



Sunday School Lesson
Rom. 8:18-30
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The Glory That is to Be



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Quick Links to the Study

I. Context

- a. Historical
- b. Literary

II. Message

- a. Coming Glory, vv. 18-25
- b. Divine Help, vv. 26-30

Once more the linking to the OT and NT passages in the current series "Taking Care of Business" proves to be too shallow and superficial for legitimate Bible study. It is based only on a word overlap of "creation" in part of Romans eight with a small snatch from one of the creation stories in Genesis. The resulting study of Romans eight reveals it is pointed in a different direction from the Genesis material. Consequently, we will focus on Paul's letter to the Christians at Rome. Additionally, an inappropriate segment of text was chosen, so we will focus on the natural unit of idea expression in verses eighteen through thirty instead.

I. Context

Both levels of contextual understanding of the pericope in vv. 18-30 are important for clear understanding of Paul's ideas. Fortunately, both the historical and literary settings are relatively easy to determine.

a. Historical

The external history of Romans is one of the more certain issues of any of the documents in the New Testament. The letter was written from Corinth during Paul's third missionary journey as he was preparing to return to Jerusalem to conclude this missionary effort. Central to this trip was the carrying of a substantial relief offering back to Palestine in order to help Jewish Christians there who were undergoing severe hardships due to an extensive famine that struck that part of the Mediterranean world in the 50s and also due to growing persecution of Christians by the Jewish authorities throughout Palestine. After a lengthy ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-41), Paul had concluded that he would revisit the churches from Philippi to Corinth before going to Jerusalem, and then he planned to go to Rome as Luke describes in Acts 19:21-22 (NRSV): "21 Now after these things had been accomplished, Paul resolved in the Spirit to go through Macedonia and Achaia, and then to go on to Jerusalem. He said, "After I have gone there, I must also see Rome."

In his letter to the Roman Christians he laid out his plans for visiting them (Rom. 15:22-29, NRSV):

"22 This is the reason that I have so often been hindered from coming to you. 23 But now, with no further place for me in these regions, I desire, as I have for many years, to come to you 24 when I go to Spain. For I do hope to see you on my journey and to be sent on by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little while. 25 At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints; 26 for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. 27 They were pleased to do this, and indeed they owe it to them; for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things. 28 So, when I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will set out by way of you to Spain; 29 and I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ."

His ultimate intention was to preach the gospel in the western side of the Mediterranean just as he had been doing in the eastern Mediterranean up to that point. Thus he hoped that Rome would become a base of operational support for this just as Antioch had been for his ministry in the eastern part. All this is taking



place during the middle 50s of the first Christian century. What Paul didn't realize was that God had a somewhat different itinerary for him. The return trip to Jerusalem would become a significant revising of those plans. Paul did make it to Rome, but as a prisoner of the Roman government. Whether or not he ever made it to Spain is quite doubtful. Nothing inside the documents of the New Testament suggest that he did, and the Pastoral Epistles (1-2 Timothy and Titus) would suggest that he didn't. But that's jumping ahead of our story.

When the composition of this letter took place at Corinth, Paul had never visited Rome. He knew some of the members of the Christian community there via contacts with them in other places as the long segment of greetings in the Conclusio in [Rom. 16:1-16](#) suggests. The letter was intended to be a lengthy introduction of Paul and his gospel to the Christian community there with the hope that they would respond in support of his anticipated ministry to the west.

As a consequence, Romans has a different tone and thrust to it than is found in the other letters in the Pauline corpus of the New Testament. The ideas are tightly woven together and progress in a rather clear manner from the beginning to the end of the Body proper of the letter ([1:16-15:13](#)). This purpose behind the writing played a role in generating this distinctive style, but also important was the role that Tertius played. As he indicated in [Rom. 16:22](#), ("I Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord."), Tertius was the one who did the actual writing of the letter. Paul dictated the outline of the contents to him for composition. The use of a writing secretary was normative in the ancient world, and Paul employed one for the writing of every one of his letters, as he implied in [2 Thess. 3:17](#) (NRSV): "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write." The normal pattern was for the sender(s) of a formal letter to dictate the contents to a writing secretary, and then take pen in hand to write the Conclusio section in his own hand writing as a verification of the contents of the letter, since the readers would be familiar with the sender's own personal handwriting. Although Paul didn't know all the members at Rome, he knew enough

of them personally, so that these individuals could verify Paul's distinctive style of writing.

b. Literary

Chapter 8 falls in the [body proper](#) of the letter, about mid point. Typically, the body section is understood to cover 1:16 to 15:13. The first eleven chapters deal with the matter of God's righteousness and how sinners can come to a place of acceptance before a holy and righteous God. The key theme of Paul here is "justification by faith in Jesus Christ." Chapters twelve through fifteen then deal with the outworking of that divine [righteousness](#) in the believer's daily life.

Most scholars will understand that chapters one through four deal mainly with the issue of [justification](#) as a theme of salvation, i.e., [soteriology](#). Then, chapters five through eight treat the love of God flowing into the believer's life, sometimes labeled as [sanctification](#). As N. T. Wright ("Romans," *New Interpreters Bible*, iPreach) has observed:

Romans 5—8 is a majestic statement of some of Paul's greatest themes. The love of God embodied in Jesus' death; the hope, even during suffering, enjoyed by God's justified people; Jesus' reversal of Adam's sin and its effects; Christian freedom from sin, the law and death itself; the life-giving leading of the Spirit. Parts of this section are sure to feature in anyone's selection of favorite biblical passages. Countless Christians, faced with life's greatest trials, have found strength and joy in Paul's closing words: "Neither height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (8:39).

At the same time, these chapters contain some of Paul's densest and most difficult writing. The Adam/Christ contrast of 5:12-21 is cryptic and elliptical: trying to read its Greek after the measured sentences of 5:1-11 is like turning from Rembrandt to Picasso. Chapter 7 has produced dozens of conflicting interpretations: it has been both hailed as a profound analysis of the human condition and dismissed as a tortured and self-contradictory rambling. The description of cosmic liberation (8:19-22) is seen by some as a great climax, by others as an irrelevant aside. The section offers, in short, just what every Pauline exegete really wants: good, strong themes to enjoy, knotty problems to puzzle over.

Prof. Wright, however, questions the frequent Protestant labeling of chaps 5-8 as sanctification, with good reason:

Romans 5—8 has played a vital role in mainstream Protestant readings of Romans. If chaps. 1—4 are held to be about "justification by faith," this section, starting from this point (5:1), is about something that follows from justification. Since the Reformers' exposition of justification regularly led to the question of Christian behavior, often framed in some such way as in 6:1 or 6:15, and since the word "sanctification" occurs twice in chap. 6 (vv. 19, 22), some concluded that chaps. 1—4 were "about" "justification," and chaps. 5—8 were "about" "sanctification." However, though there is indeed a sequence of thought from justification to something else in these chapters, this particular reading is unlikely to be accurate. The scarcity of the word "sanctification," and the fact that when Paul sums up the argument in 8:30 the final line reads "those he justified, them he also glorified," point in a rather different direction. If 1—4 is in any sense "about" justification, we might expect 5—8 to be "about" glorification.¹⁷¹

Chapters nine through eleven proceed to discuss the issue of Israel's rejection of God's anointed Messiah and how that could happen. Paul's sees it both has an expression of God's sovereignty and Jewish hardness of heart, and as the opportunity for the non-Jewish world to share in the new covenant established by Jesus through his atoning death on Calvary.

Chapter eight of Romans then comes as the climatic part of the second major section of chapters five through eight. As Bunyan described it in *Pilgrim's Progress*, Romans eight stands as "golden stepping stones out of the slew of despondency."

Prof. Wright also notes regarding these chapters how chapter eight fits into the inner structure of these four chapters:

This sequence of thought is opened up initially with four paragraphs of very similar length (5:1-11, 12-21; 6:1-11, 12-23), each rounded off with a christological formula that is not just added on for effect but sums up the paragraph. This then gives rise to two larger expositions. The first concerns the law: this is introduced in 7:1-6 and developed in 7:7—8:11. While completing this subject, 8:1-11 simultaneously introduces the second theme, that of the Spirit and of Christian and cosmic hope (8:1-30). Paul then returns to the topics with which the section began (8:31-39 repeats the themes of 5:1-11, with all the rhetorical stops pulled out), concluding once more with an emphatic christological summary.

Thus, our study focuses on one of the most profound expressions of religious thought to be found in the Bible, and contains some of the most encouraging words that Christians can glean from scripture.

II. Message

The internal structure of verses 18 through 30 divides into two sections: (1) coming glory, vv. 18-25, and (2) divine help, vv. 26-30.

a. Coming Glory, vv. 18-25

GNT

8·18 Λογίζομαι γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ ἄξια τὰ παθήματα τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ πρὸς τὴν μέλλουσαν δόξαν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι εἰς ἡμᾶς. 8·19 ἢ γὰρ ἀποκαταδοκία τῆς κτίσεως τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν υἰῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεκδέχεται. 8·20 τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη, οὐχ ἕκουσα ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα, ἐφ' ἐλπίδι 8·21 ὅτι καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ. 8·22 οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν· 8·23 οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἔχοντες, ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι, τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν. 8·24 τῇ γὰρ ἐλπίδι ἐσώθημεν· ἐλπίς δὲ βλεπομένη οὐκ ἔστιν ἐλπίς· ὁ γὰρ βλέπει τίς ἐλπίζει; 8·25 εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ βλέπομεν ἐλπίζομεν, δι' ὑπομονῆς ἀπεκδεχόμεθα.

NASB

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. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 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. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 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. 24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

NRSV

18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; 20 for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; 23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

NLT

18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later. 19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. 20 Against its will, everything on earth was subjected to God's curse. 21 All creation anticipates the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. 22 For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering. We, too, wait anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as his children, including the new bodies he has promised us. 24 Now that we are saved, we eagerly look forward to this freedom. For if you already have something, you don't need to hope for it. 25 But if we look forward to something we don't have yet, we must wait patiently and confidently.

Notes:

The lead declaration in verse eighteen sets the tone for these verses: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us" (NRSV). The contrast is between sufferings in the present and glory in the coming future. In order to develop this contrast Paul

underscores that all of God's creation is anxiously looking forward to that coming day of glory because of the struggles being experienced presently.

Eugene Nida and Barclay Newman in the *Helps for Translators* volume on Romans correctly call attention to an important background concept here:

Paul's contrast between *the present time* with its evil and suffering and "the coming age" with its *glory that is going to be revealed* reflects the Jewish and Christian belief in two ages. According to this belief the present age is characterized by the forces of evil exerting themselves and so causing sin and suffering. But the "coming age" is the age in which God's rule will be fully revealed and the power of evil destroyed. When this happens, all sin and suffering will cease, and men of faith will enjoy the benefits of God's presence.

The two age concept represents a division of human history into two periods with the coming of the Messiah as the transitional point from the first period to the second. This kind of thinking first surfaces in Jewish writings in the intertestamental period between the Old and New Testaments. It is adopted by numerous writers in the New Testament, especially by John and Paul. The Christian modification of this schema is the belief that Christ is that promised Messiah and will make two appearances: His incarnation with earthly ministry and then His return at the close of human history. Thus we as Christians are living in that period between these two comings, and that Christ's first coming signals the last phases of the first period. Thus the Christian's hope is to be focused on the return of Christ, since it will usher in the second period of divine blessings for eternity.

Gary Steven Shogren, in "Age, Ages," *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, has a helpful summation of early Jewish and Christian perspectives on this concept of two ages:

This Age and the Age to Come. The Old Testament predicts the future coming of God or the Messiah; most forms of postbiblical Judaism (see esp. 2 Esdras) go further and differentiate this age from the age to come, which is also known as the kingdom of God. This two-age schema is echoed in Matthew 12:32 and Ephesians 1:21, but the New Testament transforms the traditional pattern: with the coming of Christ, the blessings of the future are manifested among God's people in the present age (cf. Heb 6:5).

In terms of this age as a time of sin and darkness, *aión* [αἰών] is sometimes synonymous with *kosmos* or "the world" (cf. Mark 4:19; Rom 12:2; 1 Col 1:20). During this time, Satan appears as the "god" of this age (2 Col 4:4) and sin prevails (Gal 1:4; 2 Tim 4:10; Titus 2:12). The citizens of this age are living in darkness and must rely on the devices of their own human wisdom (Luke 16:8; 1 Col 1:20; 2:6, 8; 3:18). But so long as Christians remain in the world, they are cheered by the spiritual presence of Jesus until the close of this age (Matt 28:20).

Cataclysmic signs will signal the close of the present era (*synteleia [tou] aionos*, Matt 24:3). According to the New Testament, the end of the age will bring the return of Christ and the judgment of the wicked (Matt 13:39-40,49).

When the age to come arrives, the dead will rise to inherit eternal life (Luke 20:34-35). Jewish and later Christian apocalypticists loved to speculate about the blessings of this future age, but the simple message of the Bible is that the coming age will bring a good inheritance (Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30). Paul's advice to Christians is to invest for the age to come by practicing generosity and good deeds in this present age (1 Ti 6:17-19).

Thus to understand Paul here we need to see clearly the background that he is working from. And also important is the way his thought unfolds in verses eighteen through twenty-five. Essentially it flows around three segments:

- 1) Core declaration about the coming glory (v. 18)
- 2) Creation's longing for the coming glory (vv. 19-21)
- 3) Believers' awaiting that day of glory (vv. 22-25)

1) Core declaration about the coming glory (v. 18). Some more details on verse 18 will be helpful. N.T. Wright in the Romans volume of the *New Interpreter's Bible* (iPreach) has some valuable insights:

By way of explanation of his cryptic opening statement in 8:17 (the connective is *gar*, omitted in the NIV and the NRSV), Paul launches the substance of this paragraph with a somewhat expanded declaration of where his calculations about the future have taken him ("I consider" in the NIV and the NRSV translates *λογίζομαι* [*logizomai*], the same bookkeeping metaphor as was used in 3:28; 6:11). This is not merely a feeling or a private opinion: It is something Paul has thought through. It fits together logically. The main point, echoing 2 Cor 4:17, is that the glory that is to be revealed will far outweigh the sufferings that have to be endured in the present. The idea that, because Christians are "in Christ," the true life is already present, but hidden, and waiting to be revealed when Christ is finally revealed in glory, is familiar elsewhere in Paul (e.g., Col 3:1-4). Paul's wording here, though, is slightly unexpected: he speaks of "the glory that is to be revealed toward us, or into us (*εἰς ἡμᾶς eis hemas*), implying not

merely that we are to be shown a vision of glory (as the NRSV implies), nor simply that a glory will appear within us (as the NIV implies), but that the future revelation will bestow glory upon us, from above, as a gift. The way Paul now justifies this opening statement is to describe that future glory, and the present situation of waiting for it, in order to explain both his calculation and the present in-between situation both of creation and of the Christian—and, we might even say, of God.

2) Creation's longing for the coming glory (vv. 19-22). Again, we draw upon the insights of N.T. Wright in the *New Interpreter's Bible* (iPreach):

Paul could hardly express the longing of creation more dramatically. Literally, he writes, “For the eager expectation of the creation eagerly awaits the revelation of the children of God,” an obvious pleonasm (use of extra or redundant words for effect) that makes its own point. The whole creation—sun, moon, sea, sky, birds, animals, plants—is longing for the time when God’s people will be revealed as God’s glorious human agents, set in authority over the world. But why? Why should creation be so eager for this? And how does Paul know such a thing?

He answers by explaining the present state of creation, drawing on Genesis 3 and other Jewish traditions. Creation itself is in bondage, in slavery, and needs to have its own exodus. It has been “subjected to futility,” not deliberately (it did not rebel as humankind rebelled), but because God subjected it to corruption and decay, creation’s equivalent of slavery in Egypt (“the slavery which consists in corruption,” v. 21). God did this precisely in order that creation might point forward to the new world that is to be, in which its beauty and power will be enhanced and its corruptibility and futility will be done away. And, if one dare put it like this, as God sent Jesus to rescue the human race, so God will send Jesus’ younger siblings, in the power of the Spirit, to rescue the whole created order, to bring that justice and peace for which the whole creation yearns. (This cannot be reduced to the old liberal Protestant “social gospel”—from which the resurrection, which Paul here presupposes, was usually bracketed out.)

The basis of Paul’s belief here must be a combination of two things: the biblical promise of new heavens and new earth (Isa 65:17; 66:22), and the creation story in which human beings, made in God’s image, are appointed as God’s steward over creation. Putting the picture together, in the light of the observable way in which the created order is out of joint, and the clear biblical and experiential belief that the human race as a whole is in rebellion against God, Paul, in company with many other Jews, saw the two as intimately related. After the fall, the earth produced thorns and thistles. Humans continued to abuse their environment, so that one of the reasons why God sent Israel into exile, according to the Scriptures, was so that the land could at last enjoy its sabbaths (Lev 26:34-43 [cf. 25:2-5]; 2 Chr 36:21). But the answer to the problem was not (as in some New Age theories) that humans should keep their hands off creation, should perhaps be removed from the planet altogether so as not to spoil it any further. The answer, if the creator is to be true to the original purpose, is for humans to be redeemed, to take their place at last as God’s imagebearers, the wise steward they were always meant to be. Paul sees that this purpose has already been accomplished in principle in the resurrection of Jesus, and that it will be accomplished fully when all those in Christ are raised and together set in saving authority over the world (see 1 Cor 15:20-28).

That is why, Paul says, creation is now waiting with eager longing.

Creation “awaits” the revealing of the sons of God (v. 19), that is, looks forward to the day of redemption at the second coming of Christ, just as believers await that day as well (v. 23b). All creation has suffered as the result of human sinfulness beginning in the garden of Eden. The content of that hope by creation is expressed in verse twenty one: “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (NRSV; καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ.).

3) Believers’ awaiting that day of glory (vv. 23-25). The comments of Nida and Newman for Bible translators in *Helps for Translators* are helpful on verse 23:

In this verse Paul adds the testimony of the believer to that of the created order. The verse begins with three words (“but not only”), which, as the commentators point out, mean *but not just creation alone* (RSV “and not only the creation”; JB “and not only creation”). In many languages one must, of course, fill out the ellipsis: “but it is not just the creation which is in pain and groans.”

We (Goodspeed; NAB “we ourselves”) is very emphatic in the sentence order, though it is difficult to retain the emphasis in translation (Moffatt has tried to reproduce the full emphatic force with “but even we ourselves...even we”).

A literal translation of the phrase *the Spirit as the first of God's gifts* (in many translations “first fruits of the Spirit”) is not easy, because it introduces a technical term from Jewish thought. First, it should be pointed out that

the word “first fruits” is in apposition with “Spirit” (see NEB “the Spirit is given as firstfruits”). Second, “first fruits” is a technical term taken from the Jewish sacrificial system; it describes the first yield of the harvest or the first offspring of animals which had to be dedicated to God before the rest could be used. In the present context the word is used of that which God gives to man rather than that which man offers to God, and so the imagery has changed somewhat. Not only has the imagery changed, but in some places in the New Testament this word is used simply with the meaning of “first” (See 11.16; 1 Corinthians 15.23; 16.15).

There are passages also where this term appears to be the equivalent of another Greek word *arrabôn*, with the meaning of “guarantee” or “promise” (of something to come, so 1 Corinthians 15.20). Evidently the NEB here follows the latter interpretation, while at the same time attempting to maintain the imagery of harvest: “as firstfruits of the harvest to come.” Moffatt and Goodspeed follow the same interpretation and also retain something of the imagery: “a foretaste of the future.” The TEV accepts the meaning of “first” and somewhat demetaphorizes the imagery: *the first of God’s gifts*.

It is difficult in some languages to speak of “having the Spirit.” Rather, one has to say “we in whom the Spirit dwells” or “we in whom the Spirit lives.” The qualifying phrase *as the first of God’s gifts* may be restructured so that *gifts* becomes a verb—for example, “as the first thing which God gives us.”

The clause structure of the second part of verse 23 is relatively complex, for not only is there a relative clause which modifies *we*, but there is an additional phrase which modifies *Spirit*, and this phrase must in some languages be changed to a clause. It may be important, therefore, to break the sentence after the expression *we also groan within ourselves*. A new sentence may then begin with *as we wait*.

God to make us his sons (so also NEB; Goodspeed “to be declared God’s sons”) is literally “adoption,” which the RSV renders “adoption as sons.” Though in Greek the word “adoption” is a noun, Paul’s meaning usually comes across much more clearly when this noun is rendered as a verb phrase. The word “adoption” is the same word which Paul used in verse 15, but with a somewhat different emphasis. Verse 15 has reference to the present life of the believer, while the reference in verse 23 is eschatological, looking forward to our final acceptance into God’s family. Some ancient manuscripts do not include the word “adoption,” and it is omitted from the JB and the NAB. The evidence for its inclusion is not conclusive, but most modern translations do include it as part of the text.

In practically all languages there is some more or less formal way of expressing “adoption.” It may be spoken of as “take us up as his sons,” “consider us his sons,” or “call us his sons.” Where adoption is not a regular cultural practice, one may employ a descriptive equivalent such as “regard us as his sons.”

And set our whole being free is literally “the setting free of our body” (on the word “setting free” see 3.24) and is actually in apposition with the clause that precedes it (“adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies”; Moffatt “the redemption of the body that means our full sonship”). Both the TEV and the NEB make it coordinate with the preceding clause, while Goodspeed connects it in another way (“as we wait to be declared God’s sons, through the redemption of our bodies”). Paul uses the word “body,” either because he is thinking specifically of the final resurrection, because he is using the word as the equivalent to “one’s whole being.” The TEV follows the latter of these alternatives. The expression *our whole being* may be quite difficult to render because it is so completely abstract. A language may have some such expression as “the whole of us” or “us in all of our parts,” but a more common expression would be “every part of us” or “all of the different parts of us.”

How do these verses relate to us today? The answer is relatively clear. Most of us can identify with the hope of redemption for believers at the second coming of Christ. Salvation belongs to those bathed in the redeeming blood of Christ, and that salvation will be fully realized only as the returning Messiah ushers in the eternal order of things. But this passage reminds us of the participation in and longing of the material world around us for that day as well. In the purging of divine judgment the old heaven and earth will pass away and a renewed heaven and earth will emerge, as declared in 2 Peter 3:10-15 (NRSV):

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. 11 Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? 13 But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. 14 Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; 15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Before that day arrives, however, we are to be faithful stewards of the world God has created. Our living is not to further abuse creation but to help begin the process of restoration.

b. Divine Help, vv. 26-30

GNT

8·26 Ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα συναντιλαμβάνεται τῇ ἀσθενείᾳ ἡμῶν· τὸ γὰρ τί προσευξώμεθα καθὸ δεῖ οὐκ οἶδαμεν, ἀλλὰ αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα ὑπερεντυγχάνει στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις· 8·27 ὁ δὲ ἐραυνῶν τὰς καρδίας οἶδεν τί τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος, ὅτι κατὰ θεὸν ἐντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἁγίων. 8·28 οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν. 8·29 ὅτι οὗς προέγνω, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνης τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς· 8·30 οὗς δὲ προώρισεν, τούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσεν· καὶ οὗς ἐκάλεσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδικαίωσεν· οὗς δὲ ἐδικαίωσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδόξασεν.

NASB

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 groanings too deep for words; 27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

NRSV

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. 27 And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

NLT

26 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our distress. For we don't even know what we should pray for, nor how we should pray. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. 27 And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.

28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. 29 For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters. 30 And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And he gave them right standing with himself, and he promised them his glory.

Notes:

Nida and Newman, *Helps for Translators*, have some helpful comments about the contextual setting of verses twenty six and twenty seven:

Verses 26 and 27 are closely related to verse 23 and also have a relation to verse 16. These verses contain the third witness to the glorious future of God's people (see verse 8.19 and verse 8.22). In verse 22 Paul spoke of the groaning of the entire creation, and in verse 23 of the groaning of the believers; but now he speaks of the help which God's Spirit gives, and of the way that the Spirit himself pleads with God for us, *in groans that words cannot express*. Although Paul literally says that "the Spirit comes to help our weakness" (see NEB "comes to the aid of our weakness"), it is much more natural in English to say, as in the TEV, *the Spirit also comes to help us, weak that we are* (see JB "comes to help us in our weakness"). It is not certain just what Paul means by "our weakness," though one aspect of it is certainly that *we do not know how we ought to pray*. The NEB suggests "what it is right to pray for" as an alternative meaning of *how we ought to pray*, though no other translation goes in this direction. Although the final meaning of these two expressions ("what is right" and *how we ought*) is about the same, the structure of the Greek more nearly supports *how we ought to pray*.

Also the comments of N. T. Wright (New Interpreter's Bible) provide further understanding of these two

verses:

The point Paul is making, in any case, is that the Spirit's own very self²⁷⁹ intercedes within the Christian precisely at the point where he or she, faced with the ruin and misery of the world, finds that there are no words left to express in God's presence the sense of futility (v. 20) and the longing for redemption. It is not (as some early scribes added to the text, followed by the NIV) that the Spirit intercedes "for us"; that misses the point, and makes Paul repeat himself in the following verse. What Paul is saying is that the Spirit, active within the innermost being of the Christian, is doing the very interceding the Christian longs to do, even though the only evidence that can be produced is inarticulate groanings.

The good news about this is that God, the living, transcendent God, is in intimate touch with the Spirit, so that these inarticulate but Spirit-assisted groanings come before God as true prayer, true intercession. To say this, Paul uses another remarkable periphrasis for God (see the Commentary on 8:11; see also the Commentary on 4:24): "the heart-searcher." The Spirit's work (lit., "the mind of the Spirit," as in 8:6), deep within the human heart, is known to the heart-searching God. We may compare 2:16; 1 Cor 4:5; 1 Thess 2:4; since these references (the first two certainly, the third arguably) are to a future judgment at which the heart's secrets will be laid bare, what we have here appears to be yet another example of inaugurated eschatology; God's searching of hearts anticipates the final putting to rights of all things (see also Heb 4:12-13). The Spirit, he says, intercedes for God's people, whom he refers to as "the saints"; he often designates Christians thus, set apart as they are for God, and this is a particularly appropriate context to do so, as God's people are caught up in the inner life of God. The Spirit's intercession is "according to God's will" (lit., "according to God"). This hints at something deeper than merely praying in the way God wants or approves; God's own life, love, and energy are involved in the process. The Christian, precisely at the point of weakness and uncertainty, of inability and struggle, becomes the place at which the triune God is revealed in person.

The second section of this segment is found in verses twenty eight through thirty. Verse 28 is probably the best known and most frequently quoted verse in the entire book of Romans: "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (NRSV). The precise sense of the Greek text τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν is probably expressed more clearly by the NLT: "God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."

The rationale supporting this declaration is found in the following two verses, vv. 29-30 (NRSV): "29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified." These verses in modern times have been understood in a variety of ways. The comments of Nida and Newman, *Helps for Translators*, are insightful:

In these two verses Paul uses a series of five verbs to describe the divine purpose and action. Each verb differs in meaning from the others, yet each is related to and grows out of the one which it follows. The first two verbs (*already chosen, set apart*) refer back to God's eternal purpose before time began, while the next three verbs (*called, put right with himself, shared his glory*) describe the realization of God's purpose in history. Before these verbs are looked at in detail, it will be helpful to remind ourselves of what Paul is doing in this passage. Negatively, he is not developing a doctrine of predestination in which he looks upon God as arbitrarily choosing some and rejecting others. Positively, he is reflecting on his own experience and the experience of other believers, and he sees this in light of God's eternal purpose. In other words, Paul is saying that his own salvation and the salvation of others is a result of God's purpose and of God's grace; it did not happen by chance, and it was not something that the believer earned by his own merit. Therefore, up to this point Paul's basic emphasis has been to show that salvation is by God's grace alone and it is not due to any human effort. Now he emphasizes the other aspect of the salvation event, that is, that it is within the eternal purpose and intention of God.

Our redemption at the return of Christ is the culmination of the purposes of God that were begun in creation. The message of these verses is that our God will not be deterred from that original intention, but instead will see it through to its realization. Of that, we can be absolutely certain. The modern doctrine of predestination abuses Paul's words here with a twisted rendering of them into a Christian elitism implying that God's only concern is with those predetermined already for redemption. The context rejects such interpretation outright. This unflinching purpose of God is the basis of His ability to turn every lemon thrown at us by life into sweet lemonade.

In sum, our Christian experience -- although caught up in the struggles of a corrupt and sinful world -- points us to a wonderful day coming ahead when we will be set free from this corruption, along with the rest of God's creation. We can shout with Paul in 1 Cor. 16:22, "Μαρὰνα θὰ" (maran tha) "Come, Lord Jesus, Come!"

Rom. 8:12-30 Diagrammed

8:12 Ἄρα οὖν,
ἀδελφοί,
1 ὀφειλέται ἐσμέν
2 (-----) οὐ
τῇ σαρκὶ
κατὰ σάρκα
τοῦ...ζῆν,
8:13 γὰρ
κατὰ σάρκα
3 εἰ...ζῆτε,
μέλλετε ἀποθνήσκειν·
δὲ
4 εἰ...τὰς πράξεις τοῦ σώματος θανατοῦτε,
ζήσθε.
8:14 γὰρ
ὅσοι πνεύματι θεοῦ ἄγονται,
5 οὗτοι υἱοὶ θεοῦ εἰσιν.
8:15 γὰρ
6 οὐ ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα δουλείας
πάλιν
εἰς φόβον
ἀλλὰ
7 ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα υἰοθεσίας
ἐν ᾧ κρᾶζομεν,
8 Ἀββα
ὁ πατήρ.
8:16 αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα συμμαρτυρεῖ
τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν
ὅτι ἐσμέν τέκνα θεοῦ.
8:17 δὲ
εἰ τέκνα,
καὶ
9 (ἐσμέν) κληρονόμοι·
μέν
10 (ἐσμέν) κληρονόμοι θεοῦ,
δὲ
11 (ἐσμέν) συγκληρονόμοι Χριστοῦ,
εἵπερ συμπάσχομεν
ἵνα καὶ συνδοξασθῶμεν.

8:18 γὰρ
12 **Λογίζομαι**
ὅτι (ἐστὶν) οὐκ ἄξια τὰ παθήματα τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ
πρὸς τὴν...δόξαν
μέλλουσαν...ἀποκαλυφθῆναι
εἰς ἡμᾶς.

8:19 γὰρ
13 **ἡ ἀποκαταδοκία...τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν...ἀπεκδέχεται.**
τῆς κτίσεως τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ θεοῦ

8:20 γὰρ
14 **τῆ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη,**
οὐχ ἑκούσα
ἀλλὰ
διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα,
ἐφ' ἐλπίδι
8:21 ὅτι καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται
/-----|
ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς
εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν
τῆς δόξης
τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ.

8:22 γὰρ
15 **οἶδαμεν**
ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συστενάζει
καὶ
----- συνωδίνει
ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν·

8:23 δέ,
16 **(ἐστὶν)**
οὐ μόνον
ἀλλὰ
καὶ
αὐτοὶ τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἔχοντες,
ἐν ἑαυτοῖς
17 **ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ...στενάζομεν**
υἰοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι,
τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν.

8:24 γὰρ
18 **ἐσώθημεν·**
τῆ ἐλπίδι
δέ
19 **ἐλπίς βλεπομένη οὐκ ἔστιν ἐλπίς·**
γὰρ
20 **ὁ βλέπει**
τίς ἐλπίζει;

8:25 δὲ
εἰ ὃ οὐ βλέπομεν ἐλπίζομεν,
δι' ὑπομονῆς
21 ἀπεκδεχόμεθα.

8:26 δὲ
Ὡσαύτως
καὶ
22 τὸ πνεῦμα συναντιλαμβάνεται
τῇ ἀσθενείᾳ ἡμῶν·
γὰρ
τὸ τί προσευξώμεθα
καθὸ δεῖ
23 οὐκ οἶδαμεν,
ἀλλὰ
24 αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα ὑπερεντυγχάνει
στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις·

8:27 δὲ
25 ὁ ἐραυνῶν τὰς καρδίας οἶδεν
τί τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος,
κατὰ θεὸν
ὅτι...ἐντυγχάνει
ὑπὲρ ἀγίων.

8:28 δὲ
26 οἶδαμεν
ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ
εἰς ἀγαθόν,
κατὰ πρόθεσιν
τοῖς...κλητοῖς οὖσιν.

8:29 οὓς προέγνω,
καὶ
ὅτι.....προώρισεν συμμόρφους
τῆς εἰκόνας
τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ,
εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον
ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς·

8:30 δὲ
27 οὓς προώρισεν,
τούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσεν·
καὶ
οὓς ἐκάλεσεν,
28 τούτους καὶ ἐδικαίωσεν·
δὲ
οὓς ἐδικαίωσεν,
29 τούτους καὶ ἐδόξασεν.