

It was a balmy October afternoon in 1982. Badger Stadium in Madison Wisconsin was packed out. That day there were more than 60,000 die-hard University of Wisconsin football fans watching their team take on the Michigan State Spartans. It didn't take long to determine who the better team was. Michigan State was moping up the field with the Badgers. But what seemed odd was that even as the score became increasingly lopsided against their team, there were bursts of applause and shouts of joy from the Wisconsin fans. How could they cheer when their team was getting trounced so decisively? It turns out that 70 miles away the Milwaukee Brewers were beating the St. Louis Cardinals in game 3 of the 1982 World Series. Many of the fans in the stands were listening to portable radios and responding to what was going on in another game, in another sport, in another place.

There is something to be said for being plugged into what is going on elsewhere. Sometimes, the things that are going on where you are become extremely difficult. You would just like to tune those things out, and think about something else that is happy and joyful. Paul tells us we can do that quite easily. He says, "Focus in on Future Glory!"

You don't have to be a very astute observer to notice that we live in a world that struggles against hopelessness. If you talk to people at all, you are going to get in a conversation with someone who is going to tell you that they are discouraged. They are discouraged with the 17 trillion dollar debt. Will our children or grandchildren face a great depression? They are discouraged with the tensions in the world. Iran building a nuclear bomb, the senseless killing in the Ukraine and in Palestine. They are discouraged with how our borders go unprotected, and how the unborn are aborted or that marriage is no longer just between one man and one woman. So much frustrates us today in our world. It looks so hopeless.

Likewise in our personal lives there is frustration. You are in the prime of life, looking forward to 10-20 years in retirement, and then a stroke occurs, you get diagnosed with cancer, or you find out your savings are going to be drained by medication you are taking. You have to live out your remaining days with this thorn in your flesh.

It all began when Adam and Eve fell into sin. Verse 20 tells us that "The creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it." Plants, animals, fish, birds, anything in creation - all those things subjected to frustration. When sin entered the world, it not only ruined mankind, it also ruined nature. Animals and plants and everything else in nature was supposed to glorify God. Everything was supposed to be perfectly peaceful.

But that's not how it is. There have been tornadoes in the United States in 2014, from Nebraska to Louisiana. There have been forest fires out west. Flash floods. And we await the next hurricane in Florida. There's pollution. Certain animals are becoming extinct. Trees and plants are catching diseases. These are the sounds of nature groaning. Nature can be beautiful, at times, but it's also a place of death and decay. Nature is pictured as a person in the Bible, frustrated, because it can't glorify God the way it wants to.

"Mr. Sun is saying, I must not only shine on one Christian person, but hundreds of thousands of enemies of God, blasphemers, and persecutors. If I was a rational human being obeying my own instincts, I would deny those wicked wretches even the least ray of light. But that I am forced to continue on by God causes me to sigh and groan. I look forward to the day when the world will be cleansed of evil and I shall serve the righteous

alone with my light.”

Not just the sun, moon, stars, rivers, and Lakes are suffering but the animal world as well. Every living thing, waits with sighing and groaning for the final revelation of our glory. Every bleat of the flock, low of the herd, is an outcry against the ungodly as enemies of God. These animals are upset that they have to serve so many godless people in our world. “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth up to the present time.

How does a pregnant woman get through the ordeal of having a baby? She doesn’t focus in on the here and now. But she focuses in on the new life, the child that will soon be hers. She looks ahead. You and I are experiencing the same thing as nature, and that’s what secret number one to being positive is: Don’t focus on the here and now. It’s painful and frustrating.

Rather be an Eager Expecter. Someday, the creation will be liberated - no more floods, no more forest fires, no more droughts, no more pollution, no more death and decay. On Judgment Day, nature will be liberated, and when the sons of God are revealed, the true Christians, then it will be “brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.” Finally, it will be able to glorify God the way it was supposed to before the fall into sin. Nature is an “eager expecter” of Judgment Day. And so are we.

Just like the world, we also are groaning, because of all the problems we face. But it’s a groan of hope, “as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” This passage is talking about Judgment Day. As a Christian – you have a lot to look forward to on Judgment Day. Each one of you will be publicly acknowledged as a son of God, a true believer. Your body will be redeemed – in other words, your body will be raised from the dead – all the problems you experience will be gone, and you will be perfect, and you will be able to perfectly glorify God without any sin, without any problems getting in the way. The secret to being a positive thinker is to be an “eager expecter” of Judgment Day.

Our lesson says, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” The Greek word here for consider is an accounting word. It basically means that you put a list down of all your debits and credits, and compute the bottom line. Paul says that he has done the math and added it all up. He has added up all the sufferings of this life on one side of life’s ledger and he has added up all the glories of the future life on the other side of the ledger and the glory far exceeds the pain. The suffering in this world is nothing compared to the glory of the next! The best is coming. Its worth the wait.

In the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, a Japanese gymnast, Shun Fujimoto, was competing in the team competition. Somehow, during the floor exercises, he broke his right knee. It was obvious to all reasonable observers that he would be forced to withdraw. But they reckoned without the determination of a true competitor. On the following day, Fujimoto competed in his strongest event, the rings. His routine was excellent, but the critical point laid ahead—the dismount. Without hesitation, Fujimoto ended with a twisting, triple somersault. There was a moment of intense quiet as he landed with tremendous impact on his wounded knee. Then came thundering applause as he stood his ground. Later, reporters asked about that moment and he replied, “The pain shot through me like a knife. It brought tears to my eyes. But now I have a gold medal and the pain is gone.”

This in effect is what Paul is saying to us. We will go through painful times but one day the pain will be gone and the glory will be lasting. There is no doubt that even though we are children of God we will go through some very hard and hurtful times. It doesn't matter how much faith you have, how spiritual you are, or how many supposed spiritual laws you may practice – you will suffer! This is true simply because we have not yet received the fullness of what it means to be children of God. We only have the beginnings of our inheritance. As Paul says in verse 23 we have the “first fruits of the Spirit.” But oneday, like an Olympian, we will say, “It is all worth it!” The pains of this life are small and temporary when compared to the glory and eternity the future holds for the children of God. Think about it. Body feeling good every day. No more stomach aches or fat over the beltline. Smiles and laughter every day. Enduring friendships. Perfect Peace. Love. Joy. In the Savior's Presence. Every need supplied. Its time we start exalting the future glory more than we do! All of this has been provided for us by our magnificent God. You see our God took the entire sin ledger from creation Day to Judgment day, computed our sin against Christ's sacrifice at Calvary, and totaled the bottom line- Forgiven-Saved-Future Glory forever!

When that final curtain falls, God's true sons and daughters will be revealed for who they truly are. Right now Jesus Christ's followers look just like other people do. We get sick, just like other people. We experience heartbreak, failure, broken relationships, anger, frustration, and all the other things that are characteristic of the human condition. But one day the curtain will be pulled away, and who we really are will be revealed: God's adopted sons and daughters. Right now we are like a small child standing on tippy toes eagerly straining to get the first glimpse of the parade. The parade is coming

So there are two secrets to being a power of positive thinker in a broken world. First, Don't get caught up in the here and now, and second, be an eager expecter. When you are evacuated from your home, and it's swept away in a flood. When you're house burns down. When your body doesn't work the way you want it to. When people don't treat you well, because you believe in Christ, when things just aren't going your way, don't get caught up in the here and now, be an eager expecter. Remember verse 18: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” On the big scale of life, our future glory far outweighs are present problems.

Someday, someone might ask you, what makes you tick? How can you be so peaceful, so calm, even though the world, and you, experience all kinds of problems? What will you say? What makes you tick? You can say, “Because I know something better is coming. A better world. A better me. A better relationship with God. A better relationship with others. I am the way I am because I know that something better is coming. Christ is coming” Let that be for you your comfort, your hope, your secret to being a positive thinker. Amen.