

ROMANS 8: More Than Conquerors

“Finding help in a time of waiting”

Scripture: Romans 8:26-27

Delivered during the COVID-19 crisis via Livestream at Central Baptist Church on May 10, 2020,
by Pastor Steven Edelman

(SLIDE 1) INTRODUCTION:

Good morning everyone. Thank you for joining us online. We are so glad you are with us. My name is Steve, and I am one of the pastors here at Central. I just want to say Happy Mother’s Day to all the mothers out there. Your current or past investment matters! Thank you for all the seen and unseen things that you do. It was great to hear all the kids talking about their mothers in the Mother’s Day video that Tom put together. I recognize that this is a hard day for many for so many different reasons. God sees you. He is with you right now!

Today, I want to talk about, “**where do we find help in a time of waiting?**”
What do you do? What is your first reaction when you feel overwhelmed? What are the words that come out of your mouth?

STORY: Just before our first child was born, there was much groaning. I heard things like, “babe, can you buy me cheeseburgers right now?” She also went through an eating snow or ice phase. Hormones started to say things that were confusing and inarticulate sounding. **DISCLAIMER – I did get permission to tell this story.** To be honest, **as we were waiting**, some of the difficult moments felt hopeless in the journey, and other moments were filled with expectation and joy.

When baby #1 was due, a C-section was scheduled, which brought us into an operating room. I remember the doctor asking if I wanted to watch, and I said, “Noooooo!” I want to imagine a cute little zipper that you open and close with a wonderful result. As I hid behind the sheet, the doctor did his thing, and a Baby was lifted up by one leg. Soon there was a little cry, and the new package was handed over to me. I was ushered into another room with this newborn baby, so the doctors could put Megan back together again. I remember looking down at this new little face. I had no words that could capture that moment... and Tears started to run down my face!

Fast forward to the birth of our second child. We went through a very similar pattern. This time, baby Maya was passed to me, and I was escorted to another room so the doctors could do their thing with Megan. Again, tears started to fill my eyes. However, this time Maya started crying and crying. She starts to do the angry cry where the little chin shakes. I look down at her and say, “I have got nothing to feed you with!” Thirty minutes go by! One hour goes by and I, too, start to become overwhelmed and weak with the situation. At this point, no doctor or nurse has come to update me on the status of my wife, and I am starting to worry because it didn’t take this long last time! As I was waiting, I start to have this inner conversation. “**You got this... no, you don’t! You got this... no, you don’t!**” I started to think thoughts like, “**Maybe Megan didn’t make it!**” I send up a prayer, “HELP!” Meanwhile, baby Maya is crying and crying... I have still got nothing to fix this with! For a second, I knew I needed to lay down my pride and call for help! I quickly searched for all of our things to find my cell phone, so I could call for some help. I called Megan’s mom, who was staying close by, and I am sure I didn’t articulate the state of things in fancy words. It was probably a groan of “**Ruth...**”

HELP! I don't know what to do!" Once Ruth arrived, she helped share the load of the difficulty. We discovered that Megan was left in a recovery room because they were short-staffed so they couldn't move her.

Just like in the story, many of us are going to face difficulty and weaknesses. We may be struggling to lay down our pride to pursue the help that we need. Our deficiency (and the deficiencies of others) can cause us to groan. Our troubles can be all-consuming. You may be a parent who is overwhelmed with your kids, you may be struggling with your health, or depression, or a difficult marriage, or the loss of social connection. We are all waiting for it to end. At times, we may not have words to express in the middle of our difficulty.

As you are going to see, God gives us help through an instrument of prayer beyond regular prayers. These prayers seem to go beyond the ceiling so we can experience comfort and assurance that comes from God alone. **As we face difficulty, we can increase our hope in God. He will provide because we have more help than we know.**

We are in the middle of a series in Romans 8 and today we are in Part 3. Today, I want to focus on the question "**How do we find help in a time of waiting?**

Today, I want to show you that in our weakness, we can strengthen our hold on hope because of what God has done.

First,

(SLIDE 2) INCREASING OUR HOPE #1 – In our weakness, we may not have words to pray

(SLIDE 3) Let's start with the second part of verse 26 in Romans 8, which says, "*For we do not know what to pray for as we ought...*"

Paul is saying that there may be times when we are so weak that the Spirit himself prays on our behalf. What I like about this passage is that it gives us permission to not have all the answers or the right words in times of weakness. Why?

He is saying that there will be times in our life that are so intense that the only thing we can do is "groan" because we can't muster up words to express ourselves. This past week, I heard a lot of moments of groaning. Parents who are trying to homeschool and work from home are groaning. Those who are tired of isolation are groaning and as they miss their friends and family. **What do we do?**

(SLIDE 4) *If we keep reading in verse 26 says, "the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."*

a) **The Holy Spirit groans (vv. 26-27) (SLIDE 5)**

What do we mean when we say that the Holy Spirit groans?

ANSWER: It means the Holy Spirit speaks to God the Father in ways that **we can't express ourselves**. The Spirit takes those inexpressible longings (to know and to do the will of God) and articulates them to God the Father. Our failure to know and articulate God's will in difficult times is perfectly mediated by God's Spirit to match the will of God.

We may not be able to speak or pray in difficult times:

- a) **Because we are too weak.**
- b) **Because we lack understanding** of why this happening and may never get the answer.

- c) **Because we don't know the will of God.** For example, should we pray for healing or for strength to endure? Both could be correct. But we know we should pray with faith as we groan through sickness, loss, and trials.

If you look back in Romans 8, Paul says, creation groans, we groan, and even the Holy Spirit groans.

Here is a little review from last week, Paul talks about three groans:

b) Creation waits and groans (vv.19-22) (SLIDE 6)

Creation suffers because of sin as it becomes filled with futility, decay, and death. At times the forces of nature seem to work against themselves and humanity. Things are not working as they should be. We could give countless examples including COVID-19.

c) We wait and groan (vv.23-25) (SLIDE 7)

We groan because our lives consist of sin. Our battle against sin never stops, and the effects of sin continue to break down good things in our life. We groan about the damage that sin causes in the life of those we love. We groan because we see gifted people wasting their life. As we grow in Christ, we should increasingly grieve sin as we become more like Christ.

For example, we even see this in Paul's life in **2 Corinthians 12** as he talks about his thorn in the flesh. He asked three times that it be removed. And finally, Jesus revealed to him that his will was not to take it away. Surely, that experience would leave Paul wondering with every sickness and pain and hardship and imprisonment what God's will was: Healing or not? Deliverance or not? **Because of suffering and sin we groan because we may not have words.**

(SLIDE 8 – TITLE) ILLUSTRATION:

When I was a college student, I remember my parents waking me up in the night, and they said that there has been an accident and that one of my teachers was dead. There were no words.

When my Christian Martial Arts teacher who I loved dearly had an affair that got him kicked out of the college, I had no words.

When I was counseling one of my youth who witnessed her parents being killed, at times, I could not articulate words that would help her.

APPLICATION:

The skeptic says, “there is no point or purpose to this suffering its simply and interruption to my “happy” life!” Which leaves you with only yourself to try and gather the resources to make yourself happy again!

Tim Keller says, **“In this approach to life, suffering should be avoided at almost any cost, or minimized to the greatest degree possible. This means that when facing unavoidable and irreducible suffering, secular people must smuggle in resources from other views of life, having recourse to ideas of karma, or Buddhism, or Greek Stoicism, or Christianity, even though their beliefs about the nature of the universe do not line up with those resources.”**

Why because there is no help or meaning without God!

(SLIDE 9) John Newton says, **“Everything is needful that he sends; nothing can be needful that he withholds.” We don't understand. And that is okay.** When we do not know what to say

or pray in our weakness... **we need not despair, for we can depend on the Spirit's ministry of perfect intercession "on our behalf."**¹

If we are honest with ourselves, we have experienced times when we could not pray. We may encounter an illness of a friend, child, or family member so difficult that we won't have words for God. But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

There will be times when someone says something so devastating, and we will be so hurt that we cannot pray, "but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." But, the Holy Spirit expresses those things we feel but cannot muster into sentences.

One day some of us will lie in hospitals with catheters and IVs, and we will not have the will to pray or even put two thoughts together.

Paul includes himself in this; at times, no believer knows how to pray. By nature, we are weak, lacking the self-control to avoid distractions, to stop all wandering thoughts, to prevent emotional changes, to control our varying affections, to know the future, to know what is *really* best for us and our growth in any given situation.

The Holy Spirit meets us in our groaning and expresses what we need to God when those needs are just too heavy for us. This is how we increase in hope, it's knowing that we are not alone and that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in a time of waiting.

Secondly, in our weakness, we have more help than we know!

(SLIDE 10) INCREASING OUR HOPE #2 – In our weakness, we have help

(SLIDE 11) Let's look again at Romans 8 verses 26 & 27, and we read, *"²⁶ Likewise **the Spirit helps us** in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but **the Spirit himself intercedes for us** with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because **the Spirit intercedes for the saints** according to the will of God."*

Notice that three times Paul says the Spirit of God helps us. The Spirit of God helps us in our weak, frail state, the Spirit himself intercedes for us, and the Spirit intercedes for those who know Christ. Paul is telling us that God is helping you in your weakness with the promises of a great future. The primary role of the Holy Spirit by definition is the helper who was sent by God.

(SLIDE 12 – TITLE) The word for intercession literally means "to meet with to converse." It means that the Holy Spirit pleads on our behalf!" When we give our lives to Christ, the Spirit comes to reside in us, he helps us, and mediates for us. Once that happens, the Holy Spirit aids believers by untangling our messy knotted and broken state. **In other words, our groans (v. 23) become His (v. 26) as he intercedes on our behalf.**²

The word "intercedes" implies that the Holy Spirit doesn't do everything, while we sit back and do nothing. Rather, we are to keep praying and, if appropriate, keep working or obeying or whatever the Bible may tell us to do about our situation. But as we pray, the Spirit says, "Let Me grab the other end. Let me help you by picking up your

¹ Moo, D. J. (1996). *The Epistle to the Romans* (p. 526). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

² Mounce, R. H. (1995). *Romans* (Vol. 27, p. 187). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

burden and taking it before the Father's throne. **(Think of a scale or titter totter where there is an imbalance or a significant wait that tips things too far.)** So, the Spirit helps us by praying for us in our weakness. What an encouragement!"

Also, the Holy Spirit expresses our groanings to God when they are just too heavy for us. Sometimes the struggles and sufferings of life become so weighty we just cannot bear them. At other times, matters of such importance grip our hearts to such an extent that words are impossible. Emotions become too much for words. We become lost in the presence of God. Every believer has experienced moments like this. But we have more help than we know!

The Holy Spirit goes even beyond conversing on our behalf!

(SLIDE 13) According to scripture here are all the ways the Spirit of God helps us:

- He **speaks to our hearts** through scripture.
- He **regenerates us** ([John 3:15](#)) through the second birth.
- He **anoints us** ([1 John 2:20,27](#)).
- He **guides you** ([John 16:13](#));
- He **sanctifies us** (that is, He makes you holy).
- He **is your helper, your teacher** who, as [Romans 8:26](#) says, helps us in our weakness, makes intercession for us before the throne of God.

(SLIDE 14) In Romans 8:

- In v2, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus **sets you free from sin and death.**
- In v4, the Spirit **helps you fulfill the just requirement of the law.**
- In v6, the Spirit **gives life and peace.**
- In v11, God will **raise you from the dead by the Spirit who dwells in you.**
- In v13, the Spirit **helps you put to death the deeds of the body.**

(SLIDE 15)

- In v14, the **sons and daughters of God are led by the Spirit.**
- In v15-16, the **Spirit bears witness in us that we are the children of God and so gives us assurance of our salvation.**
- In v23, the Holy Spirit **is the foretaste and guarantee of our final redemption.**

We can hold on to hope because the Spirit of God holds on to us! He is helping us!

(SLIDE 16 – TITLE) ILLUSTRATION:

This past week I was sitting on the couch talking to Megan when I heard the sound of dripping behind me. When I turned around, I saw water pouring out of the chandelier in the kitchen, pouring out of the light beside it, and pouring out of the smoke alarm in the hallway. I quickly ran upstairs to find the bathtub was left running, and the entire bathroom was covered in water. My first instinct was to be the man and fix it. I turned off the power, dropped the lights from the ceiling so the water could drain, and vacuumed the water up with the shop vac. However, it quickly became apparent that I needed help because there was too much water stuck in the ceiling, which would eventually mold if not dried up! I quickly called the insurance company, who sent a restoration company to help. The help was already paid for. I just needed to call upon the help that was available to me.

APPLICATION:

Just like in the story, God has already given us access to the help we need. When we draw close to God, The Holy Spirit helps us to bear the frailty of our body and

of our mind; he helps us to bear our cross, whether it be physical pain, or mental depression, or spiritual conflict, or slander, or poverty, or persecution. He helps us when we fall short, and with a helper so divinely strong, we need not fear for the result. God's grace will be sufficient for us; his strength will be made perfect in weakness. The Holy Spirit grabs hold of our weakness and carries part of the burden that we are facing!

(SLIDE 17) Paul Tripp says, **“God did not create human beings to be independently able; he designed us to be dependent... None of us has the natural storehouse of wisdom, strength, patience, mercy, and perseverance that every person needs in order to do their job well. Independent ability, like independent righteousness, is a delusion. So, quit beating yourself up because you feel inadequate; you feel that way because it's true!”**

The Holy Spirit does not always give us advice in our time of difficulty. He rolls up his sleeves and helps us bear our inadequacies and burdens. This reminds us that we need to go to God so we can let go of our burdens and stop dwelling on our mistakes. So we can rest knowing that we have the help that we need in God. In our weakness, we have more help than we know!

Lastly, in our difficulty, we can have confidence that God is at work.

(SLIDE 18) 3. INCREASING OUR HOPE #3 – In our weakness, God is at work

(SLIDE 19) Let's look at Romans 8:27, which says, **“And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”**

(SLIDE 20) a) God is at work as He searches our hearts.

God is the one who has complete access to the heart. His knowledge is direct, not dependent upon one's ability to articulate concerns. God is a searcher of hearts and knows the desires of the Spirit as the Spirit intercedes for us. He knows that the Spirit is interceding for those who know Him in agreement with His will.

There is no exception. He knows exactly what is within our hearts. He can read and understand what our groanings and needs are. Not a need will be missed. “In other words, the Spirit takes our deepest feelings and unexpressed needs to the Father, who understands everything perfectly. Nothing leaves God scratching His head, wondering what our real needs are.

Since God searches and knows every heart, our prayers should come from the heart. You can impress others with spiritual-sounding prayers, but those prayers don't impress God. Pour out your heart honestly to Him. But maybe you're thinking, “But what if my prayers are not in line with God's will?” The Holy Spirit talks those prayers and searches our heart and then translates them into what God want to do in and with our life.

(SLIDE 21) b) God is at work, according to His plan. The Holy Spirit prays for us according to the will of God; therefore, God knows exactly what the Spirit is requesting for us. There is perfect agreement between the Holy Spirit and God the Father. He will deliver and save us, causing the very best thing to happen. This why we can increase our hope because he is working it all out for good.

(SLIDE 22 – TITLE) ILLUSTRATION:

On Wednesday, many of us listened with anticipation to premiere John Horgan's announcement with hope that some of the COVID-19 restrictions would change. He is working a plan whether you like it or not with the direction of Dr. Bonnie Henry, the

provincial health officer, to determine what is best for the people of British Columbia. To be honest, we don't know how this is all going to turn out!

Tim Keller says, **“Do you know how important hope is? Hope is an assured future.** Imagine two women, and both of them have a purse. In that purse are all the assets and money they have in the world. Everything they have in the world is in that purse. They both have \$1,000 in cash. That's all they have. The difference is the one woman knows tomorrow for some reason \$10 million will be wired into her bank account, and the other woman knows there is nothing coming from anybody for the indefinite future.

Imagine those two women go out in New York City, and they both have the very same experience. Somebody snatches their purses. Their purses are lost. They're taken. They're stolen. How are they going to respond to that? I can tell you the woman who knows tomorrow \$10 million is coming into her bank account says, “What an inconvenience! Oh, well.” The other woman is in total despair.

Do you know why? They experience the same circumstances. Why is the response so different? Because what you know about the future completely determines how you process the present.

It's through the power of the Holy Spirit believers can endure any level of suffering especially when we know the day is coming when sin will be utterly destroyed, and we will be in the presence of God forever!

APPLICATION:

What is causing you to lose hope right now? Are you trying to look for a silver bullet to fix all the broken areas of our life? When what you need is Christ and the help of the Holy Spirit. For some reason, we continue to cling and search for other things that continue to let us down. Ask the Holy Spirit to search all the dark spaces of our hearts. So we can let go of all the remaining hidden sins and disappointments so we can strengthen our grip on Christ and the assurances that God has waiting for us in heaven. When you feel very weak and hopeless, at that very moment, experience the wordless groanings of your heart as groanings for the glory of Christ. And trust the Spirit of God to intercede for you about the specifics. He is calling you to tighten your grip on hope!

To increase our hope, we need to be reminded of what a gracious and merciful God we have. He has a plan for us in our weakness and nothing can separate us from his love! **As you are going to hear about next week, if God is working for our “good” in everything, then we see that both the good things and the bad things serve the purpose of furthering the good in our life. He is calling to your hold on to hope!**

Paul wants to remind us that we are not alone in our weakness. Creation groans, we groan and this why the Holy Spirit groans for those who know Jesus. Jesus also groaned with those who were groaning by dying on the cross for the sin of the world. Through Jesus, we can have access to God and the help that you need through the Holy Spirit! **Because the Son of God was abandoned in his groaning, you never will be abandoned. That is what God accomplished on the cross for us.**

So, where do we find help in a time of waiting? We need to go to God with our weakness so we can find true strength. His strength. His resources. We need ask the Spirit to search us and changes us. God has made it possible for us to pray about anything, anytime, anywhere. When we can't pray, when the words won't come,

when we don't know what to pray for, God has given the Holy Spirit who prays for us. What an honor, what a privilege, what a gift. It's found in Christ alone.

Wherever you are. If you want to give your life to Christ... we would love to pray with you. You can email me or one of the other pastors. We can pray right now. Prayer these simple words, "God, I admit I am weak! But I believe you died for my sin so that I can find new life in you. Forgive me for my sin. Spirit of God fill me and change me. I commit my life to you. Amen."

(SLIDE 23) BENEDICTION:

Matthew 11:28 - 30 says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Happy Mother's Day!