

Freedom for the Future

Romans 8:18-30
SS Lesson for 05/08/2022

Devotional Scripture: Heb 2:10-15

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Key Verse: Rom 8:18

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

FREEDOM THROUGH SUFFERING (ROM 8:18-23)

Suffering for a better future (18)

Suffering because there is a reward in Heaven (Matthew 5:11-12)

Suffering because the future glory far outweighs the current temporary suffering (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

Suffering because of the greater value of suffering for Jesus (Hebrews 11:25-26)

Suffering because of looking forward to a better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35)

Suffering because of a genuine faith (1 Peter 1:6-7)

Suffering for a promised redemption (19-21)

A redemption that is part of Jesus' rescue (Rom 7:24-25)

A redemption that has the Holy Spirit as a guarantee (2 Cor 5:2-5)

A redemption that has a promise of a transformation into glory (Phil 3:20-21)

A redemption that has as a reward a crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8)

A redemption because we are God's possession (Eph 1:14)

A redemption by a God that has unfailing love (Ps 130:7)

Suffering while being patient (22-23)

Patently being still before God (Ps 37:7-9)

Patient while we wait on God (Ps 27:14)

Having a patient soul (Ps 130:5)

Patient while seeking God (Lam 3:25-26)

Patient while standing firm (Luke 21:19)

Patient while doing work produced by faith (1 Thess 1:3)

Patient while imitating those will inherit God's promises (Heb 6:12)

Patient until Jesus' coming (James 5:7-8)

FREEDOM THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT (ROM 8:24-28)

Holy Spirit's provision of hope (24-25)

Hope in the Holy Spirit because of being a child of God (Gal 4:6-7)

Hope in the Holy Spirit because He understands what God has given us (1 Cor 2:11-12)

Hope in the Holy Spirit because He provides the righteousness promised (Gal 5:5)

Hope in the Holy Spirit because of the glorious inheritance promised (Eph 1:18)

Hope in the Holy Spirit because we are called into Him (Eph 4:4-6)

Holy Spirit's intercession (26-27)

Intercession through Jesus who is at the right hand of God (Rom 8:34)

Intercession through the one mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5)

Intercession through the advocate of Jesus (1 John 2:1)

Intercession because God saw the need for it (Isa 59:16)

Holy Spirit's working out God's good purposes (28)

Purposes that may include suffering, but also hope (Rom 5:3-5)

Purposes that renew us day by day (2 Cor 4:15-17)

Purposes that matures us to completion (James 1:3-4)

Purposes that results in joy and fulfillment of our salvation (1 Peter 1:7-9)

FREEDOM THROUGH PROMISED SECURITY (ROM 8:29-30)

Security in God's conforming (29)

Conformed into His likeness (1 Cor 15:49)

Conformed to reflect God's glory (2 Cor 3:18)

Conformed into a new self (Eph 4:23-24)

Conformed into a glorious body (Phil 3:21)

Security in God's glorification (30)

Secure in God because He is the stronghold of our lives (Ps 27:1-3)
Secure in God because He is our refuge and strength (Ps 46:1)
Secure in God because He is greater than anything in the world (1 John 4:4)
Secure in God because He is our helper (Heb 13:6)
Secure in God because we are shielded by God's power (1 Peter 1:3-5)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

The Spirit of Hope (8:18-25)

The Spirit of Help (8:26-27)

The Certainty of Sanctification (8:28-39)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY

Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The apostle Paul was involved in several important mission trips, the last of which was his trip to Rome for a hearing before the emperor. The book of Acts ends with Paul awaiting this trial (Acts 28:30–31). Rome was a destination he had desired for many years (Romans 1:13), but not necessarily in the status of prisoner! The letter to the Romans includes Paul's understanding of the Old Testament background for the Christian message, the nature of Christian salvation based on the atoning death of Christ, the centrality of faith as the only path for human salvation, the relationship between Christians of Jewish and Gentile backgrounds in the plan of God, and several other matters. All this makes Romans both the most challenging of Paul's letters to understand and the richest depository of what he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25). The basis and reality of being justified by faith is the subject of Romans 1–4 in general and 3:24, 28 in particular. Paul quoted Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17 to set the tone for the entire book: "the righteous will live by faith." This means that faith—complete trust in Jesus—is the only way that eternal life may be found. It cannot be earned by obedience, although obedience is important. It is not inherited by ancestry, although this is not unimportant (see Romans 3:1–2; 9:4–5). True life, eternal life, the life of salvation, is only found in trusting God to save us through his Son. Abraham, the great patriarch of the Jews, was justified by faith (Romans 4:3, quoting Genesis 15:6). Thus the idea of faith in God as the core element of one's life is not a Christian innovation. Such faith is to be the foundation of our relationship with God. This was intended as central in the pre-Israel period (Abraham), in the nation of Israel itself (Habakkuk), and now is so in the church. In Romans 5–8, Paul lays out the implications of Jesus' death and resurrection. Through Christ, the reign of sin and death has been overthrown by righteousness and grace (Romans 5:21). With the reign of sin and death defeated, believers are free. New life in Christ also means freedom from bondage to the law (7:1–6). Romans 8 brings these various elements to a climactic resolution. There is "now no condemnation" for those "in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). What the law failed to do, God himself has done through Jesus (8:3). Righteous living is enabled by the Holy Spirit, who dwells in those who have faith in Christ (8:9–10). All these wonderful truths, however, raise a painful question: Why do suffering and death still wreak havoc? Paul indicated the likelihood that Christians would suffer for Christ's sake. Paul encouraged the Roman believers to keep the big picture in mind: we are "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17).

Key Verse: Rom 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

8:9-11. After speaking objectively about the two types of persons, Paul now addressed his readers directly. **You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit** (lit., "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit"), **if** (*eiper*, "if, as is the fact"; cf. v. 17) **the Spirit of God lives** (pres. tense, "is dwelling") **in you** (cf. v. 11). The indwelling Holy Spirit gives a believer a totally different life (2 Cor. 5:17). The opposite, however, is also true: **If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ** (lit., "this one is not of Him"). Since only the Holy Spirit gives spiritual life, a person cannot be related to Christ apart from the Spirit. The interchange of the titles "Spirit of God" and "Spirit of

Christ” argues for the deity of Jesus Christ. This statement also makes it clear that the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is the identifying mark of a believer in Jesus Christ (cf. 1 John 3:24; 4:13). Another significant fact is that Romans 8:10 equates the indwelling presence of Christ (**Christ is in you**) with the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (vv. 9, 11). This adds further support to the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. Verse 10, like verses 9b and 11, is a conditional statement in which the Greek condition is assumed to be true; **if** can be understood as “since” or “because.” As a result of Christ’s indwelling presence, **your body is dead** (or, “subject to death”; cf. 7:24) **because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.** Because of God’s imputed righteousness, a believer is alive spiritually. The eternal, spiritual life of God is implanted by the indwelling Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ here and now, even though a believer’s body is mortal. Then Paul wrote about an even better promise (8:11). Since God **raised Jesus from the dead** (lit., “out from dead ones”; cf. 4:24; 6:4), God promises believers in whom His **Spirit... is living** (cf. 8:9) that He **will also give life to their mortal bodies through His Spirit.** In other words, God promises spiritual resurrection life now (6:4, 8, 11) for each believer’s mortal body and physical resurrection in the future for that mortal body (6:5; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:42, 53; 2 Cor. 4:14).

8:12-14. Paul drew a conclusion and made an application from his previous discussion. **Therefore... we have an obligation.** Each believer’s responsibility is a positive one—to live each day in the control and power of the Holy Spirit. But first Paul expressed this truth negatively—**not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.** Each Christian is to refuse to follow the inclinations and desires of his sin nature. He is to deny the efforts of that nature to impose its lifestyle on him (cf. Titus 2:12). The reason is that a **sinful** manner of life results in death. This does not suggest that a believer who sins will face eternal death in hell; instead, it means he will not enjoy his spiritual life. He will seem like an unsaved person (1 Cor. 3:1-4) and will be unable to enjoy the indwelling presence of the Spirit. **You will die** is literally, “you are about to die,” or “you are at the point of dying.” On the other hand, **if by the Spirit you put to death** (pres. tense, “are putting to death”) **the misdeeds of the body, you will live.** A few Greek manuscripts have “flesh” instead of “body.” But the body is the vehicle by which one’s sin-nature expresses itself (cf. Rom. 6:6, 13). Only by the Holy Spirit’s power can a believer put to death the sins of his former life (cf. Eph. 4:22-31; Col. 3:5-9). This is what Paul referred to when he said “count yourselves dead to sin” (Rom. 6:11). Paul then continued his explanation. **Those who are led** (pres. tense, “are being led”) **by the Spirit of God are sons of God.** Many Bible students see no difference between the word translated “sons” in 8:14 and the word translated “children” in verse 16. However, in verse 16 the Holy Spirit’s indwelling presence attests *the believer’s birth relationship to God* (*tekna*, “children,” is lit., “born ones”). But in verse 14 the Holy Spirit’s control and direction attests *the believer’s privileges in God’s family* as a “son” (*huios* means a child mature enough to take on adult family privileges and responsibilities). A son in God’s family is led by God’s Spirit.

8:15-17. In contrast with the control of sin, which enslaves to the point of **fear**, believers have **received the Spirit of sonship.** The word translated “sonship” (*huiothesias*) means “placing as a son” and is frequently translated “adoption” (as in, e.g., v. 23). Believers are adopted sons (Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5), not slaves (Gal. 4:7); so they need not be enslaved to sin or in fear. In New Testament times adopted sons enjoyed the same privileges as natural-born sons. So, instead of cowering in slave-like fear, Christians can approach God in an intimate way calling Him **Abba, Father.** “Abba” is a Greek and English transliteration of the Aramaic word for father (used elsewhere in the NT only in Mark 14:36; Gal. 4:6). Besides being adopted into God’s family as sons, believers also are His children (*tekna*, “born ones”) by the new birth (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1-2). And **the Holy Spirit**, who gives believers life, **testifies with** (not to) their **spirit(s)** of the fact of the new birth. In many families children inherit their parents’ estates; each child is an heir and the children together are co-heirs. Similarly, since Christians **are God’s children, they are His heirs** (cf. Gal. 4:7), **and they are co-heirs with Christ.** They are recipients of all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3) now, and in the future they will share with the Lord Jesus in all the riches of God’s kingdom (John 17:24; 1 Cor. 3:21-23). Sharing with Jesus Christ, however, involves more than anticipating the glories of heaven. For Jesus Christ it involved suffering and abuse and crucifixion; therefore being co-heirs with Christ requires that believers **share in His sufferings** (cf. John 15:20; Col. 1:24; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12). In fact believers do share in His sufferings; **if indeed** translates *eiper*, which means “if, as is the fact” (cf. Rom. 8:9). Then after the suffering they will **share in His glory** (2 Tim. 2:12; 1 Peter 4:13; 5:10).

8:18. In one sense this verse is the conclusion of the preceding paragraph in which believers are assured of being heirs of Christ’s coming glory. However, Paul reminded his readers that sharing in the glory of Christ in the future required sharing “in His sufferings” in this life. But after careful figuring (*Logizomai*, **I consider**) Paul concluded **that our present sufferings are far outweighed by the glory that will be revealed in** (as well as to and through) **us.** This future glory is so great that present sufferings are

insignificant by comparison. Also the glory is forever, whereas the suffering is temporary and light (2 Cor. 4:17). Certainly this truth can help believers endure afflictions. Romans 8:18 also serves as a topic sentence for the following discussion on the relationship between believers and the whole Creation, both in their afflictions and in their future glory.

8:19-21. The interrelationship of man with the physical creation of which he is a part and in which he lives was established in God's sentence of judgment on Adam after the Fall (Gen. 3:17-19). In Romans 8:19-21 Paul demonstrated that this relationship has a future aspect in connection with God's program of salvation for people. He declared, **The Creation waits in eager expectation** (lit., "for the strained expectation [*apokaradokia* is used only one other time in the NT, in Phil. 1:20] of the Creation keeps on eagerly awaiting") **for the sons of God to be revealed.** The verb for "eagerly waits" (*apekdechomai*) is used seven times in the New Testament, each time to refer to Christ's return (Rom. 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Cor. 1:7; Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28). The revealing of the sons of God will occur when Christ returns for His own. They will share His glory (Rom. 8:18; Col. 1:27; 3:4; Heb. 2:10), and will be transformed (Rom. 8:23). All of nature (inanimate and animate) is personified as waiting eagerly for that time. The reason for this eager anticipation is stated in verse 20. **For the Creation was subjected to frustration.** The Greek word *mataiotēti* ("futility, frailty, purposelessness"; cf. Eph. 4:17; 2 Peter 2:18) describes the change and "decay" (cf. Rom. 8:21) that prevails in all created things. This was not a voluntary subjection because the created world as such had no **choice**. Instead it was a decree of God, the sovereign Creator, **who subjected it.** (This probably refers to God, not, as some have suggested, to Adam.) And yet it was **in hope**, that is, in anticipation of a coming day when the "frustration" would be removed (cf. vv. 24-25). God judged the totality of His Creation along with people for their sin (Gen. 3:14, 17-19). When God's program of salvation for people is completed and **the children of God** together experience their **glorious freedom** from sin, Satan, and physical decay, then **the Creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay.** God had cursed the physical Creation as a part of His judgment on people for sin because of their position and authority over the Creation as God's representatives (Gen. 1:26-30; 2:8, 15). Similarly, since God's program of salvation for people is one of a new Creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15), the physical world also will be re-created (Rev. 21:5). This will take place in two stages. First will be the renovation of the present cosmos in conjunction with the return to earth of the Lord Jesus and the establishment of the messianic kingdom on earth (Isa. 11:5-9; 35:1-2, 5-7; 65:20, 25; Amos 9:13). The second stage will be creation of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1; cf. 2 Peter 3:7-13).

8:22-23. In one sense verse 22 is an appropriate conclusion to the preceding paragraph, summing up the present cursed state of the physical creation. Paul said, **We know** (*oidamen*, continuing state of knowledge that grows out of perception) **that the whole Creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth** (lit., "keeps on groaning together and keeps on travailing together") **right up to the present time.** The emphasis on "together" in these verbs does not include believers in Christ, who are specifically mentioned in verse 23, but involves the various parts of the natural Creation. At the same time verse 22 introduces this new paragraph, which sets forth the hope of future deliverance from suffering under the curse of sin. Paul had begun this section by referring to the believers' "present sufferings" (v. 18), a subject to which he returned in verse 23. Believers are described as the ones having **the first-fruits of the Spirit.** This is an appositional use of the genitive and means that the Holy Spirit *is* "the firstfruits" (*aparchēn*) of God's work of salvation and re-creation in believers. Elsewhere the Holy Spirit is called "a deposit (down payment or earnest) guaranteeing our inheritance" (Eph. 1:14; cf. 2 Cor. 1:22), a similar idea. A farmer's "firstfruits" were the initial harvesting of his first-ripened crops. This first installment was a foretaste and promise that more harvest was to come. Similarly God the Holy Spirit, indwelling believers, is a foretaste that they will enjoy many more blessings, including living in God's presence forever. Because of "present sufferings" (Rom. 8:18) believers, like the Creation, **groan inwardly** (cf. v. 22; 2 Cor. 5:2) **as they wait eagerly** (from *apekdechomai*, the same word used of the Creation in Rom. 8:19 and of the manifestation of hope in v. 25) **for their adoption as sons**, which is identified as **the redemption of their bodies.** The word "adoption" (*huiiothesian*, "placing as a son"; trans. "sonship" in v. 15) describes a believer's legal relationship to God as a result of God's grace received by faith. (Regeneration, however, describes a believer's relationship to God as a result of the new birth.) Israel had received adoption by God (9:4), a reality undoubtedly growing out of her covenantal ties with God (Deut. 7:6-9). In one sense each believer has already received the adoption because he has "received the Spirit of sonship" (lit., "adoption," Rom. 8:15) and is a son of God (Gal. 4:6-7). At the same time, as Romans 8:23 states, believers still anticipate their adoption in its completeness, which is said to be "the redemption" (*apolytrōsin*; etymologically the Gr. word describes a release or deliverance or manumission achieved by a ransom payment [*lytron*]; cf. 3:24) of their bodies. This is called the revelation of the sons of God (8:19) and "the glorious freedom of the children of God" (v. 21). It will occur at the Rapture of the church when believers will be raised and transformed with glorious

bodies (1 Cor. 15:42-54; 2 Cor. 5:1-5; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thes. 4:13-18). Paul called that day “the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).

8:24-25. God has promised that a believer’s body will finally be delivered from sin and its effects by the work of His Son. Those who respond by faith to that promise have **hope**, a confident expectation of that bodily redemption (cf. Gal. 5:5). This is the final step of salvation and it was in that anticipation that **we were saved**. The redemption of the body (Rom. 8:23) obviously has not yet occurred (**Who hopes for what he already has?**), but it is hoped for and eagerly anticipated (**wait** is from *apekdechomai*; cf. vv. 19, 23) with steadfast endurance (**patiently** is lit., “through endurance”) in present sufferings (v. 18).

8:26-27. These verses point out that believers are not left to their own resources in their sufferings (v. 18) and groaning (v. 23). **The Spirit helps** (pres. tense, “keeps on helping”) **us in** (the Gr. here does not have the words rendered “us in”) **our weakness**. It is not that the Spirit helps in those occasional times *when* Christians are weak; their state *is* one of weakness and the Spirit continually helps them. The Greek word for weakness (*astheneia*) may include physical, emotional, and spiritual disability (cf. James 5:14) evidenced by inward “groaning” (Rom. 8:23). “Helps” translates *synantilambanetai*, a rich word that pictures someone helping another carry a heavy load. (It is used elsewhere in the NT only in Luke 10:40.) One evidence of their weakness is the fact that believers **do not know what they ought to pray** (lit., “what we should pray as it is necessary”). In their weakness both the content and the manner of proper prayer eludes them, **but the Spirit Himself** comes to their rescue and **intercedes** (pres. tense, “keeps on interceding”) **for us with groans that words cannot express**. Natural Creation groans (Rom. 8:22) and believers groan (v. 23), and so does the Holy Spirit. This has nothing to do with praying in tongues, as some suggest. The groaning is done by the Holy Spirit, not believers, and is not stated in words. The help the Spirit gives (v. 26) is His interceding. “Intercedes” translates *hyperentynchanei*, which occurs only here in the New Testament; it means “approaches or appeals to someone.” The One **who searches our hearts** is God (1 Sam. 16:7; Heb. 4:13), and He **knows** (*oiden*, “knows perceptively or intuitively”) **the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes** (*entynchanei*; cf. Rom. 8:26) **for the saints in accordance with God’s will**. Even though the Spirit’s words are not expressed, the Father knows what the Spirit is thinking. This is an interesting statement about the Father’s omniscience and the intimacy within the Trinity. The Lord Jesus continually intercedes for believers in God’s presence (v. 34; Heb. 7:25) and the Holy Spirit also intercedes on their behalf! Though believers are ignorant of what to pray for and how to voice those requests, the Spirit voices their requests for them.

8:28. Believers, Paul began, know of sanctification’s certainty, and that knowledge is gained by spiritual perception. Christians **know** intuitively (*oidamen*)—though they may not always fully understand and sense it experientially—**that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him** (lit., “to the ones who love God He works all things together unto good”). The things themselves may not be good, but God harmonizes them together for believers’ ultimate good, because His goal is to bring them to perfection in His presence (cf. Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Col. 1:22; Jude 24). Even adversities and afflictions contribute to that end. The active voice present tense of the verb *synergei* (“He works together”) emphasizes that this is a continuing activity of God. And His working is on behalf of “those who love Him,” who are further identified as the ones **who have been called according to His purpose**. It is significant that a believer’s love for God *follows* God’s calling of him and is undoubtedly the product of the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 5:5; 1 John 4:19). The word for “purpose” is *prothesin*, God’s plan (Paul used the same word in Rom. 9:11; Eph. 1:11; 3:11). “Called” means more than being invited to receive Christ; it means to be summoned to and given salvation (cf. Rom. 1:6; 8:30).

8:29-30. These verses give Paul’s explanation of what it means to be one who has “been called according to His purpose” and why God keeps on working all their experiences together to their benefit (v. 28). Believers are those God foreknew. This does not mean simply that God foreknows *what* believers will do, but that God foreknows *them*. Nor does divine foreknowledge merely mean an awareness of or acquaintance with an individual. Instead it means a meaningful relationship with a person based on God’s choice (cf. Jer. 1:4-5; Amos 3:2) in eternity before Creation. “He chose us in Him before the Creation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). This eternal choice and foreknowledge involves more than establishing a relationship between God and believers. It also involves the goal or end of that relationship: **Those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son** (cf. 1 John 3:2). The entire group that is brought into relationship with God in His eternal plan by divine foreknowledge and choice is **predestined** (*proōrisen*, “predetermined”; cf. Eph. 1:5, 11). God determined beforehand the believers’ destiny, namely, conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. By all saints being made like Christ (ultimate and complete sanctification), Christ will be exalted as **the Firstborn among many brothers**. The resurrected and glorified Lord Jesus Christ will become the Head of a new race of humanity purified from all contact

with sin and prepared to live eternally in His presence (cf. 1 Cor. 15:42-49). As the “Firstborn” He is in the highest position among others (cf. Col. 1:18). Between the start and finish of God’s plan are three steps: being **called** (cf. Rom. 1:6; 8:28), being **justified** (cf. 3:24, 28; 4:2; 5:1, 9), and being **glorified** (cf. 8:17; Col. 1:27; 3:4), and in the process not a single person is lost. God completes His plan without slippage. “Glorified” is in the past tense because this final step is so certain that in God’s eyes it is as good as done. To be glorified is another way of saying that God’s children will be “conformed” to His Son; and that is God’s ultimate “purpose.” No longer will they “fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

8:31-32. It is astounding to realize that God’s plan of salvation for people is a program that reaches from eternity past to eternity future which God will carry out perfectly. Recognizing this, Paul asked and answered (in vv. 31-39) seven questions to drive home the truth that a believer’s eternal salvation is completely secure in God’s hands. The first question is general, **What, then, shall we say in response to this?** (cf. 4:1; 6:1; 9:14, 30) The obvious response to 8:28-30 would be to say “Hallelujah,” or to stand in open-mouthed amazement. This leads to a series of six more specific questions. The first is, **If God is for us, who can be against us?** Obviously, Satan and his demonic hosts are against believers (cf. Eph. 6:11-13; 1 Peter 5:8), but they cannot ultimately prevail and triumph over believers. God is the self-existent One and the sovereign Creator and, since He is for believers, no one can oppose believers successfully. He is for believers to the extent that **He... did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all.** The word “spare” (*epheisato*, from *pheidomai*) is the same word used in the Septuagint in Genesis 22:12 where the NIV translates it “withheld.” God said to Abraham, “You have not withheld your son.” Then God directed Abraham to spare Isaac and to offer a ram as a substitute (Gen. 22:2-14), whereas God offered His own Son as the Sacrifice for sin (John 1:29). In view of this supreme act of God’s grace, **How will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?** Since God gave the greatest Sacrifice of all, His own Son, He will certainly not hesitate to give believers all other things pertaining to and leading to their ultimate sanctification (cf. 2 Peter 1:3).

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Freedom through Suffering (Rom 8:18-23)

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

19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits 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 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

Suffering for a better future (18)

Suffering because there is a reward in Heaven (Matthew 5:11-12)

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Suffering because the future glory far outweighs the current temporary suffering (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Suffering because of the greater value of suffering for Jesus (Hebrews 11:25-26)

25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

Suffering because of looking forward to a better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35)

35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection.

Suffering because of a genuine faith (1 Peter 1:6-7)

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Suffering for a promised redemption (19-21)

A redemption that is part of Jesus' rescue (Rom 7:24-25)

24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

A redemption that has the Holy Spirit as a guarantee (2 Cor 5:2-5)

2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, 3 because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 4 For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

A redemption that has a promise of a transformation into glory (Phil 3:20-21)

20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

A redemption that has as a reward a crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8)

8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

A redemption because we are God's possession (Eph 1:14)

14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

A redemption by a God that has unfailing love (Ps 130:7)

7 O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.

Suffering while being patient (22-23)

Patiently being still before God (Ps 37:7-9)

7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. 8 Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil. 9 For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.

Patient while we wait on God (Ps 27:14)

14 Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

Having a patient soul (Ps 130:5)

5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope.

Patient while seeking God (Lam 3:25-26)

25 The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; 26 it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

Patient while standing firm (Luke 21:19)

19 By standing firm you will gain life.

Patient while doing work produced by faith (1 Thess 1:3)

3 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Patient while imitating those will inherit God's promises (Heb 6:12)

12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

Patient until Jesus' coming (James 5:7-8)

7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

Freedom through the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:24-28)

24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?

25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Holy Spirit's provision of hope (24-25)

Hope in the Holy Spirit because of being a child of God (Gal 4:6-7)

6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

Hope in the Holy Spirit because He understands what God has given us (1 Cor 2:11-12)

11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

Hope in the Holy Spirit because He provides the righteousness promised (Gal 5:5)

5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

Hope in the Holy Spirit because of the glorious inheritance promised (Eph 1:18)

18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

Hope in the Holy Spirit because we are called into Him (Eph 4:4-6)

4 There is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to one hope when you were called- 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Holy Spirit's intercession (26-27)

Intercession through Jesus who is at the right hand of God (Rom 8:34)

34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Intercession through the one mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5)

5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

Intercession through the advocate of Jesus (1 John 2:1)

1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

Intercession because God saw the need for it (Isa 59:16)

16 He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him.

Holy Spirit's working out God's good purposes (28)

Purposes that may include suffering, but also hope (Rom 5:3-5)

3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Purposes that renew us day by day (2 Cor 4:15-17)

15 All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. 16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

Purposes that matures us to completion (James 1:3-4)

3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Purposes that results in joy and fulfillment of our salvation (1 Peter 1:7-9)

7 These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Freedom through Promised Security (Rom 8:29-30)

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Security in God's conforming (29)

Conformed into His likeness (1 Cor 15:49)

49 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

Conformed to reflect God's glory (2 Cor 3:18)

18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Conformed into a new self (Eph 4:23-24)

23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Conformed into a glorious body (Phil 3:21)

21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Security in God's glorification (30)

Secure in God because He is the stronghold of our lives (Ps 27:1-3)

The LORD is my light and my salvation--whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life--of whom shall I be afraid? 2 When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. 3 Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.

Secure in God because He is our refuge and strength (Ps 46:1)

46:1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Secure in God because He is greater than anything in the world (1 John 4:4)

4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

Secure in God because He is our helper (Heb 13:6)

6 So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

Secure in God because we are shielded by God's power (1 Peter 1:3-5)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The Spirit of Hope (8:18-25)

To be a son of God is also to be an heir, and so Paul's discussion of the Holy Spirit's ministry relative to our adoption as sons flows easily into the hope of future blessings which we have as the children of God. The Christian life is obviously no bed of roses, no flower-strewn pathway. It is a life of suffering, a life of struggle. These sufferings, Paul tells us, are not to be compared with the glory which is to follow (verse 18). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Hope for He assures us that great glory awaits us.

We are not alone in this struggle and suffering. When Adam fell all of creation suffered in the wake of his sin. All of creation has been subjected to futility and frustration (v. 20). All of creation groans and anxiously awaits the restoration of all things. Certainly here is the explanation to the problem our world faces in the realm of ecology. All creation suffers from the sin of men. We strip away desired minerals and resources without sufficient concern for the effect of our actions on the environment. We pollute the environment with our rubbish. No wonder creation groans.

Though we should strive to express our stewardship over the creation in a more responsible way, total restoration will not occur until God Himself renovates the earth from the rubbish of man's sinfulness and selfishness. Creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God (v. 19). By this, I understand that day to be when God will restore the earth to its original 'paradise' condition, and when the 'sons of God' will execute their dominion over the earth as God originally instructed (Genesis 1:26-28).

The struggle of the cosmos is a reflection of the struggle within the Christian. We are all too aware of the struggle of Romans 7, and we will continue to know this agony until we experience our full restoration and sanctification: "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" (Romans 8:23).

Until we are given transformed or heavenly bodies (1 Corinthians 15:40, 50ff.), we will continue to be plagued by the flesh and its solicitations to sin. The indwelling Holy Spirit is God's earnest agreement of a future and total restoration, a complete release from not only the power of sin, but from its presence. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian is like an engagement ring in that it gives substance to our hopes for better things in the future. Even in the midst of the struggles and suffering of this life, the Holy Spirit assures us of the blessings which are yet to come as the sons of God.

The Spirit of Help (8:26-27)

There is a song which I have heard on the radio which goes something like this: "I'm not what I oughta be, And I'm not what I'm gonna be, But thank God I'm not what I used to be." In the crunch of the Christian's experience of not being what we ought to be, and not yet being what we are destined to be, the Holy Spirit ministers to us as our helper, coming to our aid at points of weakness and inability.

And 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; 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 (Romans 8:26-27).

I understand the help of the Holy Spirit to be far broader than just helping us pray for those things which we cannot put into words. But this is surely a specific example of the helping ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some things simply cannot be put into words—any words (any language, native, foreign, or angelic). At these times when our humanity is stretched beyond the breaking point, the Holy Spirit ministers on our behalf, communicating for us the deepest longings and desires within us.

Here is the source of our sanctification. The Law can never sanctify, due to the weakness of the flesh.

A vine does not produce grapes by Act of Parliament; they are the fruit of the vine's own life; so the conduct which conforms to the standard of the Kingdom is not produced by any demand, not even God's, but it is the fruit of that divine nature which God gives as the result of what he has done in and by Christ.

What the Law could not do through the weakness of the flesh, God has done through the work of His Son on the cross and through the appropriation of the results of that work by the Holy Spirit.

To run and work the law commands,
Yet gives me neither feet nor hands;
But better news the gospel brings;
It bids me fly, and gives me wings.

The Certainty of Sanctification (8:28-39)

There is an expression that goes something like this: only two things in this life are certain, death and taxes. Now this may be true for the unbeliever, but for the true believer in Jesus Christ we must add at least one more thing—sanctification. That is the force in these concluding verses of Romans 8. All of the struggles, all of the turmoil, all of the agony, is a part of God's plan to conform us to Himself.

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. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He

also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified (Romans 8:28-30).

Verse 28 stresses that not only are all things for God's glory, but also for the good of the Christian. Then, also, it is God who is active in all the affairs of our lives, for "It is God who causes all things to work together." The events of our lives are no accident; they are the handiwork of the sovereign God. We are reminded that it is **all things** which work for our good. This must include those things which are pleasant as well as the unpleasant, the things we would call good, and those which we think bad. No circumstance fails to contribute to our good and God's glory. Finally, we should see that all things work **together**. We cannot look at things in isolation, yet we are incapable of seeing from the beginning to the end, so we must trust in God to accomplish His good and perfect and acceptable will in His own way in our lives.

Verses 29 and 30 remind us that salvation from beginning to the finish is the work of God, and that He loses no one along the way. Those whom God foreknew are those whom God has chosen before the foundation of the world, before they did anything, good or evil. The basis of God's free choice is grace, and not the merits of the chosen (for indeed we have no merit before God). God did not look down through the corridors of time and choose those whom He knew would come to trust in Him. The expression 'to know' often conveys the concept of choice (cf. Genesis 18:19; Jeremiah 1:5). To foreknow here and elsewhere (e.g. Romans 11:2; 1 Peter 1:20) can mean 'to choose beforehand,' and such must its meaning be here.

The sequence of verses 29 and 30 is this: foreknowledge (that is election), predestination, calling, justification, glorification. **Foreknowledge** determines who God's children will be; **predestination** determines what God's people will be (conformed to the image of Christ); **calling** is that point in time when the unbelieving elect is irresistibly invited to be a part of God's family; **justification** is the sinner's participation in the benefits of the work of Christ on his behalf; **glorification** is the full future realization of all that God has purposed us to be. Glorification is spoken of in the past tense because of its certainty of coming to pass. We say to our children sometimes, "If you do thus and so, you've had it." We do not say "You will have it," but "You've had it" because it is a sure thing. So it is with our ultimate and final sanctification. There is no question of its coming to pass.

Do you see that from election to glorification it is entirely in God's control? **Our sanctification does not rely upon our faithfulness, for we would never make it.** Our sanctification relies completely upon God, and what God determines will come to pass. Paul has not said that some of those whom God has chosen will be called, nor that some of those who are called will be glorified. From election to sanctification, it is the work of God and it is certain.

Our response to these things (vv. 31-39). The confidence of the Christian in the light of these certainties is expressed in verses 31-39 by a sequence of questions and answers.

(1) **"What then shall we say to these things?"** (v. 31). If God is on our side, who could be against us? This is not to say that there is no one against us, for Satan is our adversary. But if God is for us, who is Satan to oppose us? I did not have an older brother, but I was an older brother, and there is no greater security than being with big brother. If the sovereign God of the universe is for us, then there is no enemy that can harm us. If God's power was sufficient to save us, if God's love was strong enough to send His only Son to the cross, then there is nothing which He will not do for us as His sons (v. 32).

(2) **"Who will bring a charge against God's elect?"** (v. 33). God, the sovereign judge of the universe, has declared us to be righteous through the work of His Son. Who, then, would dare to accuse us before God?

(3) **"Who is the one who condemns?"** (v. 34). Would anyone dare to condemn us before the God Who has given His only Son to save us. He has borne our sins on the cross. There is no condemnation. Further, He is at the right hand of God interceding on our behalf.

(4) **"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"** (v. 35). Is there anything in this universe greater than God? Is there any one greater than He? No! Indeed not. If this be true, then there is nothing that can ever separate us from the love of God. Our salvation, our sanctification, is as secure as the God of heaven is strong. It is with this confidence that we may live out our Christian responsibilities, knowing that God is the source of our salvation and our sanctification, and, therefore, it is sure.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/agony-ecstasy-romans-8>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Christians have a hope that persists through the ordeals of life. Outside of faith in Christ, this hope is not possible. Still, we observe and experience suffering. Focusing on these things makes a person nearsighted. Only with an eye on our future glory can a Christian not only endure hardship but also thrive in the hope of God's promises. While we hope for the glorious future in Christ, we still have work to do. Though our minds turn to evangelism, and rightly so, these verses remind us that we also have a responsibility to all creation. God has made us stewards of his good earth. While people suffer, all creation suffers. Likewise, believers' peace is the peace of the world; our glory will be the glory of creation. We wait in hope for the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises. May we, as people who have died with Christ and live again in the Spirit, be beacons of God's wonderful intentions for all creatures, great and small.

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

Hope - What God has prepared in heaven for His children cannot compare with the earthly existence they are experiencing now. It's understandable why a person would feel hopeless and sad when a loved one dies; there is an illness/ stress about finances, or other personal concerns. Paul suggests that we can find joy amid difficulty because we have a living hope.

A Taste of Heaven - When Christians come into the fullness of sonship, they get a taste of heavenly fruit that wets the appetite for more of what is to come eventually. But the final coming to the heavenly home and receiving all the benefits of being in God's family is yet to be experienced.

The Holy Spirit - While the spiritual soldiers are in the thick of this earthly battle, God has not left His army to fight alone. He gives the greatest weapon in His arsenal—the Holy Spirit. When the suffering can't pray at their lowest point, God reminds the helpless, "I am here." He comes in the person of the Holy Spirit, who meets the deepest inner longings, emotions, desires, and thoughts of the heart. The third person of the Trinity can shape a human's words to God and be in harmony with His will.

All for Good - God is sovereign and able to manage everything that happens in life. He can bring it all together, causing it all to turn out for good in the end. Individuals can see this promise unfold because of their love for God. They are now confident of their purpose in this life. The Creator conceived this plan for each life long before He brought the earth into being. He is the author of the book called "My Life." The Father selects the characters and lays out each chapter. Then He is in the middle of the story making sure each scene goes according to His plan. The ultimate goal of each life is to become like Christ. We yield our inner will. He shapes and molds us. What we are walking through right now is not always going to be the case. God has good things planned for His children in the future, and even as we go through life now, He is with believers and will continue to be there to show the way and give peace.