

Sermon for August 30, 2026 – 14th Sunday after Pentecost

Romans 8:18-25 (EHV)

Theme: **Groan in anticipation of God's promised glory, which**

- 1) Is won for us by Christ,
- 2) Sustains creation in its suffering,
- 3) Gives purpose to our suffering.
- 4) Empowers us to endure patiently.

¹⁸ For I conclude that our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ In fact, creation is waiting with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in the hope ²¹ that even creation itself will be set free from slavery to corruption, in order to share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. ²² For we know that all of creation is groaning with birth pains right up to the present time. ²³ And not only creation, but also we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we eagerly await our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ Indeed, it was for this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he already sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for something we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patient endurance.

Whenever suffering arises in our life, the devil tempts us to deal with it by questioning God's goodness. The Lord, however, invites us to deal with our suffering differently. He encourages us to groan to Him like the Psalmists of the Bible: to bring all our struggles, doubts, sorrows, and fears to Him in prayer. Sadly, the devil is often present too when we do this, enticing us to turn our groans into grumblings against God.

Why do we so easily fall into such sin? Because, like Peter, who sank beneath the water when he let the wind and waves distract him from Jesus' command to come to Him, we sink into a spirit of resignation when we let our suffering distract us from the salvation God promised us in Christ Jesus. Thankfully, as Jesus reached out to Peter in His grace, so He reaches out to us – saving us from ourselves by forgiving our sins and redirecting our attention upon Him.

With the apostle Paul as our guide, let us learn to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Let us learn to **Groan in anticipation of God's promised glory, which** 1) is won for us by Christ, 2) sustains creation in its suffering, 3) gives purpose to our suffering, and 4) empowers us to endure patiently.

Part One: A glory won for us by Christ.

Shortly before our sermon text, the Apostle Paul tells Christians the good news of how Jesus set us free from the law of sin and death so we can belong to Him. “*So then, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,*” he thunders.ⁱ All sin is paid for through Jesus' cross. It is finished. There is no condemnation for those who believe in Him.

And to ensure that we would repent and believe in Him, God sent His Spirit through His Gospel to create faith in our hearts to receive His salvation in repentance. He did this to make us His children, as the apostle Paul writes: *The Spirit himself joins our spirit in testifying that we are God's children. Now if we are children, we are also heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, since we suffer with him, so that we may also be glorified with him.*ⁱⁱ

Sadly, many people focus so much on the glory this verse says we will share with Christ that they miss the part that speaks about our suffering with Him. Is the victor's crown coming? Absolutely – and it's already yours, purchased and secured by Christ Himself. But God still wants us to run the race that He marked out for us for His glory. He allows us to suffer with Jesus – not to earn salvation, but so that the image of His Son might be reflected in our lives to the glory of His name.ⁱⁱⁱ

Therefore, we should take Jesus' words to heart: *"In this world you are going to have trouble. But be courageous! I have overcome the world."*^{iv}

But it's hard to be courageous when troubles pile on – especially when they are not a direct result of our confession of Christ. I mean, if I get beaten up because I confess Christ, I can understand my purpose in suffering. But what about random crime, natural disasters, theft, accidents, cognitive dysfunction, disease, or mental anguish? These things seem to serve no purpose other than to cause pain.

Understanding how the devil uses such suffering to tempt us to question God's love, Paul redirects our attention to God's promises. He writes:

¹⁸ For I conclude that our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.

Notice that Paul does not minimize suffering. He doesn't say, "Come on, it's not all that bad. You can handle it." No, he takes it all, as hard and as horrible as it is, and puts it on a scale. At first, it seems untipable, until he puts God's promised glory on the other side of the scale. Then suffering goes flying!

Paul's point is this: "Yes, your suffering is great, but the glory God promised you in Christ is greater. Your earthly suffering is temporary, affecting your body. The glory that Christ won for you is everlasting, freeing both body and soul forever. Every day of groaning is a day closer to that glory."

But that invites the question: what is the glory that outweighs all earthly suffering? It is the glory of being revealed as God's children – coheirs of heaven with Christ, as the apostle John once wrote: *See the kind of love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are! ... Dear friends, we are children of God now, but what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when he is revealed, we will be like him, and we will see him as he really is.*^v

We can be certain that this truth applies to us because Jesus kept the law perfectly in our place, died in payment for our sins on the cross, and rose from the dead to declare our forgiveness. It is finished; because of Jesus, God declares every believer His dearly loved child in the sacrament of Holy Baptism. He also reassures us of that forgiveness in the sacrament of Holy Communion, where He offers us Jesus' true body and blood, given and shed for us for the forgiveness of sins.

Yes, because Jesus groaned on the cross as He suffered to win our salvation, we can groan in hope, confident that nothing can separate us from the love God has for us in Christ.^{vi}

Part Two: A glory that sustains creation in its suffering.

To show that our hope in God's promises is not misplaced, the Apostle directs our attention to the natural world that shares in our hope. He writes:

¹⁹ In fact, creation is waiting with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in the hope ²¹ that even creation itself will be set free from slavery to corruption, in order to share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.

To understand Paul's point, we must first understand how closely creation is tied to humanity. The entire natural world was created for man to teach him about the great, caring love God has for him, and to be a means by which man could express his love for God in return by caring for nature. Sadly, ever since Adam's fall, humanity does not view the natural world in this way. Instead, it sees creation as something to be selfishly used, possessed, or exploited. Creation's true purpose is lost on humanity.

Therefore, even though no part of the natural world outside of man is responsible for sin, *creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it.* Because human sin made it impossible for plants and animals to fulfil the purpose for which God created them, He subjected them to another purpose: to be a sign of the corruption and destruction human sin causes. Some animals eat animals, and some plants produce poison. Instead of bringing blessings, certain insects bring hurt; certain viruses and bacteria cause disease. Death and decay abound in creation, not because nature wants it, but because God subjected creation to it *in the hope that even creation itself will be set free from slavery to corruption, in order to share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.*

Therefore, *creation is waiting with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed.* The suffering creation endures is temporary, and it knows it. Therefore, every mournful howl, chirp, cry, or song the animal world expresses in suffering is a groan of hope, a groan looking forward to God's promise to make all things new after the last of God's elect is gathered. Then, when Christ returns to gather His children to glory, creation itself will be liberated to fulfil the original purpose for which God created it.

Understand, therefore, that the groans of creation are not sighs of resignation and despair. They are groans of anticipation in the same hope that we Christians have in Christ, as Paul explains.

Part Three: A glory that gives purpose to our suffering.

²² For we know that all of creation is groaning with birth pains right up to the present time. ²³ And not only creation, but also we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we eagerly await our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

As painful as every contraction is, a soon-to-be mother knows they serve a purpose. And if, in the pain, she is tempted to lose sight, her husband, nurse, or doctor, reminds her, “Keep pushing, your child is coming.” And so the soon-to-be mother groans in hope, anticipating the joy she will have when her child is born. As the suffering increases, so does her inner joy, as she groans louder in anticipation of her child.

God wants us to view our suffering like the pains of childbirth: a sign that something wonderful is about to be born. And just as contractions increase in frequency and intensity closer to birth, so the sufferings creation endures will do the same.

Seeing this causes us to groan, not in resignation, but in hope. Why? Because God has given us the Holy Spirit, who not only serves as a deposit, guaranteeing our glory. He also directs our attention to God’s promises in Scripture, encouraging us to offer the same prayers to God that the Psalmist offered when they asked Him: “How long?” Yes, the Spirit encourages us to lay all our problems before God, not in despair, but in hope, as we eagerly anticipate God to fulfil His promise to raise our redeemed bodies and bring us into glory as His adopted children.

Part Four: A glory that empowers us to endure patiently.

²⁴ Indeed, it was for this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he already sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for something we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patient endurance.

One of the biggest misconceptions people have about Christianity is that faith in Christ will “save” you from earthly suffering. Is that true? Look at our sermon text.

The apostle Paul does not say Christ saved you for the hope of having a trouble-free earthly life. No, He saved you for the hope of everlasting life with him in glory – a hope that will be fully realized when he raises the dead on the last day.

Imagine being the child of wealthy parents who not only want to give you much of their wealth but also desire you to be financially responsible in the future. To accomplish these goals, they set up a trust fund that will give you access to that wealth after you turn 30. Even though the money is yours, you still have to struggle to find work and pay for things until that time comes. As difficult as that might be, you understand that none of the financial struggles you face now can compare with the financial security you will have in the future.

How much greater than a trust fund is the hope God has graciously given us in Christ! Our everlasting redemption is complete, purchased with Jesus' blood, and guaranteed by His resurrection. Our hope is real, kept in heaven for us.^{vii} Nothing can separate us from it.^{viii}

Because all this is true, we patiently endure all the suffering God allows in our lives. Are these sufferings painful? Absolutely. But as painful as they are, God's promised glory remains. They can't separate us from it. This Gospel truth, guaranteed to us in Christ and given to us in Word and Sacrament, empowers us to endure our sufferings patiently as we look forward to the glory God promised us in Christ.

Yes, dear Christian, whenever suffering pops up in your life, don't be shocked or fall into the devil's trap of grumbling against God. Instead, groan in anticipation of God's promised glory. It is a glory which is won for you by Christ, sustains creation in its suffering, gives purpose to your suffering, and empowers you to endure patiently. Amen.

ⁱ Romans 8:1 EHV

ⁱⁱ Romans 8:16-17 EHV

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf Romans 8:29

^{iv} John 16:33 EHV

^v 1 John 3:1-2 EHV

^{vi} Cf. Romans 8:39

^{vii} Cf 1 Peter 1:4

^{viii} Cf. Romans 8:39