

Unashamed (11): Are We There Yet?

(Romans 8:18-39)

I. Introduction

- A. I really didn't like the state of Tennessee very much when I was a kid. Sorry, I just didn't.
1. I've gotten over it; I even lived there. There were reason why I didn't like it as a kid
 - a. **First**, Tennessee sitting right between the states of Virginia and Arkansas.
 - b. **Second**, the state of Tennessee is a about gillion miles long!
 - c. **Third**, my family drove from Virginia to visit relatives in Arkansas 1-2 times a year
 2. That was before I-40 and trip took 28 or hours—most of that was across Tennessee
 - a. **Distractions**: “*License Bingo*,” “*Billboard ABC’s*,” “*Slug-Bug*,” “*Count-Cows*”
 - b. Those did help pass the time... for about an hour— so then we only had 27 hours!
 - c. To this day, when I think of Tennessee, I think of long hours in the car being bored
 3. To be fair, we didn't get anywhere near Tennessee before I'd ask, “*Are we there yet?*”
- B. Long trips are boring because we don't like to wait; ost of us aren't very good at waiting
1. Do Wal-Mart waltz or Sam's Club shuffle for mythical moving line. *Don't like wait!*
 - a. We play bongos on steering wheel because it speeds up traffic. *Don't like to wait!*
 - b. We buy expensive one-cup coffee makers because can't wait for hole pot to brew!
 - 1) Sammy gave us a bag of grits, and you'd think we had discovered ambrosia!
 - 2) We've eaten instant for so long! Who has time to cook grits? *Don't like wait!*
 2. Part of the problem with the long trip of daily life is very often it is a daily grind.
 - a. We live in the first chapter of Ecclesiastes where the daily grind wears us down
 - 1) The sun rises, meets itself hurrying back; the wind blows one way and another
 - 2) Stream flow to a sea that's never full; generations come and generation go.
 - b. Everything goes on without a point or without end... like Tennessee (**1:8-10**, MES)
- C. But what happens when life isn't just boring? What happens when it life fights back?
1. What happens when life hurts? What happens when life becomes a real pain?
 - a. No, we don't like to wait, but there are times that we must wait WHILE we hurt!
 - b. When we struggle with pain and loss, you long for days when you were just bored!
 2. And that is precisely where we left off our study of *Unashamed* last week (**Rom 8:17**)
 - a. Here is the assurance that we are God's children—and so we will share in His glory
 - b. But Jesus was also God's child—we must also come to share in suffering as well.

II. Are We There— Our Sufferings and Glory

A. Paul continues this connection between suffering and glory (**Rom 8:18**)

1. Actually, this connection is a “*contrast*.” It is a “*Now*” versus a “*Then*.”
 - a. Suffering is in “*present time*” (ESV); the glory “*he will reveal to us later*” (NLT)
 - b. It is a **contrast** and not a **comparison**. Paul says there is *no comparison!*
 - 1) World is going to throw some hard stuff at us that going to make things hard
 - 2) Life will get hard— faith and faithfulness won’t take all those hard things way
2. What hard things? Exactly what “sufferings” does Paul have in mind here? (**8:35**)
 - a. Messing up the big finish, but it’s important to see. (*Still have to wait for end*)
 - b. These are real struggles! The kinds that cause some to say, “*God doesn’t care!*”
 - c. Paul’s point is the opposite; these things have no power to separate us from God!

B. World is full of brokenness and suffering, and it’s not the world’s fault (**Rom 8:20**)

1. I spent hours on this verse; it struck me as odd—I like odd things (*so does my wife*)
 - a. The question is, “*Who is responsible for the world being subjected to frustration?*”
 - 1) NIV is more literal; newer translations have “*subjected to God’s curse*” (NLT)
 - 2) Footnote in NET says “*God*” is added for clarity... but not WHY it should be
 - b. Maybe God; Or Satan. Maybe Adam? Who was world subject at fall? (**Gen 1:28**)
 - 1) Adam and Eve. Was their fault creation was broken by sin and suffering
 - 2) We began in Ecclesiastes; “*frustration*” here is Greek word for “*vanity*.”
2. Why this strikes me as odd (and important) is is that its connected to hope (**8:21**)
 - a. Who hoped that the creation would be liberated? Not God. *He sees!* (**Rom 8:24**)
 - b. Did Adam and Eve hope that something would undo their sin to save creation?

C. We’ve wrestled with this text a bit on Wednesday night in the heaven series

1. We’ve seen destiny of creation through single lens, “*not water but fire next time*”
 - a. Paul looks through another lens; he expects something else for world (**Rom 8:19**)
 - 1) Paul’s creation is not looking not for an end— it longs for a new beginning
 - 2) Stott defines “*eager expectation*” as “*to wait with head raised and eye fixed*”
 - b. What is creation waiting for? The exact same thing you and I are waiting for!
2. Paul’s imagery link the creation with God’s children—we wait together for God!
 - a. Creation suffers. We suffer. Creation waits. We wait. *And we wait in hope.*
 - b. And until that day comes, we’ve got some suffering to do. Until then, we wait.

D. But then we don't just wait together— *we also groan together*. (**Rom 8:22-23**)

1. There's a sense in which we all "*speak in tongues*;" our prayer language is a *groan*
 - a. The world we see and that we live in isn't the world that God created it to be
 - 1) Because of sin, the world never became what God fully intended for it to be.
 - 2) World wasn't to be hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword
 - 3) One day God will set world free to become what it should have been all along
 - b. Same is true of us. We've never become all that God intended us to become
 - 1) We fail, we fall, and we struggle. So as long as we are here, we will groan.
 - 2) We look forward to the day when God will make us what he intended all along.
2. We will never be without struggles, but we'll never be without the Spirit (**Rom 8:23**)
 - a. The firstfruits offering was given at harvest to express two important things—
 - 1) **Thanksgiving**: Farming was risky business; harvest was time to thank God
 - 2) **Blessing**: By giving God first and best, it also expressed expectation of more
 - b. We have the Holy Spirit as "*deposit, guaranteeing what is to come*" (**2 Cor 5:5**)
 - 1) We're given the Spirit as a part of God now to guarantee our inheritance
 - 2) **Last Week**: Suggested "*adoption to sonship*" is a technical legal expression
 - a) Full legal adoption with full right to inherit; generally, must wait for Dad to die
 - b) In this case, we wait for US to die to get full inheritance—we have Holy Spirit

E. But the hard part is that we must wait— and we don't like to wait (**Rom 8:24-25**)

1. Time isn't relative; a minute is 60 sec (*just seems longer if someone is preaching*)
 - a. Time has a way of feeling different. Fred and Eugenia's 60th year anniversary
 - 1) Eugenia can back me up on this point; she's an expert after all those years
 - 2) Daily grind seems really LONG in living and SHORT when looking back
 - b. Sometimes if feel like life is dragging by—but look back it.... Where did it go?
 - c. When you're hurting and waiting for God to do something. *All we can do is groan!*
2. Paul's point is that we don't groan alone— the Spirit groans with us (**Rom 8:26**)
 - a. All creation is groaning and we are groaning right along with creation.
 - b. So is the Spirit. He groans along with us in those times that we struggle to pray
 - 1) May mean we don't know WHAT to pray for—healing or God to take them
 - 2) May mean we don't know HOW to pray— so overwhelmed we can't speak
 - c. No matter how broken our world may become, we are never alone. Never.

III. Conclusion

- A. Despite our struggles, we know that God is up to something—he is at work (**Rom 8:28**)
1. This isn't really saying that everything is going to work out for the best
 - a. Don't tell people that it was probably for the best their loved one died
 - b. Don't comfort people by saying God will make their divorce the best thing
 - c. Don't suggest that God caused their financial disaster to teach them something
 2. God does have a plan—the restoration of all things when our glory is revealed
 - a. God is at work in the middle of our suffering just as He was at work in Christ's
 - b. Paul's answer is, "You can't compare the struggle with the glory that awaits"
 - c. Some days, all we can do is fix our eyes on that glory, praise God... and groan!
- B. Paul wants us to get our game face on, so he asks a series of questions.
1. He asks, "*What do you have to say about that?*" (**31a**) Series of rhetorical questions
 - a. "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" (**31b**)
 - b. "*Won't God graciously give us all things?*" (**32**)
 - c. "*Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own?*" (**33**)
 - d. "*Who then will condemn us?*" (**34**)
 - e. "*Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love?*" (**35**)
 2. Do we believe all that? For faith to survive in the real world, we had better believe it
 - a. Paul's his grand conclusion says we're more than conquerors (**Rom 8:37-39**)
 - b. Some days, it doesn't feel like we're winning. Some days we just hurt and groan
 - c. But we never groan alone, for God groans with us And we will not groan forever
 3. We do believe that Christ came and that He will come again. But we live in-between
 - a. And we wait and groan. We long for days without pain or tears... and without sin
 - b. We wait through good days and bad days—in faith and doubt, struggle and joy
 - c. We wait through trials and triumph, in loss and victory. We wait and we pray
 4. But we don't like to wait; we're not good at waiting. So we sing, "*Teach me, Lord...*"
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