

March 8, 2020

Speaker: Eric Naus **Series:** This I Believe – The Book of Romans

Passage: Romans 8:23-27

Community Group Questions: “Groaning with Hope”

Read Romans 8:23-27 aloud as a group. And then work through the following questions:

1. In Romans 8:18-22, we saw that all creation “groans” as it waits to be liberated from the curse and be transformed into a New Creation when Christ returns, and his people are raised in glorious resurrection bodies. Now, in verses 23-27, we see two others who “groan.” Can you locate them?
2. Verse 23 says that those with the “firstfruits of the Spirit” groan. Romans 8:9 made it very clear that every Christian believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and therefore, the groaners in this text must be Christians. The Spirit is called a “firstfruits,” and this means that, just like the firstfruits of a harvest could be offered to God as a sacrifice in anticipation of the full harvest to come, the Spirit inside of every Christian is like a preview of our full, future, heavenly glory. In what sense do Spirit-indwelt Christians “groan” as they wait for their final adoption and the “redemption of our bodies” (i.e. our resurrection)?
3. Pastor Eric described these groans as “homesickness” – they are a form of homesickness for the New Heavens and New Earth. Do you experience these types of groanings in your life? What does it feel like for you to be homesick for the New Creation to come?
4. C. S. Lewis wrote, “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world” (Mere Christianity). How do our groanings in this life give evidence that we were made for the heavenly world to come?
5. Verses 26-27 tells us of an incredible ministry of the Holy Spirit: he prays for us (note the word “intercedes” in both 26 and 27). Though we often lack the right words to pray or the right insights into how to pray, the Holy Spirit always prays in perfect alignment with God the Father’s will, and therefore, when the Father hears the Holy Spirit’s prayers for us, he responds! How does this prayer ministry of the Spirit comfort, encourage, and humble us as we journey through the Christian life?
6. Notice that the Spirit’s prayers for God’s people are “with groanings too deep for words.” This means that the Holy Spirit emphasizes with our longing for our future home, and he groans on our behalf before God! How does it make you feel that the Spirit of God would choose to empathize with your suffering, longing, and waiting? How should this awareness of the Spirit’s work change the way you pray?

Prayer suggestion: Take time to thank the Holy Spirit for his work in our hearts as he groans and intercedes for us. Thank him for his work in transforming us from the inside out as we journey toward eternal glory.