

A trip to visit my 3 grandsons in Michigan. Ages 4 ½, 3 and 1. They view me as Papa Play master. I have a reputation to live up too. And I did my best. We played Lava flow. Jumping on couches, chairs, and pillows avoiding the hot lava on the basement floor. I had to get down on the floor to build towers, put together puzzles, and race cars. I climbed up on the monkey bars at the park, and dived for glow sticks at the bucket pool. I played sandbox and hide and seek. I jogged after the two oldest boys as they zoomed on their scooters. But I will tell you. When rest break occurred in the early afternoon, I had to take a nap.. I was exhausted. I had to grab something, to help me get off the floor. I groaned regularly, as I moved from one activity to the next. My sciatic nerve hurts in the back of my right leg. My back is sore. Now you may think with my groaning, I am miserable. But I'm not. I'm actually filled with hope and joy. It is my hope that you agree with me today, that "Groaning is a Godly Thing."

When you groan, it means that something is not going right. You are suffering in some way. Our lesson begins with these words, "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! Groaning reminds you, 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-FutureGlory forever!

Our God doesn't owe us an explanation as to why we are going a particular type of

suffering in our lives. Besides 99% of His explanation would be over our heads anyway. I like the way author Philip Yancy puts it. "Maybe sometimes God keeps us in the dark about why, not so much because He wants to keep us in the dark, as because He knows we are incapable of absorbing so much light." One day soon though, we will no longer see through a glass darkly, but all will be made clear to us.

But we aren't the only ones awaiting glorious freedom from suffering. "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth up to the present time. The whole creation is groaning as a result of the effects of sin in our world. The ugly red tide has made an appearance on the Gulf beach you have selected for your vacation getaway. You can't even swim in the water, it stinks. Or maybe you have a landfill down the road from your house. If the wind is blowing in a certain direction, you breathe in an awful aroma. Check out some of the rivers in our country, and they look brown in color, from pollutants that find their way into them. Or what about the abundance of plastic and garbage you see floating in our oceans, or the discarded needles and feces you find on the streets of San Francisco, or Los Angeles. Ug. Says creation, this is awful. All of God's creation is groaning.

In addition, All of God's creation is frustrated. Verse 20 says, "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God." "

Mother nature is frustrated at all the exploitation brought on by humans. Creation must continue to serve a race of people who are enemies of the Triune God, reject Jesus Christ as the only Savior, are blasphemers and persecutors, full of vanity.

"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 I am forced to continue on. I look forward to the day when the world will be cleansed of evil and I shall be free of this painful shining.

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.

But nature is also positive and upbeat. Nature is described as an "eager expecter." Verse 19: "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed in us." Animals, plants, the land, the sea – they're not caught up in the here and now. Instead, they're all waiting for something in eager expectation. Nature is like a woman in labor. A woman in labor is an eager expecter, isn't she. She's going through pain, but she's eagerly expecting a child. Nature is also waiting for the "sons of God to be revealed in us." No one really knows who the true believers are. That will be revealed on Judgment Day, and that's what nature is waiting for. The creation is described as a person, filled with hope, hope "that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God." 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."

Here's what we sound like: "I know that I am a sinner, and that I deserve to be condemned on Judgment Day. But I eagerly expect that God will forgive me – I know he will, because Jesus has taken my sins away at the cross." "I know that I'm not very good at glorifying God in my daily life – I'm weak and selfish and sinful. But I eagerly expect that on Judgment Day, God will turn me into a new person who will worship him perfectly.

"I know that I'm getting older, that my body has aches and pains, sicknesses and injuries. I'm not able to do all the things I want to do. But I eagerly expect that this same body on Judgment Day will be raised from the dead, and will be transformed into a perfect body that will perfectly glorify God."

"I know that not everyone agrees with my beliefs. Some people look at me like I'm an old-fashioned, naive, narrow-minded idiot. Some people even talk to me or treat me that way. But I eagerly expect that on Judgment Day, I will be revealed as a true son of God, and that God will bless me for being faithful to him.

"I know that the world in which I live in is a mess. There's anarchy going on. Small businesses are being looted and burned to the ground. Statues are being defaced and torn down. There are all kinds of natural disasters. Our world can be beautiful at times, and enjoyable, but often, it is a mess. I eagerly expect that someday, on Judgment Day, things will get better. I eagerly expect that God will wipe out this world, and start over, and will make a new world better and more beautiful than anything I can imagine right now.

If you want to be a positive thinker, then be an eager expecter. That really is the definition of a Christian – someone who is eagerly expecting Christ to return on Judgment Day. Verse 24: "For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?" That's not us. An eager expecter is someone who is hoping for things he does not yet have. Verse 25: "But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." An eager expecter is also a patient expecter. We are patient, because we know that God is never late, he's always on time, and when it's the perfect time, he will give us everything we've been waiting for.

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. Hang in there. It's going to get better. A hundred thousand times better! Amen.