

STRENGTH THROUGH WEAKNESS

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-5

UNHAPPY CAMPERS



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

DAVID MURRAY
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INTRODUCTION

Most of us in Michigan have been on at least one camping experiences that ended up soggy and cold. It always starts off so bright and happy but all it takes is one summer storm to wipe out our tents and soak everything. We try to persevere for the sake of the kids, but we're absolutely miserable and so are all the other damp adults in the campground. Unhappy campers, we're just longing for it to be over so we can get back to our warm homes and cozy beds.

In 2 Corinthians 5:1-5, the Apostle Paul says Christians are unhappy campers, longing and groaning for home. He uses camping language to explain the connection between our present earthly experience and our future heavenly experience and how we should relate to both. **So, how should we feel on earth about heaven?**

BACKGROUND

In chapter four, Paul gave six reasons why the Corinthians should not lose heart in the midst of their sufferings. The last few reasons were focused on the increased heavenly glory that awaited them after earthly sufferings.

In chapter five, Paul continues to focus the Corinthians on what that ultimate heavenly glory will look like, by zooming in on the glorious resurrection body that God had prepared for each of them and guides them in how they should feel about that.



1. WE GROAN FOR GLORY (1-4)

Paul uses three illustrations—camping, clothing, and eating—to help the Corinthians develop a healthy relationship with their present earthly bodies and their future heavenly bodies.

We groan for a glorious new home

Paul compares our present earthly body to a tent and our future heavenly body to a building. **For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens** (1). As a tentmaker himself, Paul knew that, like a tent, our present body is frail, temporary, vulnerable, unstable, and will eventually be torn down. In contrast, our future heavenly body is a building from God, a building constructed by God, and is as eternal as God. 'We have' indicates that God has already designed this body for us.

How does that future body affect our present experience? Paul combines great confidence (**We know...**) with great groaning (**for in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling**). His great confidence about his future body brings with it deep groans of anticipation while still in his present body (Rom. 8:23).

We groan for glorious new clothes

Staying with the same truth but changing the picture from a new building to new clothes, Paul says, **If indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed** (3-4). We are clothed with our present body (our earthly state), we will be unclothed when we die (we have no body in the intermediate state), and will be clothed again at the resurrection (eternal state). We don't just groan for a new tent, but for a new set of clothes.

We groan for a glorious new life

Paul introduces a third picture, that of something smaller being eaten by something bigger. **So that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life** (4). We're like little fish swimming along happily when a much bigger fish (death) swallows us in one gulp, only for that bigger fish to be swallowed up immediately by the biggest fish of all (eternal life). Earthly life is swallowed by death which is swallowed by eternal life. We groan for this too, not to be swallowed by death but for death to be swallowed by life.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

We groan in our tent, in our old clothes, and as a little meal being prepared for death's swallow. But we also groan for God's building, our new clothes, and for death to be swallowed by life. As such it's not a despairing groaning but a hopeful groaning, a positive groaning, a groaning not just to escape the tent but to get into our heavenly body. We groan like children waiting for Christmas with impatient excitement.

WE'RE GROANERS
BUT NOT MOANERS



How can we be sure that our groaning will end?



2. WE'RE GUARANTEED GLORY (5)

God prepares us for glory

He who has prepared us for this very thing is God (5).

God is preparing two houses for us. The first is heaven itself (John 14:2-3) and the second is our resurrection body. The latter preparation involves not only preparing a body for us, but preparing us for that body. When he brings us together with that body we will fit it and it will fit us perfectly. That's so rare isn't it. We've never had a house, or new clothes, or a meal that's been just 100% perfect. But this will be a perfect fit and part of that fitting, that preparation is the groaning that we experience here on earth as we await our resurrection bodies.

God guarantees glory

God....has given us the Spirit as a guarantee (5)

We've all had the experience of preparing for something that doesn't actually happen. It may be a meal, or a trip. We can't wait for a vacation but then something unexpected happened, like COVID-19, and all our preparations were in vain.

How can we be sure that all our groaning and all of God's preparations will result in glory for him and for us? How can we be confident that we will get the new body, the new building, the new clothes, we've been groaning for?

The groaning itself is the guarantee. 'Guarantee' is the word for an engagement ring that secures the relationship until the marriage. Groaning for glory is the guarantee of glory because it's evidence of the Spirit's work in preparing us for glory. God guarantees us a glorious resurrection body by preparing it himself in heaven, and preparing us for it on earth. Spirit-worked groaning in our tent is the downpayment on the building God is constructing for us.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Every time you groan for your glory-body, God is guaranteeing your glory body. Every groan here below is a Spirit-worked deposit that assures us of a secure home above. God gives us groans for glory to assure us of glory.

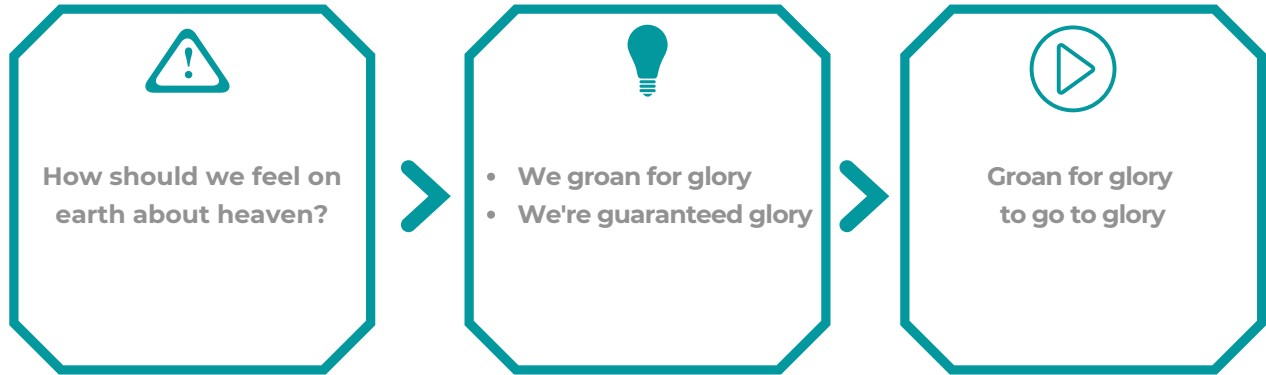
GROANING FOR GLORY
IS THE GUARANTEE OF GLORY



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story > Change others stories



SUMMARY



PRAYER: Give me groans while I camp, to guarantee glory when I'm torn down.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your changing relationship with your present body?
2. What's the difference between groaning and moaning?
3. What does Romans 8:22-27 teach you about who groaning?
4. What do you most look forward to about your resurrection body?
5. How can you increase your groaning?
6. How can you increase your spiritual confidence and assurance?

First Byron Christian Reformed Church
8541 Byron Center Ave SW, Byron Center, MI 49315
Phone: (616) 878-9768
www.firstbyroncrc.org

Pastor David Murray
www.HeadHeartHand.org
www.livingthebible.net

