

Michael McGowan

Romans 8:18-25 – *Grounded: Glorification*

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Romans 8:18-25

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

The Word of the Lord. (**Thanks be to God**)

[read children's book *Waiting is Not Easy* by Mo Willems]

Who here can relate with Gerald?

3 times in this book he lets out a groan...

A groan so massive that it knocks Piggie over.

Gerald knows something good is coming...

Piggie tells him:

It's big;

It's pretty;

And it's something they can share.

Gerald is giddy with excitement...(PAUSE)

Until he's told he must wait:

“Wait? What? Why?”

The surprise isn't here yet...

GROAN!!!

We know what this groaning is all about...

Waiting for something good...

But something that we cannot have just yet.

We're like children...

Waiting at a parade...

Standing on our tiptoes...

Craning our neck...

Eager to catch a first glimpse of the floats and firetrucks. (Scott Hoezee)

We know it's coming...

But it's not here yet.

We're told we have to wait.

Warmer weather is around the corner—

But it's not quite here yet—

You'll have to wait.

GROAN!!!

It *is* your birthday month—

And you *will* get that new game you wanted—

But you'll have to wait.

GROAN!!!

Covid vaccines *are* being distributed—

There *does* seem to be an end in sight to the restrictions—

But we're not there yet, so we'll have to wait

GROAN!!!

Especially as Christians—

Christians who know what the end holds—
 We know how deep these groanings can be.
 We look around us at the condition of our world...

And we know that things are not supposed to be this way:

We know that loved ones aren't supposed to be enslaved to opiates;
 Young adults aren't supposed to contemplate suicide;
 Marriages aren't supposed to end in divorce;
 People aren't supposed to resort to sleeping in makeshift shelters in the park;
 My body isn't supposed feel like it's falling apart;
 People aren't supposed to die from cancer...

People aren't even supposed to die!

From Scripture—

And from deep within us—

We know that things aren't supposed to be so broken...

Life shouldn't be this painful;
 Suffering shouldn't be this common.

There will come a day when God sets things right—

But that day is not now—

So, we'll have to wait.

GROAN!!!

Did you know that creation is groaning too?

Plants, animals, land, sky, sea, sun and moon...

All of creation is groaning.

Our passage says:

“Creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”
 (8:22)

What happens in childbirth?

New life comes from the mother through intense pain...(so I'm told)

Creation is anticipating a time of renewal—

When new life will come to the hurting world—

Because right now it's broken.

“Creation was subjected to frustration...by God.”

When humanity sinned against the Creator...

Not only did *we* experience a widespread brokenness...

Creation experienced it too.

“Cursed is the ground because of you,” God says to Adam.

“It's going to produce thorns and thistles for you.” (Gen 3:17-19)

We see the frustration of creation today...

And we hear its groaning:

When hurricanes stir up ocean waters...

Sending waves crashing into buildings.

When wildfires ravage and destroy millions of acres;

When crops are stunned by freezing temperatures in late-spring;

When animals attack and injure humans;

And of course, when microscopic viruses mutate...

Mutate into deadly variants causing respiratory distress.

This is creation groaning.

This is creation living in enslavement...

Enslaved to corruption and decay.

Not the way it was created to be.

But—

Just like that kid standing on their tiptoes...

Craning their neck, waiting to catch the first glimpse of the parade;

Just like Gerald giddy with excitement at Piggie's surprise—

Creation is waiting in eager expectation.

Waiting for what?

“For the children of God to be revealed.” (8:19)

Waiting for that time when God’s children are glorified...

Because this is when creation will be set free.

Glorification.

This is what God promises *us*...

That we are bound for glory.

This is why our groaning is so deep and intense at times.

This is why the waiting is so difficult...

Because we know what’s ahead...[PAUSE]

Or do we?

Do we know what God has promised us?

Do we realize what God has waiting for us?

What do you think Gerald is expecting Piggie’s surprise to be?

Something big...something pretty...and something sharable.

It could be a large, well-decorated cake.

It could be a toy house they can play in together.

Maybe it’s a new pink and blue double swing?

That’s big, pretty and sharable.

Think bigger, Gerald.

This is Piggie’s surprise for Gerald...

[SHOW PICTURE]

I wonder if we need to think bigger—

Set our imaginations free—

Allow ourselves to dream wildly when it comes to what God has waiting for us...

For those who are in Christ.

Because maybe we’re like the child in the ball pit at McDonalds...

Finding so much joy and fun playing in the 10x10 pool of colorful plastic balls.
This child loves the ball pit...

But it's all they know.

What about when her parents take her to Disney World.

Can she even grasp what that will be like?

Does she have any idea what's in store for her?

Her parents may try to explain it to her...where they're going...

But words will never do it justice.

Paul says that what we're experiencing here now—

The joy yes...

But especially the suffering and hardships—

It's not even worthy to be compared to what's ahead...

There is no comparison:

A ball pit isn't worthy to be compared with Disney World.

A well-decorated cake isn't worthy to be compared with the view of the galaxy and thousands of stars in the nighttime sky.

“The glory to be revealed in/to us will far outweigh what we have now...”

There is no comparison.

So, what is this glory?

What are we eagerly waiting for?

Paul says, “We're eagerly awaiting our adoption.”

There's a tension that we have to deal with in this verse...

Because just a few verses earlier (8:14-17) Paul told us we're already adopted...

We're already God's sons and daughters.

Now he's saying, “We're still awaiting it.”

How can we already have it, but still be waiting for it?

This is the already-not-yet tension that we live in as Christians.

We've already been adopted into God's family:

If we are in Jesus Christ...

God has already taken care of our sins;

He has signed the legal paperwork to make us his...

We belong to him.

We are his children.

This is the "already" part of it.

But there's more to come.

We have yet to be transformed into his children...

We are not yet finally made like Jesus.

Our bodies are still weak and failing.

We still give ourselves over to sin...

Words, thoughts, and actions that destroy us...

That destroy our relationships...

That destroy the creation around us.

We *are* God's children—

We are forgiven and considered righteous in his eyes—

But this isn't our lived-out reality...

Yet!

Glorification is that reality...

"The redemption of our bodies."

What we are now is nothing compared to what we will be...

Holistically, we will be changed:

Our *bodies* will be transformed:

No longer subject to viruses and cancers;

No longer experiencing aches and pains of growing old;

No longer living under the weight of depression;

No longer living under the paralysis of anxiety and panic;

No, our bodies will be made new.

Our *spirits* will be made new.

We will no longer be drawn to sin:

No more giving into those addictions;

No more jealousy or rage;

No more broken relationships;

No more fighting among ourselves.

Our relationship with creation will be made new:

Our transformation to glory will be so powerful...

That all of creation will be brought along. (Tim Keller)

“Creation is waiting for this...”

“Waiting for the children of God to be revealed...”

So that it will be liberated and brought into the glory of God’s children.

The creation we’ve been depleting and destroying...

We’ll steward faithfully.

And finally, no more separation from God.

All of our doubts will at last be relieved.

We will see our Lord face to face.

He will speak his love over us.

We will be free to worship him...

Free to simply enjoy being in his presence...

Offering him our praise...

Giving *him* the glory due his name.

God promises that we will be glorified...

But for now, we’re waiting.

So, the question becomes, how are we waiting?

How are we doing at living in the tension of the already and not yet?

Let's talk about two unhealthy ways of waiting...

Ways that we commonly find ourselves in.

First is what we'll call an *impatient settling*.

This is when Gerald crosses his arms—

And with a look of displeasure on his face—

Says, "I am *done* waiting," then walks away.

He cannot take the tension...

So he is willing to settle for nothing.

Impatient settling is the point Abraham and Sarah come to when they can't conceive.

They decide that God is too slow in fulfilling his promise to give them a son...

So, they take things into their own hands...

Abraham impregnates Hagar, the maidservant.

Impatient settling is the people of Israel not waiting for God's plan for the Messiah to be revealed.

Jesus comes into town on a donkey...

They hail as King.

But when he doesn't overthrow the Romans as they thought he would...

They don't wait to see the full plan to the end.

"Crucify him!" they call out.

"We're done waiting for this guy to do something."

Impatient settling is where we say, "I'm done waiting."

"I'm taking things into my own hands."

"God has either forgotten about me..."

"Or he doesn't care about the pain the waiting is causing me."

Impatient settling:

Unwilling to wait for what God has in store.

On the other end though, there is denial.

We deny that any such tension can exist in our life as Christians today.

Because we are God's people, we think, things need to be neat and tidy...

No unanswered questions...

No loose ends...

And certainly, no deep groaning or getting upset over things in the here and now. (Scott Hoezee)

We don't fully allow ourselves to live in the tension of the already-not-yet of God's world.

We act as if we're not allowed to long for something better...

To long for the renewal and glory that God has promised us.

Impatient settling or a blissful denial...

We probably move back and forth between these.

What does healthy waiting look like then?

First, it's based on hope.

"In this hope we were saved." (8:24)

We stand on the assurance that what God says will come true...

His promise will be fulfilled.

So we daily remind ourselves and saturate ourselves in his Word...

We keep his promise in front of us...always!

Next, we allow ourselves to feel the tension.

We allow ourselves to be sad and upset over what we see broken.

We don't try to make excuses for it...

We don't pretend like things are better than they actually are.

We don't deny that everything is *not* okay.

God will make it better in the end...

But we're still in the not-yet part of things.

We acknowledge that a lot of things *do* suck right now:

Asian Americans being targeted;

People shooting up shoppers in a grocery store;
 Unable to hug our family and friends;
 Wrestling with the same sins after years of struggle;
 People we love dying...

Allow yourself to feel it.

Allow yourself to groan.

Allow yourself to be eager about redemption...

Because we know this isn't how it's supposed to be.

And finally—

And don't miss this—

We practice what the Contemporary Testimony calls “tempered impatience.”

This is a faithful impatience...

Where we know something is broken in the world...

And we have the opportunity to participate in its renewal.

It's where we *don't* settle for seeing something broken anymore.

It's working toward justice and equity.

It's where we offer ourselves to God for his work...

To be used in whatever the situation is where he's called us to.

God promises us a future of glory...

A future with him—

A future in a renewed creation with renewed bodies—

A future that words cannot describe.

This is our guaranteed future...

But we're not there yet.

And so we cling to the Lord Jesus Christ...

Eagerly waiting for that day to come...

And all the while serving the Lord now.

Amen.