

From Groaning to Glory

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[0 : 00] Thank you, choir. That was an inspiring song, and we're grateful for the hard work you put into that.

! We have been in this series in Romans for a number of weeks, and I was thinking through whether to prepare an exclusive kind of one-off sermon, taking a break from our series, to talk about America and our 250th anniversary, or whether there was a way to find some of the themes that we're talking about at this time of year, and in this year specifically, within the pages of our text in Romans chapter 8.

And I believe, y'all don't let me know until after the service, but I believe I was able to do that. All right. All right. So, I want to, first of all, just kind of share some thoughts with you before we dive back into Romans chapter 8, where we talked before.

Of all the world's inventions, how many of you know America has been an inventing country? We have invented many great things. Of all the world's inventions, the dry erase board has to be the most remarkable.

Remarkable. Yes. Thank you. It just got there. I was using super glue, and I accidentally glued my finger and my thumb together.

[1 : 45] It's okay now. What do you call a cow with no legs? Ground beef. Y'all know. What do you call a cow with two legs shorter than the others?

Lean beef. Why do cows wear bells? Because their horns don't work. I could keep going, but I think I've milked the cow jokes long enough.

I know, I know. They're utterly terrible. All right. And of course, one of the best dad jokes out there, when is a door, not a door, when it's a jar.

There you go. How many of you, your child has said, dad, I'm hungry. You said, nice to meet you, hungry. I'm Sam. What are y'all doing?

You're groaning, either audibly or inside. You're groaning right now, right? I'm wondering what on earth all these dad jokes have to do with America's 250th or Romans chapter eight. Well, I'm glad you asked that question because groaning is exactly the reaction that I was hoping to get you to this morning.

[3 : 02] Groaning means make it stop, right? Some of you are begging for it to stop right now. Well, as we celebrate America's 250th birthday this weekend, our nation, if we're honest, has been for quite some time doing a lot of real groaning.

No matter your politics, we look at our nation, we look at our country and we feel the division, we feel the tension, we feel the brokenness. We love our nation, but we groan for it.

And it just so happens that Paul picks up where we left off last week in Romans chapter eight by talking about groaning. So as we think past, we think that of the 250 years that have just passed in our nation's history, history.

We see videos like that and we hear choir songs and we sing our national anthem. And I know there are people in the room whose birthplace was not America and we're grateful for your presence here.

Some of you have become naturalized citizens and I'm sure you share from your own perspective some of the love that we as natural born American citizens have for our country.

[4 : 17] But as we study American history, we think back through the 250 years that have passed. There's much to be proud of. If we're honest, there's some that would cause us to hang our head in shame.

And we look at our current moment in American society and it does cause heartbreak. It does cause groaning.

So turn with me if you're in your Bibles, if you would, to Romans chapter eight. And let's look at verse 18. Paul talks about groaning for about 13 verses here.

And I'll try not to make you to groan too much more as we explore the theme of from groaning to glory, from groaning to glory.

This is also true of American history. You think of the birth pains that America went through finding its liberty from England, the United Kingdom, and going through the difficulties of becoming a nation, getting its feet under it.

[5 : 33] And then to the glory that came as America became the world's foremost superpower and oftentimes a force for good around this globe. And we see the glory that America has enjoyed.

But we know the groaning that it took to get it there. And that mirrors what a lot of us experience as the people of God. So let's look at Romans chapter eight and verse 18.

If you wouldn't mind joining me in standing if you're able to, we're just going to read the first few verses together. And then we'll work through the rest of the chapter. Yet what we suffer now, verse 18, is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.

From groaning to glory. For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse.

But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

[6 : 51] And we believers also groan. Even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory. For we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering.

We too wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children. Including the new bodies he has promised us.

God, we thank you for this passage that applies to so many parts of our life and our nation. God, I pray that you reveal your truth to us. May it be done by the power of your spirit.

It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You may be seated. Thank you for standing. In the first 17 verses we worked through last Sunday here in Romans 8. We talked about, we saw how the Holy Spirit is working inside of us to break the power of our past.

To free us. To change our identity. And now, as Paul is picking it up here in verse 18, we see that God's rescue plan to do that in us is much bigger than just saving our individual souls.

[8 : 01] He is working to heal, to restore all of his creation. So, this leads us, as we study from groaning to glory in the pages of Romans 8, this leads us to the first thought I want you to take home with you today.

While we are waiting, God is working. You could say it this way. While we are groaning, God is preparing us for glory. While we are waiting, God is always at work.

For 250 years, the American experiment has been remarkable. It's been a remarkable experiment in human freedom, in liberty. But no human empire, no nation, going back to Greece and Rome and Babylon and any empire or nation that has risen above the rest in the history of this world, has ever been or will ever be the final destination.

It is not the culmination. It's not the end. Every country, including our own, experiences the groaning of a broken world. We did it at the beginning of our nation and we still do it today.

We see the groaning and the brokenness around us. So, don't judge God's ultimate plan by the temporary chaos you see when you turn on the news or you log on to social media or you just interact with those around you or even when you look in the mirror.

[9 : 22] God is working through all that. He has a plan that is bigger than any single nation. So, I want to highlight some doctrines that we find in the pages of Romans 8 as we work through this.

And remarkably, in verses 18 through 30, I want to draw your attention to this idea of glorification. What is glorification? It is the new creation but a future glory that will come.

God is working on us to reveal his glory in us. That is a wild concept to wrap our heads around. That God wants to use broken humans like you and me to reveal his glory.

Oftentimes, God has used a people group or a nation to reveal his glory. We've seen him do that even through the United States of America.

Look at verse 18 down through 22. We see this idea that your present suffering is real. God is not ignoring or denying or minimizing your present suffering that you're going through.

[10:33] So, whatever is going on in your life that you're suffering through right now, whether it's external problems or internal problems, whether it's something you can't control or a failing on your part, your suffering is real.

But it's not the end. A future glory awaits. So, don't judge God's faithfulness by today's circumstances. Today's pain is not the final chapter.

Verse 18, what did it say? What we suffer now is, what did it say? Nothing compared to the glory that later will come.

That he will reveal later. Do you see the wording there? It said, what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. You know what that implies? That the glory is real. The glory is already present. It hasn't all been revealed yet. Man, that encourages me. When I feel that there is no hope.

[11:32] When I feel that nothing is really going to get better. You know, we talked about last Sunday. You move somewhere. You change jobs. You try to get a fresh start in some way. Only to be reminded that it's still you in the new place.

It's still you in the new job. And it's still you carrying the same you that caused problems in the last place. Or the last job. But through all that, God is saying he's working on you through the groaning to bring you to be aware.

To reveal his glory within that situation. And within your life. And within the life of our nation. So your present suffering is real, but it's not the end.

And then look down at verse 23. We believers also groan. Even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory.

We know, yes, God's Spirit seals me. I'm promised to be with God forever in what we call heaven. He said, but then we long for our bodies to release.

[12:38] To be released from sin and suffering. We're longing for that day. Why isn't it here yet, God? God, Paul said it this way. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus. God, don't drag this thing out.

It's getting rough down here. And then he says, we too wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children. So it's okay to feel like you're waiting.

It's okay to feel like you're in an in-between time. And this has eschatological implications. That's eschatology. What is eschatology?

The doctrine of the end times. The things that have not yet happened. The things that we leave to God in his hands. And we can read in the book of Revelation.

We can look at Daniel's prophecy. We can look at many, Isaiah, Jeremiah, many of the Old Testament prophets. And then the writings of Paul and others. In 1 Thessalonians, we see eschatology pop up throughout the scriptures.

[13:38] When they're talking about things that haven't yet come. Things that haven't yet come to pass. This is eschatology. And that's what this is talking about. How does eschatology apply to our everyday life?

It's the idea of trust. It's the idea of while I'm waiting, I know God is working. So it's okay for me to wait right now. Try telling your kid that.

When he's waiting for dessert. And you say it's okay to wait. Or he's waiting for a treat or a reward or a surprise. Tell me what the surprise is. No, then it wouldn't be a surprise. Yeah, but I want to know right now.

I don't want to wait. And we don't want to wait either. But God is teaching us that while we're waiting, he's working. The groaning brings the glory.

It's all part of the process. Trust the process of our heavenly father. Faith doesn't mean having everything now. It means trusting God when you don't have everything.

[14:40] Trusting that he will provide everything you need. And someday he'll provide everything you could possibly want. When your soul is aligned with his.

Problem is our souls are not aligned with his. Our souls are distracted. Our mind, our will, our emotions are influenced by this world around us. By the brokenness that still struggles with the spirit within us.

And so we feel like we don't have everything we want. And we struggle with waiting. So your present suffering is real, but it's not the end. It's okay to feel like you're waiting.

It can be a good thing. And then in verse 26, Romans 8 and verse 26. By the way, if you don't have a copy of the word of God, there should be one in front of you in the seat back.

Or you can look on with somebody who does. The Bible app is on the phone. That can be a handy thing for you to pull up as well. But Romans chapter 8 and verse 26. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness.

[15:47] For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. You ever realize that? Has that ever hit you? I don't exactly know what I should be praying for right now. Yes. But Paul is identifying with that as he writes to the church in Rome.

But he says, Here's more groaning, right? More groaning that will result in God's glory.

The Holy Spirit is praying for us. And the Father who knows our hearts, knows all hearts, he knows what that Holy Spirit is saying. He knows what those groanings mean.

For the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. That's the secret. When you and I pray for things, sometimes it's in harmony with God's will.

Harmony means it sounds right, you know? How many of you like to sing harmony? How many of you are able? Your ear hears harmony parts. There's some kind of halfway. Yeah. My dad was a pastor growing up.

[16:47] His secretary was, she was a natural harmony singer. And she would sit with our family. I would stand next to her so every time we sang during church, she would sing harmony parts. And I learned harmony that way just by standing next to her.

So I would always then go and pick out harmony parts myself. Harmony means you're not singing the melody line that was written, the main line that you normally sing when you sing a song. But you're singing a part that is closely related to that.

And it meshes well. It breathes well. It works well together. And so when you and I pray, we're not always praying in harmony with the Holy Spirit. But when our hearts are aligned with God, even if our requests aren't always aligned with God's will, the Holy Spirit prays on our behalf.

He says, God, this is what we need. This is what they need. This is what they want. Their heart is toward you. And even if their request is not toward you, I'm praying for them.

I'm pleading on their behalf in harmony with God's will. So the Spirit is making intercession for us. What is intercession? It is hardcore prayer.

[18:00] Okay? What is intercessory prayer? It means you are ridding yourself of any other distraction. You are focusing in on going before God and pleading for a cause.

And the Holy Spirit is doing that for you and for me. For your kids. For your grandkids. For your coworker. For your neighbor that's on your heart.

For the people that make you, keep you up at night. The people that make you lose sleep. Even when we don't intercede for them as often as we could, the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us. That's a comfort for you and for me. So while we're waiting, the Holy Spirit's making intercession. While we're waiting, God is working. And then down in verse 28.

As you're looking at verse 28, I want to share this verse with you. Jesus is able to save those who come to God through him completely and forever since he always lives to make intercession for them.

[19:09] Isn't it amazing that God makes intercession for us? We're going to see that again. That the Holy Spirit is not the only one doing the interceding. In just a minute, a little bit later in Romans 8, we're going to see how Jesus the Son is also making intercession for us.

But it is such a comfort and a reminder to the believer that God is praying to himself for us. What an incredible thought. And then down in verse 28, if you're there.

We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

How many of you have heard that verse before? Romans 8, 28. We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God. Yeah. That's a verse that we love to claim. Sometimes when things are going wrong, it's like, yep, but all things are going to work together for good.

That's true. But we don't always see the good when it comes. Because the good is aligned with God's purpose and we don't always see that in the moment. Well, how did this turn out to be good?

[20:12] What good came from this? We can't see it in that moment. This is a waiting time. But we can trust that while we're groaning, glory is the future. Glory is promised.

God is working. And this has to do with God's sovereignty. God's sovereignty. Hang on. I got ahead of myself. There we go. Down through verse 30.

This is talking about how God is in control of all of it. He chose us. He knew his people in advance. And he chose us. And he called us. And he says to all that he called.

He will work all things in our lives together for our good and for his glory. And what does it say in verse 30? Having chose them, he called them to come to him.

And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. That's how we can wake up in the morning and say, I have right standing with God because God told me I did. I'm not out of favor with God because I messed up last night.

[21 : 12] I'm not favor. I'm not out of favor with God because I got drunk. I'm not out of favor with God because I looked at pornography. I'm not out of favor with God because I was angry and yelled at my kids.

I'm not out of favor with God because of fill in the blank. I have favor with God because he gave that to me. I may have from time to time go off and make a choice that will lead to bad consequences it will be hurtful to myself, to others and I'll have to endure that until I align my will back with God's will but all the way through, while I'm waiting, while I'm groaning in this world of brokenness I have right standing with God, I have his favor because I'm his child and since he gave that to us in verse 30 having given them right standing he gave them his what's that last word in verse 30 what is it? his glory he gave them his glory let's put us in there he gave us his glory that is what is promised we sing the battle hymn of the republic not too long ago glory, glory, hallelujah glory, glory, hallelujah praise be to God because he gave us as his children not because we're Americans not because we're white or black or Hispanic or Asian or we're rich or poor or anything else not because of any social standing on this earth but because he gave us his grace to repent of our sins to turn to him and say God I place my faith in you and you alone so glory is promised and then number two and we only have two points so this is the last point ready?

God's love never fails while we're waiting God is working and we can be sure that his work is always motivated and acted out through the lens of his love it always reflects his love for us and his love never fails 1 Corinthians chapter 13 is called the love chapter and one of the ends of that it uses a word that's charity it's a placeholder for love it means the same thing and so it says charity never fails love never fails have you noticed that real love never fails there is selfish love there is attraction there is sexual love there is self-serving love there is all kinds of love out there but real love that comes from the inventor of love the author of love which is God that love never fails it took Jesus to the cross but then what happened did he stay dead was that the end of his story come on church

I'm asking you if Jesus stayed dead there you go y'all know the answer to this one this isn't hard no he came back to life it's why we celebrate Easter around here in a big way because Jesus is alive love love could not fail love will not fail you so look down in verse 31 what shall we say about such wonderful things as these if God is for us who can ever be against us God's love will never fail you why because he's for you God is for you and you don't have to live in fear since he didn't spare even his own son but he gave him up for us all he is for us and he gave his son for us and then look this is talking about the atonement the atonement that Jesus made the atoning sacrifice where he recognized that we were slaves to sin we owed a debt of sin to darkness to death to hell and

[25 : 26] Jesus came and paid! debt had left a crimson stain but he washed it white as snow it's what Jesus did in the atonement when he atoned or paid the sacrifice the sacrificial debt for our sins 2nd Corinthians 5:21 Paul wrote this and it has powerful implications for you and me God made Jesus who had no sin to be sin for us can we say that God made Jesus who had no sin to be for us so that in Jesus we might become or embody God's righteousness there's no way that you and I could be God's righteousness but through Jesus alone you and I are sinners we're always going to be attracted or drawn toward what is wrong toward what is unrighteous but since Jesus became our sacrifice for us he gave us right standing with God now he can change what we're drawn to he can change what we find ourselves getting involved in in this world like huh me what

I volunteered to work in the nursery at church I'm not that kind of person I volunteered to sing in the choir where did that come from because God can change you we talked about that last Sunday God changing your nature that is part of becoming God's righteousness he changes you to become what you could be not what you have been and then in Psalm 56 in verse 9 the psalmist knew this David knew this when he wrote this so many years ago he said this I know I don't know everything there are things I doubt there are things I fear but he said this I know that God is what this I know that God is what!

does it really matter who is against you I feel like this world is against me I feel like culture is against me does it really matter because God is for you that's what matters so your failures don't get the final word because God is for you verse 33 who dares accuse us us whom God has chosen for his own no one because God himself has given us right standing with him so who can condemn us no one because Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us and is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand pleading for us so Jesus is also interceding for us he's also pleading for us he's also praying for us we ask each other to pray for each other when we have a need or a burden right we'll say would you pray for this and we hope that person does pray for it but you know what we can be confident in

Jesus is praying for us the Holy Spirit is praying for us and he is for us so while we're waiting while we're groaning in the middle of the!

God is preparing glory his love will never fail and then down in verse 35 we're almost done can anything ever separate us from God's love from Christ's love does it mean that he no longer loves us if we have trouble of course not calamity or persecuted we're hungry we're poor we're destitute we're in danger we're threatened!

[29 : 05] with death does it mean that God doesn't love us when these things happen to us of course not as the scripture says in the old testament prophets for your sake for God's sake we're being killed every day we're being slaughtered like sheep you think you're the first Christians to suffer in the name of God you think you're the first Christians to go through a hard time of course not no verse 37 despite all these things overwhelming victory is fail you love has never failed love only brings overwhelming victory and this also says that hard times are not a sign that God has abandoned you hard times are not a sign that God has is throwing the book at you and making you pay for all the wrong you've done that is not who he is he closed the book he wiped out your record of wrong he washed it in his blood and he gave you right standing with him first

Peter 4 13 rejoice in the degree that you can share in the sufferings of Christ so that when his glory is revealed in you you may also rejoice and be glad instead of saying man I guess I just haven't been perfect so God is getting me with all this trouble that is going on in my life John was just coming back from vacation and he can tell you himself about everything that they went through on their return trip home with their truck and trailer and just the insanity now God showed up and he kept it from being too bad that they couldn't recover from it right but look he didn't come in saying man I guess I just wasn't faithful enough in prayer so God was getting me no I'm glad that he could share I'm glad that you can share I'm glad that I can share in the sufferings of Christ none of us will ever suffer to the degree that Jesus did when all the weight of the sin and the brokenness of this world was placed on him and he sacrificed his very life on this earth on the cross for you and for me but when we can share a little bit of the suffering then we know that glory is coming

I know that God is going to show up big in that family's life he has and he'll continue to I know that he'll show up big in yours and I've seen him show up big in mine and I believe that the best is yet to come do you believe the best from our heavenly father is yet to come do you believe there's glory waiting then you can endure this groaning because the glory is coming nothing can at the last two verses here I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love this has to do with God's covenant look we went through the atonement we talked about Christ interceding and praying for us talked about how Christ is enough through the problems through the suffering that we have to endure and then we get to God's covenant promise in verse 38 nothing can ever separate us from God's love death life angels demons our fears for today our worries about tomorrow not even the powers of hell can separate us from

God's love no power in the sky above or in the earth below nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord this is the unbreakable covenant of God's love your love is flawed my love is imperfect I love you but my love might fail you I believe looking across here most of you love me some of you I'm not sure I'm kidding but your love might fail me at some point but nothing can ever separate you from God's love and nothing can ever separate me from God's love that is the covenant that we can rest in we can go to sleep at night knowing God made a covenant with me because of his son Jesus Christ and if my faith is in him then I'm safe if my faith is in myself

I'm not safe if my faith is in the church I'm not safe if my faith is in my past or my present or my future my kids if my faith covenant and I am safe there's glory coming so we've gone through Romans chapter 8 verses 1 through 39 between last week and this week and we saw well I can't

skip over this verse alright real quick if we are unfaithful he remains faithful for he cannot deny who he is this is a point that directly applies to what we were just talking about so before we recap the chapter and we close I want to draw your attention to this how many of you believe that you've always been faithful to God through your whole life and you've never been unfaithful to him I was really hoping nobody would raise their hand so good job good job so

[34 : 33] I'm not going to make you raise your hand to highlight your unfaithfulness to God but you all recognize even when you were unfaithful to him I got both hands up yeah if we are unfaithful look that's in the Bible Paul was writing to Timothy and he said I have learned this even when I am unfaithful to God he remains faithful because he cannot die who he is deny who he is why because we're in that covenant we are in him we are in Christ so we can separate us from

God's love this is why this is one of the most important chapters that Paul ever wrote in any of his letters to the early churches because this tells us our standing in God it gives us our identity we are God's family it gives us our purpose an explanation for this life nothing God is working nothing is meaningless nothing is a waste of time God is working even in the meantime while we're waiting and then finally it gives you an answer for all the fears that pop into your head all the thoughts that threaten to undermine your emotional well-being your mental health God gives you an answer for that nothing can separate you from his love you are loved you are important for 250 years people have called

America a work in progress and we have been we've been a nation striving for a more perfect union but we haven't achieved perfection yet we are moving in a common direction as people as a nation toward liberty toward good and equality for all the exact same thing is true of your spiritual life you are a work in progress you are moving in a direction toward Jesus God doesn't demand that your life be flawless or perfect he just wants your eyes fixed on him looking unto Jesus the author of Hebrews wrote so on this historic weekend of America's 250th birthday we can thank God for the blessings he shown us for the blessings he bestowed upon our nation we can celebrate Christian patriotism but not Christian nationalism there's a difference there Charles de Gaulle one of the greatest

French heroes that ever lived put it this way patriotism is when love of your own people comes first it's not a thing wrong with that nationalism is when hate for people other than your own comes first there's a difference there patriotism is affection and love and devotion for the nation of your birth it's praying for it it's working to make it the best possible nation and people that it could be nationalism is when you sense superiority to all other nations and you naturally have resistance or think less of or even hatred toward those who are not of your nation may God give us Christian patriots not Christian nationalists that's the difference for the child of God we are not only citizens of the United States of America we are citizens of the kingdom of heaven of the kingdom of God itself so you and I can anchor our souls in something bigger something eternal something everlasting something permanent governments will change cultures change countries change but here in Romans 8 Paul gives us two truths that we can anchor our lives on and this is what I'll leave you with number one God is for you and number two God will never let you go the Christian life is not built on the promise of an easy road or a perfect superior nation the Christian life is built on those two truths God's unshakable promise his covenant with you the faithful love revealed in Jesus Christ can we say that together and we'll pray number one ready God is for you number two he God we thank you for those truths we thank you how you have shown them to your people even in the [39 : 52] United States of America God your people were always the children of Israel and then after your death and resurrection you opened that up to the Gentiles and you said all of you are welcome to be my people you didn't replace Israel with America you didn't replace Israel even with the church you expanded your people to be peoples of every nation and someday every knee will bow from people all across this world and every tongue will say or confess that Jesus Christ is Lord so we thank you for the promise that you are for your people and you are for our nation as we follow you we thank you that the promise that you will never let us go applies to us and it applies to our nation as we follow you I pray for our nation I pray for Texas I pray for Henrietta I pray for our church pray for my family we remember that

God is for us God will never let us go while the music plays before we close with a final song I want to ask you this question whether you're a guest this morning or you're a regular attender or a long time member I want to ask you the same question how many of you know that you are in Christ that you placed your faith in him and him alone for the forgiveness of your sins to become his child

would you testify to that say yes I know that I am in Christ would you testify to that say yes that's me thank you put your hands down how many of you would say I couldn't raise my hand a moment ago but I would like to talk to someone about finding out how to be in Christ how to be part of that family would you slip your hand up now and I'll pray for you as well say I want to know more about becoming a child of

God is working and his love will never fail me would you slip your hand up now whatever you're going through I'll pray for you thank you thank you thank you thank you there's hands all over the room God knows exactly what's going on in your heart in your life what the burden is whether it's you whether it's someone else and you're burden for them or whatever is going on God God we can certainly set that up for you brother

Greg is going to come and lead us in a final song kind of share a song with us before we go but we thank you for celebrating not only our risen Savior and in this worship service but also America's 250th birthday on this very special weekend it