

Afternoon Lesson. Romans 7.

JUNE 18 1978

TEXT 2 CORINTHIANS 5.4

It will be our endeavour initially this afternoon, to show you the holy atmosphere that prevailed in the spirit of our apostle when, by divine inspiration and grace he expressed himself in the language of the Text and context. Do not think he was in darkness or bondage: do not think the child of God is speaking in legal bondage. The atmosphere was an assured expectation of entering eternal Glory. He was not in great darkness or bondage of spirit, but in light, in the sweetest liberty of soul. I want to approach the subject by the grace of God in the same manner: not cold orthodoxy; not in a hard, cold, doctrinal way, but under the sweet, heavenly influence of the Spirit, and in the enjoyment of His love, and assured that we have 'an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens'.

You may have thought groaning signified something gloomy in character; it is far from that. I will define with you the term that expresses that which is precious and vital, Groan. I wonder if you are able to antecede me in the definition? What is the groaning in the Text? It is holy groaning, and it is a precious fruit of the Spirit. As such, a groan contains the concentration of all your holy desires, aspirations, prayers, cries, tears before the Lord. The groaning that is before us is complete in itself. A child of God comes to a place where it is not a matter of a short prayer of a few words. Almost unperceived your soul groans before the Lord, and that expresses all; all the holy exercises, desires, heavenly aspirations, longings, pantings; as well as sorrow, temptation, tears and trials of the journey. I want to get over, by His grace, the right definition of groan. It is not dismal, despairing: it is a holy fruit of the Spirit. Let me remind you that we have a definition in Romans 8 of the internal intercession of the Spirit: "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Through your life, child of God, you will find everything concentrated in the fruit of the Holy Ghost in your soul, - precious groans.

There are two further points: one is, groanings are of an evangelical nature. They relate to gospel liberty and not legal bondage: they belong to Mount Sion, not Sinai. Two main facets of groaning appear in

the Scriptures: one is that which is felt by the soul under pressure, affliction and trial which is so adverse to the Spirit of holiness, and pressure felt due to anxieties, temptations, trials, thorns in the flesh. That is one facet; you groan. There is another facet: it is not only groaning over and because of things; it is after the Lord, after His blessing, His presence and peace, and groaning after immortality and Heaven. You may never <sup>have</sup> associated this with groaning: you thought the word altogether dismal. It is bright, beautiful: it is the spirit of holiness in the soul giving you to yearn for holiness without a stain and entrance to eternity. Concerning groaning, there is something beautiful, blessed indeed to the soul; namely, it is resultant from a principle. If you can see it you will gain the greatest encouragement in your soul. It results from the principle of holiness in the soul, and the image of Christ in the soul. You groan because of sin; to be with the Lord, like Him; for perfect holiness without a stain or blemish. Why do you groan? Because there is that in you which is holy, - the new man. You groan because the Lord has blessed you with His nature and Spirit. A soul that groans over sin is holy. Precious soul! If you could find a few in the Sanctuary, or your dear children, and they were groaning over their sins you would bless God for the work of grace in their souls. Groaning is exclusive to the living family of God. I hope I have made these points clear.

I want to approach the subject now in the life, light, love, assurance and expectation the Spirit has given me of eternal Glory. Immediately the Lord gives you life divine in your soul, especially after He reveals Himself to you, you will groan because you can never be satisfied until you are with Him in Heaven. You have no abiding city here. You will groan after your Beloved; to be with Him and like Him in your soul and to be holy in Heaven. Do you see the nature of groaning? If you want to find the happiest people on earth, find those who have the sweet fruit of the Spirit to groan: who groan after glories, beauty and blessings. "For immortality we groan,

For robes and mansions in the skies." (1081)

Once Christ in His dear Self is known to you He takes your heart to Heaven with Him. That is where your heart is. You will groan to be there. Groaning is invaluable: you cannot produce it; it is a fruit of

the Spirit.

Groaning is something that is productive. You wonder what I mean. Take any on the earth in tragedy or distress: poor human beings will groan. If there is no life in the soul it is not a fruit of the Spirit: it is poor flesh and blood groaning because of catastrophe. With a child of God it is the Spirit's work. Christ feels your groans at His heart, and feeling and hearing your groans, blessed be God, He interprets. He knows all your groans express. He has inspired them. There will be a response from divine Majesty of His pity and compassion, and a river of love and mercy to your soul. "Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob." Those who groan, weep. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Happy, blessed, fruitful groans! wonderful, exclusive groans, only known by God's dear people under the influence of the Spirit. It is a great mercy to be favoured to groan. All your prayers, exercises, travail over your dear children are expressed as groans, the fruit of the Spirit.

"He knows how deep their groanings are,

And what their secret sighs declare." (263)

The nature of groaning is to get to Heaven, to be free from sin, never to sin against Him more. It is the soul longing to be released, to stretch its wings and fly to Heaven. There is something very bright, beautiful, divine concerning these groans. (You have a mental note of it and it is written on the fleshy tables of your heart.) You long for Your Beloved, for the land of pure delight, to be perfectly holy. This is what a groan expresses, as well as the intensity of deepest emotion of your spirit, activated by the Holy Spirit by the promise of God to you. The Lord has said, and He will fulfil. Precious, wonderful groans! So favoured we are to know groanings that cannot be uttered, inarticulate known to the eternal God, Father, Friend and Saviour.

What causes the Lord's people to groan in this tabernacle, or tent, a body of sin and death? I will make a few relevant observations following on this morning. It is because they have a body of sin and death. There are several facets of this to name before you. One is the terrible disposition, proneness and determination of a body of sin and death to wander from the Lord. It is a terrible trait in the body of sin and death: there is present with us a determination to depart from

the Lord.

"Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;

Prone to leave the God I love." (199)

This will make you groan. And there is something almost too base to name. The body of sin and death loves sin and would wallow in it. I do not know to what depth the Lord has shown you your heart and nature. It does not matter what it is; there is the solemnity of the devil having a stranglehold over the media. Every form of iniquity and transgression of the moral law; all that appeals to the populace in immorality, lewdness, violence is attractive to fallen nature. It is solemn to know if left by God we have a nature that would wallow in sin, and this will make you groan. Those taught of the Spirit know it in His teaching: it is true. To a child of God the world is as Vanity<sup>Fair</sup> to Christian. He must not look or listen. He must look straight to Christ and go through the Fair. How often do we turn an eye or an ear and prove the corruption of fallen nature? Nature loves sin, hates holiness. Blessed be God for preserving us! Even the manners and customs of the flesh you will groan under and wish to be released from. Things in themselves legitimate you come to feel you groan under, and you long to be as the angels of God in Heaven. There is such deadness<sup>deadness</sup> in your soul to sin by Christ, who died for sin once, and a sense of His sufferings in the garden and at Calvary produces<sub>n</sub> to the flesh of a child of God. You will groan to be as the angels of God. I hope this does not discourage you or reflect on the ordinances of God. There are lawful things to be enjoyed, but you groan under the manner of the flesh and long to be devoted to the Lord; holy in body, soul and spirit. The whole process is, as the Lord deepens His work, to put off the old man and put on the new man. You will say, if the Lord comes to you in the Sanctuary, "O! I wish I had never to return to flesh and blood." I would not discourage you. The Lord has given you something to do in His Name, - the privilege of bringing up a family, or something to do in the earth, and to do it as serving Christ. You say, "It is His will. He has set before me an open door and I will put my strength and mind to it." But the Lord is your Object. By all means He weans His people from all below, and teaches them to set their affections on things above, and not on things on earth.

A few further observations on why the people of God groan. I have named a body of sin and death, and there is something else connected

with all your spiritual ~~exercise~~ life since you have known the Lord. You will survey your record as to how you have served and obeyed and honoured the Lord and lived to His glory. You feel you have failed/completely. So often at the end of the day you feel you have done that which you ought not, and ~~done that~~ left undone that which you <sup>ought</sup> to have done. I feel the same in the ministry and as your unworthy pastor. I have failed to live as a Christian should do to the Lord's glory. We feel how little really we set our affections on things above: how inadequate is our reading of the Scriptures; our poor prayers and Church membership. You will groan. There are two facets: you groan over, and after a blessed state where there will be no failing, no sin, nothing to mourn over, no coming short. You will be perfectly holy. See the wonder of it. It is obvious that life is so full and concentrated, and it seems as though there are thorns and briars, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches threaten <sup>to choke</sup> the word. You will mourn over your life. You have before you the ideal of living to the glory of God. This is what you will groan after. You are reaching out after something with your arms with the expectation of it. His dear people often <sup>groan</sup> in this tabernacle because of bodily affliction. Your chief affliction is a body of sin and death. You have infirmities, pain and sickness. O those pathological conditions that show symptoms, and you recognise the Lord is bringing you to the grave. If you are in pain and do not know how to carry on, you groan. You do not know how to get through the day. The Lord weakens your strength in the way and shortens your days. There are afflictions in families,- there are many that are not seen.- and they are as a thorn in the flesh. People speculate: it is useless. There are many afflictions not specified or named that the Lord's people groan under. There are things in your lot that are thorns in the flesh all your days, and Satan seems to know. You groan under affliction. Partial or complete loss of sight or deafness, how the Lord's people groan under it! I am not inferring that there is rebellion. The Lord knows how to bless you with submission and willingness to bear what He lays on you. And there is ~~xx~~ your lot. It is certain that the lot of every child of God contains a cross, whether men see it or not. You will groan under your cross,- not complaining, not rebelling, not replying against God, but out of the sheer nature of it and the pain of it and the continuity of it. It is

every day, not once a month.

"For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." If only we could <sup>see</sup> those on the other side of the river in Immanuel's Land, with their harps of gold, their beautiful garments, peace and radiancy! It will be said by your grave, "These are they which came out of great tribulation." You are in the fellowship of His sufferings; close to a suffering Redeemer, and you are dead to the world. "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." and that is you. It is great tribulation, and you groan. All your desires are in groans. The Lord's people come into sore trials, adversity; everything seems to go against them and they get overwhelmed and groan before the Lord. "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." There is a blessed issue, a triumphant issue. The Lord turns the captivity of His people, wipes away the tears from their eyes, commands deliverances for Jacob. And there is this, the trial of faith. The Lord has given you a promise concerning your family and others, and you come to the trial of faith in it. There is a poor lad or lass going into a far country. O the groans of parents! These reap in joy.

There is complete harmony between groaning and the New Song. Our Saviour groaned in Himself. O the sighs and groans of God! When He rose again He did not groan because He had accomplished His work, expiated the sins of His people, wrought their righteousness, satisfied Justice, cleansed the Church and conquered for her. Presently, poor dear heart, I will tell you where you will be. You will come to the time where the Lord will appear for you, and you will sing and hear the heavenly melody as I did once.

"Happy songsters!

When shall I your chorus join?"

Blessed be God. Amen.