

Romans (42) **The Assurance of Hope**

Let us return to the portion of Scripture that we began to study last Lord's Day, which is Romans 8:18-30. We will read two paragraphs for context.

¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Rom. 8:18-30)

If we could stand back and perceive the expanse and the scope of Paul's statements, we would be quite taken with the wonder and the wisdom of the plan and purpose of God in history and our place within it. The apostle would have us see the grand plan of God for His creation that He has purposed to bring into reality in history. He desired that believers see that this grand purpose of God was being realized presently in their lives and that it will be totally or wholly experienced when believers are fully glorified in His presence on the future day of their resurrection. In order to express this grand design and purpose, Paul personified the creation itself as desiring and impatiently anticipating the glorification of the saints. The creation groans in its present sufferings, as it anticipates the culmination of history that will occur when the children of God come into their full stature as the adopted children of God at the resurrection. It is as though the creation itself is in misery presently, groaning under the effects of man's fall into sin. It desires the end to occur. Believers are also groaning as they are attempting to endure through their suffering as they wait to receive the fullness of what God has promised them. Yes, even the blessed Holy Spirit Himself is also groaning, even while He labors in prayer, interceding on behalf of the people of God, helping them through their sufferings unto the appointed glorious destiny (in 8:26ff). And so Paul takes us from the beginning of the fall of mankind with its effect upon creation to the final destiny for which God had originally designed and intended for mankind, the assumption of their rightful inheritance as sons of God ruling over all that God had made.

Now the attentive reader, who is mindful of the history of God's dealings with mankind as recorded in Holy Scripture, and who is familiar with popular evangelical teaching about God's purpose in history, might pose a question regarding what might seem to be great omission. "Where is the purpose and promise of God with regard to Israel? It would seem that the entire Old Testament record and hope has been set aside or passed over?" But this would be a failure to read rightly and understand fully what the apostle is setting before his readers (and what the Holy Spirit has set before us). He was teaching these first century Christians through this Epistle to the Romans that God's promises and purposes to and through Israel are being fulfilled through His Son, Jesus Christ and in those who become the people of God through faith in Him. God is revealing through the unfolding of this gospel age, and will fully reveal at the future resurrection and glorification of His saints,

that all of His purposes are being fulfilled in His church, which includes all of the redeemed of all of history. God will be glorified in His church throughout all ages for He has manifested Himself in bringing many sons to glory through Jesus Christ. Paul will show more fully in Romans 9, 10, and 11, how God is fulfilling His purpose and promises for Israel in this gospel age. But it is present here in Romans 8 as well, if the discerning reader is attentive to its cues and clues.

What God has declared through His apostle is that His promises given through the prophets of Israel's glorious future are being realized in the church. God was manifesting His purposes through His people in a manner beyond anyone's ability to have seen it. Some had anticipated it in the past, such as Abraham, David, and the prophets, but no one had truly seen in it with clarity, understood it with precision. We read in 1 Peter of the limited understanding of the Old Testament prophets themselves of the message that the Holy Spirit had delivered through them.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith *for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*. ⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by *various trials*, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith--more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire--may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. ¹⁰*Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories*. ¹²It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves *but you*, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. ¹³Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, *set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. (1 Pet. 1:3-13)

Here we see the same themes that Paul identified in Romans 8. Peter wrote clearly that the Old Testament prophets foretold of the New Testament Christianity we enjoy, and that the glory that God has promised His people through the Old Testament prophets will be realized in the believers of Jesus Christ. Peter also wrote of the intervening sufferings that believers would encounter, which he calls "various trials", but that believers may nevertheless be assured that one day they would receive their promised inheritance. We may conclude from these comments of Peter regarding the Old Testament prophets, that there are probably passages of Scripture in the prophets or concepts in the prophets that speak to the matters unfolding before us in Romans. And when we arrive to Romans 9, 10, and 11, after first having set forth the glorious future for the sons of God in Romans 8, Paul will confirm his teachings through numerous citations from the Scriptures.

But as we continue to work through this passage of Romans 8, let us be mindful that Paul is setting forth the unfolding of this church age to be the realization of the Old Testament hope. Paul has shown, as have other New Testament writers, that the promises to God's unfaithful son, Israel, are being fulfilled through His Son, God's true "Israel", Jesus Christ. Those, who have faith in Jesus Christ and are united to Jesus Christ through that faith, are due to inherit "the world", that being the new heavens and the earth. Paul had shown in Romans 4 that Abraham and his descendants would inherit the world.

¹³For the promise that he would be *the heir of the world* was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, ¹⁵because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶Therefore it is of faith *that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed*, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all ¹⁷(as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;

¹⁸who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, “So shall your descendants be.” ¹⁹And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. ²⁰He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. ²²And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

²³*Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, ²⁴but also for us it shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification. (Rom. 4:13-25)*

Now to show better how the teaching of Romans 8 speaks to these matters, consider this extended summary of the teaching by **Thomas Schreiner**, who very ably brought it all together. I thought that it was so well stated that we all might profit from his words:

In Romans 8:1-17 Paul proclaims that Jesus Christ has broken the power of sin and death through his death on the cross. The era of bandage and sin has ceased. By the power of the Spirit believers are enabled to keep the Torah (i.e. the law of God). Those who have received the end-time gift of the Spirit are also assured of the resurrection promised to Israel, for in Ezekiel 37 the Spirit and resurrection are closely conjoined. The church has now received as God’s people the promises of Israel. Those who belong to Christ are adopted, God’s sons, his children and heirs. If the church has received the promises made to Israel, then they await the promise of a new creation that was initially made to Israel (Rom. 8:18-25; Isa. 65:17; 66:22). When Abraham was promised that he would be the heir of the world (Rom. 4:13), the transformation of the whole world was in view. Of course the new world has not yet arrived. All creation groans as it awaits the revelation of God’s children and the fulfillment of all that God has pledged in his covenant. Even believers groan, for they have not yet obtained the resurrection of the body. The groaning is suffused in hope, however, since believers in Christ will surely inherit the promises made to Israel. The presence of the Spirit assures them of their eschatological (i.e. end of time) inheritance, and the Spirit within them intercedes to God on behalf of believers so that God’s will is accomplished in their lives (8:26-27). Indeed, God has worked in such a way that everything that enters the lives of believers works for their good (Rom. 8:28-30). That is, all of life’s circumstances will accomplish the goal of making believers like God’s true Israel, his firstborn son, Jesus Christ. In the OT God set his covenantal affection on Israel, and predestinated them to be his people. They were called the people of God, had the promise of divine vindication, and the hope of future glory. Now all these blessings belong to the church. In the light of this (8:31-29) the church is filled with tremendous confidence. Nothing that the future brings can daunt the God’s people. Since God is for them, nothing can successfully triumph over them. God will surely give his people every good thing since he has already given the gift of his Son. No condemnation is possible on the day of judgment since the Son, the true Israel, has taken God’s condemnation upon himself and been publicly vindicated by his resurrection and intercedes on behalf of his people. The miseries of life and death cannot triumph over believers because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. All past sin is forgiven and future foe can triumph. Thus hope reigns supreme in the hearts of God’s people.¹

Those comments are a very good summary of the teaching of Romans 8. But we confess that this understanding of the Scriptures is believed by few among evangelicals. It is largely a matter of them never having been taught rightly about these matters. It is unfortunate that they embrace popular but false teachings about God’s purposes being centered on ethnic and national Israel and that God’s greatest purpose is in bringing back a political nation state of Israel comprised of ethnic Jews. Now we readily affirm that God is obviously in control of history and has brought the Jews again to Palestine to accomplish His purposes through them, but it will only be and must be by their inclusion into the church through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. But in failing to see the glory of God’s great purpose in history respecting His church and rather focusing on ethnic and political happenings in the Middle East, well intentioned evangelicals “carnalize” God’s promises and they rob the true people of God of their legacy and the hope of their future. But the worst effect of this popular by wrong

¹ Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Academic, 1998), pp. 430f.

understanding is that they unwittingly rob God of His glory, for later Paul will reason and argue that what God is doing in the church in history is the greatest basis and cause, if understood rightly, of bringing glory to God. It is God's realizing the age-old promises and purpose of God in the church, which Paul will explain in Romans 11:33ff.

³³Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out!

³⁴“For who has known the mind of the LORD?
Or who has become His counselor?”

³⁵“Or who has first given to Him
And it shall be repaid to him?”

³⁶For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

If you understand what we are saying about these matters and you get a measure of comprehension of the many implications, you are numbered among a relatively few to whom God has blessed with the understanding of these realities. God has opened the eyes of your understanding “to behold wondrous things in His law” (Psa. 119:18). You should regard yourself blessed of God. But you also should see your privilege as the great opportunity also to give the glory to God that is due His name. May He give us greater comprehension and appreciation of these truths.

Now let us return to the paragraph of Romans 8:18ff that we began to study in detail last week. Here we read of....

I. The Hope of a New Creation (Rom. 8:18-25)

Last Lord's Day we considered the words, “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us*” (Rom. 8:18). And then we read a more full explanation of the incomparable glories of the children of God that the creation itself anticipates. **Verses 19f** read,

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

Paul describes the creation as though it were a living, thinking, feeling creature, which itself was awaiting expectantly for the glorification of believers. This literary device of personifying the physical creation is common to Scripture. Back in the early days of human history, upon the occasion of the first murder, brother slaying his brother, God Himself personified the earth and as a living holy creature that had been forced to endure the criminal actions of Cain the murderer. God said this of the creation:

And now you are cursed from the ground, ***which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.*** (Gen 4:11 ESV)

Even the creation groaned from under the crime. It had been forced to drink the blood of an innocent man. It cried out for vengeance for the injustice that it had witnessed.. The earth would no longer co-operate in feeding Cain for him having fed it with his brother's blood. God cursed Cain for his crime. As God sent Adam and Eve from the garden, Cain is sent “from ***the face*** of the ground” (4:14). God consigned him to a life of wandering in the earth away from His presence, which is essentially a death sentence.

Later Moses personified the earth, as well as the heavens, in his speaking to gathered Israel prior to their entering the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. Moses rehearsed the covenant that God had made

with Israel at Mount Sinai 40 years earlier. When Moses rehearsed the covenant, he called upon the heavens and the earth to bear witness that Israel heard and understood precisely what God had expected of them as His people. We read in Deuteronomy 32:1ff

“Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;
And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

²Let my teaching drop as the rain,
My speech distill as the dew,
As raindrops on the tender herb,
And as showers on the grass.

³For I proclaim the name of the LORD:
Ascribe greatness to our God.

⁴He is the Rock, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He.

The earth is as one witnessing a formal, legal, binding contract, to which God would hold His people accountable. The heavens and the earth bore witness of the agreement and the life of Israel would be played out in history before the watchful eyes of the heavens and the earth as to whether or not Israel kept its promises to its covenantal relationship with God.

Centuries later, after Israel had broken its covenant with God, when God was about to execute the curses of the broken covenant on Israel, God called upon these witnesses to testify to what they had observed, that Israel was guilty as charged. We read in Isaiah 1:3ff

²Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!
For the LORD has spoken:
“I have nourished and brought up children,
And they have rebelled against Me;
³The ox knows its owner
And the donkey its master’s crib;
But Israel does not know,
My people do not consider.”

The Lord was indicting Israel. He was calling upon the heavens and the earth to affirm His charge—Israel had broken His covenant frequently and egregiously. And so, we see Paul’s personification of the creation in Romans 8 to be consistent with Old Testament, even Hebrew poetry and literature. Paul wrote, ***“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.”***

Now we who believe on Jesus Christ are ***presently*** sons of God. As Paul wrote in another place: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26). But although we are presently sons (& daughters) of God, it has not yet been revealed to us or to others what all this will be like when we come into our promised inheritance. The creation “knows”, for it will experience renewal and transformation when the sons of God are revealed. Why is the creation in need of renewal and transformation? **Verses 20 and 21** tell us:

²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

The One who had subjected the creation to futility was God. I believe that we showed last week that this should be understood as God originally cursing the ground when Adam sinned, making the earth unresponsive to Adam and his descendants as a punishment for Adam’s original sin. When God cursed the ground, it was in order to impose hardship upon Adam due to his sin. In **Genesis 3:17ff** we read God’s words to Adam:

¹⁷Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’:

“Cursed is the ground for your sake;

In toil you shall eat of it

All the days of your life.

¹⁸Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,

And you shall eat the herb of the field.

¹⁹In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread

Till you return to the ground,

For out of it you were taken;

For dust you are,

And to dust you shall return.” (Gen. 3:17-19)

But Paul describes the earth as not preferring to assume this role. God had originally created all things good. “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Gen. 1:31). But when Adam fell into sin, man lost his regal position as the steward of God’s earth through whom the fruitfulness of the earth would be realized. But when the full revelation of the sons of God occurs at the resurrection and glorification of the saints, when the original design of mankind is realized in them through Jesus Christ, then the original fruitfulness of earth that would be brought through man’s stewardship of the earth will also be realized. This fallen, cursed earth will give place to a new heaven and a new earth over which the sons of God will share in rule with their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It will be then that **“the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God”** (Rom. 8:21)

Paul then expresses the great longing of the creation but also of us for that day when our adoption by God as His sons will be fully realized. We read in **Romans 8:22ff.**

²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Our future glorification is so far beyond anything that we have experienced or even have imagined, that we cannot express its prospect in terms that are understandable. We groan inwardly for the day that we are finally delivered from the body of this death in which sin plagues us and keeps us from seeing our destiny manifested.

Paul wrote, **“For in this hope we were saved”** (8:24a). Here Paul states that believers were saved in the past. Clearly he was referring to the believers’ justification before God through faith alone. When sinners come to true faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, God freely and fully pardons them of their sins and regards them from that moment onward as righteous before Him. It was then, in this context, that Paul declared that we were saved in the past.

Interestingly Paul speaks of salvation in the past, whereas he most often locates salvation in the eschaton (i.e. in the last day). But even here the future dimension of salvation is not lost, for he adds the words “in hope” thereby anticipating the completion of the salvation now enjoyed.²

When we were saved in the past, we were saved into **a state of hope**. We were pardoned fully of our sin, but we did not enter into the fullness of what God has promised to those who are saved. Hope is a part, or an aspect of our salvation. Because we have faith in what God has promised that He will do for us one day, we

² Ibid., p. 439. Schreiner gives a list of passages in which Paul expressed salvation as a future prospect: (e.g. Rom. 5:9, 10; 13:11; 1 Cor. 3:15; 5:5; Phil. 1:19; 1 Thess. 5:9; 1 Tim. 2:15; 4:16; 2 Tim. 4:18.

have a sound basis for hope. Our future salvation is not something we hope (wish) for, but because of its certainty to us, it is the ground of our certain hope.³ What Paul was emphasizing once again was the “not yet” aspect of our salvation. We have been saved, but we will yet be saved. What Paul is showing is that our full salvation will not be experienced by us until we have experienced our future resurrection from the dead when we receive our glorified bodies.

Paul expressed in **verse 24b** that *“hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?”* It is important that Christians have a clear anticipation of what God has promised them. If they fail to do so, then they sever themselves from the basis of hope, which they will need when trials come through which they need to endure. We see this from **verse 25**, which reads, *“But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”* Here patience describes the steadfastness that characterizes the believer who has his hope fixed on what God has promised him in Jesus Christ. The realization of our glory is future, but it is a certain prospect that strengthens us through our sufferings that we face and endure.

II. The Hope we have in the Praying of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26-30)

We read in the next paragraph of the assistance that the Holy Spirit gives to the people of God to enable them to live in faith in anticipation of their promised future glory. Not only does our “hope” born of God’s promise of our future glory help us in our times of weakness, that we have just considered, but we read in **verse 26**, *“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness.”*

There are times when we find ourselves in great weakness with respect to our faith. Our sufferings can be of such a nature and to such a degree that what faith we had seems to be nearly extinguished. But the Holy Spirit helps us in our times of weakness so that our faith fail not. In fact with the Holy Spirit’s help we find ourselves not only strengthened to endure, but we become more holy as we progress toward our certain and promised destiny.

It would seem that what God is revealing to us here is that He is working in us and on our behalf even in those times when we do not see it to be so. This is a secret working of the Holy Spirit in that He is praying from God’s people even as they are enduring overwhelming trials that have rendered them in a state of “weakness.” They may not sense it, in fact they probably are unaware of His activity, but the Holy Spirit is praying to God the Father for every true Christian in order to strengthen him or her so as to persevere in faith unto their final destiny.

Now most of us are probably familiar with the intercessory work of our Lord Jesus on our behalf. He is our High Priest and He is intervening on behalf of each of us to before the Father as we are in need of grace to help in our time of need. Two examples of our Lord’s intercession may be cited, one of all believers generally and another of one believer specifically. First, in general, all of John 17 is a record of Jesus’ prayer to His Father for us. For example, we read in John 17:9, “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.” A second example is how He may pray for us individually. He told Peter at the Last Supper, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:31f). But not only does the Lord Jesus pray for His own, but we read here in Romans 8 that the Holy Spirit also prays for the Lord’s people.

Paul explains precisely how the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. He prays for us when we are weak. The assistance that we need is that which God the Father is able to give us. But in our times of need and weakness we do not know what we may or should ask of God. It is then that the Holy Spirit who indwells us prays on our behalf to the Father according to the will of God for us. The result is that we receive from God the grace we need to sustain us in our weakness and to help us onward to our glorious destiny.

It is our weakness in prayer that is Paul’s focus. Our weakness is not in the manner that we pray (or don’t pray), but our weakness is in *not knowing what the content of our prayer should be*. The point is that we will face difficulties in life that are beyond our capacity to assess or work through the matter to know what we are to do. Now thankfully, God has given us His Word by which we can receive instruction for whatever we may encounter in life. But sometimes, we may find ourselves in situations which due to our limited perspective, our

³ In other words, the hope that we have as Christians is a noun, not a verb.

ignorance of the Word of God, the nature or the complexity of the problem, we find ourselves “clueless” as to what to do. About all we can do is “groan” toward God. But it is especially at these times that we may take comfort that the Holy Spirit Himself is praying on our behalf to the Father. Moreover, we may be assured that He knows the Father’s will and that His praying will be according to that will, so every petition that the Holy Spirit offers to the Father is answered and granted by the Father.

And so, there are times, or there will be times, when we do not know how to voice a prayer to God. Even while you groan within yourself, you may be assured that the Holy Spirit Himself also groans on your behalf, as He prays for you according to the will of God. We read in **verses 26 and 27**,

For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

The Holy Spirit knows what it is we need and when we need it and so He prays to God the Father on our behalf according to God’s will. In this way the Holy Spirit makes up for us in times of our weakness and deficiency and sees us through our hardship so that our faith fail not.

It is because of the effectual nature of the omniscient Holy Spirit who prays for us according to the will of God in which every petition of Him is granted by the Father that the next verse, Romans 8:28 is a reality. ***“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.”*** One of my pet peeves is seeing the promises of God that are designated to God’s people only placed on church marquees as though they were God’s promises to all people indiscriminately. This is a promise to God’s people only. Perhaps the reason that this happens is that even among those who profess to know God, they do not understand the special covenant love that God has for His people only. Their failure to distinguish the ***special love*** that God has for His chosen people, over against the ***general love*** that He manifests for the whole world. There is a general assumption that God loves all people alike; consequently, they draw wrong conclusions about how God views people and how they relate to Him. Granted, there is a general love that God manifests for mankind, but there is a special love, a redeeming love, that unbelievers will never know for its objects are God’s people only. It is to them and them only does God promise the truth of Romans 8:28. But we will need to address this more fully next time. Also, next Lord’s Day, Lord willing, we will address the common but wrong understanding that this ministry of the Holy Spirit described as “groaning” speaks of the common practice of our Pentecostal friends, speaking in tongues. And so, there are interesting matters ahead that we will be addressing.

But let us conclude on th high note of the glorious matters before us. Some of you are encountering some issues that are overwhelming. You wonder how it is that you are going to come through this. But be assured, if you are in Christ you are the object of God’s loving concern and His careful attention. He is at work on your behalf. And you may not have answers or even a hint of how to proceed, but the blessed Holy Spirit will bear you along even as He petitions the full resources of God the Father to come to your aid and comfort. You may trust in the living God who has good desires and designs for you. You cannot know the indescribable grace and glory that He will bestow on you freely at the coming and appearing of our blessed Lord Jesus!

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb. 13:20f)