

# Paul's Epistle to the Romans

LESSON XIX: THE SPIRIT'S INTERCESSION FOR THE BELIEVERS — CHAP 8 VERSES 18-27

**PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS AND THEMES** — “Although ‘glory’ is mentioned only three times in vv. 18-30, it is the overarching theme of this passage. Occurring at both the beginning (v. 18 — ‘the glory that shall be revealed in us’) and at the end (v. 30 — ‘these he glorified’), this concept frames these verses, furnishing us with an important indicator of Paul’s central concern. This ‘inclusio,’ the noticeable shift at v. 17b from the Christian’s present status to his future inheritance, and the parallels between vv. 17-30 and 5:1-11 show that vv. 18-30 comprise a coherent unit of thought, whose focus is eschatological glory [others separate the paragraphs as either vv. 14-30, vv. 18-27, or vv. 18-25]. Paul enlists several other concepts in his elaboration of this glory: ‘freedom’ (v. 21), ‘the redemption of the body’ (v. 23), and, most important, ‘sonship’ (vv. 19, 23, 29). The causal connection suggested in v. 17b between suffering and glory — ‘if we suffer with Christ *in order to be* glorified with him’ — is not developed in vv. 18-30. To be sure, ‘suffering’ — of both creation (vv. 19-22) and of Christians (vv. 18, 23, 26 [‘weakness’]) — is still present, but Paul is not so much interested in its relationship to glory as he is in their sequence. ***He assumes the fact of suffering as the dark backdrop against which the glorious future promised to the Christian shines with bright intensity.***” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 508f]

**THE CHRISTIAN AND SUFFERING** — “In vv. 1-17, Paul has focused on the Spirit as the agent through whom believers are granted life and sonship. ‘No condemnation’ can be proclaimed over the Christian (v. 1) because he or she has been transferred from death to life and made God’s own child. But the problem that Paul had already broached in vv. 10-11 is insistently raised by v. 17b:

**in-cho-ate** (in-kō-īt) adj: (1) in an initial or early stage; incipient; (2) imperfectly formed or developed: a vague, inchoate idea

How can the Christian maintain hope for eternal life in the face of sufferings and death? How can those who have been set free ‘from the law of sin and death’ die? How can God’s very own, dearly loved children suffer? Do not these contradict, or at least call into question, the reality of Paul’s ‘there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus’? ***The exposition of the future glory to be enjoyed by the believer is necessary to answer this objection. In a sense, what Paul is saying in vv. 18-30 is that the Christian must go the way of his Lord. As for Jesus glory only followed suffering, so for the Christian (cf. v. 17c). The life we now definitively enjoy is, nonetheless, incomplete or, better, inchoate — present but not yet fully worked out. ‘Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God’ (1 Cor 15:50), and only when the ‘mortal body’ is transformed will the life that we now have be visible and final (v. 23; cf. vv. 10-11). It is this transformation of the body that brings to fruition our sonship (v. 23). Only then will our sonship be ‘revealed’ (v. 19), and will we be fully conformed to the image of God’s Son (v. 29).*** We may, perhaps, draw here a loose parallel with Jesus’ own sonship, for it was only at the time of his resurrection that he become ‘Son-of-God-in-power’ (1:4). All this is summed up on Paul’s words in v. 24a: ‘we were saved in hope’: ‘saved’ — a past, definite action; ‘in hope’ — the state in which we now live, waiting with anticipation and assurance for the culmination of God’s plan for us and the world. And, while the Spirit is not mentioned nearly as often in vv. 18-30 as in vv. 1-17, it is just in bridging this gap between our present status and our future deliverance that the Spirit plays the crucial role. For the Spirit is the ‘first fruits’ — the pledge, or first installment, of God’s gifts to us that both anticipates and guarantees the gift of glory yet to come (v. 23). The Spirit connects our ‘already’ with our ‘not yet,’ making ‘the hope of glory,’ though unseen, as certain as if it were already ours — which, in a sense, it is (cf. ‘glorified’ in v. 30).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 509]

**ROMANS CHAPTERS 5 & 8: COMING FULL CIRCLE** — “This passage develops the reference to suffering and glory in v. 17b, continues the overall theme of assurance that dominates chap. 8, and brings us back full circle to the opening paragraph (5:1-11) of this major section of the letter.... [Verses] 8-30 (with vv. 31-39) remind the attentive reader of the themes with which Paul opened this great section of his letter to the Romans. In both 5:1-11 and this text, Paul demonstrates the unbreakable connection between the Christian’s present status — ‘justified by faith’ (5:1, 9, 10; 8:30); ‘set free from the law of sin and death’ (8:2); ‘children of God’ (vv. 14-17) — and her enjoyment of the blessings of God’s eternal kingdom — ‘saved from wrath’ (5:9b); ‘glorified’ (8:18, 19, 30). Sufferings, though real, unavoidable, and painful, cannot break this connection (5:3-4; 8:18, 23); for the Spirit is active to instill within us a deep sense of God’s love as the basis for our hope (5:6) and to act as God’s pledge that he will continue to work on our behalf (8:23; cf. 26-27). There are, of course, important differences in these texts: 8:18-30 delineates in more detail this ‘hope of glory’ than does 5:1-11, and sets the issue against a more ‘cosmic’ background. But the basic message is very much the same.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 508ff]

**THE LAYOUT OF THE PARAGRAPH** — “Several key words, or concepts, serve to bind vv. 18-30 together. In addition to ‘glory’ (vv. 18, 21; cf. ‘glorify’ in v. 30), these are ‘groaning’ (vv. 22, 23, 26), ‘hope’ (vv. 20, 24-25), ‘await, wait for’ (vv. 19, 23, 25), and, as we have seen, ‘sonship’ (vv. 19, 21, 23, 29). Some have suggested divisions of the paragraph based on one or more of these words — particularly the threefold groaning of the creation (vv. 19-22), the Christian (vv. 23-25), and the Spirit (vv. 26-27 [-30]) — but none is very obvious. If we go by literary markers, the most obvious breaks occur at v. 26 (‘likewise’) and v. 28 (‘we know’). And these markers correspond to the logical flow of the passage. Verse 18, and particularly the last phrase of v. 18 — ‘the glory that shall be revealed in us’ — states the theme of the section as a whole. Verses 19-25, whose key words are ‘wait for’ (vv. 19, 23, and 25) and ‘hope’ (vv. 20, 25-25), develop particularly the note of futurity implicit in the word ‘to be revealed.’ Paul wants Christians to realize that they, along with the subhuman creation, are in the position of waiting and hoping

for the culmination of God’s plan and purposes. There is, Paul is arguing, a necessary and appropriate sense of ‘incompleteness’ in our Christian experience and a consequent eager longing for that incompleteness to be overcome. But, cautions Paul at the end of this subparagraph, this yearning for our final redemption should be characterized by ‘patient fortitude.’ The final two subparagraphs describe those works of God that help us to maintain this attitude. First, during this present stage of incompleteness, or ‘weakness,’ the Spirit helps us to pray that prayer which God infallibly hears and answers (vv 26-27). And, second, God himself is working in accordance with his fixed and eternal purpose to bring all things touching our lives to a triumphant conclusion — the ‘good’ (v. 28), conformity to the person of Christ (v. 29), and, coming back to the overall theme, ‘glory’ (v. 30).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 510]

*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. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. 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? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. 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. 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. (Rom 8:18-27 KJV)*

*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will. (Rom 8:18-27 NIV)*

*For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time [are] not worthy [to be compared] with the glory about to be revealed in us; for the earnest looking out of the creation doth expect the revelation of the sons of God; for to vanity was the creation made subject — not of its will, but because of Him who did subject [it] — in hope, that also the creation itself shall be set free from the servitude of the corruption to the liberty of the glory of the children of God; for we have known that all the creation doth groan together, and doth travail in pain together till now. And not only [so], but also we ourselves, having the first-fruit of the Spirit, we also ourselves in ourselves do groan, adoption expecting — the redemption of our body; for in hope we were saved, and hope beheld is not hope; for what any one doth behold, why also doth he hope for [it]? and if what we do not behold we hope for, through continuance we expect [it]. And, in like manner also, the Spirit doth help our weaknesses; for, what we may pray for, as it behoveth [us], we have not known, but the Spirit himself doth make intercession for us with groanings unutterable, and He who is searching the hearts hath known what [is] the mind of the Spirit, because according to God he doth intercede for saints. (Rom 8:18-27 Young’s Literal Translation)*

**V 18 — THE RELATION OF THIS PARAGRAPH WITH THE PREVIOUS PARAGRAPH** — “The ‘for’ introduces this verse and, indeed, the entire paragraph that follows, as an elaboration of the sequence of suffering and glory attributed to believers in v. 17b. Viewed from a perspective that holds this world to be a ‘closed system,’ suffering is a harsh and final reality that can never be explained nor transcended.... But a Christian views the suffering of this life in a larger, world-transcending context that, while not alleviating its present intensity, transcends it with the confident expectation that suffering is not the final word. *‘The present and visible can be understood only in the light of the future and invisible.’* (Leenhardt) Thus, Paul can ‘consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that shall be revealed to us.’ We must, Paul suggests, weigh suffering in the balance with the glory that is the final state of every believer; and so ‘weighty,’ so transcendently wonderful, is this glory that suffering flies in the air as if it had no weight at all. ‘For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison’ (2 Cor 4:17).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 511] “If children, then heirs; *for* I do not think our present sufferings inconsistent with our being either the children or the heirs of God: 1. Because they are comparatively insignificant, vers. 18-23; and, 416 2. Because we are sustained under them, vers. 24-28.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 268] “The Apostle had been reminding those to whom he wrote, that their sufferings with Christ is the way appointed by God to bring them to glory. *Here he encourages them to endure affliction, because there is no comparison between their present sufferings and their future glory. In order to encourage the Israelites to sustain the difficulties that presented themselves to their entry into Canaan, God sent them of the fruits of the land while they were still in the desert. Our blessed Lord, too, permitted some of His disciples to witness His transfiguration, when His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white*

*as light. This was calculated to inspire them with an ardent desire to behold that heavenly glory, of which, on that occasion, they had a transient glimpse, and to render them more patient in sustaining the troubles they were about to encounter.* In the same manner God acts towards His people when they suffer in this world. He sends them of the fruits of the heavenly Canaan, and allowing them to enjoy a measure of that peace which passeth all understanding, He favors them with some foretastes of the glory to be revealed.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 367]

**I reckon** — λογίζομαι [logizomai] **“It implies reasoning. ‘I judge after calculation made’** (Godet). Compare 3:28; 2 Corinthians 11:5; Philippians 3:13.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 92] “Paul was better qualified to judge in this matter than any other man, both as having endured the greatest sufferings, and as having been favored with a sight of the glory of heaven. His sufferings, 1 Corinthians 4:9; 2 Corinthians 11:23, appear not to have been inferior to those that exercised the patience of Job, while his being caught up into the third heaven was peculiar to himself. But, independently of this, we have here the testimony of an inspired Apostle, which must be according to truth, as being immediately communicated by the Holy Ghost. **Paul makes use of a word which refers to the casting up of an account, marking accurately the calculation, by comparing one thing with another, so as to arrive at the true result.**” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 367]

**sufferings** — πάθημα [pathēma] is used in 2 Cor 1:5-7 where the parallel is ‘all our afflictions;’ in Phil 3:10 which speaks of conformity to Christ’s sufferings and mentions death specifically; in Col 1:24 where Paul mentions his ‘afflictions’ for the sake of believers; and 2 Tim 3:11 in which this word may denote illness. **“These ‘sufferings of the present time’ are not only those ‘trials’ that are endured directly because of confession of Christ — for instance, persecution — but encompass the whole gamut of suffering, including things such as illness, bereavement, hunger, financial reverses, and death itself.** To be sure, Paul has spoken of our suffering in v. 17 as ‘suffering with Christ.’ But there is a sense in which all the suffering of Christians is ‘with Christ,’ inasmuch as Christ was himself subject, by virtue of his coming ‘in the form of sinful flesh,’ to the manifold sufferings of this world in rebellion against God.... **The word Paul uses here refers to ‘sufferings’ in any form; and certainly the ‘travail’ of creation, with which the sufferings of Christians are compared (vv. 19-22), cannot be restricted to sufferings ‘on behalf of Christ.’** And the qualification ‘of the present time’ links these sufferings with the old age of salvation history, conquered in Christ but remaining as the arena in which the Christian must live out his or her new life.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 511f]

**PARTICIPATING IN CHRIST’S SUFFERING AND GLORY** — “Paul was certainly not the only ancient author to contrast present suffering and future glory; see, for example, 2 Apoc. Bar. 15:8: *‘For them [the righteous] a struggle and an effort and much trouble. And that accordingly which will come, a crown with great glory.’* But, **since the Christian’s glory is a partaking of Christ’s own glory (‘glorified with him’), Paul puts more stress than does Judaism on the righteous person’s participation in this glory.** In light of this focus on certainty, and since Paul conceives the Christian’s glory to be something that has, in some sense, already been determined (8:30), we are probably justified in seeing in ‘to be revealed’ the nuance of a manifestation of that which already exists. ‘Glory,’ like salvation in 1 Pet 1:4-5, can be conceived as a state that is ‘reserved for us,’ a state that Christ, our forerunner, has already entered. This is not, then, to say that the Christian already possesses this glory, but that the last day, by bringing the believer into the scope of the glory of God, will manifest the decision that has already been made on our behalf.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 512]

**to us-ward** — **“We shall be included in the radiance of the coming glory which will put in the shadow the present sufferings.”** [Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol 4 pg 375] “In 2 Corinthians 4:17, Paul speaks much in the same manner of the lightness of the afflictions of this life in comparison with *the glory that shall be revealed in us.* We are not only the recipients of a great favor, but the subjects in which a great display of the divine glory is to be made to others, Ephesians 3:10. It is a revelation of glory in us; see Colossians 3:4; 1 John 3:2.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 268]

**v 19** — **“Verses 19-25 support in some way what Paul has said in v. 18.** But in what way? Is Paul explaining and demonstrating the suffering he has mentioned [Godet]; giving reasons for the patient endurance commanded by implication in v. 18 [Murray]; supporting the certainty of the future manifestation of glory [Meyer]; or giving evidence of the transcendent greatness of the glory [Alford]? None of these suggestions does justice to **the focus of these verses, which is on the longing anticipation of future transformation shared by both the creation and Christians. In these verses, therefore, Paul supports and develops ‘to be revealed’ in v. 18 by showing that both creation and Christians (1) suffer at present from a sense of incompleteness and even frustration; and (2) eagerly yearn for a culminating transformation.**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 513]

**earnest expectation** — ἀποκαρδοκία [apokaradokia] is formed from the words κάρα [kara, ‘head’] + δέχομαι [dechomai, ‘stretch’], with the prefix ἀπο- [apo, perhaps meaning ‘away from’]. Phillip paraphrases it, *‘the creation is on tiptoe...’*. Wuest: *“For the concentrated and undivided expectation of the creation...”*. [8:19a, Wuest’s Expanded Translation] **“The word ‘eager expectation’ suggests the picture of a person craning his or her neck to see what is coming.”** [Moo, *Romans*, pg 513] **“A watching with the head erect or outstretched. Hence a waiting in suspense.”** [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 92] **“It is an expectation that waits the time out, that never fails until the object is attained.”** [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 269]

**creation** — κτίσις [ktisis] could mean *“the act of creating”* or, more often, *“that which has been created,”* either in an individual sense (*“creature”*) or the most general sense (*“creation”*). “But what does Paul include in this ‘creation’? Noting the naturally broad meaning of the word, and Paul’s addition of ‘the whole’ in v. 22, some interpreters argue that Paul must mean the entire created universe — human beings, animals, plants, and so on. Others, however, insist that the distinctly personal activities Paul



attributes to the creation ('anticipating,' 'set free,' 'groaning') show that he has only the human part of creation in view (cf. Col 1:23) — either all humankind or unbelievers only. However, while we may agree with Schlatter that the transition from v. 22 to v. 23 — 'we ourselves' — plainly excludes believers from the scope of creation in vv. 19-22, Paul's insistence in v. 20 that the 'vanity' to which this creation was subjected was not of its own choice appears to exclude all people, not just believers. ***With the majority of modern commentators, then, I think that creation here denotes the 'subhuman' creation. Like the psalmists and prophets who pictured hills, meadows, and valleys 'shouting and singing together for joy' (Ps 65:12-13) and the earth 'mourning' (Isa 24:4; Jer 4:28; 12:4), Paul personifies the subhuman creation in order to convey to his readers a sense of the cosmic significance of both humanity's fall into sin and believer's restoration to glory.*** [Moo, *Romans*, pg 513f] "The word may signify either the creative act (as 1:20), or the thing created (Mark 10:6; 13:19; 16:15; Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 4:13). Here in the latter sense.... [T]he non-rational creation viewed collectively, animate and inanimate. Equivalent to *all nature*." [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 92f] "The word in the original, which is translated in the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> verses, creature, and in the 22<sup>nd</sup>, creation, can have no reference to the fallen angels, for they do not desire the manifestation of the children of God; in this they dread, and, looking forward to it, tremble. Neither can it refer to the elect angels, of whom it cannot be said that they shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, for to this they were never subjected. It does not apply to men, all of whom are either the children of God or of the wicked one. It cannot refer to the children of God, for they are here expressly distinguished from the creation of which the Apostle speaks; nor can it apply to wicked men, for they have no wish for the manifestation of the sons of God whom they hate, nor will they ever be delivered from the bondage of corruption, but cast into the lake of fire. ***It remains, then, that the creatures destitute of intelligence, animate and inanimate, the heavens and the earth, the elements, the plants and animals, are here referred to. The Apostle means to say that the creation, which, on account of sin, has, by the sentence of God, been subjected to vanity, shall be rescued from the present degradation under which it groans, and that, according to the hope held out to it, is longing to participate with the sons of God in that freedom from vanity into which it shall at length be introduced, partaking with them in their future and glorious deliverance from all evil....*** The whole creation, then, groaneth together, and is under bondage on account of the sin of man, and has suffered by it immensely. As to the inanimate creation, in many ways it shows its figurative groaning, and the vanity to which it has been reduced. 'Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.' It produces all noxious weeds, and in many places is entirely barren. It is subject to earthquakes, floods, and storms destructive to human life, and in various respects labors under the curse pronounced upon it. The lower animals have largely shared in the sufferings of man. They are made 'to be taken and destroyed,' 2 Peter 2:12, and to devour one another. They have become subservient to the criminal pleasures of man, and are the victims of his oppressive cruelty. Some partake in the labors to which he is subjected; and all of them terminate their short existence by death, the effect of sin. All that belongs to the creation is fading and transitory, and death reigns universally. The heavens and the earth shall wax old like a garment. The earth once perished by water, and now it is reserved unto fire. *The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up. The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved.* ***The cause of this subjection to vanity is not from their original tendencies, or from any fault in the creatures. They have been so subjected, not willingly, not owing to any natural defect or improper disposition in themselves, but by reason of the sin of man, and in order to his greater punishment.***" [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 369f]

**waiteth** — "Only in Paul and Hebrews 9:28. The whole passage, with the expressions *waiting, sighing, hoping, bondage*, is poetical and prophetic. Compare Psalm 19:2; Isaiah 11:6; 14:8; 55:12; 65:17; Ezekiel 31:15; 37.; Habakkuk 2:11." [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 93]

**revelation of the sons of God** — This "revelation" that the creation is awaiting is the "unveiling" of the true nature of Christians. ***Paul has already made clear that Christians are already 'sons of God' (vv. 14-17). But, experiencing suffering (v. 18) and weakness (v. 26) like all other people, Christians do not in this life 'appear' much like sons of God. The last day will publicly manifest our real status.*** Nevertheless, since this 'being revealed' as God's sons takes place only through a further act of God — causing his glory to reach out and embrace us (v. 18), transforming the body (v. 23) — we are justified in attaching a degree of dynamic activity to 'revelation' here also. ***The 'revelation' of which Paul speaks is not only a disclosure of what we have always been but also a dynamic process by which the status we now have in preliminary form and in hidness will be brought to its final stage and made publicly evident.*** [Moo, *Romans*, pg 515] "Believers are even now the sons of God, but the world knows them not, 1 John 3:1. In this respect they are not seen. Their bodies, as well as their spirits, have been purchased by Christ, and they are become His members. Their bodies have, however, no marks of this Divine relation, but, like those of other men, are subject to disease, to death, and corruption. And although they have been regenerated by the Spirit of God, there is still a law in their members warring against the law of their mind. ***But the period approaches when their souls shall be freed from every remainder of corruption, and their bodies shall be made like unto the glorious body of the Son of God. Then this corruptible shall put on in corruption, and then shall they shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. It is then that they shall be manifested in their true character, illustrious as the sons of God, seated upon thrones, and conspicuous in robes of light and glory.***" [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 374]

**V 20 — CREATION SUBJECT TO "FRUSTRATION"** — "In this verse and in v. 21 (which make up one sentence in Greek) Paul explains what many of his readers would naturally be wondering: ***Why must the creation be eagerly anticipating the revelation of the sons of God? The reason, Paul says, is that the subhuman creation itself is not what it should be, or what God intended it to be. It has been subjected to 'frustration.'***" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 515]

**vanity, frustration** — some interpreters think that it may connote the ‘vanity’ that the author of Ecclesiastes deplors, the ‘emptiness’ or ‘absurdity’ of things in general (32 of the 47 times this word occurs in the LXX is in the book of Ecclesiastes). “In light of Paul’s obvious reference to the Gen. 3 narrative — Murray labels these verses ‘Paul’s commentary on Gen. 3:17, 18’ — *the word probably denotes the ‘frustration’ occasioned by creation’s being unable to attain the ends for which it was made. Humanity’s fall into sin marred the ‘goodness’ of God’s creation, and creation has ever since been in a state of ‘frustration.’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 515] “Only here, Ephesians 4:17; 2 Peter 2:18.... [The Greek word] expresses *aimlessness*. All which has not God for the true end of its being is [vanity].... Here, therefore, the reference is to *a perishable and decaying condition, separate from God, and pursuing false ends.*” [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 93] “This word expresses either physical frailty or worthlessness, or moral corruption. Here it is the former; in Ephesians 4:17; 2 Peter 2:18, it is the latter. The two ideas, however, are in the Scriptures nearly related. The idea here expressed is antithetical to that expressed by the word *glory*. It includes, therefore, all that distinguishes the present condition of the creature from its original state, and from the glorious future in reserve for it.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 273]

**not by its own choice but because of the one who subjected it** — “The ‘one who subjected it’ has been identified with (1) Adam, whose sin brought death and decay into the world (cf. Rom 5:12); (2) Satan, whose temptation led to the Fall; and (3) God, who decreed the curse as a judgment on sin (Gen 3:17). Reference to Adam, however, is unlikely; as Bengel says, ‘Adam rendered the creature obnoxious to vanity, but he did not subject it.’ Nor did Satan, whatever his role in the Fall, ‘subject’ creation. *Paul must be referring to God, who alone had the right and the power to condemn all of creation to frustration because of human sin.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 515f] “God, not Adam nor Satan. Paul does not use the grammatical form which would express the direct agency of God, *by Him* who hath subjected, but that which makes God’s will *the occasion* rather than *the worker* — *on account of Him*. Adam’s sin and not God’s will was the direct and special cause of the subjection to vanity. The supreme will of God is thus removed ‘to a wider distance from corruption and vanity’ (Alford).” [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 93]

**in hope** — “*But this decree of God was not without its positive side, for it was issued ‘in hope.’ Paul probably has in mind the protoevangelium — the promise of God, given in conjunction with the curse, that ‘he [the seed of the woman] will bruise your [the serpent’s] head’ (cf. Rom 16:20). The creation, then, though subjected to frustration as a result human sin, has never been without hope.... [T]his phrase is the ‘pivot’ of Paul’s argument in vv. 19-22, because he now moves from explanation of the reason why creation should need to be looking ahead in hope to the nature of that hope and its relationship to the ‘revelation of the sons of God’ (v. 19).*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 516]

**v 21** — “In this verse, Paul specifies the content of the hope that he mentioned at the end of v. 20: ‘[the hope that] the creation itself would be set free from the bondage to decay into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.’ *Creation, helplessly enslaved to the decay that rules this world after the Fall, exists in the hope that it will be set free to participate in the eschatological glory to be enjoyed by God’s children.* Paul describes this glory in terms of freedom; we might paraphrase, ‘the freedom that is associated with the state of glory to which the children of God are destined.’ The repetition of the ‘freedom’ idea here — ‘set free ... into the freedom’ — suggests that it is only with and because of the glory of God’s children that creation experiences its own full and final deliverance. As in v. 19, the, the hope of the creation is related to, and even contingent upon, the glory to be given to Christians.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 516f]

**creation itself** — “The combination of καί [kai] — which means ‘even’ here — and the emphasizing pronoun αὐτή [autē, ‘itself’] conveys a sense of wonder: *‘Why, even the creation itself is going to be set free!’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 516]

**glorious liberty** — “Better, and more literally, as Rev., *liberty of the glory*. Liberty is one of the elements of the glorious state and is dependent upon it. The glory is that in ver. 18.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 94] “*Liberty of glory*, as the words literally mean, or *glorious liberty*, refer to that liberty which consists in, or is connected with the glory which is the end and consummation of the work of redemption. This word is often used for the whole of the results of the work of Christ, as far as his people are concerned; (see ver. 18.) The creature then is to be partaker in some way, according to its nature, of the glories in reserve for the sons of God.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 274]

**CREATION WILL NOT BE ANNIHILATED** — “*We might also note that the idea of creation ‘being set free’ strongly suggests that the ultimate destiny of creation is not annihilation but transformation.* When will this transformation take place? If one adopts a premillennial structure of eschatology (see Rev 20:4-6), then it is tempting to apply the language Paul uses here to that period of time. But we cannot be certain that Paul has the millenium in mind because there is some evidence that the language he uses could also apply to the eternal state (see, e.g., the description of ‘the new heaven and new earth’ in Rev 21:1-22:7).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 517]

**PAUL’S EMPHASIS HERE IS MAN, NOT CREATION** — “While Paul obviously says some important things in this paragraph about the renewal of creation, his focus is consistently on anthropology.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 517]

**v 22** — “This verse, concluding the subparagraph on the hope of the creation, comes back to the theme with which the paragraph began (v. 19): the longing of creation for deliverance. ‘We know,’ Paul says, ‘that the whole creation groans together and suffers birth pangs together up to the present time.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 518]

**for we know** — “Paul generally uses ‘for we know that’ to introduce a commonly recognized truth (see also 2:2; 3:19; 7:14;

8:28), and it may be that he sees the violence and disasters in nature as evidence of the ‘yearning’ he speaks of in this verse.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 518]

**groans together / suffer birth pangs together** — “Paul uses the simple verb ‘groan’ in 8:23, and in 2 Cor 5:2 and 4, to depict the ‘groans of eschatological anticipation’ [the verb used in this verse for ‘groans together’ is not used anywhere else in the NT]. And, while neither the verb ‘suffer birth pangs together’ nor the simple ‘suffer birth pangs’ is used elsewhere in the NT in this sense, the noun form of this verb is used in Mark 13:8 (= Matt 24:8) to depict the times of distress preceding the end. **Indeed, the image is a natural one, for the difficulties and trials of this age are, for Christians and the creation, fraught with the knowledge that they will ultimately issue in victory and joy.** Our Lord makes this application in John 16:20b-22, as he addresses the disciples: ‘You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world. So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 518]

**together with** — “The ‘with’ idea in both verbs means not that creation is groaning and in birth pangs with believers, but that **the various parts of the creation are groaning together, are in birth pangs together, uttering a ‘symphony of sighs’** (Phillips Translation).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 518] “The word *together* may have reference to the *whole creation* which groans together, all its parts uniting and sympathizing; or it may refer to the sons of God, ‘For the whole creation groans together with the sons of God.’ On account of the following verse, in which Christians are specially introduced as joining with the whole creation in this sense of present misery and desire of future good, the former method of understanding the passage seems preferable.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 275]

**until now** — “From the beginning until the present time. The creature has always been looking forward to the day of redemption.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 275]

**v 23** — “In vv. 19-22, Paul has described the yearning anticipation of creation for deliverance and tied that deliverance to the ‘glory to be revealed’ to believers. Now he shows how believers share this same eager hope. The transition from creation to Christian is made via the idea of ‘groaning’; not only is the creation ‘groaning together,’ but ‘we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, groan in ourselves, awaiting the adoption, the redemption of our bodies.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 518f]

**groan within ourselves** — “By saying that Christians ‘groan in themselves,’ Paul suggests that these groans are not verbal utterances but inward, nonverbal ‘sighs,’ indicative of a certain attitude. This attitude does not involve anxiety about whether we will finally experience the deliverance God has promised — for Paul allows of no doubts on that score (cf. vv. 28-30) — but frustration at the remaining moral and physical infirmities that are inevitably a part of this period between justification and glorification (see 2 Cor 5:2,4) and longing for the end of this state of ‘weakness.’ ... The verb στενάζω [stenazō, ‘groaning’] and its cognate, στεναγμός [stenagmos, ‘groan’], occur infrequently in the NT, but more often in the LXX. **They are used characteristically of the ‘groaning’ occasioned by oppression, and often of entreaty to God for deliverance from oppression.** In the NT, στενάζω [stenazō, ‘groaning’] refers to the same frustrated longing for deliverance in 2 Cor 5:2 as in this verse; Mark 7:34, though not entirely clear, probably refers to a prayer of strong entreaty. In both Heb 13:17 and Jas. 5:9, it denotes ‘groaning’ in the sense of ‘complaining.’ The noun στεναγμός [stenagmos, ‘groan’] occurs elsewhere in the NT only in Acts 7:34, in a quotation of Exod. 3:7. In the LXX, στεναγμός [stenagmos, ‘groan’] refers to the groaning occasioned by pain (e.g., childbearing — Gen 3:16; cf. Isa 35:10, 51:11; Jer 45:3), but more often, in a more metaphorical sense, the ‘groaning’ under oppression; cf., e.g., Lam 1:22; Ezek 24:17. But even more characteristic are texts in which ‘groans’ are cries to God of the righteous person who is being oppressed, cries that suggest both the expression of pain and a plea for deliverance. Ps 38:9 is typical: after complaining of physical and spiritual agony, David says, ‘Lord, all my longing is known to thee, my sighing is not hidden from thee’ (see also Exod 2:24; 6:5; Judg 2:18; Pss 6:6; 12:5; 31:10; 79:11; 102:20).... **Paul, therefore, has chosen a word that very aptly conveys both the sense of frustrated longing occasioned by the continuing pressures of ‘this age’ and the sense of entreaty to God for deliverance from that situation.**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 519] “Believers groan *within themselves*. **Their groanings are not such as those of hypocrites, which are only outward; they are from within.** They do not always meet the ear of man, but they reach the throne of God. ‘All my desire,’ says David, ‘is before Thee, and my groaning is not hid from Thee,’ Psalm 38:9.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 375]

**who have the first fruits of the Spirit** — Grammatically, those knowledgeable in the original languages believe this is best understood in the sense of “*the first fruits which is the Spirit.*” “Paul defines those who experience this frustrated longing for final deliverance as those ‘who have the first fruits of the Spirit.’ The word ‘first fruits’ signifies a ministry of the Spirit that is very characteristic in Paul. **The word alludes to both the beginning of a process and the unbreakable connection between its beginning and the end. As applied to the Spirit, then, the word connotes both that God’s eschatological work has begun and that this redemptive work will surely be brought to its intended culmination. The Spirit, in this sense, is both the ‘first installment’ of salvation and the ‘down payment’ or ‘pledge’ that guarantees the remaining stages of that salvation....** ἀπαρχή [aparchē, ‘first fruits’] has a sacrificial flavor in the LXX, where it is used most often to describe those ‘first fruits’ of the harvest that were to be offered to the Lord and to his priests (see, e.g., Num 5:9; Deut 18:4; 2 Chr 31:5-6). But these allusions are not clearly present in the NT, where ἀπαρχή [aparchē] is **used in a natural metaphorical way to describe a ‘first stage’ of something** — Christians as the first converts in a particular area (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:15), or as the first stage in God’s redemptive work



generally (Jas. 1:18; Rev 14:4; 2 Thes 2:13? [v. 1]); Christ as the first to be raised from the dead (1 Cor 15:20 and 23; cf. also the purely illustrative use in Rom 11:16).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 519f] “The *first fruits* was that portion of the productions of the earth which was offered to God. **From the nature of the case, they contained the evidence and assurance of the whole harvest being secured. The idea, therefore, of an earnest or pledge is included in the phrase, as well as that of priority.** This is the general if not constant use of the word in the New Testament. Thus Christ is called ‘*the first fruits of them that slept*,’ 1 Corinthians 15:20, not merely because he rose first, but also because his resurrection was a pledge of the resurrection of his people. See Romans 11:16; 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:15; James 1:18. In all these places, both ideas may be, and probably ought to be retained. In the passages before us, what is here called the first fruits of the Spirit, is elsewhere called the earnest of the Spirit, Ephesians 1:14, etc. The phrases, *the Spirit which is the first fruits*, and *the Spirit which is an earnest*, are therefore synonymous. The Spirit is the first fruits of the full inheritance of the saints in light. **The expression in the text, therefore, is descriptive of all Christians, and not of any particular class of them; that is, it is not to be confined to those who first received the influences of the Spirit, or were first converted.**” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 275]

**WE GROAN “BECAUSE” WE HAVE THE SPIRIT** — “[T]he fact that Paul refers to ‘the first fruits of the Spirit’ rather than simply the Spirit shows that he is thinking of the Spirit’s role in anticipating and pledging the completion of salvation rather than as the agent of present blessing. This being so, a causal interpretation of the participle is to be preferred: **it is because we possess the Spirit as the first installment and pledge of our complete salvation that we groan, yearning for the fulfillment of that salvation to take place. The Spirit, then, functions to join inseparably together the two sides of the ‘already – not yet’ eschatological tension in which we are caught. ‘Already,’ through the indwelling presence of God’s Spirit, we have been transferred into the new age of blessing and salvation; but the very fact that the Spirit is only the ‘first fruits’ makes us sadly conscious that we have ‘not yet’ severed all ties to the old age of sin and death. A healthy balance is necessary in the Christian life, in which our joy at the many blessings we already possess should be set beside our frustration at our failures and our intense yearning for that day when we will fail no more — when ‘we shall be like him.’**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 520] “Not only they — the whole creation or every creature — but also believers themselves, will all their advantages, groan. Even they find it difficult to bear up under the pressure which in their present state weighs them down, while carrying about with them a body of sin and death. Of this groaning the Apostle, as we have seen, ch. 7:24, presents himself as an example, — ‘*O wretched man that I am;*’ and again when he says, ‘*We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened,*’ 2 Corinthians 5:4. In the same manner David groaned, when he complained that his iniquities were a burden too heavy for him. **Believers groan on account of indwelling sin, of the temptations of Satan and the world, and of the evils that afflict their bodies and souls. They feel that something is always wanting to them in this world. There is nothing but that sovereign good, which can only be found in God, fully able to satisfy their desires.**” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 375]

**the adoption of our body** — *The object of our hope presented here by Paul is the final glorification of our physical bodies. “Christians, at the moment of justification, are adopted into God’s family; but this adoption is incomplete and partial until we are finally made like the Son of God himself (v. 29; see also 1 John 3:2). This final element in our adoption is ‘the redemption of our bodies.’ ‘Redemption’ shares with ‘adoption’ and many other terms in Paul the ‘already – not yet’ tension that pervades his theology, for the redemption can be pictured as past (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; cf. Rom 3:24 and 1 Cor 1:30) and as future (Eph 1:14; 4:30). As Paul has hinted in v. 10, it is not until the body has been transformed that redemption can be said to be complete; in this life, our bodies share in that ‘frustration’ which characterizes this world as a whole. (cf. 20).”* [Moo, *Romans*, pg 521] “*The redemption of the body is not so in apposition with the adoption, that the two phrases are equivalent. The adoption includes far more than the redemption of the body. But the latter event is to be coincident with the former, and is included in it, as one of its most prominent parts. Both expressions, therefore, designate the same period.*” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 276] “Believers are here said to have received the first fruits of the Spirit, and to be waiting for the redemption of their bodies. In the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Apostle says, ‘**Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.**’” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 378f]

**v 24** — “Paul’s purpose in the last two verses of this subsection (vv. 19-25) is to make it clear that this need for expectant waiting is not surprising. For, as creation was subjected to frustration ‘in hope’ (v. 20), so Christians, though saved, are nevertheless also saved ‘with hope’ — and hope, by its very nature, means that expectant and patient waiting is going to be necessary. The juxtaposition of the assertion of past experience — ‘we were saved’ — and its qualification ‘with hope’ is one more expression of the eschatological tension of Christian existence. **Hope, Paul is saying, has been associated with our experience of salvation from the beginning. Always our salvation, while definitely secured for us at conversion, has had an element of incompleteness, in which the forward look is necessary.**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 521f] “**Hope is so closely allied to faith, that sometimes in Scripture it is taken for faith itself. They are, however, distinct the one from the other.** By faith we believe the promises made to us by God; by hope we expect to receive the good things which God has promised; so that faith hath properly for its object the promise, and hope for its object the thing promised, and the execution of the promise. Faith regards its object as present, but hope regards it as future. Faith precedes hope, and is its foundation. We hope for life eternal, because we believe the promises which God has made respecting it; and if we believe these promises, we must expect their effect. Hope looks to eternal life as that which is future in regard to its remoteness; but in regard to its certainty, faith looks to it as a thing that is present. ‘Hope,’ says the Apostle, ‘maketh not ashamed;’ and he declares that ‘we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.’ Thus he ascribes to it the same certainty as to faith; and in the Epistle to the Hebrews he speaks of ‘the full assurance of hope.’ Faith and

hope are virtues of this like, which will have no place in the life that is to come. *‘Now abideth faith, hope, and love.’ Faith and hope will cease; and in this respect love is the greatest, as love will abide for ever.*” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 382]

**we are saved in hope** — variously explained: “through hope,” “for hope,” “in hope,” or “with hope;” probably best understood as, *“we were saved, with hope as the ever present companion of salvation.”*

**hope seen is not hope** — The last part of the verse is a rather obvious explanation of the very nature of ‘hope’ — it involves looking in confidence for that which one cannot see. Paul uses the word ‘hope’ in both an objective sense — that for which we hope — and a subjective sense — our attitude of hope. Here, by modifying hope with the phrase ‘that is seen,’ he shows that he is thinking of the former meaning. *That ‘glory to be revealed,’ which is the focus of our hope, is not visible; and the frustrations and difficulties of life can sometimes all but erase the image of that glory for us. But hope would not be what it is if we could see it, for ‘who hopes for what one sees?’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 522] *“The objects of the believer’s hope are spiritual and heavenly blessings. They are different from earthly blessings. The men of the world hope for riches and the perishable things of this life; the believer hopes for an inheritance in heaven, that fadeeth not away.* For this hope Moses gave up the riches and treasures of Egypt. By this hope David distinguishes himself from the ungodly. *‘Deliver me from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly Thou fillest with Thy hid treasure; they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness,’* Psalm 17:13-15. And, contrasting his condition with that of the children of this world, he says, Psalm 73:7, *‘Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish;’* but as to himself, he had been plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning; yet he adds, *‘Nevertheless I am continually with Thee; Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.’* If it should be said by believers, May not we also hope for perishable and temporal blessings? the answer is, that *Christian hope is founded on the promises of God, and on them it is rested.*” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 382f]

**v 25** — “Paul rounds off this subsection with a return to its central theme: the need, in this age of salvation history, for ‘earnest waiting.’ In the ‘if’ clause, Paul resumes the point he made in v. 24b and draws a conclusion from it: hoping for what one does not see means that we must wait for it with ‘patient fortitude.’ While this emphasis on what is not seen may be nothing more than a reiteration of what hope, by its nature, is, the logic of this verse may imply that Paul is thinking more distinctly theologically about the matter. *For, as Paul puts it in 2 Cor 4:18b, ‘the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal’ (cf. also Heb 11). If this thought lies behind what Paul is saying here, then the logic of this verse is strengthened; we Christians can wait expectantly and with fortitude for the ‘hope’ to manifest itself precisely because that for which we hope is ‘unseen’ and thereby part of the eternal and sure purposes of God. The attitude of ‘patient fortitude’ is one that is frequently required of Christians undergoing trials (Rom 5:3-4; Jas. 1:3, 4; 5:11; Rev 13:10; 14:12) and as they await the climax of God’s salvation for them (Luke 21:19; 1 Thes 1:3; Heb 10:36). The word suggests the connotation of ‘bearing up’ under intense pressure. This is the virtue required by Christians as we eagerly await ‘the hope of the glory of God.’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 522]

**v 26 — THE HOLY SPIRIT ALSO COMES TO THE CHRISTIAN’S AID** — “In vv. 24-25, Paul has argued that the nature and solidity of our Christian hope enables us to wait for its culmination with fortitude. Now, he says, ‘in the same way [as this hope sustains us], the Spirit also comes to our aid.’ To be sure, this is not the only way that v. 26 might be connected to its context. Especially popular, for instance, is the view that ‘in the same way’ compares the groaning of the Christian (v. 23) with the ‘groaning’ of the Spirit. But the ‘groans’ of the Spirit come rather late in v. 26 for this to be the point of comparison; and, while there is an obvious literary parallelism between the ‘groaning’ of creation (v. 22), the Christian, and the Spirit, the groaning of the Spirit is very different in its nature and purpose from the other two ‘groanings.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 522f]

**helpeth our weakness** — συναντιλαμβάνομαι [sunantilambanomai] occurs only 3 or 4 times in the LXX. In both Exod 18:22 and Num 11:17, it is used when the people appointed to assist Moses are said to *‘bear the burden with you.’* The ‘with’ idea, clearly present here, is probably also to be found in Ps 89:21, where the Lord promises that his hand ‘will be established with’ David. The only NT occurrence of the verb is in Luke 10:40, where Martha requests that Jesus command her sister to *‘join with her in helping.’* “The word we have translated ‘come to the aid of’ connotes ‘joining *with* to help,’ ‘bearing a burden with.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 523] *“Helpeth, the word συναντιλαμβάνομαι [sunantilambanomai] means to take hold of any thing with another, to take part in his burden or work, and thus to aid. It is, therefore, peculiarly expressive and appropriate. It represents the condescending Spirit as taking upon himself; as it were, a portion of our sorrows to relieve us of their pressure.”* [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 278]

**our weakness** — “The Spirit joins with us in bearing the burdens imposed by our ‘weakness.’ This weakness may be specific — inability in prayer or external sufferings (v. 18) — but *is probably general: the ‘totality of the human condition,’ the ‘creatureliness’ that characterizes even the child of God in this period of overlap between the old age and the new.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 523] *“Our infirmities* is the appropriate rendering of the original, which expresses the idea both of weakness and suffering. Hebrews 4:15, ‘We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities;’ 2 Corinthians 12:5, ‘I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.’” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 278]

**for we know not what we should pray for as we ought** — “This condition means that we believers do not know ‘what we are to



pray as it is necessary.’ The wording of the clause indicates that it is not the manner, or style, of prayer that Paul has in view but the content, or object of prayer — what we are to pray *for* [the sense is: ‘the “what-we-are-to-pray-as-it-is-necessary” we do not know’].... ***What Paul apparently has in mind is that inability to discern clearly God’s will in the many things for which we pray; not that the ‘as it is necessary’ of this verse is paralleled by ‘according to God,’ that is, ‘according to his will,’ of v. 27. All our praying is conditioned by our continuing ‘weakness’ and means that — except perhaps on rare occasions — our petitions must be qualified by ‘if it is in accordance with your will.’ This does not, of course, mean that we should not strive to understand the will of God for the circumstances we face, or that we are in the wrong to make definite requests to God; but it does mean that we cannot presume to identify our petitions with the will of God.*** [Moo, *Romans*, pg 523f] “Our blindness and natural ignorance are such, that we know not how to make a proper choice of the things for which we ought to pray. Sometimes we are ready to ask what is not suitable, as when Moses prayed to be allowed to enter Canaan, although, as being a type of Christ, he must die before the people, for whom he was the mediator, could enter the promised land; and as Paul, when He prayed to be delivered from the thorn in his flesh, not understanding that it was proper that he should be thus afflicted, that he might not be exalted above measure. Sometimes, too, we ask even for things that would be hurtful were we to receive them; of which there are many examples in Scripture, as James 4:3.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 387]

**with groanings that cannot be uttered** — How is this intercession by the Spirit accomplished? The word translated ‘inexpressible, unutterable, words cannot express’ is ἀλαλήτοις [alalētois] and is only found here in biblical Greek. The etymology of the word implies “unspoken, wordless.” Some consider it as something inexpressible in human language, as the “unspeakable words” Paul heard when caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:4). Others consider it simply “unspoken,” groans never raising to the level of audible sounds. Still others consider it to refer to “speaking in tongues” (glossolalia), a “prayer language” inspired by the Spirit, utterances which are not of any earthly language. In response to that consideration, we must note Paul restricts the gift of tongues to *some* believers only (cf. 1 Cor 12:30) but the “groans” here are means of intercession that come to the aid of *all* believers [It is also interesting to note that Chrysostom hinted at that interpretation but confined the phenomenon to the apostolic days]. The word itself probably has the sense of “unspoken” rather than something uttered but not understandable, which again would eliminate the gift of tongues. “Moreover, it is likely that the groans are not the believer’s but the Spirit’s. While we cannot, then, be absolutely sure (and we have no clear biblical parallels to go by), **it is preferable to understand these ‘groans’ as the Spirit’s own ‘language of prayer,’ a ministry of intercession that takes place in our hearts (cf. v. 27) in a manner imperceptible to us.** This means, of course, that ‘groans’ is used metaphorically. But in vv. 22 and 23, with their references to the ‘groans’ of creation and the ‘groans’ of Christians ‘in’ themselves, has prepared us for such a meaning. **I take it that Paul is saying, then, that our failure to know God’s will and consequent inability to petition God specifically and assuredly is met by God’s Spirit, who himself expresses to God those intercessory petitions that perfectly match the will of God. When we do not know what to pray for — yes, even when we pray for things that are not best for us — we need not despair, for we can depend on the Spirit’s ministry of perfect intercession ‘on our behalf.’ Here is one potent source for that ‘patient fortitude’ with which we are to await our glory (v. 25); that our failure to understand God’s purposes and plans, to see ‘the beginning from the end,’ does not mean that effective, powerful prayer for our specific need is absent.**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 525f]

**v 27** — “Verse 27 continues Paul’s discussion of the intercession of the Spirit and focuses on the effectiveness of this intercession. The reason for this effectiveness is the perfect accord that exists between God, ‘the one who searches hearts,’ and ‘the mind of the Spirit’ [in the sense of, ‘what the Spirit sets his mind on,’ ‘what the Spirit intends’]. **God, who sees into the inner being of people, where the indwelling Spirit’s ministry of intercession takes place, ‘knows,’ ‘acknowledges,’ and responds to those ‘intentions’ of the Spirit that are expressed in his prayers on our behalf.**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 526f]

**IT IS GOD’S WILL THAT THE SPIRIT INTERCEDES FOR HIS CHILDREN** — “The second clause of the verse is usually taken as explicative: God ‘knows’ what the Spirit intends, in that, or ‘for,’ the Spirit intercedes in accordance with God’s will for the saints. But the emphatic position of ‘in accordance with [the will of] God’ suggests that Paul is rather giving a reason for the first statement. God knows what the Spirit intends, and there is perfect harmony between the two, *because* it is in accordance with God’s will that the Spirit intercedes for the saints. **There is one in heaven, the Son of God, who ‘intercedes on our behalf,’ defending us from all charges that might be brought against us, guaranteeing salvation in the day of judgment (8:34). But there is also, Paul asserts in these verses, an intercessor ‘in the heart,’ the Spirit of God, who effectively prays to the Father on our behalf throughout the difficulties and uncertainties of our lives here on earth.**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 527] Kenneth Wuest translates the verse as follows: “Moreover, He who is constantly searching our hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit because, according to God, He continually makes intercession on behalf of the saints.” [8:27; Wuest’s Expanded Translation] “As the word *to know* is so often used with the implication of the idea of approval, this may mean, God recognizes or approves of the mind of the Spirit.... If this be the meaning of the word, then the following ... introduces the reason why God thus approves of the mind of the Spirit. It is because the Spirit maketh intercession for the saints *according to God*, i.e. agreeably to his will. The desires produced by the Spirit of God himself are, of course, agreeable to the will of God, and secure of being approved and answered. **This is the great consolation and support of believers. They know not either what is best for themselves or agreeable to the will of God; but the Holy, Spirit dictates those petitions and excites those desires which are consistent with the divine purposes, and which are directed towards the blessings best suited to our wants. Such prayers are always answered.**” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 279f] “The Holy Spirit is the ‘other Paraclete’ (John 14:16) who pleads God’s cause with us as Christ is our

Paraclete with the Father (1 John 2:1).” [Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol 4 pg 377]

**he who searcheth the hearts** — **“To search the heart is the prerogative of God, as it implies omniscience.** As no man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of man that is in him, to read the unexpressed emotions of the soul must be the work of Him to whose eyes all things are naked. *‘I the Lord, search the heart, I try the reins.’* Jeremiah 17:10; Psalms 139; 7:9; Revelation 2:23.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 280] “This verse is replete with instruction as well as consolation. We are here reminded that the Lord is the searcher of hearts. *‘Hell and destruction are before the Lord; how much more then the hearts of the children of men.’* The reasons of the perfect knowledge that God has of our hearts, are declared in the 139<sup>th</sup> Psalm: — 1. The infinity, the omnipresence, and omniscience of God. 2. He forms the heart, and knows His own work. 3. He preserves and maintains the heart in all its operations. 4. He conducts and leads it, and therefore knows and sees it. The prayer of the heart, then, is attended to by God, as well as the prayer of the lips. Yet this does not prove that oral prayer is unnecessary — not even in our secret devotions.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 389]

**ONLY CHRISTIANS CAN TRULY PRAY** — “The persons to whom the benefit of this intercession of the Spirit extends are said to be *saints* **This proves that none can pray truly and effectually except the saints.** It is only in the saints that the Spirit dwells, and of whose prayers He is the Author; and it is they only who are sanctified by Him. It is the saints, then, emphatically, and the saints exclusively, for whom the Spirit makes intercession.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 389]