let's look at why you and I groan.

WHY YOU AND I GROAN

Verse 23, "Not only so, but we are cells who have the first fruits of the spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies." Why do we groan? Well, we groan and because we are treated unfairly. We do suffer. We do get cancer. We do have COVID. We have friends who have died from COVID. We have suffered abuse. Maybe it's emotional neglect, abandonment, whatever it is, bullying.

We groan because there really is suffering. And why is that suffering good though? Because we eagerly await for our adoption to sonship. We have a hope of reconciliation with God forever through his son, Jesus Christ, and then the redemption of our bodies to be with him. We have this future hope, this glorious future hope. And we have the first fruits also of the spirit.

What are these first fruits that are talked about in the verse? Well, there's love. We talked in Romans chapter five, verses three to five in one of the messages that we rejoice in our sufferings because suffering produces faith, perseverance and hope and hope doesn't disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts by his holy spirit, so love is one of the first fruits.

The assurance of salvation. In one of the messages that Brett taught, the spirit testifies with our spirit, that we are sons of God.

Another first fruit is power, that you will receive power when the holy spirit comes upon you.

And then there are the spiritual gifts. In first Corinthians 12, "To each has been given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good." And then there are the fruits of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in Galatians 5:22 and 23.

And there are other things as well that are first fruits. Then in verse 24, "For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?" Who hopes for what they already have?

What is hope? Hope is ... It's not what we already have, but it's something for which we are waiting patiently. And what is this hope that we are waiting for, this hope that we groan for? It is our adoption as sons. And I would say that if your hope is for anything else, what is that going to result in? What does it profit you to gain the whole world yet forfeit your soul?

Verse 25. "But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait patiently for it." The Big Idea today, **Don't be misled. Everyone groans and groaning is good.** When you and I groan, we groan because we have the hope of the glory that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

And then third, why the spirit groans.

WHY THE SPIRIT GROANS

The creation groans. You and I groan, but the spirit groans, too. Verse 26. In the same way, the spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans and he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the spirit because the spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

Why does the spirit groan for us? The spirit groans for us because we do not know what we ought to pray for. Now, this doesn't mean we're not praying. It just means that when we pray, often, we're praying for something that is not what we really should be praying for, what we really need to be

praying for, or even necessarily what we really want in the deepest part of our hearts, but we're praying the best that we can. We don't know what we are praying for.

It's like this. God listens to our prayers and then he edits them so that he ends up interceding for us with the prayers that we should have been praying all along. Read it again. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the spirit himself intercedes for us with wordless groans, with groans so deep that words cannot express.

You've all experienced this. You've all been in prayer. You've just felt deep experience going on inside of you with this groaning, this longing, this aching for the thing that you're praying for, and what that is is that is the Paraclete, the holy spirit, the intercessor interceding for you with groans so deep that words cannot express.

And then we know from Matthew 6, verse eight, "He knows what you need before you even ask." Right in front of the Lord's prayer, the verse right in front, before it says, "Our father who art in heaven," the last thing that he says before that, "He knows what you need before you ask." And as we have taught before in this bible study, according to Luke 11, verse eight, we can approach God with shameless audacity knowing that God will never give you anything less than as much as you need. He will give you whatever you ask for if it's an accordance with his will, but never less than as much as you need, because he's going to be interceding for us with prayers and words that are so deep that words cannot express.

The Big Idea today. **Don't be misled. Everyone groans and groaning is good.** The creation groans. And that's good because God is using that to draw us to himself, all people to himself. You and I groan because we have the hope that we are looking forward to our adoption as sons and the first fruits that we have, they give us this foretaste. They make us groan even more because we have this foretaste of what's to come. And then the holy spirit himself groans, too, and he groans out on our behalf. He's interceding for you and me with groans so deep that words cannot express.

I just wish so much that my own father who had the deep groan within him could have experienced the scriptures in the way that we're talking about so that he would have understood that that was the grace of God drawing him into a deeper relationship with himself by reconciling this man with his son. Don't be misled. Everyone groans and groaning is good. Let's pray.

Our dearest father. Thank you for this text that our present sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in us. And while we experience the creation groaning, the frustration, the futility of it, and while we experience our own groaning as we look forward in hope and as we sense inside ourselves, your spirit interceding for us with groans so deep that words cannot express, we pray, Lord, that we would not be misled, that we would understand that this is a normal part of the Christian experience, to groan, that everyone groans and groaning is good. We make this prayer in your name, Jesus. Amen.

Thank you, men.