

THE DEEP GROANINGS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

by Carter Conlon

Most people have little understanding about the deep groanings the righteous experience in their walk with God. Some of you may have experienced this inner groaning when you became a Christian, or perhaps shortly thereafter. Now, you may wonder why this deep groaning is even in you.

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David wrote Psalm 6 at a time when he was surrounded by his enemies, consumed by an inner groaning and a deep grief. He writes in verses 1–8, “O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O Lord, how long? Return, O Lord, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies’ sake. For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.” David felt weak and powerless to do anything about these enemies, and in some measure he began to feel God was displeased with him. This is one of Satan’s most potent tactics against the righteous.

As a child of God, you may be going through life with this inner groaning. This does not mean you are necessarily walking around with a long face; in fact, you can actually be smiling and meeting people on the job while having this deep inner groaning, which never seems to go away. During such times the enemy loves to whisper that God is angry with you, that you somehow have failed God and you have fallen out of favor with Him. The reality, however, is that a much deeper work is taking place inside of you. I want to show you something in the Scriptures I believe will help you understand these times of deep inner groanings.

David said, “My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?” (Psalm 22:1). The word “roaring” in the Hebrew means a moaning; you could say there was a groaning in his spirit. David was unaware that having a heart for God would bring him into a place where he would inwardly experience a measure of the agonies of Christ. In Psalm 22:15–18, David continued to say, “My strength has dried up like sun baked clay. My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth... My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs; an evil gang closes in on me... My enemies stare at me and gloat. They divide my clothes among themselves and throw dice for my garments” (New Living Translation). David had no way of knowing that these statements would be the very words of Christ on the cross. There are very few Christians who understand this agony and groaning. They live

their whole life before God trying to escape it, yet I believe this is one of the deepest workings of the Spirit of God in our lives.

■ THE INTERCESSORY GROANINGS OF THE SPIRIT

Paul speaks about this inner groaning of the Spirit in Romans 8:26: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” The moment you were saved, you were given a new nature in Christ. With this new nature came a deep inner longing for a new way of living. This groan that is within you was planted there by God. It is the groan of the Holy Spirit as He begins to intercede for you and within you. He longs for you to understand the completeness of the victory that was won for you on Calvary. There has been a groan in the heart of God to have you back in fellowship with Him, not just now but for eternity.

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■ THE DEEP GROANINGS OF CONVICTION

As a Christian with a new nature, you are immediately brought into conflict with what God says to do and what your flesh wants to do. In the past you did not feel a pang of regret about taking on grievances when somebody

wronged you. You felt totally satisfied with yourself and fully justified, but now you find you cannot walk away when the Holy Spirit convicts you. If you do, you suddenly feel this deep inner groaning. You cannot escape; the Holy Spirit is constantly calling you back into doing what is right in the sight of God. At times doing what is right seems impossible, but the Holy Spirit is right there to intercede for you. *“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God”* (Romans 8:27).

The Holy Spirit knows what the will of God is in every situation. If you are not walking in God’s will, the Holy Spirit will intercede within you and you will experience a cry right from the heart of God. It is a cry of intercession that is leading you back into the will of God for your life. As a Christian, you begin to understand that this inner groaning is for your good. You realize God is not mad at you and, in fact, is leading you into the full purposes of His life for you. Now you can understand Romans 8:28: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.”*

■ THE GROANINGS FOR OUR FULL INHERITANCE

The Bible speaks of another groaning in Romans 8:23: *“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”* This is a deep inner groaning to become the new creation God fully intended you to be. He promised you a new nature, a new mind, and a new heart; this new nature will cause you to leave the old ways of thinking, or responding in a manner that is unlike Christ. God created a desire in you to want His will for your life, no matter what

the cost. It is not always going to be easy to follow in the will of God, and many times it will be foreign to the natural mind. The life God has for you cannot come as a natural way of thinking. It has to be the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

■ THE GROANINGS TO BE FREE FROM INDWELLING SIN

David says in Psalm 38:7–10, *“For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee. My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.”* David is deeply aware of how this inner struggle is affecting his physical life. He did not want to live in mediocrity, settling for some kind of substandard relationship which brought no honor or glory to God. His inner groaning was a desire to live an overcoming life completely given to God. You will experience these same groanings because the mark of the Christian is a deep desire to be free from the power of indwelling sin. When you come to the knowledge of Christ, there is an inward awareness of sin. It is not a knowledge that condemns you, but a knowledge that says, “God, I don’t want this sin in my life anymore. I want your will for my life.”

All of a sudden you find yourself with enemies you did not have before.

■ THE GROANINGS CONCERNING HARD TIMES THAT COME

Psalm 38 also records a very strange happening in David’s life. In verse 11, he says, *“My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.”* There were those around David who did

not want to live as he did, a life separated to God, so they began to distance themselves from him. The same thing will happen to you. The ungodly and those who are not surrendered to Christ will begin to consider you somewhat of an oddity when you want to live for God. All of a sudden you find yourself with enemies you did not have before, and this produces another kind of groaning. Many of you reading this may have experienced this in the workplace. It has caused you to groan as you get out of bed, groan as you go to work, groan throughout your day, and groan as you make your way home. Folks, I wish I could tell you that everything in the coming days is going to be great and thousands will turn to you and ask you how to be saved. But that’s not what the Bible says. It talks about a generation that is lust-laden, filled with hatred for things that are righteous, having no desire to turn from sin. For the Christian it is going to be harder to stand in the coming days.

Listen to what the psalmist says in Psalm 102:2–8: *“Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily. For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin. I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top. Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me.”*

■ THE GROANINGS TO BE IN GOD’S PRESENCE

As true children of God, we also groan because we are not satisfied to live without the evidence of God’s

presence. We do not want to be where He is not. The writer says in the Song of Solomon 3:1–2, “*By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.*” This is a type of the bride of Christ. I see a groaning in this bride for her bridegroom. She is not satisfied with just theories about him; she wants to know where he is, she wants to be his and for him to be hers. She does not want stories about him, or faint little glimmers and whispers of one day when he comes. No, he is already here and she is seeking him out!

In Song of Solomon 5:6–8, the bride says, “*I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.*” She is saying, “I opened my heart, I sought him and called, but I could not find him. So, I went about the city and the watchmen—who are supposed to be speaking of his return; who should know where he is and understand the times that we are living in—did not tell me where I could find him. These unsanctified watchmen found me, wounded me in the house of the Lord, and took away my veil.”

Today there are preachers who are taking away the veil from the bride of Christ. But God, by His grace, will put a groaning in your heart and you will not be satisfied until you are His and He is yours. You will not be among those who sit in so-called houses of God with their feet on the

altar rail and a cup of coffee in their hand, listening to a PowerPoint sermon about a Christ they do not know. There is a stirring of the Holy Spirit in the true bride in this generation. We are living in a time, as the prophet Malachi said, when those who fear the Lord are going to know the difference between those who serve God and those who do not.

If you have this inner groaning inside of you, thank God for it every day.

■ THE GROANINGS BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF

“*When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled*” (John 11:33). Here the Scripture records a groan in the heart of Jesus when unbelief seemed to be reigning in the minds and hearts of men. Jesus groaned. This is the groan of the Holy Spirit, because Lazarus’ family and friends did not believe He could bring death back to life again. As far as Mary and Martha were concerned, Lazarus was dead and would be raised to life only at the resurrection of the last day.

Do you believe that the battle is over because the devil says you are all wrapped up in grave clothes? When you’ve given up hope of ever changing in a certain area, the Lord comes, and the groan is the Holy Spirit saying, “Do you not understand the victory that was won for you on Calvary? Do you not know it was complete?” The groan is there to remind you God does not see your situation the way you see it.

When your prayer has been reduced to weeping, where all that is left is a groan and weeping, will you let

Him call you to share in His life? Ironically there will be more faith in that prayer, in that groan, than anything you have ever prayed before.

■ THANK THE LORD FOR THE GROANINGS INSIDE YOU

David thought that because he was aware of his own weaknesses, God somehow felt the same way about him. This is why he exclaimed in anguished prayer, “*O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Have mercy upon me. O Lord, for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed*” (Psalm 6:1–2). No doubt the devil was there to try to reinforce this wrong perspective. But David was a man after God’s own heart, and God planted this groan within him. If you have this inner groaning inside of you, thank God for it every day. It is evidence that the Holy Spirit is within you, drawing you and guiding you. Thank God that you are not satisfied with nominal Christianity.

The mark of righteousness is upon you, and when the day of justice comes, you will stand.

You need to ask yourself a question: How does God protect those who have this inner groaning produced by the Spirit of God? We see the answer to this question in Ezekiel 9. Society had dealt so casually and carelessly with the things of God that they were now under God’s judgment. Their enemies were right at the borders and they were ignorant of it. Priests were continuing to sacrifice in the temple, and prophets of success and prosperity had arisen among the people. There were few voices left speaking the truth for God. False prophets were casual concerning the things of God. The people’s minds had become dulled and everyone was thinking that as

long as they were going to the temple, everything was fine. But now the justice of God had come.

Today, people are saying similar things, “As long as I’m a Christian—a Baptist, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, or a Pentecostal—everything will be just fine.” Hovering above them, though, is the justice of God.

God hears every cry, and every groan is a prayer.

■ THE GROANINGS FOR THE TRUE THINGS OF GOD

In the midst of the false prophets and dulled congregants were men and women with a deep inner groaning for the true things of God. The Bible says the Lord sent a messenger, Ezekiel, and describes him as a man with an inkhorn, or a pen. He was told to go down and set a mark on everyone who sighs (groans) because of the evil prevalent in their day. When judgment begins, it is going to touch all: young and old, rich and poor, influential and common, old and young. Everyone is going to be touched by this judgment; everyone, that is, except those upon whom God places His mark.

When judgment on the ungodly society of Ezekiel’s day came, the people who were marked by the heart of God were spared. If you are groaning today for the true things of God and longing for the Name of Jesus Christ to be exalted in a society that is quickly moving toward the justice of God, you can thank Him. The mark of righteousness is upon you, and when the day of justice comes, you will stand. The Bible

says you will stand as lights in a darkened world. You will stand with assuredness in your heart.

“I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard. My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever” (Psalm 22:22–26).

God hears every cry, and every groan is a prayer. Every time you step out of your apartment or house and let out a sigh simply because you want God, that is a prayer. It is a cry for Him; it is a cry for His righteousness, His power, His glory and His ways. Everyone around you may be calling you weak in this hour, but ultimately you will be the one who is able to stand in the midst of the storm.

Carter Conlon
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TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

Times Square Church was founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of “The Cross and the Switchblade.” It is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday	10:00AM	3:00PM	6:00PM
Tuesday	7:00PM	Church Service	
Thursday	7:00PM	Prayer Meeting	
Friday	7:00PM	Church Service	

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