

July 19, 2026

Romans 8:18-27

“From Groaning to Glory!”

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

There is a story of an apartment building that caught fire during the early morning hours. Flames and smoke filled the hallways. Several families became trapped. One family waited at an upper-story window while firefighters worked frantically below. The parents, already overcome by smoke, could do little more than keep their children close. The children stood on tiptoe at the window, watching every movement of the rescue team. Every moment seemed like an eternity.

But they did not run into the burning hallway. They did not jump from the window. Why? Because they had hope. They could see the rescue operation unfolding. They stood on tiptoe, waiting with eager expectation until finally they were carried to safety.

That image captures something of what Paul describes in Romans 8. We live in a burning world. We see suffering, death, decay, disease, disappointment, and grief all around us. The whole creation is standing on tiptoe, waiting for rescue. And so are we. Paul writes, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18). In these words he gives us three great truths. We groan because of sin, we hope because of Christ, and we wait because our redemption is coming - a glory that is to be revealed in us!

First, we groan because of sin. Paul speaks repeatedly about groaning in this section. Creation groans. Christians groan. Even the Holy Spirit intercedes with groans too deep for words. Why all this groaning? Because we live between two worlds. On the one hand, through Holy Baptism we belong to Christ. We are children of God. We have forgiveness of sins. The Holy Spirit dwells within us. Heaven is our inheritance. Yet on the other hand, we still live in a fallen world and carry around our sinful flesh.

The Christian knows the suffering that Paul describes: "I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing." Through the Spirit we desire to follow Christ, yet the old sinful nature still clings to us. We are God's children, but we still battle pride, selfishness, fear, impatience, and temptation. We know what we should be, yet we are not yet what we shall be. That tension produces the groaning Paul describes. It is the sigh of the believer who loves Christ and yet sees his failures. It is the longing expressed elsewhere by Paul when he asks, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

Nor is this groaning limited to Christians. Paul says that the whole creation groans together in the pains of childbirth. When Adam fell into sin, creation itself was subjected to futility. Thorns and thistles, disease and death, storms and disasters all testify that the creation is not what God originally intended it to be. Everywhere we look we see the effects of the fall. The whole created order bears the scars of humanity's rebellion against God.

Yet the wonderful message of Romans 8 is that Christians do not merely groan. We groan in hope. This hope is not wishful thinking or mere optimism. It is confident expectation grounded in God's promises and secured by Jesus Christ.

The certainty of our hope rests in what Christ has already accomplished. The eternal Son of God entered our fallen world, fulfilled the law in our place, carried our sins to the cross, and rose victorious from the grave. His resurrection is God's declaration that sin has been paid for, death has been defeated, and Satan's power has been broken. Because Christ lives, our future is secure. We have the hope of a new creation!

This is why Paul can say that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. He is not denying suffering. Paul knew suffering firsthand. He had endured the sufferings of sin, beatings, imprisonment, hardship, rejection, and persecution. Yet when he placed those sufferings beside the glory God has prepared for his children, there was simply no comparison. The glory to come is so great that it changes how we view the troubles of the present. Pain is real, but it does not have the final word. Christ has already spoken the final word through his death and resurrection.

Paul says that we have received the first fruits of the Spirit and the adoption as children. We already belong to God's family. We are forgiven, loved, and heirs of eternal life. Yet we are still waiting for the full realization of what God has promised. We possess the adoption now, but we still await what Paul calls “the redemption of our bodies.”

That phrase is important because Christianity is not merely about saving souls. God intends to redeem the whole person. The body that grows weak, suffers disease, and eventually dies also belongs to Christ. On the last day he will raise it. Just as Jesus rose bodily from the grave, so all who belong to him will be raised. The grave is not the end of the story. It is not a permanent prison. Christ has transformed it into the doorway to resurrection and eternal life.

And remarkably, Paul says that creation itself waits for that day. He pictures creation standing on tiptoe, stretching its neck forward, eagerly awaiting the revealing of the sons of God. It is as though all creation is watching God's rescue operation unfold. Creation suffered because of humanity's fall, but creation will also share in the freedom won by Christ. The Bible ends not with souls escaping the world but with God restoring all things. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. Sin, sorrow, suffering, and death will be gone forever. The curse will be removed. The groaning will cease. The children of God will stand revealed in glory, and creation itself will rejoice in the freedom of the redeemed.

These promises are not given merely to satisfy our curiosity about the future. They are meant to shape our lives in the present. Because we have hope, we proclaim Christ to a world burdened by sin and death. Because we have received mercy, we show mercy to those who suffer. Because the earth belongs to God, we seek to be faithful stewards of his creation. We cannot remove the curse, but we can bear witness to the coming kingdom while we await its fulfillment.

Yet we are still waiting. “If we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” Ours is not a passive waiting but a hopeful one, for like those children watching from the apartment window, we know that our Rescuer is drawing near.

So it is for us. We live in a groaning world, and we groan with it. Yet we do not groan without hope. Christ has entered our fallen world, borne our sins, conquered death, risen from the grave, and promised to return.

Until that day, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. When sorrow leaves us without words, he intercedes for us with groans too deep for words. Our confidence rests not in ourselves but in the faithfulness of our God.

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, stand on tiptoe. Look beyond the sufferings of this present time, beyond the troubles of the moment, even beyond the grave itself. We know what we should be, yet we are not yet what we shall be. But Christ knows what we shall be, and he is bringing us there. Your Redeemer lives. Your resurrection is certain. Your glory is coming.

And when Christ appears, the waiting will end. The groaning will cease. Faith will become sight. We shall see our Savior face to face and know that every promise he made was true.

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott