

# Groans of the Spirit

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[0:00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone and I'm one of the pastors here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.

A special welcome if you're new, visiting. We're glad that you're here. This morning we're continuing our series in the book of Romans. The book of Romans is a letter written by the Apostle Paul in the 50s AD. It's called Romans because it is written to the churches in the city of Rome and it is about the gospel.

It's about the good news of Jesus' life and death and resurrection. We are getting to the end of Romans chapter 8. If you read the congregational letter that came out in February, you know that after we finish chapter 8, we are headed back to the book of Genesis for the story of Isaac.

It shows up in Genesis chapters 25 through 37 and then the plan, Lord willing, is when we finish with Isaac, we'll return again to Romans and we'll pick back up with chapter 9.

So we're finishing chapter 8, which is about life in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, and we're continuing a problem that was introduced all the way back in verse 17.

[1:16] So you remember verses 12 through 17 of chapter 8, Paul tells us, look, good news, you've been adopted by God, you're God's children. And then he tells us this in verse 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.

And so there's the problem. Adoption ultimately results in glory, but we have to pass through suffering first. And so that raised this question that we've been kind of chipping away at for a number of weeks, which is, okay, glory, that's great that that's coming.

How do we make it through the suffering in the meantime? Verses 18 through 25 gave us our first answer. We make it through the suffering by meditating on understanding, realizing how great heaven is.

So the hope of future glory helps us make it through present suffering. We spent three weeks working through that first answer.

Now the second answer is coming in verse 26. We make it through present suffering because of the work of the Holy Spirit on our behalf in prayer.

[2:40] We make it through present suffering because of the work of the Holy Spirit on our behalf in prayer. So with that, I invite you to turn with me to Romans chapter 8.

You can find it many places. One of them is page 7 of your worship guide. And as you turn there, remember that this is God's word. Psalm 19 tells us that God's word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold.

And it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb. So that's why we read now Romans chapter 8, starting at verse 26.

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

[3:51] I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we do thank you again this morning for your word, and we ask for your help.

That you would send your Holy Spirit to unstop our ears, to open up our eyes, to clear our minds and soften our hearts, that we would be able to see and hear and understand and believe everything that you've given us in your word.

And most of all, you'd show us Jesus Christ, that we'd see him clearly. You'd grow our love and our affection for Christ. You'd increase our reverence and our awe for him. And you'd lead us in obedience to him.

And we ask all of these things in his mighty name. Amen. One of the great principles of Scripture that I mention to you all from time to time is that God never commands us to do something that he does not enable and empower.

And he does that in a wide variety of ways. God has a vast repertoire of things he gives us to help us. The emphasis in chapter 8 of Romans is God's gift of the Holy Spirit, the help that is given to us by the Spirit.

[5:18] That's why verse 26 starts with the verse, likewise. He's saying, look, here's the next item in this list of supports that I'm giving you.

God enables and empowers all your obedience. Here's how he does it. Here is another way. In your tool belt, your toolbox of God's power, here's one more item.

Here's another help for you as you face the challenges of life. Here's another way that I enable and empower you. It's not just verses 18 through 25.

It's not just a hope of future glory, but also, again, verse 26, the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought.

Now, as we think about this word weakness, there's all sorts of weaknesses that we experience because we're human. The challenges that we face in the world are not just because of our struggle against sin.

[6:26] They're also because of our own frailty. There is this inability, this weakness, that shows up in our lives, even if it's not something sinful, because it's part of being human.

There are significant limitations that we knock up against as finite people. And one way, Paul tells us, that inability, that weakness, that frailty pops up in our lives is when we turn to pray.

And we turn to pray, and our frailty means often we have no idea what to pray for. We know we're supposed to talk to God, but what is it we're actually supposed to say?

We hit up against our own significant human limitations. So someone comes up to you, they say, hey, I really need your prayers, I want you to pray for me, and you say, yes, absolutely, and then you go to pray for them, and you realize, what am I praying to God for?

I know what the problem is. I have no idea what the solution is. I'm not sure what it is exactly I'm supposed to be asking for.

[7:44] There are situations that are truly baffling to us. So you have a friend, and there's a great tragedy, right? They're facing a terminal illness. You know that within a short amount of time, this person will die.

So it doesn't make sense for you to pray for healing. Death comes for all of us. It's inevitable.

Maybe you pray for comfort or relief from pain.

Maybe you ask that God would fix their eyes on heaven. What else? What else can you pray that will help? How is God using this within his greater purposes for the world?

Well, you don't know. You don't know because of your weakness. Maybe someone asks you, hey, I really need you to pray that my kid will get into Harvard.

And you think, well, is that a good prayer? Will that take them closer to Christ, or will it draw them farther away? Will that make them proud or arrogant, or will they serve as a light for the gospel there?

[8:51] Well, for some people, maybe that's a good thing for them. Others, it's a bad thing. And you don't know God's will. You don't know if it's good or bad in this situation.

So how should you pray? Should you do what they've asked? Should you pray that God doesn't get them into Harvard? You don't know. You have great weakness.

And then, of course, there are situations that are overwhelming. And this really gets at the groaning that's spoken of in this passage and the passages that preceded it.

There are tragedies in this life, and when they happen, there are times where grief and sorrow and confusion is so overwhelming, perhaps you feel like you can't even breathe.

Your spouse tells you that they want out of the marriage. Your doctor tells you that you have cancer.

[10:02] Your child has a severe and crippling disability. You find out that your best friend has left the Lord.

Wars and rumors of wars break out, whether in the Middle East or somewhere else. And you want to cry out to God.

You just don't know what to say. And you don't know what to say because of your weakness. It's in that confusion that the Holy Spirit helps.

Verse 26. The Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

In all of those situations, the Holy Spirit takes your desire, he takes your groanings, he takes your confusion and frustration, and he prays to God for exactly what will be for your good and God's glory.

[11:29] The Holy Spirit knows the groanings of your heart. Remember the Holy Spirit dwells within you. Romans chapter 8 verse 9. If you're a Christian, he understands your confusion and frustration.

He knows your inability and your weakness, and so he steps in. The Spirit prays to God for something that will bring your good and his glory.

Now maybe you're not praying for yourself. Maybe you're praying for another Christian. Maybe you're praying for the parent whose kid needs to get into Harvard. The Spirit will pray for something that is for their good and his glory.

You don't know what to pray for? That's okay. Because the Holy Spirit does.

You have a problem. We have a problem. Because of our weakness. And the Holy Spirit helps. The point is this.

[12:40] You pray, and you groan, in your confusion. The Holy Spirit prays and groans with you, but not in confusion, with clarity.

The Holy Spirit knows exactly what to pray for, and he does. The Greek word for help here, speaking of the Spirit, in verse 26, means to come alongside someone or to share the load.

So, some boxes, maybe you've had a box arrive at your house, has this sticker on it, and what does the sticker say? To man lift. It shows these little stick figures, right?

One stick figure on one side of the box, one stick figure on the other. Paul's telling us the life of prayer is like that. There are times when it is too heavy for you to carry alone.

Good news. The Holy Spirit lifts as well. Pastor Derek Thomas illustrates this with the story of moving a piano, which at one point he had to bring into his house, and so he had many men helping him lift this piano, and he said this, I had my hands firmly on a section of the piano, but can I honestly say that I lifted that piano?

[14:32] The truth is, the young men were doing most of the lifting, even though I groaned along with them, as the piano seemed to grow heavier with each step.

Christian, so it is in prayer. Yes, your hands are on the piano.

Yes, you are groaning. The Holy Spirit is doing the real work. The Holy Spirit is doing the heavy lifting.

The point is this. As a Christian, as you walk in this life and you face your own weakness and inability and frustration and confusion in prayer and life, you are not alone.

The Holy Spirit is there with you. Another reason why Jesus' words are true, it's better that he left us so that he could send the Spirit.

[16:05] Another benefit that comes from what we saw in Romans 8, verse 9, that there's this indwelling of the Spirit for every Christian. If you are a Christian, you have the Spirit full stop.

Page 7 of your worship guide, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit refers to his special presence in every believer in Christ.

If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit lives in you and what does it do? Many things including groaning with you in prayer.

Verse 27 goes on to tell us that these prayers of the Spirit are 100% effective.

Verse 27, and he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit. That first phrase, he who searches hearts, is a reference there to God the Father.

[17:16] Knows what is the mind of the Spirit, so God the Father knows the desire of the Holy Spirit and why does God the Father know that desire? Well, 27 goes on, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

So the Spirit's intercession is effective because both God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are members of the Trinity.

They're part of the Godhead. Remember, as Christians, we believe in the triune God. That is, there is one God in three persons. And so, they are always in perfect agreement.

The will of the Father and the will of the Spirit are always the same. And so, the prayers of the Spirit, the answer is always yes.

Remember, the Spirit takes your groanings and longings and confusion and frustration and turns them into a clear prayer for your good and God's glory.

[18:34] Pastor Tim Keller puts it this way, God will either give us what we ask for in prayer or give us what we would have asked for if we knew everything He knows.

God will either give us what we ask for in prayer or give us what we would have asked for if we knew everything He knows.

Now, there is one who asks for what we would have asked for if we knew what God knew, the Holy Spirit. and so those prayers are already being offered.

Great preacher Martin Lloyd-Jones compares the work of the Holy Spirit here to the work of a good lawyer. There are certain situations, if you've lived life long enough, you know this, unless you have a lawyer, you might as well give up.

Now, when our congregant Shabnam was taken by ICE last year, the task number one, number one, find a lawyer. Find a lawyer as fast as possible.

[20:05] They tell you, you know, the conventional wisdom is if you get a DUI and it's your first DUI, what's the real punishment? The real punishment is the \$10,000 you have to shell out for a lawyer.

And they've been saying that for years, so I bet it's \$15,000 or \$20,000 now. Why is it people start legal defense funds? It's for that reason. When we were calling around for Shabnam, they were saying, hey, the going price, \$20,000.

You want someone to help you get out of ICE detention? That is your entry fee. Why? Because a good lawyer represents you.

A good lawyer knows the right thing to say and when to say it. The right lawyer understands the system. He's been there before. He knows how this works.

He anticipates the questions from the judge. The results with the right lawyer are vastly different. Of course, you hear in the news, right, there's celebrity lawyers.

[21:15] Hey, this famous person hired this lawyer, you know, charges \$10,000 an hour, and they've helped all these other famous people get out. And why are they worth that much money?

Because they know how to win. they know how to get it done. Christian, the Holy Spirit always wins his case.

And he is your lawyer. Wow. That's what Paul's saying.

you have the best legal defense possible before God the Father. You feel like this situation in your life is overwhelming and beyond your ability to comprehend and process and understand, and you do not know the right words to say.

No problem. You have a lawyer who does know exactly what to say. I have a friend here in town who at one point was taken advantage of, defrauded, we might say abused, by a local businessman.

[22:42] Actually, a number of people lost money investing with this man. People in our circles, Presbyterian people who trusted him and he walked away with tens of thousands of dollars.

And I talked to this individual at one point about legal representation because he didn't have any. And he was trying to basically negotiate this situation on his own.

And he said this to me, Matthew, we ain't got lawyer money. This is a way of saying, yeah, we've been defrauded, we've been abused, we've taken advantage of, but I don't have the resources. I don't have ten, twenty, thirty thousand dollars to throw at this case. So we're going to have to figure it out on our own. If you are in Christ, you have lawyer money.

You have the best lawyer that money can buy. In fact, you have a lawyer money can't buy. You have a lawyer who can only be purchased in one way.

[23:53] and that is the blood of Jesus Christ. Why is the Spirit with you? Because Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, ascended to the right hand of God the Father, and sends the Spirit to you.

you. Why would you fear? You have someone better than Frank Azar.

The strong man, strong arm. Now, Martin Lloyd-Jones uses that to talk about the Holy Spirit.

Funny enough, the Puritan, Richard Sibbes, who lived a long time before Martin Lloyd-Jones, uses almost the same exact illustration, but not of the Holy Spirit.

No, Sibbes uses it of Christ. The Holy Spirit is not the only lawyer you have on your side. You also have Christ, and by the way, we're going to see this in a couple weeks in Romans, representing you before the Father.

[25:13] Because if you're in Jesus, you have both. You ain't got just one lawyer. You have two lawyers.

Theologians would say you have Jesus standing before the throne of God interceding for you, and you have the Spirit in your heart crying out for you, pleading your case in heaven.

How much better could it get? All because of Jesus' life and death and resurrection.

And so Arkant Hughes sums it up in this way. It's page eight of your worship guide. How marvelous this all is. We have two intercessors, one in heaven, our Lord Jesus who intercedes for our sins and one in our hearts, the Holy Spirit himself.

How greatly we are loved. Christian, how greatly you are loved by God.

[26:29] Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we do praise you and thank you that you haven't left us alone in our confusion and our weakness, that our future doesn't rely on the greatness of our prayers, but instead you've given us the Holy Spirit to help us, to support us, to intercede for us.

We ask that you'd remind us of that. It would give us great courage and joy to continue following you in this life to the glory that is to come. And we ask all of these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Amen. I invite you to stand for our communion hymn.