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ZWTF

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Martin Zender Zapping You Whenever Thoughts Flow

ROMANS Part 72

Chapter 8:22-25

The groaning of the creation.



For we are aware that the entire creation is groaning and travailing together until now. 23 Yet not only so, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruit of the spirit, we ourselves also, are groaning in ourselves, awaiting the sonship, the deliverance of our body. 24

For to expectation were we saved. Now expectation, being observed, is not expectation, for what anyone is observing, why is he expecting it also? 25 Now, if we are expecting what we are not observing, we are awaiting it with endurance.

The groaning of the creation is different than the premonition of the creation. The premonition of the creation is a relief from the groaning. Even so, this premonition is nevertheless rarely strong enough to stop the groaning. I wish it were. Here again is evidence of the imbalance that we have been discussing. A mother in labor has a premonition that she is about to deliver a baby. (The girth of her midsection and the ultrasound photo help the premonition along.) Still, she groans and travails. (How appropriate that the word “groan” comes from the Greek *stenazo*, whose English element is CRAMPIZE.) The happy premonition is not enough to curtail the articulation of discomfort. Were it so, she would stoically take it. As the cramps distended her belly, she would watch *Seinfeld* re-runs and order Chinese food. But no. The groaning outweighs the premonition. Without the premonition, however, the groaning would give way to something worse, such as screaming. No one wants that to happen. Therefore, one ought to never squelch a groan. A concentrated series of well-executed groans can consistently derail a scream, and this has been proven in laboratory experiments.

JUST SNEEZE, FOR THE LOVE OF GOD

Some people squelch sneezes. I don't understand this. I have seen people do it, and I am always afraid that their brains are going to come out of their ears. I fear that at the very least they will pop a blood vessel. I am concerned that their larynx will fly out their throat and strike an innocent bystander, such as myself. Sneezes are not meant

to be squelched. The sneeze is given us by God to get rid of something. It's a release of some sort of nasty pressure that wants badly to escape the body. Some people must think that it is embarrassing to sneeze, or that sneezing is stupid. No. It belongs to the human race. It is a gift of God. But maybe the particular sneeze of some people *does* sound ridiculous. Well, yes, I have known people with ridiculous-sounding sneezes. Many people will embellish their sneezes, and I don't know why. For instance, who says that one must add a long, drawn-out "choooOOOOO" at the end of a sneeze? It is completely unnecessary. It is my opinion that such bizarre suffixes can be consciously stopped. I think that



some people have just gotten used to sneezing this way and that no one has ever told them, "Do you know that you don't *have* to add that absurd little 'choooOOOOO' at the end?" But they get into the habit and can't stop it. Others sneeze so loudly that, if the expulsion occurs at a mall, the entire mall spins on its heels and wonders what happened. *Is it a terrorist attack?* I don't see why such volume is necessary. You can still get out the sneeze without attaching a cannon to it. Can't you?

People are embarrassed to sneeze, so they don't. So they get sicker than they already are. They get sicker because they keep things in. When you have a cold, you sneeze. The sneeze is your body's way of getting rid of something. Let it happen. A sneeze is an orgasm for your cold. Why fight it? It's the same thing with groaning. Stop trying to be an Epicurean or Stoic philosopher. If you don't groan, something worse will come, such as a scream. (Remember those laboratory experiments?) You are living in the most pressure-filled eon there has ever been, and this pressure must be released on a daily if not hourly basis. If it isn't, then ulcers and diseases come—

on the heels of squelched sneezes and screams, of course.

ORGASM FOR THE SOUL

People who refuse to groan eventually do suffer very bad things much worse than groaning. This has been documented, although I'm not sure where. These kinds of people are "so stoic, so strong," up until the day they lose it. From screaming, they graduate to strangling people and/or watching *Ellen*. Don't let this happen to you. Let out good healthy groans all day long, if you need to. And you know you need to. A groan is an orgasm for a soul trapped in an evil eon. Don't deny it expression. Why be embarrassed? Everyone is going through the same thing—nearly. I do think that we in the body of Christ have it worse. Knowledge of the plan of God is definitely sometimes *not* bliss. That would be ignorance. It is ignorance that is bliss, and not necessarily a knowledge of the plan of God, which can sometimes be a burden because we see it from afar and yet still can't catch it. The cookie jar has been out of reach for a long time.

MORE THAN A HEAVY SIGH

Stop being hard on yourselves. Who is asking you to be imperturbable? Literal groaning is the expulsion of air out of the lungs and through the mouth. A good groan worthy of the name is not simply a heavy sigh, but comes with guttural noise sourced at the throat. I'm pretty sure that the uvula vibrates in concert. The uvula is that little flap of skin hanging down from the back of your throat. For sure, the vocal chords want in on it; let them have their day. Don't tell me that you're groaning if I can't hear anything. A groan must be voiced. It must be audible and

“The entire creation is not happily musing about anything. If you are happily musing, you are not groaning.”

it must sound terrible. Please don't let me mistake it for any sort of whimsy or happy musing. If that happens, then you're not groaning. That's my point. The Scripture does not say, "For we are aware that the entire creation is happily musing." No. The entire creation is not happily musing about anything. If you are happily musing



or whimsical, then whatever noise you are making in the throes of whatever you are going through can under no circumstances be called a groan. I'm sorry. It may develop into a groan, though I don't see how. A groan must be so disturbing that, upon hearing it, I must feel sorry for you. A good old-fashioned groan is nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, it has much to commend it. Are you living in the midst of a wicked eon? Then let it out. There, there now.

THE SPIRIT ITSELF GROANS

To help ease the pain of your pain, I will head off at the pass next week's installment by telling you that the spirit itself groans. Here is verse 26 of Romans chapter eight:

Now, similarly, the spirit also is aiding our infirmity, for what we should be praying for, to accord with what must be, we are not aware, but the spirit itself is pleading for us with inarticulate groanings.

If it's good enough for the spirit of God, then it's good enough for me. Am I'm supposed to be more stoic than the spirit of God? The difference between our groans and those of the spirit is that the spirit groans inarticulately. That is, you can't hear it. I'm glad. Otherwise, what em-

*Ha ha, that was just
the spirit making
intercession.*

barrassment would come. I imagine myself sitting at a restaurant and suddenly some strange noise of the deepest distress emanates from my being. From whence it would escape my body, I know not. I would be afraid to think about it, and hesitant to ask. I'm not sure what the groaning of the spirit would sound like, but we are talking about some of the deepest, darkest guttural expulsions here—and I do have an imagination—so I think it would sound something like an elephant in the throes of sexual distress, or a dying giraffe, or a harpooned manatee. The sound might resemble something as simple as the slow release of a whoopee cushion. After all, it *is* the spirit of God, and we all know how unpredictable that is. Imagine trying to explain it to your tablemates: "I'm sorry, but that was just the spirit of God pleading for my sake. Expect more of it, unfortunately. Otherwise, thank you. It is Eon 3, after all. Do you think *I* know what to pray for? Ha, I certainly do not. Please pass me those baked beans again, thanks."

ISRAEL GROANED

Our groans are of the guttural variety. Many famous Bible people have groaned before you, including the Israelites in Egypt. Note the following—

You can be sure that I have heard the groans of the people of Israel, who are now slaves to the Egyptians. And I am well aware of My covenant with them (Exodus 6:5).

Israel groaned in Egypt for more than 400 years. Notice that God does not criticize the groans. At this time I would like to point out that a groan differs from a murmur in several important particulars. God would not have us murmuring, no, but He well understands the groan. In fact, a groan could very well prevent a



“We don’t like that the quail tastes like chicken.”

murmur. (We already know that it prevents a scream.) A groan is an expression of pain and a release of the pain into the atmosphere via sound waves, whereas a murmur is a complaint. It is a whine. Today we would call it bitching. I would not have any of us doing the “b” word. Why not trade the “b” word for the “g” word? This is not a joke. I am instructing myself as I write, because I bitch far too much for my own good or for anyone else’s.

Israel bitched in the wilderness but she groaned in Egypt. What if she had groaned in the wilderness? I am of the opinion that God would have gone easier on her. Perhaps more than two of her number would have advanced to Canaan. Moses would have gone easier on them, I think, and the unfortunate incident with rock and staff might have been avoided. A groan elicits

divine sympathy (note the verse again), whereas a murmur—in the old days, at least—called down wrath. I like how God says in this passage that He is “well aware” of His covenant. If He’s well aware of it, then He must also be well aware of how hard it is for people to wait for His promises (His covenants) to be fulfilled. This tells me that, even in the old days of the law, God sympathized with the groan. The groan belongs to waiting and accompanies it through the trial. For Israel, it was waiting for deliverance from Egypt. For us, it is waiting for deliverance from these failing bodies. Along that line—

The Lord looked down from His sanctuary on high, from heaven He viewed the earth, to hear the groans of the prisoners and release those condemned to death (Psalm 102:19-20).

We are also condemned to death, aren’t we? Are we not prisoners of mortality? Then look! The above verse says that God pays attention to this and that release is coming. In the meantime, do we not, because of the long wait, groan? Is not this what Paul refers to in Romans 8:23 when he says—

Yet not only so, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruit of the spirit, we ourselves also, are groaning in ourselves, awaiting the sonship, the deliverance of our body.

It’s obvious. The groaning has to do with these bodies. These bodies have caged us; we are so limited inside them. Our spirits soar into truth, yet these bodies run into brick walls both literal and figurative. Our bodies are afflicted by Murphy’s Law: “What can go wrong, will go wrong.” I would like to get hold of this Murphy fellow and throttle him. If something ever goes right, we’re shocked. Consider this to be Zender’s Law: “If something ever goes right, we’re shocked.” Job said, “Man is born for trouble as sure as sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). That’s a great saying; I wish I had written it. I look forward to the day when sparks fly downward. (There’s another great saying.) The problem is that the deliverance takes so long. I am reminded of George Harrison’s lyric from “My Sweet Lord”—

I really want to see you Lord, but it takes so long my Lord.

This lyric walks a fine line between groaning and bitching. Technically, it’s the “b” word.



NOT ONLY US

“For we are aware that the entire creation is groaning and travailing together until now” (Romans 8:22).

We are not the only ones groaning. The creation not only has a premonition, but the premonition elicits guttural noises, on a regular basis, from the corporate uvula of creation. Do not believe those photos of dogs where the dogs appear to be smiling. It’s an illusion. Dogs do not smile. It is some sort of muscle affliction. Dogs are honest, whereas human beings deceive themselves and others as a vocation. For instance, I can easily smile for a photograph, but don’t be too impressed. It’s a muscle affliction. Were you to look at such a photograph—lasting all of 1/64 of a second—you would say, “Why, that Martin Zender fellow sure is a happy fellow!” Ha. You will have been tricked by the muscle affliction. Martin Zender smiles for the sake of the photographer who wants a lovely photograph with Martin Zender after handing his phone to a third party for the sake of the memorable snap. When the 1/64th of a second ends (it doesn’t take long), Martin Zender resorts to his regularly scheduled programming.

I once had a dog named Pup who groaned in her sleep. Pup had three legs. In her dreams, I am pretty sure that Pup had her full complement of limbs. In her dreams, she would groan and run. Her stub would pump like a locomotive arm. Everything would be twitching. I would have paid to get into Pup’s dreams, but they were always sold out. The groans made me think that either Pup was

after something in her dream or that something was after Pup. We do the same thing sometimes in our sleep. Dreams make us twitch like steam trains and groan like panda bears. Maybe it’s that we subconsciously realize that we’re eventually going to wake up to the regularly scheduled programming.

WILD KINGDOM

Animals make strange noises. It is all groaning. If you listen carefully, the sounds coming from animals—even insects—is not too different from those sounds made by humans. We all sigh, whine, hiss, buzz and groan. Some of us whinny. Others snort. We are a vast cacophony of animal-like noises. Paul blames the vale of vanity. None of us get exactly what we want—not dragonflies, not polar bears, not owls, not seahorses, and certainly not us. The only difference between us and some of these animals is the size of the holes we crawl into at the end of another frustrating day.

I have seen close-up films of ants carrying cafeteria items into their colonies, such as large, dead insects. The ants are amazingly strong for their size, but they struggle mightily with things like grasshopper carcasses. It’s usually one ant carrying a grasshopper carcass. It’s like he’s trying to be a hero. Something else killed the grasshopper, but the ant will take advantage of the road kill and crate it home. We can’t hear it, but the ant groans in vast frustration. Certainly, it must. Its very movements betray agitation.

An ant carrying a grasshopper is like you or me carrying the Chrysler Building. The ant drops the Chrysler Building again and again. We admire its strength, but the ant is thinking how weak it is and how absurd it is to have to transport so giant an insect to the herd, at the same time tripping over its own six legs and dropping the grasshopper repeatedly. The ant also hates the idea that someone is filming it. *Why is someone filming my humiliation?* The ant is not like the Kardashian sisters. It doesn't want to be on *Animal Planet*, it only wants to drag home dinner and eat it. The ant itself muses subliminally to itself that, if only it had a different body, things would be different; or if only it had twelve legs instead of six, things would be different; or if only it had two heads instead of one, or an extra antenna, things would be different. Everything's got excuses, even ants. Of course the ant is no more consciously aware of the source of its groaning (that is, vanity) than we are. But we are learning. Nevertheless, the planet emits one long objection to its lot.

Whales groan, squeak and whistle. We all know this. Undersea explorers such as Jacques Cousteau have recorded the sounds of whales and broadcast them on television. The "Save The Whales!" people think it is so cute that the whales make such cute noises. They think that the whales are communicating with one another. Oh, they are. They are saying four-letter whale words. The whale noise is the groan of a gigantic organism suffering beneath an unrequited premonition and a blow-hole. I cannot hear the squeaks, groans and whistles of whales without empathizing and wanting to share



a drink with the whale, and to put my arm around it and say, "I know how you feel, pal." I want to meet one of the great mammals later in a bar—maybe in Seattle or San Francisco—and commiserate together about the sad state of our bodies, the poor quality of plankton these days, and of how this excruciating wait for the sons of God to be manifest is making us all crazy.

SPEAKING THE NAMES

"Yet not only so, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruit of the spirit, we ourselves also, are groaning in ourselves, awaiting the sonship, the deliverance of our body" (Romans 8:23).

We have the firstfruit of the spirit, and you would think that this would curtail our groaning. In fact, we groan more than any of the creation. Man is a creature, and a pitiful one. Our groans come easier, for we are the most conscious of our destiny and present lack. Whales and ants still see through a glass darkly. Who would convict the animal kingdom of sin? Why then should we convict ourselves of sin for groaning? We ought to just groan while saying God's name, and we do. Heaven understands. God's seal of approval rests upon the God-tinged groan. I also recommend groaning using Jesus Christ's name. This is the best. It relieves all sorts of pressure. I do it all the time. It is not taking the Lord's name in vain, for that has to do with people calling themselves Christians ("taking His name"), while at the same time doubting everything that Christ ever accomplished ("in vain") for the sake of His creation.

Spicing a groan with the names of both God and Jesus Christ credits the Ones Who have set us up for this groan-fest in the first place. It honors God to say, "Oh, God!" and it honors Jesus Christ to say, "Jesus Christ!" Why wouldn't it? Again, this is groaning while at the same time crediting the Masters of our fates and the Progenitors of our trials with the fruit of Their corporate womb.

EXPECTATION

"For to expectation were we saved. Now expectation, being observed, is not expectation, for what anyone is observing, why is he expecting it also?" (Romans 8:24)

This verse vexes me. What do you mean, God, when You say, "to expectation were we saved"? I thought that I was saved in order to escape this expectation business and step out onto the reality, the physicality, and the super-naturality of my calling. Do you mean to suggest that expectation is as

good as it gets? I know You can't mean that, but surely there must have been better wording available. Do You really want to remind me, Yahweh, of Jack Nicholson walking into the psychiatrist's office waiting room and saying, "What if this is as good as it gets?" The people in that waiting room nearly bled in horror. Since I know that expectation is surely not Your end-game, my only conclusion is that there is something so great about the expectation that, in the future, I will exchange it for some unspeakably glorious reality and at last grasp, with full heart, Your choice of words.

Expectation is, to God and Paul here, synonymous with faith. And faith—I must conclude—is the ultimate trading commodity for future glory. The apostle writes, "Now expectation, being observed, is not expectation." Is this any different than the definition of faith that we find in Hebrews 11:1?

Now faith is an assumption of what is being expected, a conviction concerning matters which are not being observed.

It is no different. The topics in both passages are expectation and observation. If we are observing something, then we are not expecting it. If we are expecting it, then we are not observing it. This still doesn't mean that I like the jarring wording of, "For to expectation were we saved." Why say that we are saved *to* expectation? See? I get the truth, I just don't like the wording. It feels like a slap in the face. It is because of the expectation (which is not being observed) that I groan. And because *I* am still groaning, the great whales and the little ants toil and boil unsatisfied. Because of my unfulfilled destiny, their deliverance waits in the sand hills and in the great oceans. I ameliorate my pain by reiterating to you (and to myself) that faith (that is, non-observation) must be so important in and of itself as to warrant the seemingly insulting words of Paul and God. It is the only satisfying conclusion. The only modern saying worthy of it is, "Half the fun is getting there."

Wee-ha.

"Now, if we are expecting what we are not observing, we are awaiting it with endurance" (Romans 8:25).

Endurance is the thing. It's *a* thing. You have often heard me say, "Endurance is not pretty." If endurance were the Mona Lisa, it would be a bunion on her left foot. Endurance is, really, not doing anything; that's how much of a thing it is. If you're not doing anything, then you're enduring. The Greek word is *hupomone*, and its English elements are simply (and terribly), UNDER-REMAIN. All you have to do is to remain under some sort of waiting, and you're enduring. Congratulations? Hell yes.

Watch people at a doctor's office. What are they doing? They are reading magazines, doing their nails, looking at their phones; any number of dull activities. Some aren't doing anything. Bravo. They are all enduring. Film it and put it to a John Williams score, because it is that epic. According to Paul and God it is. According to Paul and God, we're saved to it. Enduring means that you are not killing yourself. If you are not killing yourself but are instead writhing, groaning, reading a magazine, doing your nails or looking at your phone, then you are enduring and you're in good shape—good shape, I say.

If you are a member of the body of Christ and cognizant of the future burden of glory, yet you are still watching films of whistling whales and bug-carrying ants while at the same time mourning the bygone days of youth and regular bowel movements before losing most of your mind and some of your limbs while watching your children declare themselves atheists as your parents die and your ex-wives remain just

that in-between your perusal of the obituary column to find the name of your dad's last surviving brother—and if the names of God and Christ are still on your lips as you *continue* reading a magazine, *continue* doing your nails, *continue* staring at your phone, *continue* groaning *and* saying the names of God and Jesus Christ through the mucous at the back of your throat, then congratulations because you are enduring. You have appeared as a significant blip, aglow, on God's radar, and all of the beings of heaven hail your fortitude. To friends and family members you remain anonymous, of course, but chin up. The beings above bandy your celebrity about, and the whales and ants and gerbils of this pathetically shared existence know who you are. As previously noted and celebrated, these beings speak the common language of the groan. When this vast chasm between trial and glory yields spiritual delight at last, then we, along with the animal kingdom, shall celebrate as only those who have never seen Jesus Christ can celebrate. We will have pierced the iron curtain of vanity and death via faith, having never really witnessed a dang-blasted thing.

Rejoice. —MZ

