

## “Homesick for Heaven” (Romans 8:18–30)

I have two important questions to ask you: (1) Do you want to suffer? (2) Do you want to be miserable? Honestly, however, your answer to the first question is irrelevant. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but the truth is you are going to suffer whether you want to or not. You cannot avoid suffering. It is a required course. But, your answer to the second question is critical because you don't have to be miserable in the midst of your suffering. If you allow your attitude and actions to be transformed by God you can avoid misery and self-pity. The choice is up to you.<sup>1</sup>

In Hamlet, Shakespeare said, “Suffering makes cowards of us all.” In many respects, he was correct. Suffering can bring any believer to his or her knees. Perhaps you have experienced a devastating divorce. You didn't want your marriage to end, but it did. Now you are overwhelmed with a sense of loneliness and defeat. Maybe you have recently lost a loved one—a spouse, a child, or a parent. You are in the throes of grief and loss and possibly even angry with God. Perhaps you've recently lost your job. All that you ever wanted was to provide for your family and now that's been taken away from you, and there are no jobs on the horizon. Such sufferings may cause you to wonder if you can even go on. The daily grind of life is filled with seemingly unbearable suffering. It can be excruciating!<sup>2</sup>

However, I have some good news. In Romans 8:18–30, Paul argues that your perspective can change how you endure suffering. In fact, with the proper perspective you can transition from being miserable to being joyful. Paul's words can be summarized in this statement: *A future focus affects present perseverance*. In these thirteen verses, the apostle shares two hope-filled truths: (1) We have a glorious expectation (8:18–25), and (2) we have a glorious assurance (8:26–30).

**1. We have a glorious expectation (8:18–25).** Paul explains that your sufferings, though severe, cannot be compared with the glory that God has prepared for you.<sup>3</sup> Verse 18 states the theme of this section: **“For I consider that the sufferings<sup>4</sup> of this present time<sup>5</sup> are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to<sup>6</sup> us.”<sup>7</sup>** The word “for” (*gar*) unites 8:17 and 18 in their common theme of suffering.<sup>8</sup> It is worth underlining “sufferings” and “glory” because Paul invites you to make a comparison of these two concepts.<sup>9</sup> The verb translated “consider” (*logizomai*) is a mathematical term meaning, “I calculate, I count on this fact as being true!”<sup>10</sup> It speaks of contemplative meditation. The terms “worthy” (*axios*) and “glory” (*doxa*) are related to the OT concept of weight. The word “worthy” is from a commercial term that means “to weigh as much as.” The Hebrew term “glory” is also from a root “to be heavy,” in the sense of being valuable, like gold. Paul is saying: You may feel weighted down by the heaviness of your suffering; however, the heaviness (i.e., the value) of your glory will far outweigh all that you have endured (cf. 2 Cor 4:16–18). To put it another way, if you could put all the difficulties of your life on one side of the scale and the glory that will someday be revealed to you on the other side of the scale, the suffering would be a grain of sand and the glory would be Mount Everest.

I am confident that you understand this principle. Perhaps you are attending college or graduate school. You are spending countless hours and thousands of dollars to earn a degree that you hope will help you in your future vocation. Maybe you are working two jobs. You want to make the necessary sacrifices to allow your spouse to be able to remain at home. Perhaps you are homeschooling your children. You believe, as a parent, that you may be the best teacher of your children and you want to invest further time and energy into them. All of these commitments are challenging, and at times downright daunting, but the payoff can be great. Likewise, focusing on the future glory that will be revealed to you enables you to endure present suffering. Again, you must weigh up what is happening to you now with what you are laying up as treasure in heaven. If you let this thought grip you, it will revolutionize the way you look at your problems. *A future focus affects present perseverance*.

In 8:19–22 our glorious expectation is explained in relation to the creation. Paul writes: **“For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing<sup>11</sup> of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.”**<sup>12</sup> In these verses the physical creation is personified as a person. But not in the “Mother Earth” sense; rather, the “Father God” sense. The idea is that creation is like a person waiting for something good to happen. The phrase, “anxious longing” (*apokaradokia*, 8:19a), literally means “to watch with an outstretched neck.”<sup>13</sup> Whenever I come upon this term I can’t help but think of an episode that happened nearly twenty years ago when my wife and I were dating. We were enjoying a meal at the luxurious Wendy’s down the street from Multnomah University. I was in one of my particularly bizarre moods. As we were talking, I began to briskly and awkwardly stretch my neck back and forth towards Lori. She was horrified and humiliated. She assumed that everyone was watching me. Of course, they probably were! (I can’t believe she eventually decided to marry such a goofy nerd.) Lori calls this “one of the most embarrassing moments of our relationship.” I like to tell her that I was just giving her my undivided attention. The story illustrates how creation earnestly stretches its neck, or even stands on its tiptoes,<sup>14</sup> with earnest, eager expectation. The verb translated “waits eagerly” (*apekdechomai*) is used seven times in the New Testament and it always refers to Christ’s return.<sup>15</sup> Creation is longing for the “revealing” (*apokalupsin*)<sup>16</sup> of the sons and daughters of God, which will occur when Christ returns for our final redemption and glorification.

Paul explains in 8:20–22 that this world is not the world that God intended it to be. Nature suffers in various ways (e.g., earthquakes, tornadoes, tidal waves, drought, floods, extreme heat, and extreme cold). Obviously, creation did not choose such suffering for itself. Instead, God “subjected”<sup>17</sup> creation to “futility” (*mataiotes*)<sup>18</sup> because of human rebellion (Gen 3:17–19). God also attempted to use this futility to turn humankind to Himself. Hence, creation longs to be set free. But that will not happen until God’s creation is destroyed (2 Pet 3:12–13) and then renewed and restored (Rev 21:1).<sup>19</sup> Until that time, Rom 8:22 says, “The whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth.”<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps you’re thinking, “I don’t really care about creation’s groaning and its future expectation. I’m not really into nature and I don’t care too much about the environment.” Paul seems to realize that most people (believers included) are only interested in themselves, so in 8:23–25, he transitions to your glorious expectation. The apostle writes: **“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,<sup>21</sup> the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.”** I call 8:23 “the forty and over verse.” I speak from personal experience having turned forty last month. I can assure you that my body groans.<sup>22</sup> When Lori and I get out of bed in the morning, we often feel like we are in our 90s. All we can hear is cracking, creaking, and groaning. Sometimes we even feel like there could be imminent croaking! It can be rather discouraging. Speaking of discouraging, looking in the mirror is not much fun either. Most people over forty understand grey hairs, hair loss, wrinkles, and last but not least, the infamous cellulite. There are times when I look in the mirror and I am horrified by what I see. Nevertheless, I have begun to recognize that if I still possessed the same perfect body (JOKE!) that I did in my 20s, I would not long for Heaven like I do now that I am forty. Nowadays when I look in the mirror, I often say, “Lord Jesus, take me now; I’m ready to go. I want my glorified body . . . and quick!” Nonetheless, I refuse to be discouraged when I look in the mirror. Instead I like to say: “Lord Jesus, I may be one step away from eternity.” God uses these visual and audible reminders to fulfill a very important purpose—to cause me to long for my eternal home.<sup>23</sup> As my Aunt Lydia used to say, “It won’t always be this way.” One day my earthly body, which is subject to corruption and sin, will be put away and I will be given a redeemed body, free from sin, corruption, and death.<sup>24</sup> Again, perspective is everything: *A future focus affects present perseverance.*

Paul explains that believers in Jesus “have the first fruits of the Spirit” (8:23). What does “first fruits” (*aparche*) mean?<sup>25</sup> This term is theologically analogous to “the seal of the Spirit” (2 Cor 1:22) and “the pledge of the Spirit” (2 Cor 5:5; Eph 1:14). The “first fruits” in the Old Testament were a promise of the harvest to come. They symbolized God’s ownership of all the harvest (Deut 26:1–11). The Spirit was the first fruits of the new age, as Jesus was the first fruits of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:20). Believers, as God’s children, even now experience something of the joys of heaven by means of the Holy Spirit who dwells with them and in them.<sup>26</sup> We do indeed have a glorious expectation.

The word translated “hope” (*elpis*) is the turning point of this section<sup>27</sup> as Paul’s outlook shifts from the past truth of judgment and frustration to the future aspect of glorification and freedom. “Hope” is referred to six times in this section (Rom 8:20, 24–25). The word “hope” as most often used in the New Testament does not carry with it the idea of doubt or uncertainty (as the English word often does in common usage). Rather, it speaks of certain expectancy and can be translated this way. Hope is something in the future which has not been realized or received, but is an absolute certainty because God has promised it.

Over the past three months I’ve spent five weeks away from home. I’ve been homesick for my family. I was sharing this with my mom, who is the most empathetic person that I know. But she took a 2 x 4 to me when she reminded me of the soldiers and sailors in our church. They are deployed for a year or so at a time. Many soldiers have been deployed three or four times. These sacrificial servant and their families understand the meaning of homesickness. Paul wants you to be homesick for heaven. He wants you to long to be with Jesus. Are you homesick? Or are you so caught up in work, family, and hobbies that you don’t have time or energy to think about your real home? *A future focus affects present perseverance.*

[Not only do we have a glorious expectation, Paul also declares that . . .]

**2. We have a glorious assurance (8:26–30).** When you are weak and faithless in the midst of your suffering Paul wants you to know that God is faithful. In 8:26–27 Paul writes, **“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how<sup>28</sup> to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings<sup>29</sup> too deep for words;<sup>30</sup> 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.”** “In the same way” that we are sustained with “hope” (8:24–25), we are sustained by the Spirit<sup>31</sup> because the Spirit “also helps our weakness.” There are three observations worth noting in 8:26–27: First, the Spirit “helps” us. This means that we must pray in order to give the Spirit something to interpret. The Spirit is there to help us in our weakness, not in our absence.<sup>32</sup> The word “helps” (*sunantilambanomai*) is only used one other time in the New Testament. The word occurs in Luke 10:40 when Martha beckons Jesus to have Mary come “help” her. The idea in both contexts is one of very practical “help” in time of need. In this context, our time of need is when we find ourselves in the midst of suffering and “do not know how to pray as we should.” This suffering is called “weakness” (*astheneia*), which is used to describe physical, emotional, or spiritual disability.<sup>33</sup> You may be in circumstantial weakness. You haven’t been able to find a job and you are depressed and discouraged. You just broke up with your boyfriend or girlfriend and you feel empty and lonely. Maybe you recently lost a loved one and there is a sense of void in your life. Perhaps you are in moral weakness. You have a besetting sin that is destroying you. You are addicted to pornography, or food, or money. These obstacles can make prayer a struggle, but the Spirit assists you in your weakness. Again, don’t use your “weakness” as an excuse not to pray. Don’t assume that the Spirit will do all the work for you; remember He is “the Helper.”<sup>34</sup>

Second, one of the purposes of your suffering is to draw you to God. If God didn’t allow you to suffer, you would never pray . . . at least not with a sense of desperation. God brings suffering into your life because He loves you and wants you to draw close to Him. So, in the midst of suffering don’t run from God; run towards Him! Suffering is your friend and may be the best thing that could ever happen to you.

Finally, the Spirit only intercedes for us “according to the will of God” (8:27). This means that He takes what is of God’s will from our prayers and retranslates our inner thoughts to the Father. Since this is how the Spirit works, we had better make sure that we know God’s will and meditate upon it. God’s will is not some mysterious concept—it is revealed in the Bible. Therefore, we must be absorbed in God’s Word so that we may know God’s will. Today, will you make a commitment to familiarize yourself further with the Bible and use Scripture in your prayers? If you really want to see some changes take place in your life, link up with God’s Word and the Holy Spirit in prayer. The Apostle Jude tells us that the way to build ourselves up in the faith is by praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20). This means we need to develop a lifestyle of prayer so that we will have the stamina to pray when we encounter suffering.

In 8:28 Paul pens one of the most often quoted verses in Scripture: **“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.”**<sup>35</sup> Rom 8:28 is in the context of the Holy Spirit’s intercession. However, you can’t get to 8:28 without going through 8:26–27. Notice that 8:28 begins with a conjunction “And” (*de*)<sup>36</sup> This means that 8:28 is very closely related to 8:27. What does this mean? It means that the people whom God is working all things together for good are the same people whom the Holy Spirit is interceding for according to God’s will. Also, it is important to notice that the primary reference of “all things” is “the sufferings of this present time” (8:18). The bottom line of 8:28 is this: Nothing happens outside of God’s plan or without His permission and ordination.<sup>37</sup> The “good” is that all things work together to bring each Christian into conformity to Christ, to bring each Christian to glory. Notice as well, Paul does not speak of the purposes (plural) of God but of “His *purpose*” (singular). Why is this? I believe the answer is that there is only one all-encompassing purpose. That purpose is not to save people or to bless those who believe in Him; rather, the purpose is to manifest His own glory, not only to humankind, but to the heavenly hosts as well.<sup>38</sup>

Do you like eating cake? If you are like most people, probably so! Do you eat the various individual ingredients of the cake? I hope not! Some of the ingredients may not be too bad by themselves. But other ingredients, such as alum, baking powder, or flour are not very palatable. But, when they are mixed together and baked in an oven the final product is delicious.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, God can be trusted to take even the bitter experiences of life and blend them together and make them work together for good. God knows which ingredients are needed and He knows how to mix them to produce the desired result. The end result is something very tasty! But don’t believe me, believe my friend Alan Francis. His 12-year-old daughter, Mikaela, was just diagnosed with one of the worst forms of leukemia. They are going to be spending seven months at Children’s Hospital in Seattle. Yet, he calls this suffering “a win-win situation.” When I asked him to clarify this statement Alan declared: “If we suffer well, we grow to be more Christ-like in this life. Moreover, in eternity there is a weight of glory awaiting us.” What a perspective! If you are a believer who is suffering well, your future is going to blow you away. It’s going to be even better than you think! *A future focus affects present perseverance.*

Paul concludes this section with what has been called “the golden chain.” In 8:29–30 he describes God’s greatest works on our behalf. Paul writes, **“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”** Before I break down these verses, several observations are worth noting: (1) God is the subject of all of the above five verbs. That means He does all the acting. (2) We are the objects; we do all the receiving. We are “acted upon” by the providential hand of God. (3) The first two links in this chain begin in eternity past; the third is on earth, and the last two end in heaven. (4) The words “whom” and “these” always refer to the same group. This allows for no dropouts along the way. (5) What is more, every one of these five verbs is in the past tense. Even the word “glorified” is seen as something God has already done. God writes the future as if it were history. Looked at from His point of view, we are already in heaven. What God begins He finishes!

First, the verb “foreknew” (*proginosko*) can be translated either “to know beforehand” or “to choose beforehand.”<sup>40</sup> In this context, the latter is to be preferred.<sup>41</sup> As will be seen in 8:33, believers are called God’s “elect.” God, who knows all things beforehand, foreknew or chose those whom He predestined, called, justified, and glorified.<sup>42</sup> Foreknowledge in this context is like an expectant mother who loves her child before it is born. While the baby is growing inside her, she prays for the baby, she sings to the baby, she pats her tummy and talks to the baby. She has a relationship with her child before her child even knows who she is. Or, you might think of parents who are adopting a child. They can truly say to that child, “Before you knew us, we knew you. Before you loved us, we loved you. Before you chose us, we chose you.” In the very same way, God loved you first, sought you first, chose you first. Salvation begins with God.<sup>43</sup>

Second, the verb “predestined” (*proorizo*) means “to mark out ahead of time.”<sup>44</sup> While this term certainly includes the notion of election unto salvation, the predestination here is primarily unto sanctification.<sup>45</sup> The word “conformed” (*summorphos*) means to be shaped or molded. God the Father loves His Son so much that He wants Him to have look-alikes. God is determined that one day you will look like Jesus so that He (“the firstborn”) will have many brothers and sisters.<sup>46</sup>

Third, the verb “called” (*kaleo*)<sup>47</sup> refers to God’s effective call, rather than the general invitation that calls out to all humankind. This call compels individuals to believe in Christ and to receive the blessings of justification.

Fourth, the verb “justified” (*dikaioo*) means “to declare righteous.”<sup>48</sup> Paul was clear in 3:21–4:25 that when you place your faith in Christ alone, you receive the free gift of His grace. Your salvation is secure through a forever transaction of exchanging your sin for Christ’s righteousness.

Finally, the verb “glorified” (*doxazo*) refers to seeing Christ as He is and to being made like Him (see Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:1–3). Our ultimate glorification is the final link in this chain. So certain is Paul that this will take place that he speaks of our glorification in the past tense!

Yet you may be thinking, “But how can I know whether I have been foreknown, predestinated, or called? How can I know for sure that these things are true of me? How do I know that I am a part of this salvation chain?” The key is the fourth link of the chain: justification. Can you know whether you have been justified? Absolutely! Every person who believes in Christ has been justified (i.e., “declared righteous in Christ,” see Rom 3:22–26; 3:30; 4:1–5; 4:24–25; 5:1). Hence, if one link of the chain is true of me (justification), then the other four links must also be true (foreknown, predestinated, called, glorified) because the chain is a unit and cannot be broken. You can and should know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you are a believer.

When I was growing up one of my favorite stories was *The Little Engine that Could*.<sup>49</sup> In the tale a long train must be pulled over a high mountain. Other larger engines are asked to pull the train, but for various reasons, they refuse. The request is sent to a small blue engine who agrees to try. The engine succeeds in pulling the train over the mountain while repeating its motto: “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can.” This is great little story for those who are into self-esteem and the power of positive thinking. However, I need Christ-esteem and the power of biblical thinking. So I prefer to modify this chant to: “I know HE can, I know HE can, I know HE can.” I can’t make it through this life of sin and suffering. I’m weak and prone to falter. I need strength outside of my own. I need a hope that will not disappoint. That’s why my confidence rests in Christ alone. I KNOW HE CAN!

## An Excursus:

- *These truths are for believers.* Paul never preached “foreknowledge” and “predestination” to unbelievers. Paul only preached justification by faith alone. These deep truths are intended for believers and should (1) humble our souls, (2) delight our hearts, and (3) stimulate our trust. Once we recognize that we are wholly indebted to a gracious God of love, we will be led to worship God with all that is within us. After sharing these great truths (and many more), Paul concludes the intensely theological section of Romans with these words, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen” (Rom 11:33–36).
- *These truths defy comprehension.* There are only two people who completely understand these truths: the dead and the deluded. The dead because they are in the presence of Christ; the deluded because no one can completely understand these truths. We should take comfort in Peter’s words that Paul’s letters contain some truths that are “hard to understand” (2 Peter 3:16). Moses also said it well, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law” (Deut 29:29). We must not attempt to understand a God who is infinite (Isa 55:8–9).
- *These truths are drenched in God’s love.* After writing this section, Paul is overwhelmed with God’s great love. This causes him to immediately exclaim, “What then shall we say to these things?” (Rom 8:31). This should cause us to recognize that these theological doctrines were not intended to be controversial or to create intellectual problems. Rather, these truths were designed to serve as added dimensions of God’s love. It has been well said, “These truths were not meant to be a puzzle to the mind but a pillow to the soul.”
- *These truths glorify God for His supreme sovereignty.* The doctrine of election (God’s choice of individuals to be saved) is a mystery. Yet, it is taught in the Scriptures (e.g. Acts 13:44–48; Rom 9:6–23; Eph 1:3–6; Col 3:12; 2 Thess 2:13; and 1 Peter 1:1–2). Although it is a most difficult doctrine, it is God-centered. It exalts God and esteems Him as the One who is in complete control. Any theological view that properly elevates God and can be supported by Scripture should be adopted regardless of whether we like it or completely understand it.

### **Scripture References**

Romans 8:18–30

2 Corinthians 4:16–18

2 Corinthians 11:23–28

Genesis 3:17–19

Isaiah 2:2–4; 11:6–9

Philippians 3:20–21

1 John 3:1–3

### **Study Questions**

1. What sufferings am I presently experiencing (Romans 8:18)? Have I exhibited a positive or negative attitude? What type of perspective have I maintained in the midst of my pain? How can I improve my perspective so that I can face my suffering with greater joy and contentment?
2. What evidence have I observed in creation that has revealed the consequences of humankind's sin (Romans 8:19–22)? How can creation still remain so beautiful in spite of sin and its consequences? What must God's new heaven and new earth be like where there is no sin or scarring from the Fall (Contrast/Compare Genesis 3 with Revelation 21)?
3. How am I presently experiencing sin's consequences in my fallen body (Romans 8:23–25)? How does this make me homesick for heaven? Why is it so easy for me to be caught up in the pursuits and pleasures of this world? How can I remind myself this week that this world is not my home?
4. When have I sensed the Holy Spirit helping me in my prayer life (Romans 8:26–27)? What did I learn from this experience? How can I learn to better understand God's will and the purpose of suffering? Will I practice praying the Scriptures to the Lord so that I am in accordance with His will?
5. How does Romans 8:28 provide strength and encouragement for me as I struggle with suffering and sin? How does God's "golden chain" comfort me in the midst of my suffering and discouragement (Romans 8:29–30)? What do these five glorious descriptions teach me about God's character and His commitment to me? How would I explain these five acts to a child or a new believer?

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Revised from Brad McCoy, “Romans 8:18–30”: Tanglewood Bible Fellowship unpublished sermon notes.

<sup>2</sup> The best book I know on the subject of evil and suffering is Randy Alcorn, *If God is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil* (Sisters: Multnomah, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Paul has experienced great suffering (see 1 Cor 4:9–12; 2 Cor 4:7–12; 6:4–10; 11:23–29), and he’s also been to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:1–6).

<sup>4</sup> What is Paul referring to when he speaks of “sufferings” (*pathemata*)? He uses a word that encompasses the full gamut of suffering (see Rom 7:5; 2 Cor 1:5–7; Phil 3:10; Col 1:24; 2 Tim 3:11). This means that suffering can take on many forms: physical suffering, social suffering, financial suffering, relational suffering, occupational suffering, and personal suffering.

<sup>5</sup> Lopez explains: “. . . believers ought to *consider* (cf. 4:3 for the meaning of the Gk term *logizomai*) it beneficial to undergo struggles now, because the future rewards for the faithful (cf. 2 Cor 4:17) in the Messianic age far outweighs present *suffering*. Sharing in Christ’s suffering is a precursor to being *glorified*.” René A. Lopez, *Romans Unlocked: Power to Deliver* (Springfield: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Press, 2005), 175.

<sup>6</sup> This phrase does not mean “to us” (*contra* NIV, NKJV).

<sup>7</sup> C. S. Lewis commented on this verse: “If this is so, a book on suffering which says nothing of heaven, is leaving out almost all of one side of the account. Scripture and tradition habitually put the joys of heaven into the scale against the sufferings of earth, and no solution of the problem of pain which does not do so can be called a Christian one.” C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 144.

<sup>8</sup> In Rom 8:17 Paul spoke of two types of heirs: (1) those who are “heirs of God,” as a result of being children of God and (2) those who are “fellow heirs with Christ,” as a result of suffering. Paul’s point is simple: Those who suffer with Christ will experience a greater degree of reward or “glory” in eternity. This future glory doesn’t refer merely to our physical resurrection. It refers to a reward that will be given to those who suffer with Christ. Paul makes this clear when he writes of the glory that is to be revealed “to us. See the phrase *eis hemas* (“to us”). This phrase is used nine times in the NT: Acts 3:4; Rom 5:8; 8:18; 2 Cor 1:5, 11; Eph 1:8–9; Heb 2:3. In each instance the meaning is “toward, to, or upon us.” It never means “in” in the sense of “within.” See Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings* (Hayesville: Schoettle, 1992), 379.

<sup>9</sup> Stott beautifully states: “. . . the sufferings and the glory belong together indissolubly. They did in the experience of Christ; they do in the experience of his people also (17). It is only after we ‘have suffered a little while’ that we will enter God’s ‘eternal glory in Christ’, to which he has called us. So the sufferings and the glory are married; they cannot be divorced. They are welded; they cannot be broken apart.” John R. W. Stott, *Romans: God’s Good News for the World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 237.

<sup>10</sup> BDAG s.v. *logizomai* 3: “to hold a view about something, *think, believe, be of the opinion*.” A form of the word *logizomai* is used nineteen times in Romans.

<sup>11</sup> The term *apokalupsis* means “to pull back the curtain” so as to disclose or inform. It is also the Greek title of Revelation. The Second Coming is often referred to as a revelation or coming (cf. 1 Cor 1:7–8; 1 Pet 1:7, 13).

<sup>12</sup> This is Paul’s commentary on Gen 3:17–19. Stott, *Romans*, 240 relates: “This expectation that nature itself will be renewed is integral to the Old Testament prophetic vision of the messianic age, especially in the Psalms and Isaiah. Vivid images are used to express Israel’s faith that the earth and the heavens will be changed like clothing; that God ‘will create new heavens and a new earth’, including a new Jerusalem; that the desert will blossom like the crocus, and so display the glory of Yahweh; that wild and domestic animals will co-exist in peace, and that even the most ferocious and poisonous creatures ‘will neither harm nor destroy’ throughout God’s new world.”

<sup>13</sup> Moo notes that *apokaradokia* brings to mind the image of a person craning their neck to see better. In n. 29 he explains: “The Greek word is *apokaradokia*, from *kara*, ‘head’ + *dechomai*, ‘stretch,’ with the prefix *apo*—perhaps meaning ‘away from.’” Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*. New International Commentary of the New Testament Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 513.

<sup>14</sup> See Phillips’s paraphrase: “The creation is on tiptoe. . .” The only other NT usage of the noun *apokaradokia* occurs in Phil 1:20.

<sup>15</sup> Rom 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Cor 1:7; Gal 5:5; Phil 3:20; Heb 9:28.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 1:7.

<sup>17</sup> Gk. *hupetage*, Rom 8:20; cf. 8:7; 10:3; 13:1, 5.

<sup>18</sup> See Eph 4:17 and 2 Pet 2:18. The word *mataiotēs* is the same word used frequently in the Septuagint (Greek OT) to translate the Hebrew for “vanity” in Ecclesiastes.

<sup>19</sup> See also Isa 11:6–9; 65:17, 25.



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<sup>20</sup> Here Paul refers to the “groans” of creation. In 8:23 he speaks of the “groan” of the Christian. And finally, in 8:26, he speaks of the intercessory “groanings” of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>21</sup> Rom 8:23 does not conflict with 8:15–16. Paul is just speaking of adoption in an ultimate sense when we receive our glorified bodies.

<sup>22</sup> Of course, we also groan inwardly for many other reasons. We groan because of our job. We groan because of church conflict. We groan because of unfulfilled dreams. We groan because of our failed marriage. We groan because of wayward children. We groan because of faithless friends.

<sup>23</sup> Storms writes, “The *groaning* here is not so much because of the burden of sin as it is groaning *for the glory of heaven*. It is not the groaning of disappointment or frustration but the groaning of anticipation and expectation. These groans are not death pangs but birth pangs. Thus the natural, physical creation and all Christians join together in a virtual chorus of groaning, a symphony of sighs, as it were, as we agonize in anxious expectation of that final day of redemption.” Sam Storms, “Romans 8:1–30”: [www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/81-30/](http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/81-30/).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 15:35–58; 2 Cor 5:1–4.

<sup>25</sup> See 1 Cor 15:20, 23; 16:15; 2 Thess 2:13; Jas 1:18; Rev 14:4.

<sup>26</sup> It is also possible that Paul is referring to the victorious Christian life that is described in Rom 8:1–13.

<sup>27</sup> Stott, *Romans*, 239.

<sup>28</sup> Lopez, *Romans Unlocked*, 179 rightly comments, “Though Scripture records the proper content, method (Matt 6:9–15) and principle of praying in harmony with God’s will (John 14:13; 15:16; 16:23–24; 1 John 5:13–14), believers still struggle in the midst of suffering with how to ascertain God’s will and in what way to pray more effectively. Therefore, as creation (vv 20–21) and believers groan (vv 22–23), now *the Spirit* intercedes by praying *for us with compassion* (i.e., groanings; cf. Eph 6:18).”

<sup>29</sup> Acts 7:34 is the only other use of the Greek word *stenagmos* (“groanings”).

<sup>30</sup> The single Greek word behind the translation “too deep for words” is used only here in the NT (*alaletois*). This word is the common word for “speaking,” “language” (cf. 1 Cor 13:1) with the alpha privative. Another form of the word is used in Mark for dumb/mute people (cf. 7:37; 9:17, 25). Hart asks, “Why is the Spirit’s groanings not speaking in tongues?” He responds: (1) The “whole creation has been groaning,” but the whole creation is not speaking in tongues. (2) The groaning takes place in the heart; speaking in tongues takes place in outward speech. (3) Speaking in tongues is not mentioned in the list of gifts in Romans 12. Therefore, it is not likely mentioned indirectly here. (4) This passage speaks of groaning and intercession; speaking in tongues is primarily for praise. John Hart, “The Letter to the Romans,” unpublished class notes (2010 ed.), Moody Bible Institute.

<sup>31</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 523.

<sup>32</sup> Tony Evans, *The Promise* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 261.

<sup>33</sup> See John 5:5; 11:4; 1 Cor 2:3; 15:43; 2 Cor 12:9.

<sup>34</sup> See John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7.

<sup>35</sup> See the excellent article, Daniel B. Wallace, “Do All Things Really Work Together for the Good? Romans 8:28 in its Context”: [www.bible.org/article/do-all-things-really-work-together-good-romans-828-its-context](http://www.bible.org/article/do-all-things-really-work-together-good-romans-828-its-context).

<sup>36</sup> The Greek word rendered “and” is not *kai* but *de*. The point of *de* is to indicate that what is said in this verse is related to what has been previously taught (8:1–27). God’s sovereignty must not be understood apart from the context of suffering and the spiritual life.

<sup>37</sup> Paul does not say that each event is good or even that each incident will produce that which is good. He informs us that all of the events, working together, produce what is good.

<sup>38</sup> Paul makes much of this in the first chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians: God’s singular purpose is to display His glory (see 1:6, 12, 14).

<sup>39</sup> Revised from Michael P. Green, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), Electronic ed.

<sup>40</sup> The exact term rendered “foreknew” is found only seven times in the NT. The verb form is found in Acts 26:5; Rom 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet 1:20; and 2 Pet 3:17. The noun form is found in Acts 2:23 and 1 Pet 1:2. This root meaning “to know before” seems to be intended in Acts 26:5 and 2 Pet 3:17. However, several observations should be made: (1) In Acts 26:5 and 2 Pet 3:17, it is man’s “foreknowledge” which is in view, not God’s. (2) The word “foreknow” means more than the fact that God knows the future. (3) The word “foreknow” is never used for God’s knowledge of events and things; it is only used of His knowledge of people. (4) Therefore, the key to understanding this term as Paul uses it is to better understand the way in which God “knew” men in the Old Testament. The English word “know” can be the translation of several terms (both Hebrew and Greek). Its meaning can range from a simple knowledge to a much more intimate knowledge. For example, we are told that Adam “knew” his wife Eve, so that she conceived and gave birth to Cain (Gen 4:1). Obviously, this knowledge is much more than mere intellectual awareness. It speaks of a knowledge founded on love. Both the Old and New Testaments use the word “know” to

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describe an experiential knowledge grounded in love (e.g. Gen 18:19; Exod 2:25; Deut 34:10; Ps 1:6; Isa 46:9–10; Jer 1:5; Amos 3:2; Matt 1:25; 7:23; John 1:10; 10:14, 27; 17:3; 1 Cor 8:3; Gal 4:9; 2 Tim 2:19; 1 John 3:1). So, in this context, the word “foreknew” could be better translated “foreloved.”

<sup>41</sup> BDAG s.v. *proginosko* ; TDNT 1:715–16; NIDNTT 1:692–93.

<sup>42</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, “Romans” in *The Bible Knowledge Word Study* (Colorado Springs: Victor, 2006), 173.

<sup>43</sup> Ray Pritchard, “The Golden Chain” (Rom 8:29–30): [www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1993-07-11-The-Golden-Chain/](http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1993-07-11-The-Golden-Chain/).

<sup>44</sup> The word rendered “predestined” in our text occurs six times in the NT: Acts 4:28; Rom 8:29, 30; 1 Cor 2:7; and Eph 1:5, 11. The root word, without the prefix, is found five times in the NT: Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 17:26, 31; and Rom 1:4. This term has a range of meanings including: “fix, determine, appoint, set, definite, designate, define, to set limits, and explain.” God’s foreknowledge always seems to be directed toward the people God chooses, and His predestination seems to be directed to the plan or program He has prearranged for them. In Rom 8:29 Paul tells us that we were “predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn<sup>44</sup> among many brethren.” Since God’s purpose in salvation is His own glory (Eph 1:6, 12, 14), He is glorified as we daily grow to look more like Jesus (see Phil 3:10–15; Col 1:28–29; and 2 Pet 1:3–11).

<sup>45</sup> The question has been asked, “Why doesn’t God mention sanctification?” The simple answer is: Glorification is sanctification fully realized and accomplished. However, it should also be noted that progressive sanctification is not always guaranteed in time (though it is desired by God), due to carnality (Heb 5:11–6:8), worldliness (Jas 4:4–5), and the sin unto death (1 John 5:16–17; cf. Jas 5:19–20).

<sup>46</sup> In Ps 89:27 “first-born” is a title for the Messiah. In the OT the first-born son had preeminence and privilege. The term was used in Col 1:15 to show Jesus’ preeminence in creation and in Col 1:18 and Rev 1:5 to show Jesus’ preeminence in resurrection.

<sup>47</sup> The verb “to call” is used some 147 times in the New Testament. It has a variety of meanings: (1) It is used with the meaning “to name, to designate as, to appoint to be” (e.g., Rom 9:7). (2) The word is also used in a way that does not pertain to salvation. In these contexts, the word means “to summon, invite, or appeal” (e.g., 1 Cor 10:27). (3) It is used in the Gospels, in contexts dealing with salvation, and means “to summon or invite” (e.g., Matt 9:13). (4) The word is used with the sense “to appoint” or “to call to some task or vocation” (e.g., 1 Cor 7:17). (5) The word can mean “to name, to designate, to appoint,” not simply as an address, but “to cause to become” that which one is called (e.g., Rom 4:17). (6) The word is used as a metaphor for God’s sovereign work of bringing an individual to faith in Christ. Of these thirty-one occurrences, twenty-four are in Paul’s letters (e.g., Rom 9:11, 24). In Rom 8:29–30 the latter meaning is what Paul is referring to. When we are “called,” we experience the conviction of the Holy Spirit and respond to the Gospel of Christ (see John 6:44, 65; 10:3; 1 Cor 1:26–31; Gal 1:15; and 2 Thess 2:14). Quite simply, when Christ calls, the one who is called comes (see John 6:37). This naturally follows the usage of the terms “foreknew” and “predestined.”

<sup>48</sup> The word “justified” is used thirty-six times in the NT. It is used by Paul fourteen times in the book of Romans (see 2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:1, 9; 6:7; 8:30, 33). In the majority of contexts, the word “justified” means “declared righteous.” The person who has believed the Gospel is now as righteous as Christ Himself and will be considered as such for all of eternity (Rom 5:1; 1 Cor 1:30, 31; 6:11). This is a free gift of grace (Rom 5:16–18).

<sup>49</sup> See [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Little\\_Engine\\_That\\_Could](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Little_Engine_That_Could).