We Groan

Many, many years ago my parents were living in Naples, Italy. My sister and I were just children then, living with them. One summer we took a trip to Venice, Italy.

There are two places in Venice that stick in my mind from that trip: Saint Mark's square and the Bridge of Sighs.

Venice has few roads. There are many walkways. There is a road/bridge and a train that connect the main island to the mainland. The different parts of the city are connected by water canals. People travel the canals in boats, some of which are "gondolas." Buildings that are across each other over a canal are sometimes connected with bridges. The Bridge of Sighs connects a Venetian palace to a prison on the other side. The bridge was a covered bridge with a couple of small barred windows. One one side, in the Palace were the court and interrogation rooms. On the other side was a prison. Prisoners who went to the prison often were to be imprisoned for life. As a prisoner was escorted over the bridge, he was allowed to stop for a moment to see the outside world for the last time. The prisoners would sigh. Then they were locked in a small cell, perhaps 6 foot by 8 foot cell, for the rest of their lives, never to step foot outside of that small room.[1]

Human beings are "trapped" in a fallen world. There are many times that we sigh or groan at our situation. We are imperfect, sinful beings in a world that is itself imperfect. As Christians, we sometimes sigh or groan at our state in our current bodies with a sin nature constantly trying to trip us up. We may go to God and ask for help. We may sigh to God.

1 This is what I remember from the tour guide that took us to that bridge.

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Romans 8:18-26

In Romans chapter 7 Paul expressed frustration at the operation of the sin nature in his own life.

> **Romans 7:21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.**
>
> **Romans 7:22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,**
>
> **Romans 7:23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.**
>
> **Romans 7:24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?**

That was more than a sigh. Maybe a loud groan?

Another time Paul was given a demon as "thorn in the flesh" to accompany him to keep him from arrogance due to his immense knowledge of Scripture and other revelation that was never written down.

> **2 Corinthians 12:7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger (**Greek is angelos, angel, in this case, demon**) of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!**

> **2 Corinthians 12:8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.**

Implored. It means essentially to beg. Interesting that this word is from the same word group as "*parakaleo*" and Paraclete. In this context it means to implore or beg. Perhaps that qualifies as groaning.

> **2 Corinthians 12:9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.**

Let us read a few verses until we get to the groaning of the creation, people and the Holy Spirit. Note in these verses that Paul has us looking t the future. Christianity is not about past failures. It is looking forward to God's glorious eternal plan.

> **Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**

Paul has taken us from the present time in suffering to the future glory. Yes we suffer now. But if that suffering is dealt with by depending on the Holy Spirit, there is glory produced. It will be a glory that lasts into eternity.

Perhaps the first speech I had to give was in the 10th grade. I feared getting up in front of people and speaking about some subject that I barely understood. After the speech, I felt that there were so many things I could have done differently to make the speech better. Let us pray that

God the Holy Spirit can prepare us for the various sufferings we endure by the power of the Holy Spirit. We don't want to get to heaven and say, "I could have done better."

> **Romans 8:19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.**

Waits eagerly. This is a single word in the Greek that means "waits eagerly." This looks forward to what God is going to do. For Paul, this must be an important word since he uses it three times in Romans 8. Here in this verse, creation waits eagerly.

> **Romans 8:20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope**

When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were thrown out of the garden and for a lack of a better word, "cursed" with a perishable body and no human spirit. At the same time, creation, in particular, earth was cursed. At the end of the Millennium there will be a new perfected heaven and earth.

Hope. Remember, the Greek word means "confident expectation." Though the earth is currently cursed, God will in the future restore the earth to the "new earth." We who are saved by faith look forward to a creation that is blessed. Having been justified/saved in the past we now look forward.

> **Romans 8:21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.**

Glory. We will be glorified with Christ in the future. Jesus mentions that in His High Priestly prayer in John 17.

> **Romans 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.**

Groans. This is from a word group meaning to sigh, to groan. I see it as an expression of emotion. If the creation groans, it has been characterized as a living being. So the groaning would be like an anthropopathism. It has a prefix that means "with." So it is to grown with. The question then is groan with whom or what? My suggestion is that the creation is made up of many parts. Each of the parts groans in unison.

> **Romans 8:23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.**

Waiting eagerly. The second use of this word which indeed means to "wait eagerly." In this case, we, believers in Jesus Christ, wait eagerly.

Groan within ourselves. This suggests it is an inaudible groaning. We think it.

As a reminder, Jesus suffered greatly for us.

> **Hebrews 2:9 But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that**

> **by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.**

Redemption of our body. This is a redemption that takes place in the future. Our physical bodies will be redeemed. In the future we will have a resurrection body like Jesus'.

> **1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.**

If we are redeemed at the point of salvation and we will have a redemption in eternity, then perhaps like salvation, there is a timeline: phase 1, phase 2 and phase 3.

> **Romans 8:24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees?**
>
> **Romans 8:25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.**

Perseverance. This is the Greek word *hupomone*. Often it is translated "patience." Here it is translated "perseverance" which is appropriate in this context. Robby Dean prefers, "endurance."

Hope. The Greek means "confident expectation." As Paul explains, hope is something we do not see but expect to encounter.

Wait eagerly. The third use of wait eagerly. The result of hoping for something with endurance or perseverance causes us to wait eagerly.

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Previously we have seen that waiting is associated with faith.

> **Isaiah 40:31 Yet those who <u>wait</u> for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.**

That is one of those promises we want to put in memory.

> **Romans 8:26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with <u>groanings</u> too deep for words;**

Helps. Interesting. Kenneth Wuest, a Greek scholar from the last century has a helpful insight. "The word speaks of the action of a person coming to another's aid by taking hold over against that person, of the load he is carrying. The person helping does not take the entire load, but helps the other person in his endeavor.[2]"

"Just so, the Holy Spirit indwelling the saint, comes to the aid of that saint in his spiritual problems and difficulties, not by taking over the responsibility for them and giving the saint an automatic deliverance without any effort on his part, but by lending a helping hand, allowing him to work out his problems and overcome his difficulties with His help.[3]"

We do the physical work but we are empowered by the Holy Spirit. In prayer, we have a very limited amount of information. So God the Holy Spirit helps us in prayer.

2 Wuest, K.S. (1969). Word studies in the Greek new testament, volume 1. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.Romans page 140
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Let me quote Robby Dean on the rest of this verse. I wanted to paraphrase what he said but failed to communicate the thought any better than he did.

"So He comes in as an assistant with groanings that are unutterable. They're inaudible groanings. This word for intercession is huperentechano [ὑπερεντεχανω] and it just means to pray on behalf of someone else. But in the next word we have a different word that's going to be used for intercession. In verse 27, "And He [God the Father] who searches the hearts know what the mind of the Spirit is.." The Holy Spirit is one with the Father in the Trinity. They're both omniscient so the Father knows exactly what the Spirit is thinking and He knows the mind of the Spirit "because the Spirit is making intercession for the saints according to the will of God." This is a different word. It's entuchano [ἐντυχανω] and it means to appeal, to make an appeal to someone. So the Spirit makes an appeal on behalf of the saints according to the will of God." So we pray to the best of our ability. But we pray. We don't back off; we don't say, "I'm not really sure so I'm just going to let the Holy Spirit handle it." We do it to the best of our ability and then unbeknownst to us, we don't know how it happens. He sort of dusts it off and cleans it up, straightens out, and then it goes to the Throne of God. He is our intercessor.[4]"

I may revisit these verses from a different perspective.

4 https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/romans-menuitem/message/2010-romans-091b/read

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[5]

Proverbs 14:34 Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to *any* people.

Proverbs 29:2 When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, But when a wicked man rules, people groan.

https://deanbible.org/dbmfiles/slides/2008-Voting-02.pdf

5 https://deanbibleministries.org/dbmfiles/slides/2014-GPAges-030b.pdf