

One day I was crossing over US 131 and saw traffic at a standstill for miles ... an accident had closed the highway down. My first thought was how terrible it would have been if I had been trapped in that stalled traffic. I am embarrassed to say that my first thought was not concern for who might have been hurt but how glad I was that I was not in that traffic, as I do not do well at waiting.

How good are you at "waiting?" Is it a necessary evil, or is waiting sometimes a blessing? Are you patient or are you impatient? Is waiting always a burden or sometimes does it make life easier? The Japanese have learned to wait as they always live from one earthquake to the next. For centuries they built the walls of their homes out of paper, so when the ground started shaking, the walls didn't fall apart. They knew what they were waiting for, and so they knew how to wait.

Sometimes we wait to delay inevitable, like when we have messed up and wish to delay having the gavel drop. There are all sorts of reasons to wait. We wait for medical tests. We wait for healing. We wait for love. But the most difficult waiting is when life seems unfair or is more than we can bear.

Paul knew waiting is difficult when life isn't fair. He couldn't wait to punish those threatening his traditions. He couldn't wait for eyesight to return. He couldn't wait to travel to Rome and beyond. Paul knew about waiting when life wasn't fair. He talked about the groanings of this earth. The unfairness. The pain. The trembling. The uncertainty. The fear of what comes next. He wrote to people like us who had to wait when they were impatient for a new day to come.

He said "*all of creation groaning in labor pains ... we groan inwardly while we wait for adoption (i.e. Heaven!)*" In other words, Paul suggests what seem like earthquakes are "BIRTHQUAKES!" How descriptive that is!

Calvary was full of darkness, earthquakes, and cries of pain! But, at the end of three days came a birth! Easter began with tears and trembling but finished with life and cries of joy! Like the birth of a child, this became the most perfect "birth quake" of all.

Paul's image is powerful. Just as earthquakes create mountains and valleys, labor's pain is the incredible gift of new life. One of the joys, these days, is that dads can witness birth. But only a Mom can experience the full impact. As a husband, it is difficult to watch the intense pain that comes with contraction after contraction and know there is nothing I can do to change what is going on.

But there is also no greater miracle, in my mind, than the love of a mother who can endure 9 months of body change and then the pain of childbirth. I knew a young couple whose first child was born after an incredibly long and difficult delivery. The Mom was in transition for 17 hours with incredible back pain coming with each contraction.

After her child was born, and the Mom held her baby, her first response to her husband's tears were "Oh, it wasn't that bad!" Only a Mom can respond to difficult waiting in such fashion.

In Romans, Paul lifts up the special gift that faith imparts on our waiting, so that no

matter what we face, how much we tremble, or how great is our fear, faithful waiting is rewarded with faith-filled peace.

Jesus dealt with the same issue when asked about pulling pesky weeds. His answer was “no, just wait, unless you might damage the wheat. Let them grow side by side and we’ll sort them out in the end.” Life is full of waiting, and often that waiting is painful, but the end of our wait is assured.

In our day we might consider how strong weed killers can keep crops weed free, but then the run from such powerful chemicals can get into the water supply and cause more damage than anyone intended.

Suffering and unfairness in life aren’t goals, but help us to remember that we aren’t God, and God is the only solution in the end. In other words, without pain, would we truly “know” Christ at all? And, at the same time, without the cross, would Christ truly “know” us? It is in becoming ‘one of us’ that Jesus, allows us to become one with Him! The cross IS the moment of God’s greatest love and triumph as HE embraced the most devastating struggle of being human and accepted it as his own.

He suffered what was not deserved. He surrendered what was rightfully his. In that painful struggle, a labor of love, a new birth emerged that brought life to the dying and hope to the lost. We have hope because he stooped to our level, so that he could lift us up to His.

The question should never be “WHY” must I wait, but rather "HOW shall I wait?" Remember a Father welcoming Prodigal son. And Noah's boat building when there was yet no rain. Or Israel's faithful 40-year trek through the desert.

Mary and disciples hoped against hope in their vigil at the foot of the cross!!! Disciples gathered in the upper room waiting for something to happen. Paul waited in darkness for his blindness to end. And often we wait longer than we would like, but are promised that we will not ever have to wait alone.

Paul wrote: *"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us... Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."*

Jesus said, *"Let the weeds and wheat grow together ... on the day of harvest, the righteous will shine like the sun!"* Why must I wait? It becomes easier when we know it is part of life, and more than that, when we know WHO is waiting with us and WHAT we are waiting for.    amen