

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

ROM. 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope,

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we our-

selves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will* of God.

NOTES

Anticipating Redemption

Lesson Text: Romans 8:18-27

Related Scriptures: II Corinthians 5:1-5; II Peter 3:13-15;
Revelation 21:1-7

TIME: A.D. 56

PLACE: from Corinth

GOLDEN TEXT—"Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23).

Lesson Exposition

SUFFERING EXPERIENCED— Rom. 8:18-21

Present suffering (Rom. 8:18). Paul turns his attention to the suffering experienced by God's people. Paul knew firsthand what it meant to suffer as a Christian. When we talk of suffering, we usually blame aging, poor life choices, or simply being at the wrong place at the wrong time. But Paul likely had something else in mind.

In the ancient world, suffering was part and parcel of the decision to embrace Jesus Christ as Lord. The source of Paul's suffering was often his own Jewish countrymen who had rejected Jesus as Messiah. At other times, it was Roman authorities.

With all this in mind, Paul declares that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us". In short, the infinite, eternal blessings of the future far outweigh the fleeting pains of the present.

Past failure (Rom. 8:19-20). While the Bible focuses primarily on the effects of the Fall on the human race, the whole creation was affected by Adam's sin. The word "creature" in Romans

8:19-21 would be better translated "creation." The term includes both the creatures (animals) and the rest of creation (plants and the overall environment itself). In other words, everything was affected by the entrance of sin into the world, not just human beings.

The picture painted by Paul in this passage is that all creation eagerly anticipates the time when all things will be restored to what they were in the beginning.

Future freedom (Rom. 8:21). Just as God's children will be delivered from the effects of sin, so will creation. In the case of human beings, our suffering can be a direct result of sin. But regarding plants and animals, their bondage to "corruption," or decay, is not the result of their own immorality but a by-product of the curse on sin that man brought into the world.

SALVATION EXPLAINED— Rom. 8:22-25

Creation's agony (Rom. 8:22-23). From the time of the Fall, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain" and continues to do so to this day. This anticipates a time of future

deliverance for both God's children and God's creation. The Holy Spirit will cause our bodies to be raised. This will signify the physical reality and completion of our adoption.

"In this respect 'adoption' is used [in the same way as] the terms 'salvation' and 'redemption'. Sometimes they refer to what is in the possession of the believer now (cf. 1:16; 11:11; 3:24; Eph. 1:7), at other times to the consummation of salvation and redemption at the coming of Christ (cf. 13:11; Phil. 2:12; Luke 21:28; Eph. 1:14; 4:30)" (Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Eerdmans).

Redemption should not only be seen as the salvation of the soul but the "redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). Just as Christ had a glorified body after His resurrection, so too will we in the world to come.

Steadfast hope (Rom. 8:24-25). As Paul points out, we only hope for that which is future. In his words, "Hope that is seen is not hope" (vs. 24). That is why we do not say, "I hope I get a job" after a job has been secured.

The blessings of salvation do have a future dimension, especially regarding the "redemption of our body" (8:23). Our future bodily resurrection is part of our salvation, and it obviously has not yet occurred.

The expectation for the future resurrection hope calls for "patience", a faith that perseveres to the very end because of the promised hope we have in Christ.

SPIRIT EMPOWERMENT— Rom. 8:26-27

God's Spirit (Rom. 8:26). God can help us in many ways with our "infirmities," but here Paul identifies prayer as a means whereby the Spirit can give us aid.

God's will (Rom. 8:27). The One who searches the heart is God the Father. That Paul speaks of the "mind of the Spirit" indicates that the Spirit is not just an impersonal force but a

divine being. The Spirit intercedes on behalf of the "saints."

The goal of the Spirit is to bring our wills into conformity with God's will. For the most part, God's will is outlined in the pages of the Bible. For example, it is God's will for us to be honest (Eph. 4:28). We therefore already know His will in this regard.

Our problem may not be knowing God's will but doing it (Matt. 7:21; Jas. 1:22). When the Holy Spirit indwells believers, they will progressively produce the fruits of godliness.

—John Alva Owston.

QUESTIONS

1. What kind of sufferings did Paul likely have in mind in Romans 8:18?
2. How might "creature" be better translated in verses 19-21?
3. Why was the creation subjected to "the bondage of corruption" (vs. 21)?
4. What does "the adoption" refer to in verse 23?
5. What does the "redemption of our body" direct us to look forward to?
6. Why is hope inherently connected with the future?
7. What kind of "patience" is Paul referring to in verse 25?
8. How does the Spirit help us in our infirmities?
9. Since the Holy Spirit has a mind, what does this say about His nature?
10. How can we know God's will for our lives? How does the Holy Spirit help us in this regard?

—John Alva Owston.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. We must always focus on the glory of God no matter what we endure (Rom. 8:18-19).
2. God embraces us as His own children through His Son, Jesus Christ (vs. 20).
3. Jesus freed us from sin and gave us liberty by the power of God (vs. 21).
4. All creation suffers the effects of sin until Jesus comes again (vs. 22).
5. The Spirit of God abides with us to give us the strength to overcome sin (vss. 23-26).
6. Jesus knows our hearts, and He intercedes for us (vs. 27).

—Valante M. Grant.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Discuss some of the ways believers today endure suffering in obedience to the will of God.
2. Where do we find hope when we go through trials and tribulations?
3. What is the result of disobeying God in the midst of trying circumstances?
4. Discuss some of the consequences of not patiently waiting on the Lord in the midst of trials.
5. In what ways does the Spirit of God aid us when our sinful nature seeks to draw us astray?
6. Discuss redemption (Rom. 8:23). What is it? How is it distinguished from other aspects of salvation?
7. Why is redemption such an essential component of salvation?

—Valante M. Grant.

Golden Text Illuminated

“Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23).

When God first created this earth, we know that it was good (Gen. 1:31). He was pleased with the result, for it was without flaw. He had created a beautiful, peaceful habitat in which He could walk with His people.

Unfortunately, creation did not stay that way. We know that Adam and Eve’s sin caused everything to become subject to decay (Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 8:20). Pain, death, destruction, war—all these became part of our reality.

Our bodies are waiting to be liberated from the effects of sin. Paul said that we “groan within ourselves,” yearning for “the adoption.” We who know Christ as Saviour have already been adopted as His children (Gal. 4:6-7), but that adoption will reach its fullness and conclusion when our bodies are redeemed. This refers to that future day when our bodies are raised and transformed at Christ’s coming to be like His resurrection body.

For now, we are to endure this present world with hope and a knowledge of what is to come. Remember, this life is only temporary. We have a bright future ahead of us. All creation, including us, will be freed from the curse and from Satan’s power, and we will walk in harmonious communion with our Lord, who will be in our midst. We can look forward to redeemed, incorruptible bodies raised up by the One who makes all things new.

—Jennifer Francis.