

## *Life Without Why*

Text for Meditation: *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. Likewise, the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

As I thought about our Epistle Lesson this morning, it struck me as being both insightful and humbling. Insightful, in how after all these centuries not much has changed when it comes to the human condition. Insightful in how Paul seems to understand me even though he never met me. Insightful in how his words capture well the main problem of human existence, which obviously is the same for every generation. And just what is this problem of existence, you might ask? It is my sinful delusion in thinking that this world owes me something; that this world is supposed to be all about me. Now none of us will admit this out loud because such honesty would be uncivilized. Instead, we go on deluding ourselves and others with our noble-sounding rhetoric about loving others more than ourselves, all the while knowing deep down, we are cynical, self-serving creatures. And this is a real problem. It causes us real suffering. In fact, this might be the greatest form of suffering. Yes, we suffer in other ways, but one of the major ways we suffer is when things do not go our way, according to our expectations; when the world does not bend to our will or respond exactly as we would like. If you think about various times in your life when you suffered the most, you and I both know, many of those times were self-inflicted. We have no one else to blame but ourselves because such suffering is our own fault and directly caused by our not getting what we wanted.

This brings me to my second observation how Paul's words are not only insightful, but humbling. Humbling in how Paul's insights cut me to the quick, lay me bare, level me to the ground. Humbling in how they describe my incompetence. Humbling in how I must stand before my Lord and admit I do not know how to be in this world or how to act or think, let alone how to pray, without His guidance. Can there be any humbler confession than that!? How humiliating it is that we cannot do it ourselves, and left to ourselves we are sure to make a mess of things. And yet, that's exactly what Paul means when he says, "The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought." We should know how to pray, but we do not. And why not? Because we are self-interested individuals who given the chance will choose ourselves over almost anything or anyone else. Without the Spirit's intercession, we would turn our prayers into a glorified wish list where we continually petition and pester God to give us our heart's desires. We would turn our prayer life into some ritualistic game where we feign the right emotions, and conjure up the right feelings, and string together the right words for the sole purpose of talking our way into getting something. We would turn God into this cosmic vending machine, and provided we inserted the right currency and entered the right sequence of numbers and letters, we would expect timely results.

I offer you three lessons to ponder. *Lesson one*, this world is not all about us. How easy it is to say this, but how hard it is to believe it. God Himself created this world for His glory not ours (Prov. 16:4). Sure, He invites us to share in His glory, but everything does not exist for our sake. As such, the world does not revolve around us, and anytime we try to make it so we live in disharmony with God's creation and suffer on account of it. What is more, we are told creation suffers too. Creation itself groans in agony and bondage because of our selfishness. *Lesson two*. If this world is not all about us then we are not its chief architects, and the meaning of the world is not ours to decipher. The meaning of the world lies outside of the world. It is hidden in the mind of God. Now, sometimes He shares this meaning with us, but other

times we have no idea what He is doing. But such knowledge is not owed us, it does not belong to us by right. God instructs us to be still, be patient. Don't wait for things to happen, don't even want things to happen, watch and see what actually does happen, for in this way life will come as a gift, and you will be in a better position to observe God's subtle movements. The moment you stop trying to control your life or everyone else's life around you, your life becomes infinitely less complicated and I would offer more meaningful, as well, because you are receptive of nothing but God. *Lesson three*: What are we to do then? Pray. It is just that simple. God asks us to pray. God invites us to pray. And what God asks, He gives, and what He commands, He performs. Pray, and God will pray with you. Pray, and God will pray for you. Pray because in prayer your spirit aligns with the Holy Spirit, your mind aligns with the mind of Christ, and your world aligns with the Creator of the world. Pray and then accept the life God has given you, the station you occupy, the hand you've been dealt, and don't wish it to be otherwise. The greatest gift of prayer is the gift of contentment. In other words, living life without a why. How strange this sounds? Yet, this one word 'why' tortures us, it gives us no rest—why this and why that and why me and why now...and on and on it goes. Prayer releases us from this nagging question of why. Prayer frees us from this need to force everything. God alone knows our purpose and the why belongs to Him. It was the *Why* question that got us into this sinful mess to begin with (Gen. 3); it is the *Who* question that will get us out of it. For who can know the mind of God? But thanks be to God that He knows ours, and for the likes of us makes intercession. He reveals His why to us slowly, incrementally, by degrees. Bit-by-bit, our lives unfold according to His eternal WHY until that final revelation when we will see it all clearly for ourselves in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

In Christ,

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