

We Groan For Glory

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[0 : 00] So this is our last time together and we're going to conclude our little series on the gospel. And this morning what I tried to do was point out from Romans 6 that we need a bigger view of God's grace.

That we need a view of God's grace that doesn't just stop with justification as beautiful as that is, that we have been declared righteous, but His grace goes on to renew us in righteousness.

That there's this definitive break with sin by God's grace. A definitive break where sin no longer is our master, we're no longer enslaved to Him, to it, but that now we have a new master, one who leads us not to death and separation, but leads us and those around us to life, to wholeness, to fullness.

This is part of the gospel that we talked about tonight, this morning. And tonight I want to talk about one other aspect of the gospel, one that we hinted at this morning from verse 5 and chapter 6.

Where Paul said this, if we have been united with Him like this in His death, then we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection. There is a resurrection coming.

[1 : 31] There is a time when we will rise up and be made whole, that we will no longer wake in our beds and struggle with the sins that each one of us could come up here and hour after hour, day after day, talk about that we struggle with.

That thing that continues to plague you and overwhelm you and you keep asking God to take it away and it doesn't happen. Certainly the way that we wish it had.

But there is a resurrection coming. There is a certain future. Life will one day be full grown. God's grace will find its completion in you.

That is the hope of the gospel. It is a promise of the gospel. We know that from Philippians 1-6 that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to resurrection, to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

That God has got you in His hands. You are His. He is your master carrying you along to grace and life.

[2 : 54] This is the gospel promise of glorification. That there is a resurrection coming. There is a beautiful picture of it. If you would flip over to Revelation 21 quickly.

It is the very end. It is page 1249 in your Pse Bibles. I just want you to read. I want to read to you verses 1-5.

In your mind as you look at this picture and Revelation is full of pictures. It is the comic book. It is the story picture book of the Bible.

Vivid illustrations and crazy things happening. But beautiful promises too. What I want you to have in mind as I read these five verses is that I want you to have in mind what happened, what we talked about a few weeks ago, in the bad news that precedes the good news of Jesus.

Of how through our rebellion and turning away from God, there was a fracture that occurred in our souls that separated us from God, that brought shame and separation within, that brings strife and pain in the lives of others.

[4 : 15] And we live in now and the midst of a world that is corrupt and broken. Sin sought to undo all the good that God had created.

The promise of the Gospel in the glory of Jesus is that sin doesn't win. Sin loses. Satan is defeated.

All that is sad will become untrue. All that is broken will be made new. Listen to these words from John in Revelation 21.

And then I saw a new heaven and new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And there was no longer any sea.

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

[5 : 17] And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, now the dwelling of God is with men and he will live with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. For the old order of things has passed away.

He who is seated on the throne has said, I am making everything new. Then he said, write this down for these words are trustworthy and true.

Do you see in that picture the glorious picture of what sin fractured and messed up and sought to destroy that where there was a separation because of our rebellion and sin between us and God.

Now in that beautiful story there is complete restoration. So much so that God uses marriage as an illustration, the union between a husband and wife to illustrate the reunion and union between God and his people.

[6 : 40] There is no more separation between us and God. But not just that. Those tears that we all shed, some of us in private, some of us more publicly, as we struggle with the things that we grapple with every day, the sins that bear us down, the things that disappoint us, the things that we're uncertain of and fearful of.

Those tears will be wiped away. There will no longer be any tears, no more mourning, no more shame, no more fear, no more pain.

Do you see also in that there is this glorious reunion of God's people. One of the sad things about living now and not then is that we've experienced the already but the not yet.

We'll talk about that in a minute. But the idea of that is that God's people are so fractured, so separated that we divide ourselves over the smallest of disagreements.

And it is sad. Not only that, but there are fractures within our bodies. Come to a Kirk session. I'm joking.

[7 : 59] We're all mentally on everything all the time. That there are fractures, that there are struggles. We know that if we could come into your homes and see the way you treat your wife or your husband or your friend, your flatmate or your children, we know there are fractures there.

But you see in the promise that John is talking about in Jesus, is that this bride will come together, that we are one people as the bride of Christ in perfect unity, awaiting the union with our Savior.

There is a union and a restoration of that sin as well. And not only that, but the world will be recreated. There will be a new earth.

There will be a new creation that is renewed and not broken and corrupted. So what I want you to see as we begin to talk about the doctrine of glorification and as we talk about the struggle to get there and to deal with the stuff that we deal with in life on the way there, that I want you to see the story, the story that sin tries to tell, but the story that ultimately is told in Jesus Christ.

All things will be made new. There is not a random, rebellious molecule in the universe.

[9 : 31] Jesus reigns over all of them. And the promise of the gospel extends as far as the east is from the west.

Eternity that way and eternity that way. And that is the beauty of the doctrine of glory that all things will be made new.

And we're going to talk about that tonight. But I want you to see in the passage I'm about to read the connection of the gospel leading to that point.

Let's look at Romans 8. Romans 8.

And I'm just going to read for us verses 18 to 30. 18 to 30 on page 115.

[10 : 34] And we know that in all things God works, excuse me, I'm not going to jump down to 28. I'm going to go to 18. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjective to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that the whole earth, the whole creation, has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit grown inwardly as we wait eagerly for the adoption, for our adoption is sons, the redemption of our bodies.

For in this hope we are saved. But hope that is seen is not hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has.

But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

[12 : 09] And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. And we know that all things, God works for the good of those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose.

For those God foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, and that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined, He also called, and those whom He called, He also justified, and those whom He justified, He has also glorified.

Thus far God's word. What I want you to focus in on is that last verse there for just a second, where He summarizes in a way many of the benefits of the Gospel.

That as we are united to Jesus, we could have talked about the Gospel story of God knowing us before the foundation of the world. That's a glorious story, and if you want to read more about that, read in Ephesians 1, as Paul literally just sings back to God that he cannot believe that God has lavished his love upon him from all eternity.

But that these benefits in Jesus from eternity past to eternity future. And as we look at that, I think there's something curious about that list, and one of the things is this, is that it's all past tense.

[13 : 39] He's just talked about a future hope that we don't yet have it, and yet at the same time he says, for those who he is predestined, he's also called, and those who he called, he's justified, and those who he's justified, he also glorified.

Why does he do that? Why does he use the past tense there? He's not kind of tricking you and saying, yeah, well, you really are already glorified, you just need to kind of live like it.

Because when we get into the slog of life and we look at our sin very honestly, we know that to use a word from my place ain't true, right? That that's not true.

I'm not glorified. So why does Paul tell me I am glorified? The point is this, that there is absolute certainty of the benefits of Jesus, that when he hung on the cross and his final words to you, if you are a Christian, are, it is finished.

I did it. I accomplished everything. Even your glorification. Even the renewing of all things.

[15 : 01] That Jesus hung there as one who secured with absolute assurance and certainty that you, if you are in Christ by faith, will be made new.

It's so certain he puts it in the past tense. That is absolutely vital for you to understand Christian. It is absolutely vital because when we get into how do we live in light of the glory to come in the midst of the fight of faith in the struggle with sin?

If you do not have your eyes firmly fixed on that truth as Paul did, then you will make a mess out of your life and a mess out of your relationship with God.

And you will undermine the gospel ministry of which you think you're a part. If you do not get the fact that Jesus said to you, Christian, it is accomplished.

And that you begin to work toward what Jesus has already secured for you, then you will undermine the journey there.

[16 : 16] Because you look at passages like we're going to look at now, turn back over in Romans 7 to verse 14 through 20.

Verse 14 to 20, and I love these verses because this is where I live. Remember these verses in light of what we said this morning.

Paul in chapter 6 had already said, we've died to sin, and then he writes this. We know that the law is spiritual, but I'm unspiritual. Sold as a slave to sin.

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do. But what I hate to do, excuse me, I'm going to go back.

See, there's too many do's in there. For what I want to do, I do not do. But what I hate, I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.

[17 : 17] As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

For what I do is not the good I want to do, no, the evil I do not want to do, I do. This I keep doing.

Now, if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. If you are not confused by those verses, then you're probably bewildered with the honesty with which Paul writes.

Because he said, I've made a definitive break with sin. It's no longer my master. But then he begins to look on himself. And he begins to say, yes, I know Jesus has broken sin, his sin's power in my life.

But if I look inside, I still do the things I don't want to do and I don't do the things I want to do. That's where I live.

[18 : 33] That's where I know you live too. One of the things that we do in face of this glory to come is that we by grace are freed to struggle against sin.

Paul understands that. He's going to say in chapter one, excuse me, verse, chapter eight, verse one, he's going to say, therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

He's going to follow along just his argument, I don't do any of this and therefore I don't have condemnation. Doesn't make a lick of sense. Doesn't follow any of his argument. Why? Because it's grace.

He's looking at his life and he's going, I'm a complete mess. Praise Jesus that he is not. And so one of the things that you need to see as we're on this road to glory, as we're looking forward to the not yet that God has put out before us and said, yes, with certainty that is yours.

But the already the experience you have is not quite as glorious. Is the gospel frees you to struggle against sin?

[19 : 52] To be honest, to look at who you really are. Struggling against sin is not a sign that you are not in Jesus.

As a matter of fact, it's the opposite. You struggle against sin because you are not just a sinner, but because you are a saint.

I have a friend, he was actually here about a month ago or two months ago. His name is Joe Novenson. He's a pastor in the United States in Chattanooga.

He's an amazing man. Anytime I can sit under him, I do. And Joe, if you ever went to look out mountain where he preaches, you'd notice very quickly that his hands are not like most of ours.

They're kind of crinkled up like that. He's missing the top of a thumb here. He's got awkward hands. And the reason that he has awkward hands is because a year into his marriage or not even a year into his marriage, he was in a sheet metal accident where his hands got sucked into a sheet metal bending machine.

[21 : 08] He got one in in an attempt and fear out of trying to get it out. He stuck the other one in. And so his hands were crushed and gnarled.

And he literally spent months and months and months with his new bride, with his hands above him. And she had to bathe him and feed him and do everything for him.

And in the healing process, he tells the story that one of his hands began to really ache. And he struggled with it so much.

And he was in pain. It was keeping him up at night. And he didn't know what to do. So he kind of freaked out. He was worried that, oh my goodness, it's not working. I need to run because he had been in hours of surgery, of course, prior to that point.

So he gets back to hospital. He goes to the doctor and he says, listen, my left hand, I can't remember which one it was, but his left hand, my left hand is killing me. It's hurting me.

[22 : 12] And he begins to examine it and he says, well, what about your right hand? He says, I don't feel anything. It's fine. And he immediately is admitted for surgery on his right hand.

You see the fact that he was beginning to feel the pain of life coming back to his fingers. You feel that in a little way if you prop your feet up too long on the table and your feet go to sleep.

If you're ever around here and I'm writing sermons, that's the way I write them, until my feet go to sleep. And then you go, oh, you know, that's what was happening to his hand. The life, the blood was coming back into those nerves and they were making them alive and so they hurt.

But you see this other hand that he thought was just fine was the one that was really in threat of dying because it didn't hurt at all.

And that is what Paul is trying to make sure that we understand as we look at the Gospel and we've grown toward what is to come, that you are free to struggle. Feel the pain of sin.

[23 : 20] Be honest with who you are in the struggle against sin. We need to make sure that as we look at this passage and we talk about the struggle against sin, that we don't get confused because Paul talks about the body, he talks about the flesh, he talks about the sinful nature.

Sometimes the temptation is to look at these passages and to think that the body is something bad, that the goal is getting rid of this thing and kind of floating on a cloud somewhere with Jesus with a harp and cream cheese is what the image comes to mind in America.

You know, that you're floating along and you're just as happy as you can be because you're disembodied. As we look forward to glory, what I want you to see from the passage we read initially is that that is by far not the case.

That God is going to resurrect your bodies. Jesus created your bodies. He came as a human being and he will raise you.

Jesus, the Son of God, continues to be human. Our bodies are good. So please don't confuse the idea of fighting the flesh with getting rid of the things of the body.

[24 : 52] It's not that. It's actually using the body, our intellect, our emotions, our affections, our time, our gifts, our person as an offering to God, not running away from those things. That's much more a Buddhist idea, kind of escape and kind of just run away from the material world into this spiritualized world.

That is not the picture of the gospel of glory that I want you to see. And I also want you to see as we look at this passage in Romans 7, we also need to understand that our struggle with sin is principally something that's a struggle from within, not outside.

Paul is very honest that it doesn't mean that peer pressure can't be a bad thing and that there are certain things that we shouldn't avoid. But what he's saying is your problem is not bad company corrupts good morals.

No, the problem starts here. A lot of times when I talk to my students and I work with university students in America, when I ask my students, both Christian and non-Christian, what is wrong with the world? They can go on a, you know, just a, they pull out their soapbox, you know, it's capitalism. It's, you know, it's greenhouse gases.

It's, you know, people who need to care for the poor. It's, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and they go on and on. And you know what? There are systemic injustices we need to fight. But Paul does not say, hey, when you think about the chief problem in this world, don't look out there.

[26 : 58] Look in the mirror. Do you know what kind of impact we would have on our community if they thought about St. Columbus?

And they said, those people, you know what those people think? They're the chief problem of our city. When you come up against someone, they don't think that they've got it all together and they're perfect and their theology is pristine and you cannot argue against anything.

You know what they say is wrong with the world? They say, me, I'm the problem. I'm not loving. I'm not forgiving. I don't care. I'm apathetic.

I'm not willing to extend myself beyond my comfort zone. I don't want to go there. I've never done that before.

Paul is challenging us to see the problem with sin starts here. And he's also challenging us to be honest, to take off the mask.

[28 : 08] I talked to you this morning about the woman who's next door, the Polish woman. She ever does come in here. She's going to freak out. But that I talked about her so much. But I talked about her because she went back to church. She tested it again after five years. She said, I'm done with it because that guy was so self-righteous and so arrogant, so full of himself that he couldn't see his own sin.

That he, as a priest, was sitting across hearing my confession and just berating me about how sinful I am. And he was unwilling to look in the mirror and to see that he needed Jesus to save him from his sins too.

That woman needs us to be honest that sin starts right here. This city needs us to be honest that sin starts right here. The gospel is compelling us and it's freeing us to look honestly at our sin without fear of condemnation, as Paul says.

And one of the reasons that we're able to do that is because as we're on this kind of slog of life and on the path of glory, we can see that Jesus has secured our completion in Christ that he has not left us alone.

Jesus, when he started talking about his kingdom, and he talked about what it meant for him to be Messiah, what it meant for him to be the Christ, him to be king, there was mass confusion.

[29 : 49] Even from his closest disciples, they didn't have a clue, especially when he broke out, hey, and by the way, for me to be king means dying for your freedom. That threw Peter into a tailspin.

He was reshaping their paradigms. And one of the things that we need to understand from what we read here in Romans 8 is that we need a paradigm shift in the way God relates to us.

Because oftentimes we think of Jesus. Jesus came, he gave us this teaching, we have this, the completion of the Bible, we walk away, we're people of the book, and Jesus goes away. We hadn't seen him in 2,000 years.

Some people will think he appears every once in a while and ends up on burnt toast. We're kind of at a mystery, at a loss. Where is Jesus up there? And we kind of have this idea that Jesus sits up on the throne somewhere like a CEO or a president of a company. He's given us our instructions, he's made a few decisions, and now what he does is basically check on progress reports.

And you don't want to end up on one of those. That's generally the way that we think of it. And Paul is challenging that perspective and he's saying, no, the reason that you're free to groan into this, the reason that you're free to groan into struggle against sin and the certainty of what is coming is because I have put my spirit in you.

[31 : 23] God indwells his people. That he doesn't stand off at a distance and let his minions do his bidding. That he says, I'm coming in.

I don't understand this because the majority of people think that God helps those who help themselves as a verse in the Bible. And it is not. It is not a gospel principle.

As we looked out today that this is Jesus' fight in and through us. This is, hey, you know what, I've done this for Jesus. No, we are doing this by his Holy Spirit. That the Holy Spirit indwells us.

And it is through the Holy Spirit that he gives us new life. He brings life to our mortal bodies. And you know what? Paul again uses a curious description to make us understand that process of life giving. Kind of like Joe's hands where pain was a symbol of life.

Then he hearkens to the idea of childbirth. Vicki, plug your ears. Childbirth is painful, right? Vicki's due in two weeks.

[32 : 40] But that, and I've never had a child. I've witnessed it a couple of times. And I'm an honorary Scottish midwife. You can ask me about it later.

But the fact of the matter is, is that childbirth is painful. There's lots of pain. But it is not pain that is a sign of death, but a sign of life to come.

And through the Holy Spirit, he enables us to endure, to persevere, so that life may grow. But there's a sense in which by the Holy Spirit indwelling us and being freed to struggle with our sins, that he also frees us to groan.

To groan that this is not yet life as it will be. We're still in labor. It still hurts. We're in pain. But life is coming.

And so he says that we are free to groan. Furthermore, he says, not only do we groan, but verse 26 and 27 says that even the Holy Spirit groans on our behalf.

[34 : 06] Do you, do you groan for life? Do you groan to be made whole? Now I'm not talking about an escapist idea of like, you know what? I'm sick of this life. I'm sick of my sin. I'm sick of all y'all.

And I'm ready to go to Jesus. I'm not talking about that. That's selfish. That's not kingdom oriented. I'm talking about genuinely looking to Jesus and saying, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Send your kingdom. Heal this place. How many of us weep over our own sin? How many of us long for life to be breathed into our broken, lifeless city?

How many of us groan? The Holy Spirit groaning on our behalf is a huge encouragement in the midst of that. Because I don't know about you, but I've been in those situations where I got nothing to say.

I have no appeal. I can't articulate it. I can't, I'm a man of many words, which the Bible says is a fool. But you know that there are times when I stand before the Lord and I am utterly speechless because I am overwhelmed and I just sit there and hurt.

[35 : 42] And God says I'm groaning for you even in those times. Even when you're not groaning for glory, I'm groaning for glory. Go back to Vicki. She's going to have her first baby soon. And one of the amazing things about a mommy and a daddy is that they quickly learn their child.

They have a PhD in that child by the time it's four weeks old. They have been with that child. They have heard that child. I love to watch my wife with our children, especially Bo, now that he's just 10 months old, that when he cries, she knows exactly why.

Oh, he's hungry. Oh, he's really tired. Nope, that is he heard himself cry. And that image is a beautiful image as we think about the groaning of the Holy Spirit on our behalf as we cry out and we're without words.

And the Holy Spirit groans for us and knows exactly how to intercede for us. The Bible is saying, he knows our cries even when we can't articulate them.

That when we're not able to articulate our own groans for glory, he is interceding for us. And the fact that we can groan also frees us not only to look honestly at our sin, but also to be discontented.

[37 : 18] One of the things I think Christians struggle with most is godly discontentment. Who told us that we always had to say, well, it's God's providence.

And then we just pass it off as that. One of the books that I've enjoyed reading in the past few years because I work in a context with a lot of Jewish people is I read Mudhouse Sabbath by Lauren Winter, who was a Jewish woman who was converted to Christianity.

And she writes Mudhouse Sabbath as an illustration of several points that she kind of critiques Christianity in light of her Jewish experience, not the theology of Christianity so much, but as the experience of the community.

And one of the things that she just goes after us on is the fact that we stink at mourning. Mourning over our sin, being discontent in a godly manner with the already looking toward the not yet longing and groaning for glory.

We need to be people who are able to groan and to be discontent. I meet university students all the time and they tell me their stories and some of them are wonderful and everybody should hear them and they're so much fun and it's great to hear most of them are not.

[38 : 47] Most of them are tragic. Their parents, Christian parents, oftentimes, have just messed up their kids.

And part of my job as a pastor to those students is going, it's okay to look at your mom and dad and go, that wasn't a great job. I give you grace, I can love you in spite of what you did to me or didn't do for me or the way you failed to love me or prepare me to be an 18 year old old in this university, but it wasn't okay.

It wasn't what Jesus wanted for me. And the fact that we are free to groan for glory means that we can have that same type of godly discontentment.

Without fear, without moaning and groaning, but just going, yeah, you know what? I don't like it that I'm an anxious person. I am a ball of tension.

I don't like it that I'm overly competitive and that we go out to play basketball in Scotland and I make five enemies and only three friends.

[40 : 03] I don't like it that I am fearful of what people think. I don't like those things because they're not like Jesus.

What are those things in your life you don't like? Do you groan for those things to be made new? Because that's what the gospel is compelling us toward.

Growning for glory without despair. The last thing I'll say is this is that do you see that as we groan for glory, that we do so in the context of all creation groaning for glory?

One of the things that we need, this is Paul challenging us again, is see if our gospel is big enough, to see if your idea of grace is big enough, to see if your view of salvation is big enough.

Because Jesus comes to bring healing as far as the curse is found. When we rebelled against God in the garden, every molecule in the universe was fractured.

[41 : 19] When Jesus reigns and he comes down as a bridegroom for his bride, every molecule will be made new.

The He will judge and He will restore, that He will put an end to sin, period.

And so please understand what this means that if the creation is even joining and I love the fact that they know the creation is secondary. We love to participate in what Jesus is doing for his people, that the trees, if you could walk through, if you could kind of go through Glencoe and you could listen to the mountains and the beauty and they're going, hey, I know we're beautiful but I can't wait for you to see us when Jesus comes back.

Because sin won't corrupt us anymore. And what that means for us is one, that we need to disband this idea of this kind of secular sacred dichotomy, that there's kind of Jesus' work, what the minister does, and the rest of us.

There is no secular sacred dichotomy. Mathematics is a gospel category, engineering is a gospel category, nursing is a gospel category, teaching is a gospel category, music is a gospel category, administration is a gospel category.

[43 : 01] Because what we're told in 1 Corinthians is that whatever we do, we do it unto the glory of God because He is making all things new.

Brothers and sisters, I love you. I pray that our understanding of the good news of Jesus is as big and as grand and as amazing as the good news that Paul and Romans 1-8 believes it is.

That it should be central to who we are. That we understand a whole lot about the bad news in order to understand something beautiful about the good news.

That He is renewing us in our relationship with Him. He is renovating, restoring us in our sanctification as we groan and long and fight sin knowing that our certain hope is in the future.

That there is a resurrection. That is the good news of Jesus. That is a good news that will enrapture a world and change it. Change you and change me.

[44 : 30] Let me pray. Father, I thank you so much for the gospel of your glory. We thank you so much Lord that you are making all things new. That we are being renewed in Lord even as we look in the mirror and we think about our sin and it overwhelms us and we really doubt to be honest that your promises are as true as you say they are.

Father, we pray that you may give us greater faith. From first to last Jesus, you are the author and the perfecter of our faith. You are the Alpha and the Omega.

We never outrun our need of Jesus. So that into our hearts and lives and may it manifest great fruit in our love and care for others in the world around us.

Bless us we pray. Amen.