

The Voice Beneath the Groaning

Romans 8:18–27

Last year, a recently retired woman named Sharon answered her telephone. The voice sounded exactly like her adult daughter, April. She was sobbing and said she had caused a terrible automobile accident and been arrested. A man claiming to be an attorney said her daughter needed fifteen thousand dollars for bail and warned Sharon not to tell the bank why she was withdrawing the money. It all sounded real. Sharon withdrew the money from her retirement savings and handed it to a courier who stopped by her house. After that money was collected, she received another phone call demanding thirty thousand dollars more. At this point, family members intervened and contacted Sharon's actual daughter, who was safe at work. The voice had been manufactured by artificial intelligence. The first voice sounded like her daughter and drove her into fear. The true voice restored reality.

We also hear many voices. Some say God has abandoned us, aging has made us useless, and death will win. In Romans 8 Jesus teaches us to listen beneath those voices. Creation groans. Christians groan. Even the Holy Spirit groans. But beneath the groaning is God's true voice, promising hope, resurrection, redemption, and glory.

Paul begins, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." He does not say suffering is imaginary. Aching joints, frightening tests, empty chairs, lost independence, shrinking savings, and failing memory are real. Yet Paul says present suffering cannot compare with the glory to be revealed. Creation waits "with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God." In

Christ, you are those sons and daughters, heirs of a creation released from decay.

That future reveals the Father's good will for us now. The children of the coming kingdom are to live accordingly. We are to love God wholly and our neighbors as ourselves. We are to trust the Father, speak truth, protect life, forgive, serve generously, remain faithful, and bear witness to Christ. Paul says that we have "the firstfruits of the Spirit." The Spirit's work in us now is meant to give the world a taste of the goodness that is coming. Our patience, generosity, forgiveness, and hope should be firstfruits of the restored creation.

But what has our life produced? Creation groans because it has been "subjected to futility." Disease, deterioration, disaster, and death fill the world. Yet we are not merely victims. We have joined the rebellion. The Father says, "Trust Me," but we trust what we can count, control, and insure. We trust savings until markets drop, health until scans change, and political power until elections disappoint us. Then fear tells us that God is no longer ruling.

The Father says, "Love your neighbor," but we become impatient with the spouse who moves slowly, harsh with the family member who repeats a question, demanding toward the nurse or clerk, and contemptuous toward younger people. We call gossip "concern," resentment "discernment," outrage "staying informed," and spiritual withdrawal "retirement." We say, "I have done my share." But there is no retirement from loving God or our neighbor, from prayer, forgiveness, generosity, witness, and mercy.

Much of our groaning is not holy longing for redemption. It is grumbling because our preferences have not been honored. Pain becomes bitterness, weakness becomes self-pity, and fear becomes permission to stop serving. Paul says, "We hope for what we do not see." But we demand

that God show us everything now. We want the diagnosis resolved, the family repaired, the grief removed, and the future explained. When He does not explain Himself, we listen to the counterfeit voice: “God has forgotten you.” That voice sounds convincing. But it is false.

The eternal Son entered creation’s groaning, took our flesh, and kept every command we have broken. He loved the Father with His whole being and His neighbor as Himself. He trusted when tempted, served when exhausted, spoke truth when threatened, forgave when attacked, and prayed when abandoned. Then He carried our failure to the cross. The innocent Son entered creation’s groaning. Thorns crowned His head, and darkness covered the land. He bore our fear, grumbling, loveless words, delayed obedience, selfishness, and resistance to the Holy Spirit. He paid every debt with His blood.

On the third day, Jesus rose bodily. That resurrection stands at the heart of Romans 8. Paul says that we “groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” You are already adopted through faith in Christ, though its full revelation is still coming. Your body is not a disposable shell. God will redeem it. The eyes that dim will see Christ. The ears that strain will hear Him. The knees that ache will bend without pain. The mind that forgets will know and rejoice. Jesus rose, and because He rose, you will rise.

He delivers that redemption to you now. In Holy Absolution, Christ speaks over every counterfeit accusation: “I forgive you all your sins.” Your conscience may say, “You are still guilty.” Christ says, “It is finished.” At this altar, the risen Lord gives you His true body and blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Into your aging body He places the pledge of resurrection. Into your fearful heart He places peace. Into your dying flesh He gives life.

Then Paul gives one more promise: “The Spirit helps us in our weakness.” We do not know what to pray for as we ought. Sometimes all we have is a sigh beside a hospital bed, a graveside tear, or “Lord, help me.” Grief, fear, or failing memory steals the words. But the Spirit does not abandon you. “The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” Creation groans. The Christian groans. Then the Spirit carries our groaning into the heart of the Father. Your prayer may be broken, but it is not lost.

Forgiven, restored, and helped by the Spirit, we return to the Father’s commands—not to earn adoption, because Christ has made us heirs; not to purchase glory, because Christ has secured it. We obey because the true voice has restored us to reality. Call the person you have avoided. Forgive the old injury. Speak well of the person you criticize. Encourage the young. Give generously. Pray for those who follow you. Do not use weakness as an excuse for cruelty.

These works do not save you. Jesus saves you. But they honor the Father, confirm your identity in Christ, and show that the Spirit is forming you into the likeness of the Son.

The false voice on Sharon’s telephone created terror, demanded payment, and stole her peace. The true voice brought her back to reality. So listen beneath the groaning. Hear the true voice of Christ. Your present suffering cannot compare with the coming glory. You are an adopted child of God. Your body will be redeemed. The Spirit is helping you. Your sins are forgiven. Creation will be set free. When Christ appears, every counterfeit voice will be silenced. The groaning will end. The children of God will be revealed. And the glory will begin. Amen.