

## Gimme a Break! *By Laura L. Shaw*

It was the beginning of April. My kids' homework was piled high. Planning for Easter services was in full motion. Brian's granddad, living with us at the time was not feeling well. We had an anniversary, two of the kids' birthdays and much activity in our home. The phone did not stop ringing. Some friends were neglected, housework was put aside and I felt totally spent and useless. Oscar the Grouch was finally a character I could actually relate to. I remember thinking, "I can't wait for summer break!"

Here it is now in the middle of June. As I look back over the past few months, it is amazing to see how God sustained us through the rest of April and May. Brian had to travel, Granddad's condition worsened until he went to be with the Lord, grieving, details to handle, emotions to work through. It coincided with the end of school activities and the beginning of a long series of kid camps and ministry commitments that were beginning. As I sit here today, I wonder: "When is summer break?" I guess it depends on what the meaning of the word "is" is? (*couldn't resist*).

Just as all of us in our varied seasons of life grow weary from time to time, longing for a break of some sort, so we as Christians occasionally find ourselves discouraged--either over our suffering or our sin--and we groan for the perfection we know lies ahead of us. This is beautifully described in Romans 8:18-24:

*"Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory He will reveal to us later. For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who His children really are...And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as His adopted children, including the new bodies He has promised us. We were given this hope when we were saved."*

This "groaning" I am describing is understood more by some than others. It can depend a great deal on how much suffering we are enduring in our lives or how many sin strongholds we are stuck in...even how much hardship is in the lives of others we love. In the moment, we may wish the Lord would reach down and take us to heaven or whisk us all away soon. Then the Holy Spirit encourages us, reminding us that we need to endure. The verses in Romans continue to explain:

*"But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently. And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of God and are called according to His purpose for them."*

I feel so intimately loved when I read that passage of scripture. To think that the Spirit groans for us to God is so comforting. And to see that the Lord will take that expression, love us in it & answer us by working it all out for His good in the end strengthens my faith to the n<sup>th</sup> degree...So, my friends,

"What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since He did not spare even His own Son but gave Him up for us all, won't He also give us everything else? Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for His own? No ONE—for God himself has given us right standing with Himself. Who then will condemn us? No ONE—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and He is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us. Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean He no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? NO, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that NOTHING can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

**Amen!**