

Creation Groans . . .

A response to the London Fire

The whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the redemption of our bodies. In this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

[Romans 8:22-27]



As Christians in the UK gather in the coming days, our worship will be overshadowed by the horrific tower-block fire that appears to have claimed so many lives in a shattered London neighbourhood. We are called to be beacons of hope in the midst of communities throughout the UK, that will be shocked, stunned and angry about the events that have unfolded.

We all know what it is to feel the sunlight on our faces on a bright summer's day, its warmth somehow lightens our spirit and gives us energy and life. Yet the same, flaming energy that comprises this ball of gasses at the centre of our solar system, can engulf a building in minutes, destroying everything in its path in a truly terrifying and devastating way. In this simple yet deadly contrast we see the "groans of creation" - that which was made to be good turning into a distorted monster of danger and destruction.

As tears are wept; hearts break; while anger and disbelief spews out in torrents of words and actions; where spirits are crushed by immeasurable anguish, we who are part of this damaged creation add to its groaning.

And the Spirit's response is not to tell us to pull ourselves together, compose quiet platitudes or calmly carry on. Words alone will never plumb the depths of despair, fear and anger of those who are shattered by these events. But prayers are more than words alone, and the Spirit who witnesses the deepest groanings of God's creation captures the cries of broken hearts and offers their lament before the throne of our Creator.

Hope is never lost; for the day will come when creation's growing will cease and her renewal will be fulfilled. But as we wait, our is not the task of providing explanations, imposing words or generating spiritual distractions. Rather it is to provide the space where the groans of a shattered creation can be heard, and assuring those who yet still struggle to find any words, that the anguish of their hearts is the only prayer they need to offer.

May God help us all in our task.

Phil Jump

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