Pastor Richard Allen Farmer

The Crossroads Church

5587 Redan Road

Stone Mountain, GA 30088

770-469-9069

Year-End Groaning

Text: Romans 8:18-25

What a downer, to start talking/writing about suffering. Come on, Paul!

However, suffering is a part of life and needs to be part of life’s conversations.

As difficult as it is to think of suffering, it must be put in perspective. F.F. Bruce:

*It is not merely that the glory is a compensation for the suffering; it actually grows out of the suffering.[[1]](#footnote-2)*

1. Suffering is temporary (v. 18)
2. That which follows suffering is superior to it. (v. 18)

The two, suffering and the glory which follows, cannot even be compared. Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Individuals groan. V. 21

Creation groans. V. 22

The entities that groan have a promised future which is devoid of suffering. Not only will individuals come to a fullness and perfection unimagined, but so will creation.

There will come a day when the horrors of this world will end. The old spiritual says it well: *Soon I will be done with the troubles of this world...going home to live with God.*

Compare Genesis 3:17 and Romans 8.

Genesis describes a **grand** creation

Romans 8 describes a **groaning** creation

Genesis describes **favor**

Romans 8 describes **futility**

Genesis describes a **verdant** creation

Romans 8 describes a **vain** creation. The word used in v.20 (futility) is the word used in Ecclesiastes: Vanity! Vanity! All is vanity! Meaningless! Meaningless! All is meaningless! Futile! Futile! All is futile!

Paul says, however, and this is the good news, that as bleak as our individual circumstances look and as corrupt as creation looks, this is not the end.

In a future day, creation (the natural order) will be restored, renewed, redeemed, set right. We will see paradise restored.

**Now**, creation is groaning and is in bondage and is subjected to futility (v.20-22).

**Then**, creation shall be glorious.

**Now**, our bodies break down, decline, fail us.

**Then**, the body shall be redeemed (v.23)

God, the Giver, subjected all creation in hope, setting it up for deliverance (v. 20-21).

John Piper (desiring[god.org](http://god.org)):

*Christians endure groans of almost every kind in this world until Christ comes to redeem our bodies. Life in the body — life in this fallen world — means groaning. So take heart, if you are trusting in Christ. Your suffering is not owing to God’s wrath against you. Your condemnation for sin has been taken away by the death of Christ (*[*Romans 8:1*](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.1)*). God will not let you be tested beyond what he gives you the grace to bear (*[*1 Corinthians 10:13*](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2010.13)*;* [*2 Corinthians 9:8*](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor%209.8)*). Your groaning is limited. Redemption is coming. “Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning” (*[*Psalm 30:5*](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2030.5)*).*

As we near the end of the calendar year, some of us are groaning, literally and figuratively. Our bodies are not as pain resistant as they once were. Our circle of friends is getting smaller, as treasured ones leave the earth. Arthritis seems to have made itself at home in some bodies. The fixed income is fixed too low. The memory is slipping. We are groaning. The groaning comes in all sizes and for all ages. Students get to exam time and feel woefully unprepared. Groan. I’m too fat, too thin, too acne-attacked. Groan. We are not the only parts of creation that groan. Our air is polluted. Our glaciers are melting at an alarming rate. Wildfires are decimating our forests. Our shorelines are receding. So are some hairlines. Groan. Deforestation due to fuelwood collection. Groan. Urban sewage dumping. Groan. Fertilizer run-off. Groan. Pesticide residues. Groan.

Overgrazing. Groan. Squatter settlements. Groan. Poverty. Groan.

But....

Paul says there is a post-groaning act of God. Hope takes us there. We continue to fix our eyes on our God, and we see God through the gloom, through the groaning.

At the end of the year and end of the groan and end of the gloom, there is a new order.

J. B. Phillips’ New Testament in Modern English renders verse 19 of Romans 8 like this: “The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own.”

I close with the post-groan description of the new order that God has in store for us.

Revelation 22:1-5

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. **2**In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. **3**And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. **4**They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. **5**There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

We, the people of Christ, move from groan to prone. We lay ourselves at the feet of the One who is our hope. We move from groan to throne, as we celebrate our reigning Christ.

As we near the end of this year, join me, not in the groan, but at the throne.

**1. All hail the power of Jesus' name!**

**Let angels prostrate fall;**

**Bring forth the royal diadem,**

**And crown Him Lord of all.**

**Bring forth the royal diadem,**

**And crown Him Lord of all.**

**2. Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,**

**Ye ransomed from the fall,**

**Hail Him Who saves you by His grace,**

**And crown Him Lord of all.**

**Hail Him Who saves you by His grace,**

**And crown Him Lord of all.**

**3. Let every kindred, every tribe**

**On this terrestrial ball**

**To Him all majesty ascribe,**

**And crown Him Lord of all.**

**To Him all majesty ascribe,**

**And crown Him Lord of all.**

**4. O that with yonder sacred throng**

**We at His feet may fall**

**We'll join the everlasting song,**

**And crown Him Lord of all.**

**We'll join the everlasting song,**

**And crown Him Lord of all.**

**Illus.**

One of the most colorful characters at my home church was Sister Beatty. When she overcome by emotion in worship, something we called “getting happy”, she would keel over in her pew and on the way down she’d say, “Oh, hallelujah, they can’t crown Him till I get there”. While that is poor theology, she was saying, “I want to be there and participate in the throning. I want to lay my trophies at His feet.”

What a day that will be!

Amen

1. F.F. Bruce. *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans,* p. 168 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)