

Groan!

Do you find yourself groaning more than you used to?
When you get out of bed in the morning, do you sound like an old man?
When you sit down after doing a bit of exercise, or after going for a jog, do you moan? Outside doing a bit of manual labour, lifting heavy objects, do you let out a bit of a grunt?

Maybe it's not just aches and pains that make you groan. When problems arise at church, when spouses are angry with each other, when children become frustrating, you might groan. And we all groan when we are tired or sad. We groan because it hurts.

In the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul tells us that we are not the only ones groaning. "*We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time,*" (Romans 8:22). The whole world – every man, woman and child; every living creature; all of nature – feels the aches and pains caused by sin. As we hurt, Paul encourages us to take it to the Lord in prayer. Sometimes, though, we don't know what to say to God. Sometimes we just hurt. We're just sad. We don't really understand what we are feeling. Sometimes we don't even know what we should be asking God. When we are at our weakest and don't even know what to pray, "*the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express,*" (Romans 8:26).

When we are hurting and don't know why – when we don't know what we want or what's best – the Holy Spirit groans for us. We can just open up our arms to God and groan. We can say, "God this stinks. This hurts. I don't know what to do."

We can say that because He does know what to do. He knows what we are feeling. He knows what is best for us and will always do it. God understands groans.

That doesn't mean, however, that my groans will magically disappear. Prayer is not a pill which immediately takes away all pain. God promises that He will deliver us from all our pains and problems eventually, but often we have to wait like a woman in labour. Prayer is not a happy pill. For that matter, nor is the gospel. Simply hearing and believing God's promises won't suddenly take away all your pain. That's what our world wants. Our world thinks it has the right to be happy all the time. That's why so many people pop pills or run to the bottle or jump in bed to find relief from their groaning. God doesn't promise to take away our groaning here on earth.

God's promises don't always take away the pain. Rather, they give us the strength to bear the pain. They give us the sure hope that like that woman in labour, our pain is only temporary.

We groan in eager expectation, knowing that our relief is coming, but we still groan. In fact, we are certain that we will groan more and more with each passing year. Here on earth, we will have moments of pain and sorrow which cannot be expressed in words. God knows, though. He understands.

So turn to Him in prayer, even if all you can do is groan. He will hear you. He will come to you through the promises of His Word to give you the strength to stand despite the pain. He will give you the sure hope of a home where you will never groan again.