



When in Romans Do as the Righteous Do

“Groan-up & Act Your Age”

Romans 8:23-27

This is the time of year when you walk by inanimate objects and because of sensors that detect movement or sound they give off screams and moans and groans. *“This is Halloween!”*

Year-round, life-long “groans” are described in these next few verses:

- In verse twenty-three “we groan within ourselves.”
- In verse twenty-six the Holy Spirit groans on our behalf.
- In the previous verses we studied we learned that all of God’s creation groans.

Why are we and the Holy Spirit and creation groaning? The reason given is that we are in our fallen, mortal bodies but anticipating our future, immortal bodies:

- Previously we saw that creation groans as it waits for us to be “revealed,” meaning for us to be in our future, resurrected, glorified bodies.
- In verse twenty-three you see a direct connection between the “groans within ourselves” and the “waiting for... the redemption of our body.”
- In verse twenty-six the Holy Spirit groans in response to what Paul called our current physical “weaknesses.”

These verses have a lot to say about our physical bodies - our current ones and the ones to come. Our bodies are falling apart! Even if they are not, even if we are in great shape, we are not fit for Heaven. Within even the best of us resides the flesh and our propensity to sin.

We groan BUT we can anticipate new, glorified bodies that we will receive at the resurrection of the dead and rapture of the church.

Romans 8:23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

The “firstfruits” were the pledge of the fullness of the future harvest. We have received the Holy Spirit to indwell us. The body He indwells is, of course, mortal and temporary while He is immortal and eternal. We have this heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel. The having of Him is a profound guarantee of things to come.

Jesus Christ is elsewhere called the firstfruits in the sense that He was the first to be raised from the dead in a glorified physical body. Just as He was raised from the dead, so will we, in glorified bodies.

Romans 8:23 ...even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

In our current condition, “we groan within ourselves.” It is describing our deep internal desire to be free from the earth and home in Heaven. It is not a license for us to complain or to go around being depressed and discouraged. Quite the opposite!

We groan within ourselves knowing the glory that awaits us in the very near future.

We're "eagerly waiting" for the resurrection. Think of something you want to do that you are eager and therefore willing to wait for. I'm thinking of the folks who camp out days or weeks ahead of time to get into a movie or concert. They are excited and eager in their waiting, willing to suffer hardships for the event.

I think the longest I ever waited for an event was about four hours. Even then, I grew extremely uncomfortable. I definitely groaned! But I hung in there eagerly awaiting the event.

We are "eagerly waiting" for "the adoption, the redemption of our body." Paul has previously told us we are fully adopted sons of God. In what sense, then, are we "eagerly waiting" for it?

In the sense that we cannot enter in to the fullness of the experience of our adoption until "the redemption of our body." We really will be resurrected from the dead - unless we are fortunate enough to be alive when the Lord comes for the church. Then we will be raptured without ever dying.

[Romans 8:24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?](#)

If you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior then you are "saved." You are justified by faith in Him. There is nothing more you need believe or do.

But that is not to say your salvation is complete. Spiritually it is; physically it isn't. Thus we still "hope" for the completion of our salvation when our bodies will be transformed.

“Hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?” By definition hope looks to the future. It expects something in the future. We’re expecting new bodies, a new earth, a new city, and an eternity filled with fellowship with Jesus.

Romans 8:25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

“If” means *since*. Since I am hoping for the redemption of my body at the resurrection, I definitely “eagerly wait for it.” I’m like those campers, waiting for the theater to open, expecting something amazing.

And because I’m such a happy camper I can wait “with perseverance.” Albert Barnes made this insightful comment on verse twenty-five:

Where there is a strong desire for an object, and a corresponding expectation of obtaining it - which constitutes true hope - then we can wait for it with patience.

Where there is a strong desire without a corresponding expectation of obtaining it, there is impatience.

As the Christian has a strong desire of future glory, and as he has an expectation of obtaining it just in proportion to that desire, it follows that he may bear trials and persecutions patiently in the hope of his future deliverance. Compared with our future glory, our present sufferings are light, and but for a moment (Second Corinthians 4:17). In the hope of that blessed eternity which is before him, the Christian can endure the severest trial, and bear the intensest pain without a complaint.

God the Holy Spirit has something to say amidst all this groaning.

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

“Likewise” means similarly or in the same way. “Weaknesses” could be specific times of trouble but is probably a reference to our human condition in general. It refers to our overall condition of knowing Heaven is our home but being stuck for now on earth in these bodies that are not fit for eternity.

How does the Holy Spirit help me as I am groaning waiting for the redemption of my body? **He groans right along with me!**

His groanings are not from exhaustion or disappointment or anything like that. They seem to be a type of interpretation by which the indwelling Holy Spirit translates my groaning into something intelligible to God the Father.

“We do not know what we should pray for as we ought.” It should come as no shock that we don’t know what we should pray for. We don’t know the future.

- Will that job I’m praying for be a blessing or a bummer?
- Will the healing I’m praying for draw me closer to God or cause me to fall away from Him once I have no more suffering?

So the Holy Spirit, Who dwells within us, “makes intercession for us.” He does it with “groanings which cannot be uttered.”

This is *not* speaking in tongues. I know that because it is clearly stated these groanings “cannot be uttered.” If they cannot be uttered, **then they cannot be an utterance in tongues**, now can they?

This is not me speaking at all; it is the Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes my groanings and makes them His groanings and then brings them before the Father. He interprets and translates them.

One author called this a kind of inter-trinitarian language - something understood only within the Godhead by Father, Son and Spirit.

All of us, even the most eloquent, struggle to express ourselves. Words elude us.

I love to read J.R.R. Tolkien’s, *The Lord of the Rings*. Sometimes I will encounter a sentence whose words and structure almost take my breath away. Tolkien was a linguistics professor, an inventor of languages, a genius. And yet even reading his stuff, as good as it is overall, it’s only every now and again something will totally grip you.

You’ve heard the expression, “a picture is worth a thousand words?” What Romans eight is saying is that the Holy Spirit’s groanings are worthy of the deepest expression of our mind, heart, feelings, dreams, etc., etc. They transcend words.

Everything that we can put into a groaning can be understood and translated perfectly by the Holy Spirit. Then His groanings on our behalf are expressed to the Father.

The Holy Spirit does something else to them. According to verse twenty-seven He **edits** them according to the will of God.

Romans 8:27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Only God can “[search] the hearts of men and women.” I think what is meant is that our Father searches our hearts to know what the mind of the indwelling Holy Spirit is.

Here is what is happening. In our current physical condition we sometimes are reduced to groaning. We don’t really know what to pray for since we don’t know God’s will. The indwelling Holy Spirit does know the Father’s will in the matter! So He edits our groanings to the Father in a way that fully represents our hearts but in submission to the Father’s will for us.

The Holy Spirit prays perfect prayers on our behalf!

We have two divine intercessors:

1. Jesus Christ is at the right hand of the Father in Heaven interceding on our behalf (Hebrews 7:25; First John 2:1).
2. The Holy Spirit is also interceding. The Holy Spirit intercedes with groanings which cannot be uttered that ascend to the throne of grace.

Let’s get practical. How does this help us? Something Charles Spurgeon wrote is enlightening.

I think, dear friends, you will all admit that if a man can pray, his trouble is at once lightened. When we feel that we have power with God and can obtain anything we ask for at His hands, then our difficulties cease to oppress us. We take our burden to our heavenly Father and tell it out in the accents of childlike confidence, and we come away quite content to bear whatever His holy will may lay upon us.

If I am understanding these verses correctly, the Holy Spirit translates my groanings, then edits them in a way that guarantees God will answer according to His will for my life.

In other words, I can pray and, in this truly great spiritual sense, **obtain everything I ask for!**

If properly understood, then, the Holy Spirit's intercession ought to leave me with childlike confidence in my Abba to manage my life as I await the redemption of my body.

I close with another gem from Spurgeon:

O ye people of God, let this last thought abide with you - what condescension is this that Divine Person should dwell in you for ever, and that He should be with you to help your prayers... I bow with reverent amazement, my heart sinking into the dust with adoration, when I reflect that God the Holy [Spirit] helps us when we cannot speak, but only groan. Yea, and when we cannot even utter our groanings, He doth not only help us but He claims as His own particular creation the "groanings that cannot be uttered.