THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

If God Is For Us:
A Study of Pauline Theodicy in Rom 8:18-39

A DISSERTATION

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Of The Catholic University of America
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By
Brent Kruger

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_____________________________________
Frank J. Matera, Ph.D., Director

_____________________________________
John Paul Heil, S.S.D., Reader

_____________________________________
Francis T. Gignac, S.J., D.Phil., Reader
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## Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABD</td>
<td>Anchor Bible Dictionary</td>
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<td>ABRL</td>
<td>Anchor Bible Reference Library</td>
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<td>ASV</td>
<td>American Standard Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>AusBR</td>
<td>Australian Biblical Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>B.C.E.</td>
<td>Before Common Era</td>
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<tr>
<td>BDAG</td>
<td>W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich (3rd ed.; rev. by F. W. Danker), <em>Greek-English Lexicon of the NT</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDF</td>
<td>F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, <em>A Greek Grammar of the NT</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>BEvT</td>
<td>Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bib</td>
<td>Biblica</td>
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<tr>
<td>BJRL</td>
<td><em>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>BR</td>
<td>Biblical Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>BZ</td>
<td>Biblische Zeitschrift</td>
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<tr>
<td>BZNW</td>
<td>Beihefte zur ZNW</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. E.</td>
<td>Common Era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ConBNT</td>
<td>Coniectanea biblica, New Testament</td>
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<td>EBib</td>
<td>Études bibliques</td>
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<tr>
<td>EvQ</td>
<td>Evangelical Quarterly</td>
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<td>ExpTim</td>
<td>Expository Times</td>
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<tr>
<td>FB</td>
<td>Forschung zur Bibel</td>
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<td>FC</td>
<td>Fathers of the Church</td>
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<td>FRLANT</td>
<td>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments</td>
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<tr>
<td>FS</td>
<td>Festschrift</td>
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<tr>
<td>HBT</td>
<td><em>Horizons in Biblical Theology</em></td>
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<td>HNT</td>
<td>Handbuch zum Neuen Testament</td>
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<td>HSM</td>
<td>Harvard Semitic Monographs</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTKNT</td>
<td>Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</td>
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<td>HTR</td>
<td><em>Harvard Theological Review</em></td>
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<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary</td>
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<td>Int</td>
<td>Interpretation</td>
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<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td><em>Journal of Biblical Literature</em></td>
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<td>JBQ</td>
<td>Jewish Bible Quarterly</td>
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<tr>
<td>JETS</td>
<td><em>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>JSNT</td>
<td><em>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>JSNTSup</td>
<td>JSNT, Supplement Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSOT</td>
<td><em>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>JSOTSUp</td>
<td>JSOT, Supplement Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>JTS</td>
<td><em>Journal of Theological Studies</em></td>
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<td>KD</td>
<td>Kerygma und Dogma</td>
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<tr>
<td>KJV</td>
<td>King James Version</td>
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<td>LS</td>
<td>Louvain Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>LXX</td>
<td>A. Rahlfs (ed.), Septuaginta</td>
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<tr>
<td>NA²⁷</td>
<td>E. Nestle and K. Aland (eds.), Novum Testamentum Graece</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAB</td>
<td>New American Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neot</td>
<td>Neotestamentica</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIB</td>
<td>New Interpreter’s Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICNT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIV</td>
<td>New International Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>NovT</td>
<td>Novum Testamentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NovTSup</td>
<td>NovT, Supplements</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>New Revised Standard Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTAbh</td>
<td>Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTS</td>
<td>New Testament Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OT</td>
<td>Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSB</td>
<td>Princeton Seminary Bulletin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSBSup</td>
<td>PSB, Supplement Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RevExp</td>
<td>Review and Expositor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ResQ</td>
<td>Restoration Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSV</td>
<td>Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SacPag</td>
<td>Sacra Pagina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanh.</td>
<td>Sanhedrin</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBL</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBLTT</td>
<td>SBL, Texts and Translations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Studies and Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJT</td>
<td>Scottish Journal of Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNTSMS</td>
<td>Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Studia theologica</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCGNT</td>
<td>B. M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TynBul</td>
<td>Tyndale Bulletin</td>
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<tr>
<td>TZ</td>
<td>Theologische Zeitschrift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VT</td>
<td>Vetus Testamentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VTSup</td>
<td>VT, Supplements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBC</td>
<td>Word Biblical Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTJ</td>
<td>Westminster Theological Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WUNT</td>
<td>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZNW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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Chapter One
Theodicy and Rom 8:18-39

Introduction

Romans 8 concludes Paul’s discussion in Romans 5–8 of the life of faith that is available in Christ Jesus. At the beginning of the letter, Paul describes the gospel as “the power of God for salvation for all who believe, for Jew first and for Greek” (1:16). This offer of salvation is available to all on the basis of faith (1:17), and its universal character corresponds to the universal predicament of sin that Paul describes in Romans 1–3, “for all have sinned and now lack the glory of God” (3:23). Paul’s gospel proclaims that Jews as well as Gentiles are in need of the righteousness of God.

God has acted decisively in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ to justify sinners (3:24-25). The death and resurrection of Christ was an act in which God manifested his saving righteousness, that is, his fidelity. God has given access to forgiveness of sins to all who believe in Jesus (3:25-26). It is this faith in Jesus that is reckoned as righteousness for believers, just as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness (4:3). The descendents of Abraham, Paul demonstrates, are those who believe as Abraham did (4:12), and therefore the power of the gospel is available to Gentiles as well as Jews. God’s saving righteousness is not restricted to a few; it is universal in scope.

In Romans 1–4, then, Paul has explained the need for and the manifestation of God’s righteousness. In Romans 5–8, Paul describes the new life of the justified. They are no

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1 Translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.
longer under the powers of sin, death, and the law. They enjoy a new relationship to God in the Spirit. Through the power of this Spirit, God raised Jesus from the dead and will by the same Spirit, at the parousia, also raise the mortal bodies of the justified (8:11). The Spirit is already active in the lives of believers, enabling them to live the God-given law, which they were unable to do when under the power of sin (6:12-14; 7:11; 8:7-8).

Although believers are justified in a new relationship to God, suffering still remains a possibility in their lives. In Rom 5:1-11, Paul speaks of the Spirit within a context of present suffering: “We boast in our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance character, and character hope. And this hope does not leave us ashamed, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the holy Spirit which has been given to us” (5:3-5). In Romans 8, Paul resumes and elaborates on the subject of the believer’s life in the Spirit, and it is this theme that has traditionally governed the interpretation of this chapter. But in addition to his discussion of the Spirit, Paul also resumes and expands his discussion of present suffering that he first described in Rom 5:1-11. Furthermore, he also discusses the glorious future that awaits the justified, a future that includes bodily resurrection and the renewal of all creation.

Paul’s discussion of suffering and eschatology in Rom 8:18-39 is, in fact, the beginning of a section about theodicy, that is, “a defense of the justice or goodness of God in

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2 Nils Dahl (“Two Notes on Romans 5,” ST 5 [1951] 37-48, here 39) has demonstrated that “chapter 8 contains a fuller development of the themes that are briefly stated in 5:1-11.” And again: “Paul takes up the theme from 5:3-4 for a more detailed consideration, which follows in 8:18-28, or in fact, to the end of the chapter” (42). Paul uses the words “hope,” “glory,” “affliction,” “endurance,” “love,” “save,” and “justify” in both of these sets of verses, thereby forming an inclusio.
the face of doubts or objections arising from the phenomena of evil in the world.” 3 The philosophical aspect of theodicy wrestles with the question of whether God is both benevolent and omnipotent and yet allows evil. David Hume summarizes this dilemma: “Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? then he is impotent. Is he able but not willing? then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil[?]”4 Theodicy for Israel, however, was not merely a philosophical problem to be solved but a problem in Israel’s covenantal relationship with God. Its purest expression is perhaps, “Why do the evil prosper and the just suffer?”5 Gideon’s reply to the angel of the LORD is an example of a question that arises from Israelite theodicy: “Sir, if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors told us, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian” (Judg 6:13). Such abandonment by the LORD to their foes continually marks Israel’s story: slavery in Egypt, Exile in Babylon, persecution by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The problems theodicy must address are apparent in the story of Job, parts of Exodus, 2 Maccabees, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Habbakuk, and fully a sixth of the psalms.6 Israelite theodicy, then, contemplates the question of God’s faithfulness to Israel. The

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question of theodicy reaches its peak at moments of crisis, oppression, and persecution, and it is especially in the experience of martyrdom that Israel realizes that God does not always reward the just in this life. Theodicy, therefore, often seeks to defend God’s righteousness in the light of eschatological hope.

Paul’s theodicy is even more specific. Because the vast majority of Paul’s Jewish contemporaries have rejected the righteousness of God revealed in Christ, the question becomes whether God is faithful. Put another way, the unfaithfulness of Israel calls into question God’s faithfulness. Paul states the problem succinctly in Rom 9:30-31: “Gentiles who did not strive for righteousness, have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; but Israel who did strive for the righteousness based on the law did not succeed in fulfilling that law.” Drawing upon a text from the prophet Hosea, Paul describes the new situation that God’s righteousness has brought about: “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call beloved. And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they shall be called children of the living God” (Rom 9:25-26; Hos 2:23; 1:10). Has God abandoned his people or been fickle by including the Gentiles?

Romans 9–11 are the most important chapters for any discussion of Paul’s theodicy. In these chapters Paul explicitly considers the apparent failure of the word of God. However, Paul’s theodicy is not limited to these chapters. It is present throughout Romans and, as we shall see, in Rom 8:18-39. In these verses, Paul addresses God’s election and the predestination of the justified, and he describes the glorious future of believers. The manner in which Paul treats the questions of suffering, glorification, election, and predestination in
Rom 8:18-39 prepares for his great discussion of God’s faithfulness in Romans 9–11. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine Paul’s theodicy in 8:18-39.

Scholarship on Rom 8:18-39

While most scholars have discerned a theme of Pauline eschatology in Rom 8:18-39, only a few have considered the role that theodicy plays in this section. This first chapter will provide a survey of scholarship on this pericope, organized by topics that scholars have seen in these verses.

Scholars who examine Rom 8:18-39 fall into two categories. The first and largest consists of those who focus on the role that eschatology plays in this section. This first group is divided into two subgroups: (a) scholars who interpret the passage in terms of the final glory that awaits the justified; and (b) scholars who focus on the theme of creation as the key to the interpretation of this passage.

The second group of scholars consists of those who study Rom 8:18-39 in order to determine what Paul says about God in this passage. This group can also be divided into two subgroups. The first subgroup consists of those who are concerned with the question of predestination which arises in Rom 8:28-30. The second subgroup focuses on the role that theodicy plays throughout the entire passage.

The research of the first subgroup that focuses on glorification is found, for the most part, in commentaries on Romans. The research that concentrates on the other aspects of Rom 8:18-39 tends to appear in monographs and articles, and thus these topics tend to
comprise only sections of Rom 8:18-39. The research of each author appears in chronological order in the appropriate subgroup, as a way to organize the material.

**Eschatology as the key to Rom 8:18-39**

a) **The Significance of Final Glory for Understanding Rom 8:18-39**

For most scholars the central theme of Rom 8:18-39 is the final glory that awaits the justified. Almost all acknowledge the juxtaposition of suffering and glory that Paul states in Rom 8:18, but the attention they give to suffering is usually secondary, acknowledging Paul’s admonition that we are coheirs with Christ only “if we suffer with him so that we may be glorified with him” (8:17). Their concern, therefore, is primarily the glorious destiny of the believer.

Vincent Eareckson argues that the glorious destiny in store for humanity is in reality a process. He uses Paul’s themes of the Fall, to which Paul alludes in 8:20, and the restoration of humanity to glory, which Paul describes in 8:29 (God also “predestined [them] to share the form of the image of his Son”) and in 8:30 (“these he also glorified”). Eareckson maintains that Paul interprets the Fall in a way more closely aligned to the thinking of Irenaeus than that of Augustine. Augustine held that when Adam sinned, he fell from a full state of grace, and he will be returned to the *imago dei* at the general resurrection. According to Irenaeus, however, the glory Adam will enjoy at the resurrection will be better than the glory he experienced at creation. The created Adam was not fully mature in grace.

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8 Eareckson (ibid., 45-48) delineates these respective theologies.
The Fall therefore was a necessary development that will result, after the parousia and general resurrection, in a superabundance of grace.

C. E. B. Cranfield maintains that the pericope begins with Rom 8:17 and is therefore about the inheritance for which the children of God hope. In Romans 4, Paul described the children of Abraham and the inheritance promised them. Now in Romans 8, he describes the audience as the children of God, to whom God promises an inheritance greater than that of land—his own glory. The children of God already possess this glory in terms of the first installment of the Spirit, even though it is not apparent. What they and all creation await is the full manifestation of the glory of their adoption, the resurrection of their bodies at the parousia. When humanity is thus glorified, creation will attain its own freedom and glory in accord with God’s original purpose.

James D. G. Dunn understands the words used at the end of Romans 8 (“creation,” “futility,” “glory,” “image,” and “body”) as describing the undoing of Adam’s sin, the sin that Paul describes in Romans 1 and 5. Furthermore, he argues that Paul relates the future to which believers are called to the blessings that were originally Israel’s (“adoption,” “glory,” “divine purpose”). Accordingly, he views this passage as an important prelude to Romans 9–11 in which Paul will work out the problem of Israel’s refusal to believe in Christ. Nonhuman creation waits for the full revelation of the sons of God in the same way that

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10 Ibid., 416.

believers await the full revelation of the Spirit. The Spirit is the firstfruits of the harvest of glory, that is, the earnest promise of the general resurrection.  

Joseph A. Fitzmyer also argues that this pericope describes the destiny of the Christian who has been called to glory. He notes that Paul first names the three witnesses to that destiny: creation, hope itself, and the Spirit. God subjected creation to the powers of corruption and death when Adam sinned (Genesis 3), but God also gave creation hope for a different future. It is the glorious destiny of resurrection and the abiding presence of God for which the believer groans, together with the groaning of subhuman creation and the Spirit. However, Paul has already shown how the destructive powers of sin and death have been conquered by Christ (Romans 5–8). According to Fitzmyer, Paul then sums up his discussion in a laudatory hymn of what God’s love has accomplished for humanity in Christ.

Although Paul acknowledges present suffering, Douglas Moo states that Paul is so certain of victory that he concentrates on eschatological glory. Moo further maintains that Paul is not so much interested in the relationship of suffering to glory as he is in their sequence. Human suffering and the travail of creation are just a dark backdrop against which Paul envisions the glory to which the Christian is called. Moo’s interpretation is

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12 Ibid., 473-74.
14 Ibid., 515.
15 Ibid., 529.
16 Douglas J. Moo, The Epistle to the Romans (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 508.
17 Ibid., 509.
heavily influenced by the “golden chain” of verbs in Rom 8:29-30 (“foreknew,” “predestined,” “called,” “justified,” “glorified”). Although he admits that “Paul does not intend to give a complete picture of his, still less of NT, soteriology,” Moo expounds on the saving grace of God he finds in these verses.18

Robert Jewett sees an anti-imperial polemic in this passage.19 The Roman mythos held Caesar as the glorified “son of god” who has already brought all creation to obedience through the defeat of Rome’s enemies. According to Jewett, Paul subverts the language of this mythos by telling the Christians in Rome that they are sons of God and that creation is still eagerly awaiting their full glorification. The one who subjects all of creation is not Caesar, but God, and the promised event is a future one, not a currently realized one. Its outcome, however, is sure, despite all the threats that Caesar may bring against those who believe in Christ.

To summarize, while these scholars acknowledge with Paul that there are “present sufferings” (8:18), they, like him, do not account these sufferings as comparable with the future glory that will be revealed in the justified. Because these scholars discuss God’s eventual victory, they are dealing with material that is pertinent to theodicy.

b) The Importance of Creation for Understanding Rom 8:18-39

While most scholars have interpreted Rom 8:18-39 in light of the eschatological future that awaits the justified, others have focused their attention on the term κτίσις

18 Ibid., 532.
(creation or creature) that appears four times in Rom 8:19-22. For them, the term provides the key for interpreting Paul’s eschatological hope, which they understand as the restoration of all creation. Since this term appears in only four verses of the passage, most of these scholars have explored this term and its importance through articles and monographs.

For Origen, the glory for which creation hopes is not only the resurrection of the individual human body; it includes the redemption of the corporate body of the Church as well.\(^20\) Κτίσις for Origen refers to only rational creation, both earthly and heavenly. In this way, Origen understands “all creation (κτίσις) groans together and is in labor pains together until now” (Rom 8:22). “For all creation above,” he says, “looks upon our struggles and battles, and grieves when we are vanquished, but rejoices when we overcome.”\(^21\) Therefore, the glory hoped for is a combined congregation of humans and angels who worship God.\(^22\) This glory will occur “when the sons of God are revealed and gathered into one through the Church.”\(^23\)

Unlike Origen, Augustine understands redemption solely as the resurrection from the dead. Accordingly, he views the restoration of creation in an even more circumscribed way. He interprets κτίσις as the human person. He does not include angels or any nonrational creature.\(^24\) According to Augustine, when all creation groans, it includes both humans who

\(^20\) Origen Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans 7.4.13 (trans. Thomas P. Scheck, FC 104; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2002).

\(^21\) Ibid., 7.4.15.

\(^22\) Ibid., 7.5.13.

\(^23\) Ibid., 7.4.10.

\(^24\) Paula Fredrickson Landes, Augustine on Romans: Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans: Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (SBLTT 23; Early Christian Literature Series 6; Chico,
do not possess the Spirit and those who do, in anticipation of the redemption that is not only spiritual but bodily as well.

G. H. W. Lampe does not equate κτίσις in this passage with humanity, as does Augustine, but he does interpret creation in an anthropocentric way. For Lampe, creation in the OT is anthropocentric because redemption is prior to creation. That is, the Israelites first experienced their deliverance from Egypt and their election by Yhwh before they situated themselves in the creation story. In that story, man (Adam) is central. In the NT, man is still central, but it is now the new man, Christ, who is so. Creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God, which will occur at the parousia. Lampe argues that creation does not share in the redemption of humanity, but he holds that creation benefits from the redemption, inasmuch as the human attitude toward creation is redeemed.

Horst Balz sees salvation as a process in which the believer participates together with all creation. Balz assesses the function of Paul’s apocalyptic imagery in Rom 8:18-39, and he finds an eschatology that successfully navigates between two positions. On the one hand, there is a spirit-filled enthusiasm, which understands salvation as a present, complete possession in the life of the believer. On the other hand, there is apocalyptic outlook, which places all its hope for divine involvement in the future. Balz claims that Paul is able to acknowledge the reality of this world and the situation of the life of the believer (“vanity” and “corruption”) while at the same time identifying hope for the future (“glory” and

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23 CA: Scholars Press, 1982) 23. Augustine disagrees with the Manichees who personify nonrational creatures with rational attributes and would therefore translate κτίσις in Rom 8:18-22 as including nonrational creatures.


“freedom”). The connection between these positions is the present possession of the Spirit as down payment, testifying to adoption. Those who possess the Spirit express hope for complete salvation through “groaning.”

Barnabas Lindars also argues that Paul describes a coordinated redemption of creation and humanity. In addition to Rom 8:18-39, he also considers 1 Thessalonians and the Corinthian correspondence, and he shows the development of Paul’s thought on justification and redemption. For Lindars, the issue is one of human transformation—both morally before, and bodily at, the general resurrection. Cosmic transformation is the framework within which human transformation will take place. The travail of both creation and humanity testify that this transformation is a process that is not yet complete.

Olle Christoffersson claims that Paul uses the hermeneutic of the Flood Narrative in Rom 8:18-27. When describing the present corruption of the world and its future transformation, Paul engages in a midrash on Genesis 6–9 and 1 Enoch 6–11. According to Christoffersson, the groaning of creation and the revelation of the sons of God are Paul’s retelling of the story of the fallen angels, or Watchers. Christoffersson claims that this passage of the restoration of creation shares elements with the broad category of apocalyptic literature as a whole.

Jan Lambrecht also interprets κτίσις as the context for humanity, as he argues that the world does not have its own significance apart from humanity. The “glory” (δόξα) for

which creation waits is not the result of the forces of evolution or of Adam’s will, even apocalyptic dissolution. Instead it awaits the surprising gift of God, which will be a transformed sphere for glorified humanity.\textsuperscript{30} The children of God will begin to exercise their own glory in the way they care for creation.

Mark Lawson sees the redemption of $\kappa\tau\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$ precisely in the healing of the sinful relationship that presently characterizes humanity’s relationship to creation.\textsuperscript{31} Once redeemed of its own sin, humanity will be able to exercise godly dominion over creation as God intended. Nature does not exist for its own sake and therefore does not await a separate redemption. Rather, nature will share humanity’s final beatitude when humanity exercises its godly stewardship.

Ramsey Michaels views the eschatology Paul describes in Rom 8:18-22 as totally anthropocentric. He understands $\kappa\tau\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$ in the Augustinian sense as referring to the “believer.”\textsuperscript{32} He equates it with the $\sigma\nu\mu\alpha$ or the physical “body.” The groaning and eager expectation of creation is for redemption and adoption of the human person, not for the redemption of the whole created order.

\textsuperscript{30} Here Lambrecht agrees with Heinrich Schlier (\textit{Der Römerbrief} [HTKNT 6; Freiburg: Herder, 1977] 262), “Hier ist in keinem Sinn Evolution, sondern in jedem Sinn Gottes überraschende und überwältigende Gaben.”


Harry Alan Hahne maintains that Paul’s view of the redemption of the world shares a similar outlook with Jewish apocalyptic literature. This apocalyptic literature provides an important context for understanding Rom 8:19-22 and helps to explain the Fall, the cause of the world’s corruption, as something that will be eventually transformed only by God’s decisive act. Hahne finds similar apocalyptic imagery depicting creation in *Jubilees, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, Apocalypse of Moses*, and *Life of Adam and Eve*.

Jonathan Moo holds that Isaiah 24–27 provides much of Paul’s imagery in Rom 8:19-22. Moo claims that the images Paul draws from these chapters are the personification of creation and the suffering of the earth due to God’s punishment of human sin. Other images include birth pangs, hope of the righteous, resurrection, and life after death. Specific verbal parallels from these chapters include “hope” (ἐλπίς), “glory” (δόξα), “corruption” (φθορά), “groaning” (στένω), and “labor pain” (ωδίν). Paul uses these words in relation to humanity as well as creation, which indicates that he has in view the “eternal covenant” mentioned in Isa 24:5. This covenant has a cosmic theme, which Moo argues that Paul uses as the context for his description of the resurrection of the dead.

To summarize, while some scholars in this group (Augustine, Michaels) believe that the eschatological restoration of creation has meaning for humanity only, most scholars foresee a new and restored relationship between redeemed humanity and the restored creation for which it will now be able to care as it ought. Although these authors examine only four verses of this passage (Rom 8:18-22), they already describe aspects of Pauline theodicy.

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Theodicy as the focus of Rom 8:18-39

a) The Importance of Predestination for Interpreting Rom 8:18-39

Predestination is a special consideration for the problem of theodicy. Paul’s statement that believers are predestined to glory highlights the problem of how God relates to humanity. The following scholars focus on Rom 8:28-30 in order to interpret how Paul is defending God’s righteousness.

Edwin Lewis defines Pauline theodicy as wrestling with predestination. Because Lewis understands the act of creation to be an act of subjection, he also sees creation’s bondage to decay as part of the will of God. Humanity, as part of creation, is also subject to decay, and Lewis accounts sin as part of that decay. This subjection is not the final destiny of the creature, because this subjection was made in hope. “What Paul is chiefly concerned to declare is that God’s judgment in withdrawal from the sinful man[,] because sinfulness makes fellowship impossible[,] is not a judgment of hopelessness. God is still on the side of the man who is against him!” Thus Pauline theodicy for Lewis is a matter of God being against humanity in the short term, in order to be for it in the long term (which is its destiny).

Timo Eskola claims that the theology of Second Temple Judaism was primarily concerned with the problem of theodicy. He argues that the Jews of Paul’s time would have understood soteriology in a covenantal synergistic way. According to this understanding, the human response was as necessary a component to salvation as belonging


36 Ibid., 413. Italics in original text.

37 Timo Eskola, Theodicy and Predestination in Pauline Soteriology (WUNT 2/100; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998) 29.
to the covenant. This view is opposed to E. P. Sanders’s theory of covenantal nomism, in which salvation depends solely on “getting in and staying in” the covenant. Synergism, however, is more nuanced in that it allows for turning from evil to good (as well as acknowledging that a person may turn from good to evil). Eskola uses this concept of covenantal synergism to explore his primary concern of predestination by means of human responsibility. He claims that “the problem of theodicy is actually the problem of sin.”

To summarize, for these authors the defense of God’s righteousness becomes a scrutiny of human response to the prior divine righteousness. This is precisely the question that Paul prepares to answer in Romans 9–11: whether Israel’s unfaithfulness to God’s initiative has compromised God’s own faithfulness. It is in Rom 8:28-30 that these authors find that predestination is the vindication of God’s faithfulness.

b) Theodicy as the Hermeneutical Focus of Rom 8:18-39

The last group of scholars sees their work as explicitly dealing with Pauline theodicy. Rather than confining their investigations to the problem of predestination, they have looked to Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness throughout Rom 8:18-39. They do this by examining the theologoumena present in this section. In contrast to the other subgroups already presented, there are relatively few studies that focus on what Paul says about God in Rom 8:18-39.

Ernst Käsemann employs form criticism to make sense of Paul’s description of suffering and the God who would allow it. Käsemann argues that the Sitz im Leben of Rom

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38 Ibid., 6.
8:18-30 is Paul’s disagreement with pneumatic enthusiasts.39  Their belief in a realized eschatology has taken them away from the foot of the cross, that is, from the afflictions that are unavoidable in following Christ.40  Paul demonstrates through the use of Jewish apocalyptic imagery that creation does not yet possess that freedom which is its ὑπερηφανεία or “glory.” But hope, although centered on human glorification, reaches beyond believers to all creation.41

Käsemann further sees Rom 8:31-39 as a diatribe that describes God’s legal contest for dominion over Christians.42  He sees the *Sitz im Leben* of this passage as the liturgical proclamation of God’s eschatological victory over the demonic powers even in the midst of the old aeon.43

Highlighting the conflict in Judaism and Christianity, Halvor Moxnes is concerned with discovering theological statements that demonstrate God’s fidelity to both Jews and Gentiles.44  In his chapter entitled “In Defense of the Promise of God,” Moxnes addresses Pauline theodicy.  Paul takes the description of Abraham’s faith in “God who gives life to the dead” (Rom 4:17) and turns it against the Jews, as it “is now qualified as faith in God who

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40  Ibid., 224.

41  Ibid., “Weil Paulus eschatologische Freiheit als Heil in kosmischer Dimension versteht, beschreibt er hier singulär das Geschehen der Parusie von der Anthropologie aus” (226).

42  Ibid., 238.

43  Ibid., 243.

raised Jesus from the dead.”  Paul then uses this same belief to describe Christians as those who are brought from death to life (Rom 6:13). Christians who suffer in the contemporary world, described in Rom 5:1-11 and 8:18-39, anchor their hope in God’s work in Christ. For Moxnes, the strictly theological statements of Romans 4 provide parallel christological descriptions in Romans 5–8 that defend God’s righteousness.

Although Walther Bindemann concentrates on Paul’s use of apocalyptic imagery in Rom 8:18-27, he provides a defense of God’s faithfulness. Bindemann holds that the historical use of apocalypticism was an expression of the “Distant God” because it understood God to be uninvolved in both human and cosmic spheres. The present age was irredeemable, and humanity longed for the age to come when God would set all things right. Bindemann demonstrates how Paul subverts the use of apocalyptic language by proclaiming a “God Who Is Near.” This God is involved in the human sphere in the person and action of Jesus, and the present nearness of God in the Spirit is transformational in the lives of believers and engenders in them a responsibility for creation.

Richard B. Hays highlights the theodicy of Rom 8:36 by concentrating on the suffering of the Christian community and Paul’s “theological answers to doubts about God’s righteousness.” The verse is a quotation of Psalm 44, which suggests that God has abandoned Israel. Hays addresses Paul’s theodicy by pointing out that the psalm concludes

46 Ibid., 277.
with an appeal to God to vindicate his own name. Furthermore, Paul affirms God’s ultimate faithfulness in Rom 8:37-39. Hays goes on to uncover many more intertextual quotations and echoes of theodicy in Romans 9–11.

In his commentary on Romans, Brendan Byrne writes extensively of God’s faithfulness. However, Byrne deals with the meaning of God’s faithfulness under the term “theodicy” only in articles written after his commentary. Seeking to show that God has done the right thing by the Gentiles, Paul asks if God has done the right thing by Israel. Has God been faithful to the promises enshrined in Scripture. Byrne claims that theodicy is central to Romans, that from beginning to end Romans is “a justification of God.” His examination of the topic, however, is largely limited to Romans 9–11.

For N. T. Wright, the narrative of the exodus provides the template for interpreting Pauline theodicy. One must read Romans 3–8, and especially Romans 8, against the background of the exodus. According to Wright, at the time of the Second Temple, Israel believed that God would “accomplish something for which the original exodus would be both the historical starting-point and pattern.” Paul’s description in Rom 8:18-39 of deliverance from suffering, sin, and death to the glory of a resurrection inheritance reflects

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49 Ibid., 60.

50 Brendan Byrne, Romans (SP 6; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996).


this exodus template while giving new meaning and context to those events in the Christ event. Wright describes Pauline theodicy in terms of the claim that Jesus is Lord: all other claims to lordship in this world contradict this claim and result in suffering for the believer. The God who showed faithful love in the exodus is the God who conquers sin and its consequences.

Like Wright, Sylvia Keesmaat interprets Romans through the exodus event. Concentrating on Rom 8:26-28, Keesmaat understands Paul to be saying that God suffers along with believers through the Spirit that groans within them. This suffering of God in the midst of his people echoes the exodus account and describes a new exodus, one of eschatological struggle.

Katherine Grieb claims that theodicy is the proper hermeneutic for reading Romans and that the whole letter is Paul’s sustained argument for God’s righteousness, best understood in the narrative of what God has accomplished for humanity in Jesus Christ. Within the section of her monograph that explores Rom 8:18-39, she uncovers three important theological statements about Paul’s theodicy. First, Grieb maintains that Paul envisions the groaning of the Spirit as empowering the prayer of Christians (Rom 8:26-27). “Paul’s pattern of argument assumes that the church will be present in the place of the

55 Ibid., 617.
56 Sylvia Keesmaat, Paul and His Story: (Re)Interpreting the Exodus Tradition (JSNTSup 181; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). In this work, Keesmaat also interprets Galatians through the Exodus narrative.
57 Ibid., 116.
58 Ibid., 134.
world’s deepest need and that God will be present in the midst of the church in the world: God participates in the sufferings of the new creation from within them.”\textsuperscript{60} Second, she identifies Paul’s language of covenant fidelity as the language of the law court (Rom 8:31-34). Finally, Grieb claims that Paul uses the metaphor of God’s victory in holy war to describe the overthrow of all other powers which are now unable to separate the believer from God’s love (Rom 8:35-36).

Gordon Fee calls Romans “easily the most theocentric book” in the Pauline corpus.\textsuperscript{61} Fee’s stated concern is Christology, but in cataloguing all the references to Christ in the Pauline corpus he has also compiled all the references to God and to the Spirit. In doing so, Fee uncovers Pauline theodicy in Rom 8:28-39 where Paul explicitly writes of God’s work in Christ and offers “a set of conclusions intended to encourage his readers that God is on their side in every possible way.”\textsuperscript{62} Fee claims that Rom 8:29-30 is Paul’s glimpse into the eschatological future in order “to reassure both Gentile and Jewish believers that despite present hardships and weaknesses, God is on their side.”\textsuperscript{63} The most compelling argument for God’s covenant fidelity is the “giving up” of his own Son (Rom 8:32). Theodicy, for Fee, is answered in “Christ’s past and present role on our behalf as we await the final glory.”\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 80.


\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 248.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 249.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 249.
For J. R. Daniel Kirk, Romans is primarily about God; consequently, theodicy plays a central role in this letter. However, his chief hermeneutic is the resurrection. In his investigation of Romans 8 he claims that the resurrection is the fulfillment of God’s promises and the vindication of God. This vindication is not like that of the Maccabean martyrs, who expected God to vindicate their faithfulness. It is a question of God’s faithfulness, which is not based upon any system of justice. Instead, God has vindicated his Son in the resurrection and, because of this gift of new life, God will ultimately be faithful to all God’s people. They desire vindication in their suffering, but it is God who is vindicated in the demonstration of his faithfulness.

To summarize, these authors understand this passage in terms of what Paul says about God. The various theological statements that they uncover reveal that Paul seeks to defend God’s righteousness and fidelity.

**Methodology**

In providing a justification for and the methodology to be used in treating the theological issue of theodicy in an epistolary text, I am asking: Why theodicy? And how do I approach the text in order to find theodicy within it?

Theodicy (the questioning of the covenantal fidelity of God to his promises and his people) is a concern for the Romans. Their numbers have been increased by the return of those who were expelled from Rome by Claudius, and their identity is now at issue.

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66 Ibid., 159.
Furthermore, Israel has rejected God’s Messiah; what, then are the Romans to make of God’s fidelity to Israel? The Romans are no longer only Jewish believers or only Gentile believers but a community in confusion, and Paul wants them to become one community in name and practice.

I argue that Paul’s hermeneutic is theocentric. Paul asks what we can discern about God’s current activity. “One turns to . . . Scripture to discern a pattern of divine activity and speech and to seek what is going on in the present (whenever that might be).” In this way, Scripture for Paul discloses God’s activity and speech. If, however, we now hold Paul’s letters as Scripture, then it is not improper to read these texts in a similar way, asking about God’s activity and speech. Thus, I will engage this text, which is in the form of a letter, and submit it to theological questioning. That is, Paul’s letters (including Romans) have much to say about God. I argue that Paul’s message in Romans (and in Rom 8:18-39 in particular) is a defense of God’s righteousness. I will demonstrate in Chapter Two that Paul engages in a defense of God’s righteousness at various points throughout Romans. This defense of God’s righteousness becomes explicit, however, in Rom 8:18-39 in preparation for its full exposition in Romans 9–11.

I will examine the text employing various exegetical methods: historical-critical, narrative, and intertextual. The historical-critical method requires the reader to interpret the text against the background of its historical setting. I do much of this work in Chapter Two.

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67 James A. Sanders (“Paul and Theological History,” in Paul and the Scriptures of Israel; ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; JSNTSup 83 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993] 52-57, here 53-54) argues for this hermeneutic against Richard Hays’s claim that Paul’s hermeneutic is ecclesiocentric.

68 Ibid., 54.
by examining the various contexts of the letter. Narrative criticism sees the text against Paul’s understanding of the diachronic unfolding of God’s plan in history. That is, what is the narrative or larger story of God’s salvation, within which this text finds its home? I employ this criticism mostly in the exegetical Chapters Three to Six.

A more recent exegetical method that I employ is that of intertextual criticism which recognizes the use of older texts in newer ones. In addition to recognizing direct quotations, the reader finds allusions (verbal correspondences) and echoes (thematic parallels). Most often unstated, these allusions and echoes form what is called metalepsis (or transumption).

Metalepsis is that which happens when an older text is echoed in a newer text, and the reader is placed “within a field of whispered or unstated correspondences” between these texts.69 However, there are some scholars who are dubious about employing a methodology of metalepsis in exegesis. For example, Johan Christaan Beker asks, “How many echoes of specific scriptural passages are solely in Paul’s head—and how many does he presuppose in his hearers?”70 Paul may use allusive echoes in his letters to communicate the coherence of his gospel amid the contingencies of the different communities to which he writes. Thus, either Paul or his hearers or both may be disposed to recognize the metalepsis at work. Bruce Longenecker further doubts the force of the allusions on Paul’s original audiences.71 Would the Romans have understood the intertextual matrix which I will propose? When understood, allusions are powerfully persuasive; however, Richard B. Hays argues that allusive echoes

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71 Bruce W. Longenecker, review of *Paul and His Story: (Re)interpreting the Exodus Tradition* by Sylvia Keesmaat; *EvQ* 73 (2001) 353.
are often subconscious and not premeditated, only sometimes grasped consciously by their author.\footnote{72 Richard B. Hays, “On the Rebound: A Response to Critiques of *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*,” in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, 86.} Therefore their validity stands whether they occur in the author’s mind, in the minds of his first hearers, or in the minds of people yet to encounter the text. In another objection, Samuel Sandmel argues that there is such a thing as parallelomania that “overdoes the supposed similarity in passages and then proceeds to describe source and derivation as if implying literary connection flowing in an inevitable or predetermined direction.”\footnote{73 Samuel Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” *JBL* 81 (1962) 1-14, here 1.} Sandmel concedes that he does not argue against all parallels but against their extravagant usage. Much rides, therefore, on the definition of extravagant. Inevitability and predetermined direction of communication also seem to misunderstand the suggestive force of metalespsis. This suggested similarity and connection to other texts is more than a strict parallel. Parallelism occurs at the explicit level of a text, for example, the borrowing of a word or a phrase. Metalespsis, however, reads the source of the phrase against the new setting into which it has been transposed, thereby suggesting new interpretive possibilities.

Longenecker argues that “assembling an elaborate ‘intertextual matrix’ consisting of a conglomerate of diverse texts held together by intricate threads of resonance” runs the danger of creating a scholarly construct or ahistorical abstract that never existed.\footnote{74 Longenecker, review of *Paul and His Story*, 352.} However, I argue that it is reasonable that the OT serves as source of material and mindset for Paul. Stories of Creation, Exodus, Exile, and Return are part of the great narrative of how God is bringing his people to salvation. After his encounter with the risen Christ, Paul employs this
great wealth of narrative at his disposal to relate what God is now doing for his people in Christ. Steve Moyise further cautions that “we do not lose sight of Paul’s creativity, however much he may have been influenced by scriptural patterns.”

Hays supplies a sevenfold list of criteria for assessing the probability or likeliness of an intertextual interplay. I will employ these criteria in the concluding chapter in order to evaluate my exegesis:

1. **Availability:** Was the proposed source of the echo available to the author and/or the original readers?
2. **Volume:** What is the degree of word repetition or syntactical patterns?
3. **Recurrence:** How often does Paul elsewhere cite or allude to the same scriptural passage?
4. **Thematic Coherence:** How does the alleged echo fit into the line of argument that Paul is developing?
5. **Historical Plausibility:** Could Paul have intended the alleged meaning effect? Could his readers have understood it?
6. **History of Interpretation:** Have other readers, both critical and precritical, heard the same echoes?
7. **Satisfaction:** With or without clear confirmation from the other criteria listed here, does the proposed reading make sense?

These criteria, while operating to check arbitrariness in exegesis, have differing values. For example, the sixth criterion is perhaps the least important and most misleading of the set. It may serve to limit eisegesis, but it could also squelch and narrow the possibilities of Paul’s intertextual occurrences.

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Bringing these various hermeneutical tools to the text, I seek to explain what Paul communicates in Rom 8:18-39 regarding the defense of God’s righteousness, that is, Pauline theodicy.

**Conclusion**

Paul concludes his discussion of the life of faith and the role of the Spirit in Romans 8, but his conclusion is framed in terms of present suffering and future glory. Some scholars have interpreted Rom 8:18-39 by concentrating on the eschatological glory, only marginally acknowledging the role of suffering.

This passage, however, immediately precedes Romans 9–11 where Paul seeks to defend God’s faithfulness despite Israel’s refusing to believe in God’s saving righteousness manifested in Christ. Paul’s description of present suffering and his turn to an eschatological answer in Rom 8:18-39 indicate that he is already engaging in theodicy in this passage. Some scholars have explored this theodicy, either through the predestination of the justified, described in Rom 8:28-30, or through the various theologoumena found throughout the passage. These explorations, while important, are often piecemeal, and they do not account for the whole of Rom 8:18-39. This entire passage is critical to Pauline theodicy, since it is within a restored creation that the justified will enjoy their predestined glory and finally experience that the love of God in Christ is unconquerable. Because of the significance of the passage, I propose to investigate the whole of Rom 8:18-39 in terms of its theodicy.

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77 Eg., Rom 8:17, 18, 21, 23, 28, 35-39.
Chapter Two will begin this investigation by examining the context and structure of the text. Chapter Three will look at Pauline theodicy in terms of his description of the resurrection of the dead and eschatology. Chapter Four will investigate Paul’s presentation of the Spirit in light of his theodicy. Chapter Five will consider Paul’s theodicy in terms of what he says about the plan of God. Chapter Six will examine Pauline theodicy in terms of his confidence in God’s victory. Finally, Chapter Seven will provide a summary of Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness in Rom 8:18-39.
Chapter Two

The Text and Its Context

Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the topic of theodicy and examined how various scholars have interpreted Rom 8:18-39. Theodicy, as Paul considers it, is not the philosophical question of a good God despite evil in the world. Instead, Pauline theodicy is a defense of the God that Paul preaches in his gospel. The question comes to the fore because Israel has not accepted its Messiah. However, Gentiles have come to believe and, together with a remnant of Israel, comprise the eschatological people of God. This historical reality was unforeseen in the Scriptures and prompts Paul to defend the righteousness of God who acts in such a mysterious way. Because Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles (1:5) and because his gospel is good news to “Jew first and also Greek” (1:16), Paul undertakes to vindicate God in the gospel he preaches.

In the previous chapter, I presented the interpretations of several scholars on this passage. The view of scholars who wrote commentaries predominantly concentrated on the eschatology present in Rom 8:18-39. These scholars were divided between those who considered the glory of the justified and those who focused on the theme of creation in the passage. Other scholars, writing mostly in articles and monographs, considered the theologoumena in this pericope. Some of these scholars were concerned with what Paul says
about predestination, while the final group focused on the question of theodicy in the passage.

In this chapter, I will place the passage within its historical and literary contexts. Since Romans is a letter, I will examine first its historical context. Namely, I will investigate the collection for Jerusalem, the situation in Rome between Jewish and Gentile Christians, and Paul’s diplomatic overture in writing to the Romans. Next, I will present the text of Rom 8:18-39 with my translation and an outline of the text. My study of the literary context of the passage follows. Specifically, I will discuss the proximate and remote literary contexts of the letter, the proximate context being Romans 5–8, and the remote context being the whole letter. Finally, I will highlight some echoes of theodicy that appear throughout the letter.

The Historical Context

An important context for our passage is the historical situation of the letter. Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome in the mid to late fifties, from the house of Gaius (16:23), most probably from Corinth, since Gaius is also mentioned in 1 Cor 1:14. Paul sends the letter to Rome with Phoebe, who is a deacon in Cenchreae (16:1), a port of Corinth, which further suggests a Corinthian origin.

Of most interest to this study, however, is the possible reason that Paul had for writing to the Romans. Paul did not found the Christian community in Rome, and he had

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1 Fitzmyer (Romans, 87) and Schlier (Römerbrief, 2) date the composition of the letter to winter of 57-58; Jewett (Romans, 20) prefers 56-57; Dunn (Romans 1-8, xlii) and Cranfield (Romans 1-8, 16) consider either 55-56 or 56-57 to be correct. The dating of Romans hinges on the Lucan chronology of Paul’s life, specifically when he appeared before Gallio (Acts 18:12-18), who was proconsul in Corinth from 51-52. After this date, Paul journeyed to Jerusalem and then, according to Luke, began his third missionary journey.
never visited it. Scholars disagree about Paul’s motive in writing, a few items of which may help the reader to identify our passage as Paul’s defense of God’s action.2

The Collection for Jerusalem

Although Paul did not found the Roman community, he knows many people there, as Romans 16 testifies.3 He plans to visit the Christians in Rome, but only after he has first delivered the collection to Jerusalem (15:30-32). While in Rome, he desires to “have some fruit” from them, as he has collected from the rest of the Gentiles (1:13).4 This fruit will take shape in the form of money and supplies that Paul has in mind for his mission to Spain.

However, Paul is worried about the reception that his collection will receive in Jerusalem, for he realizes that it will symbolize much more than the acceptance of money for the poor. If the (Jewish) Christians in Jerusalem approve of the collection, then they will also be approving of Paul’s missionary activity among the Gentiles. Paul is nervous about this gift and its reception, and he asks for prayers from the Romans for its success (15:25-31), for he is not certain that the Jerusalem Christians will accept either the money or his mission to

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3 Scholars have long debated whether or not Romans 16 belonged to the original letter Paul wrote. Fitzmyer (Romans, 55-65), and Donfried (“A Short Note on Romans 16” in The Romans Debate [ed. Donfried] 44-52), give thorough synopses of the arguments from both sides. Marcion had a fifteen-chapter letter. \( \Psi^{46} \) witnesses the doxology (16:25-27) before 16:1-23, but Fitzmyer (idem, 59) says that \( \Psi^{46} \) “the oldest MS of Romans does not make one necessarily conclude that 16:1-23 had a separate existence.”

4 Luke T. Johnson (Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary [Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2001] 25), points out that “fruit” is the exact word that Paul has used in 15:28 to describe the collection he has raised from the other communities for the poor in Jerusalem. Jewett (Romans, 129-30) maintains that, since the collection for Jerusalem is already on its way by the time the Romans receive this letter, Paul cannot mean for them to contribute to this collection. However, Paul also uses “fruit” in Phil 1:22 and “firstfruits” in Rom 16:5 to mean converts by his missionary activity.
the Gentiles. Behind this gift looms the question of who comprises the eschatological people of God.

Some of the Jewish Christians believe as Paul had believed before his conversion that God had chosen only Israel to be a people particularly God’s own. God had made a covenant with them alone, promising to be their God (Exod 19:5-6). God had given them the Scriptures and entrusted them with God’s law (Deut 4:1-8). God had also promised through his prophets that Israel would be the light to all other nations, showing forth God’s glory and bringing all nations to belief in God (e.g., Isa 2:2-3).

The very existence of Gentile Christians forced the important question of what God was doing in history. Paul’s experience was that, for the most part, Israel had rejected God’s Messiah and that the majority of the believers in Christ were Gentiles. God’s confirmation of their belief was the outpouring of the Spirit. Gentile Christians were joining together with Jewish Christians in small communities and manifesting the spiritual gifts that are the signs of the new age.

Therefore the acceptance of Paul’s collection in Jerusalem would represent a Jewish Christian acceptance of the existence and role of Gentile Christians. Furthermore, it would acknowledge Paul’s preaching of God’s righteousness. It would bring to the fore the question of whether God was abandoning the people of Israel in favor of the Gentiles.

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5 Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 18) states, “Paul viewed this collection as a practical means to cement the fractured and sometimes bitter relationships between the Jews and Gentiles in the early church.”
Jews and Gentiles

As the names in Romans 16 suggest, as well as from the rhetoric of the letter as a whole, the Roman community was composed of Jewish and Gentile Christians. The Roman Christian community grew out of the Roman Jewish community and had been established by the forties. An indication of this is the expulsion of the Jews by Claudius as reported by the historian Suetonius. The most probable date for this expulsion is 49 C.E. This date comes from Orosius, a fifth-century historian who claimed that Josephus reported Claudius’s expulsion of the Jews happened in his ninth regnal year (49-50). Suetonius’s record of this event actually witnesses to two expulsions, the first at the level of the synagogue and the second at a national level. The first expulsion was that of the Roman Christians from the Roman Jewish community. This would have led to the “riots” that Suetonius notes. This expulsion did not require an edict, but rather happened organically as the Jews and Christians

6 Among the Jewish names in Romans 16 are Mary and Herodian. Some of the Greek names are Andronicus, Epaenetus, Jason, Narcissus, Nereus, Olympas, Timotheos, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. But a Greek name does not necessarily indicate that one is a Gentile, as Fitzmyer (Romans, 734-42) points out: both slaves and freemen used many Greek names, which therefore could also designate Jewish Christians. Paul identifies Andronicus and Junia, people with Greek names, as “my kinsmen” (15:7). It is for this reason that the rhetoric of the letter is also important, for Paul addresses “You Gentiles” in 11:13, and presumably Jewish Christians in 2:1. However, Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 13) believes that “the Gentile Christians were in the majority.”

7 Suetonius (Claudii Vita 25.4) writes, “Iudaeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantis Roma expulit.” Suetonius uses the common Greek name of Chrestus, but seems to mean Christos (Messiah), about whom arguments in the synagogues during the forties would certainly have incited trouble. However, Dio Cassius (Historia Romana 60.6.6) does not report an expulsion, but only that the Jews were forbidden to assemble. His report neither agrees with that of Suetonius, nor is it supported by Acts 18:2 which describes Prisca and Aquila’s move to Corinth because of the expulsion,

8 Fitzmyer (Romans, 31-32) states that even though no extant copy of Jospehus’s texts reports this date, it remains the most likely. See also Jewett (Romans, 19) who holds that “the coordination of this remarkable and unexplained datum with [Orosius’s] other details about Claudius’s career lead most historians to take it into account and set the date for the edict in 49 C.E.”

disagreed on the role and person of the Messiah. The second expulsion was the imperial one: Claudius expelled from Rome the Jews together with the Jewish Christians who were quarreling about Jesus the Messiah. Thus, Paul would encounter Prisca and Aquila in Corinth (Acts 18:1-2).

The expulsion of the Jews and the Jewish Christians from Rome left the Gentile Christians in a new situation. Not required to leave the city, they nonetheless could not meet in the synagogues as before. Their new faith was not recognized as a religion either by the Jews who left or by the state. They were forced to meet in houses (as suggested by Rom 16:5). By the time Paul writes his letter, Jewish Christians would have returned to Rome, since Nero had rescinded the expulsion upon Claudius’ death in 54. The result was that Christians in Rome would have reorganized internally, with Gentiles emerging as leaders and returning Jewish Christians perhaps not agreeing with the changes or leadership. Their house churches probably formed some kind of loose and possibly rivalrous confederation.

In his letter to the Roman Christians, Paul addresses a problem between the “strong” and the “weak” (14:1–15:13), but to identify these factions with any certitude is not possible. Paul specifically mentions food issues and the observance of certain days, about which the

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10 Ibid., “The number of [Christians in the Roman Jewish community] had grown to such an extent that they could no longer be treated as a small group with odd opinions. Their presence was significant enough that something had to be done. What resulted were their expulsion [from the synagogues] and the ensuing disturbances.”

11 Ibid., (39) “Paul uses the word ‘church’ five times in Romans 16. In four of the instances (16:1, 4, 16, 23), he means the church in particular places other than Rome. The only time he uses the word to refer to the Roman Christians is in the mention of the ‘church’ at the house of Prisca and Aquila (16:5), as one church among others in Rome.”

12 Further indication that that the community in Rome was not unified is that Paul does not address it as an ἐκκλησία, Instead he addresses the letter “to all those in Rome, beloved of God called to be saints” (1:7). Paul uses this word ἐκκλησία in the addresses in 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, IThessalonians. In Phil 4:15 he calls that community an ἐκκλησία in comparison to the other churches of Macedonia. See also Jewett (Romans, 61), who notes that “separate and competitive development” characterizes the Christians in Rome.
“weak” seem to be scrupulous. The “strong,” in turn, vaunt their freedom over the “weak.” To claim that the “weak” are Jewish Christians and the “strong” are Gentile Christians does not appreciate the complexity of the situation. However, at the root of this disagreement is the keeping of the Jewish calendar and the Jewish refusal to eat meat. To those who are involved, it is a question not only of orthopraxis, but ultimately a question about God.

**Diplomatic Overture**

By diplomatic overture I mean that there may have been some uneasiness between the Roman community and Paul so that Paul had to measure his words. Paul implores prayers from the Romans for the success of his trip to Jerusalem. Jacob Jervell suggests that Paul’s letter, though addressed to the Romans, is really intended for the Christians in Jerusalem. Despite the collection Paul is bringing to Jerusalem, he may have been *persona non grata* with them after his inflammatory letter to the Galatians, about which they would have heard. Christians in Rome stayed in close contact with the Christians in Jerusalem. What is more, Rome was the center of the empire, and so reports about Paul would have reached the Christians there. It is possible that the Jewish Christians in the Roman community might

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13 Frederick Fyvie Bruce (“The Romans Debate–Continued” in *The Romans Debate* [ed. Donfried] 186) notes that “many Jewish Christians had become more or less emancipated from legal obligations in religion. . . . On the other hand, some Gentiles were more than willing to judaize.”

14 This refusal to eat meat may be related to the Corinthian problem of eating meat sacrificed to idols (1 Corinthians 8). See Byrne (*Romans*) 12.

15 Jacob Jervell, “The Letter to Jerusalem” in *The Romans Debate* (ed. Donfried) 51-64, here 61. However, he reaffirms that “Romans. . . is addressed directly to the congregation in Rome and not to Jerusalem” (*ibid.*) 62.

16 Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 29) states that trade, travel, and taxes flowed between Rome and Jerusalem, and that the “events of the Jewish people of Palestine were certainly known to the Jews of Rome.”
have had a nascent antipathy toward Paul.\textsuperscript{17} Whereas Paul wrote somewhat polemically in Galatians in response to the crisis he faced there, he writes in a more measured and diplomatic way to the Romans since his mission to Spain depends on Roman support.

The diplomacy of Romans represents Paul’s articulation of how God is working within the history of salvation. In Galatians, Paul criticizes the Mosaic Law; however, in Romans he presents the Law as good, but ineffectual because of the power of sin (7:7-14). Such a different characterization might heal any possible rift that Paul might already experience with the Roman Christians. It would also defend his preaching of God’s righteousness to a community that may be questioning how Paul is articulating the gospel.

Paul, then, had a number of reasons for writing to the Christians in Rome.\textsuperscript{18} He was worried about the reception of his collection in Jerusalem, and what that might signify about the Jewish Christian acceptance of his mission to the Gentiles. Since the Roman community was composed of both Jewish and Gentile members, the acceptance of the collection in Jerusalem would constitute not only a symbolic acceptance of the existence of Gentile Christians, but also an acceptance of such mixed communities as that in Rome. It was a community that was perhaps loosely confederated, and certainly had some divisions. These divisions, while not exactly adhering to the limits of Jew and Gentile identity, began with those differences and possibly were exacerbated both by the disagreements in the synagogues and by the imperial expulsion of the Jews from Rome for a time. Also, Paul may have been making a diplomatic overture to a community that has heard of his harsh letter to the

\textsuperscript{17} Byrne (Romans, 9) holds that Paul “is by now a highly controversial figure, suspected of playing fast and loose with the Jewish heritage of Christianity (cf. esp. Gal 2:10-15; 5:11; 2 Cor 10:10-11; Rom 3:8).”

Christians in Galatia. Paul planned to go from Rome to Spain, and he wanted not only to preach his gospel, but also to gather money, supplies and translators from a community that he neither founded nor had ever visited.

At the root of this diplomatic overture lies the problem of the gospel which Paul preaches. God appears to have abandoned Israel in favor of the Gentiles. Paul, therefore, is writing to the Romans to present and defend his gospel about God. Although Paul is not writing a theodicy, he addresses questions which theodicy addresses inasmuch as he presents a defense of the righteousness of God. It is these issues of theodicy present in Rom 8:18-39 to which we now turn.

The Text and Its Literary Context

As I have shown in the previous section, Romans has a historical context. Knowing the situation of both Paul and the Christians in Rome helps the reader to better understand what Paul is saying in this letter. However, the historical context is not the only context to consider. In this section, I will explain how the text fits into the literary context. First, I will present a brief overview of the passage by delimiting the passage and then providing my own translation. Next I will show how the passage fits into the context of Chapters 5–8, and finally into Romans as a whole.

Limits of the Passage

The passage begins at 8:18 with the comparison of present suffering to future glory. Although the word “suffering” occurs also 8:17, it occurs in the context of inheritance.
Therefore, Paul is beginning a new section with 8:18.\textsuperscript{19} Inheritance is not the main idea here, but rather the question of the righteousness of God in the gospel that Paul preaches in relation to present suffering.\textsuperscript{20} Paul presents this suffering and God’s righteousness through the prism of God’s ultimate victory. The passage begins “For I consider,” using a first-person verb and a γάρ explanatory clause. Also, the passage turns toward the future, specifically with the verbs μέλλω (v. 18), ἀποδέχομαι (vv. 19, 23, 25), the future forms of ἐλευθερώ (v. 21), λέγω (v. 31), χαρίζω (v. 32), ἐγκαλέω (v. 33), χαρίζω (vv. 35, 38), δίνωμαι (v. 38), and the quadruple use of the pregnant εἰς (vv. 18, 21, 28, 29). Despite the many aorist verbs in this passage, Paul is looking forward rather than backward. This future orientation marks this passage as eschatological.

The passage ends with 8:39, inasmuch as it describes the triumph of God’s love. Romans 9:1 then begins a new section. This new section begins with an extended wish expressed in the first person. The topic is why Israel has rejected its own Messiah. This section runs through all of Romans 9–11, and it is within this section that most people identify the problem of God’s goodness in relation to God’s chosen people. Paul addresses the situation of Israel in this section; he also addresses the seeming failure of God’s word and

\textsuperscript{19} Peter von der Osten-Sacken (Römer 8 als Beispiel paulinischer Soteriologie [FRLANT 112; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975] 104-24, here 104) notes many parallels between this passage and 2 Cor 5:1-10. “Die Nähe von 2.Kor. 5, 1–10 zu Röm. 8, 18–27 ist augenfällig.” Among the similarities are eschatology, “groaning” and the reception of the Spirit as the first installment.

\textsuperscript{20} I disagree with Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 405) who envisions the passage beginning at 8:17, and therefore claims that the topic is the inheritance of the children of God. Wright (Romans, 608) similarly believes that the passage is about inheritance.
its implications for God’s faithfulness to Israel. My pericope, therefore, ends at 8:39 before Paul’s specific discussion of Israel.21

### Translation of Rom 8:18-3922

Having examined the limits of the passage, I now present my translation of the text.23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verse</th>
<th>Greek text</th>
<th>English translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Λογίζομαι γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ ἡξία τὰ παθήματα τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ πρὸς τὴν μέλλουσαν δόξαν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι εἰς ἡμᾶς.</td>
<td>For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory about to be revealed in us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>ἢ γὰρ ἀποκαραδοκία τῆς κτίσεως τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεκδέχεται.</td>
<td>For the eager longing of creation awaits the revelation of the children of God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη, οὐχ ἐκούσα ἅλλα διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα, ἐφ' ἐλπίδι</td>
<td>For creation was subjected to futility—not of its own will, but by the One who subjected it—in hope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>ὅτι καὶ αὐτῇ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθῆσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας</td>
<td>So that even creation itself will be set free</td>
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21 Tobin (Paul’s Rhetoric, 12) argues that Romans 8–11 belongs together for a number of reasons. “From a literary perspective, [it reflects] the same structure as the three earlier sections of the letter: an explanatory section (8:1-30) followed by a much longer argumentative section (8:31–11:36). [These chapters] also belong together because they are all concerned with issues of eschatology.” However, Byrne (Romans, 282-83) holds that Romans 9–11 is about the inclusion of Israel, while Romans 1–8 is about the inclusion of the Gentiles. Fitzmyer (Romans, 540) similarly maintains that the whole argument of Romans 9–11 moves in different direction from the preceding chapters. See also Schlier (Römerbrief, 282-83), Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 547-54), Wright (Romans, 620-26), Jewett (Romans, 30), and Ernst Käsemann (Commentary on Romans [Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980] 131).


23 All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.
22. For we know that all creation groans together and is in labor pains together until now; 23. not only that, but also ourselves who possess the firstfruits of the Spirit—even we ourselves—groan within ourselves awaiting adoption, the redemption of our body.

24. For in hope we were saved. But hope of that which is seen is not hope—for who hopes for what he sees? 25. But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance.

26. In the same way, even the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as is necessary, but the Spirit itself makes intercession with unspoken groanings.
<table>
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<th>Greek</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. ὁ δὲ ἐραυνῶν τὰς καρδίας οἶδεν τὶ τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος, ὅτι κατὰ θεὸν ἐντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἁγίων.</td>
<td>And the One who searches hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because it intercedes for the saints according to God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἁγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἁγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὐσιν.</td>
<td>We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, for those who are called according to his plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. ὅτι οὕς προέγνω, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνος τοῦ ὑιοῦ αὐτοῦ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτῶν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἄδελφοῖς;</td>
<td>Because those whom he foreknew he also predestined to share the form of the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn of many brothers and sisters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. οὕς δὲ προώρισεν, τούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσεν· καὶ οὕς ἐκάλεσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδικαίωσεν· οὗς δὲ ἐδικαίωσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδόξασεν.</td>
<td>Those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν πρὸς ταῦτα; εἰ ὁ θεὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, τίς καθ' ἡμῶν;</td>
<td>What, then, should we say about these things? If God is for us, who could be against us?</td>
</tr>
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</table>
| 32. ὃς γε τοῦ ἰδίου ὑιοῦ οὐκ ἐφείσατο | He who did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for all of us, how will he
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Greek Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33. ἐὰν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πάντων παρέδωκεν αὐτόν, πῶς οὐχὶ καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα ἡμῖν χαρίσεται;</td>
<td>Who will bring a charge against the chosen of God? God who justifies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. τίς ὁ κατακρινῶν; Χριστὸς ὁ ἀποθανῶν, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐγερθεὶς, δὲ καὶ ἔστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ, δὲ καὶ ἐντυχήσανει ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν.</td>
<td>Who is it who will condemn? Christ who died—or rather was raised, who is also at the right of God, and even intercedes for us?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. τίς ἡμᾶς χωρίσει ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Χριστοῦ; θλίψις ἡ στενοχωρία ἡ διωγμός ἡ λιμός ἡ γυμνότης ἡ κίνδυνος ἡ μάχαιρα;</td>
<td>Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Affliction, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι ἦνεκεν σοῦ θανατοῦμεθα ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν, ἐλογίσθημεν ὡς πρόβατα σφαγῆς.</td>
<td>As it is written: “For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we are considered as sheep for slaughter.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. ἄλλῃ ἐν τούτωι πᾶσιν ὑπερικώμεν διὰ τοῦ ἀγαπηθησάντος ἡμᾶς.</td>
<td>But in all these things we are superconquerors by means of him who loved us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. πέπεισμαι γὰρ ὅτι οὐτε θάνατος οὐτε ζωὴ οὐτε ἀγγελοῦ οὐτε ἀρχαὶ οὐτε ἐνεστῶτα οὐτε μέλλοντα οὐτε δυνάμεις</td>
<td>For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
39. οὐτε ὄψωμαι οὔτε βάθος οὔτε τις κτίσις ἑτέρα δυνήσεται ἡμᾶς χωρίσαι ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν. things, nor future things, nor powers, 39. nor height, nor depth, nor any other kind of creature can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Structure of the Text

This passage extends from 8:18-39 and considers the believer’s participation in salvation history from God’s point of view. It is comprised of two main sections that depict what Paul expects in the eschaton. In the first section (8:18-30), Paul defends God’s righteousness\(^{24}\) with regards to present suffering and God’s plan for future glory. In the second section (8:31-39), Paul explains his gospel from the point of view of God and those God has made righteous, despite all the powers that might array themselves against them. Both sections form part of Paul’s defense of his gospel. Both are a defense of God’s righteousness; for this reason I see them as an example of Pauline theodicy.

The first section of our passage divides into three separate parts. In the first part, (8:18-25), Paul considers the righteousness of God in light of the resurrection of the dead. In the second part (8:26-27), Paul defends his gospel with regard to the Holy Spirit in the life of believers. In the third part (8:28-30), Paul considers the plan of God.

\(^{24}\) I construe “God’s righteousness” and “the righteousness of God” as subjective genitives—that is, as a quality of God—rather than as objective genitives. Such a reading would understand righteousness as a condition that God bestows upon believers, which is also known as “justification.” See Gottlob Schrenk (“δική, κτλ.” in \textit{TDNT} [2: 203]), Fitzmyer (\textit{Romans}, 105) and Jewett (\textit{Romans}, 142) who maintain that it is better to read these phrases throughout Romans as subjective genitives. Against this view, Cranfield (\textit{Romans 1–8}, 97) supports a reading of the objective genitive.
The second section is marked off from the first by a series of questions in the style of
diatribé. Paul describes the scene of the eschatological court. Although the adversaries are
many and powerful, the victory belongs to God. This scene is fraught with evil powers both
worldly and cosmic, but nonetheless portrays a triumphant God from beginning to end.

Outline of Rom 8:18-39

The structure of the text lends itself to an outline that will be useful in my exegesis
later.

8:18-39 Pauline Theodicy: The Believer’s Participation in Salvation History as
Seen from God’s Perspective

8:18-30 Present Suffering and Future Glory

8:18-25 Theodicy in Light of the Resurrection from the Dead
  8:18-9 The eager expectation of creation and the revelation of glory
  8:20 Creation’s own subjection
  8:22 The groaning of creation
  8:23 The groaning of believers
  8:24-5 The role of hope

8:26-27 Theodicy in Light of the Spirit
  8:26 The groaning of the Spirit
  8:27 The intercession of the Spirit

8:28-30 Theodicy in Light of the Plan of God
  8:28 Those called according to God’s plan
  8:29 Predestination of the justified
  8:30 The glorification of the justified

8:31-39 In the Eschatological Court

8:31-33 Questions about God
  8:31 God is for us
  8:32 God withholds nothing from us
  8:33 God does not accuse us
  8:34 God raised Christ, who makes intercession for us
8:35-37  Question about separation from Christ
8:35    Earthly powers which try to separate us from Christ
8:36    An example of theodicy from LXX Ps 43
8:37    We are super-conquerors through the one who loved us

8:38-39  Confidence in God’s Victory
8:38-39a Cosmic powers which try to separate us from God’s love
8:39b    God’s love in Christ Jesus is victorious

Explanation of Outline

The title of the outline identifies the passage as an example of Pauline theodicy. The reason for this is that the passage is full of Paul’s language about God and God’s righteousness. Despite the grammatical subjects of the sentences, the prime actor in this pericope is God. The believer’s participation in salvation, then, is seen from God’s perspective. For Paul is defending God’s action in salvation history; not that God needs to be defended, but Paul is explaining what is puzzling indeed: how the God of Israel has welcomed the Gentiles while simultaneously seeming to ignore his chosen people. Our passage is an example of Pauline theodicy inasmuch as it explains how God is and will act.

The first half of the passage (8:18-30) describes present suffering and future glory. Although this juxtaposition is the traditional philosophical consideration of theodicy, Paul is not working with philosophical ideas. He considers the real, historical, and theological aspects of suffering in terms of God who has revealed himself not only through covenant, but also in the person of Christ and in the Spirit as well.

Suffering, however, is not Paul’s subject. He points forward to the glory that will be revealed in believers. But even this glorification serves only to highlight Paul’s real topic: God. It is the same God who handed over his Son to death who now calls believers to share
in suffering. This same God promises the glory of his risen Son to those who suffer with the Son.

It is God, therefore, whom Paul describes in 8:18-30. The first part of this section (8:18-25) portrays creation eagerly awaiting the revelation of the children of God. This revelation of glory within them is the resurrection from the dead (8:19). It is no feat attainable by human endeavor; rather, God is the agent who brings about the event. This glory is in the future, and so Paul depicts creation groaning together with humanity (8:20-23), waiting to give birth to the glorious future. Yet, it is the God of creation who brings this new and glorious freedom to birth. Therefore, Paul ends this first part with a note on the role of hope (8:24-25).

In the second part of the section (8:26-27), Paul discusses the Spirit’s groaning: the Spirit groans for the sake of believers, not for its own sake. Those whose lives are lived in the Spirit are known by the Spirit in an intimate way; therefore the Spirit makes intercession for them according to God’s own will. Since God is the giver of the Spirit and the receiver of the Spirit’s intercession, this part, too, is language about God, and therefore part of Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness.26

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25 Cranfield (Romans 1-8, 260) holds that δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ means “that illumination of man’s whole being by the radiance of the divine glory which is man’s true destiny but which was lost through sin, as it will be restored (not just as it was, but immeasurably enriched through God’s own personal participation in man’s humanity in Jesus Christ—cf. 8.17), when man’s redemption is finally consummated at the parousia of Jesus Christ.”

26 Dunn (Romans 1-8, 493) states that “it is the acknowledgment of dependence upon God’s enabling which constitutes effective prayer, precisely because it is in and through such creaturely dependence on God that God can work to accomplish his will.”
It is in the third part of the section (8:28-30) that Paul engages in explicit language about God in reference to salvation history.27 God’s interaction with believers moves from foreknowledge to predestination (8:29), from predestination to call, from call to justification, and from justification to glorification (8:30). This description of God’s action for believers, while full of promise, raises the question of the righteousness of God in a specific way. It asks who are believers and who are not. Even more importantly, it asks the question about a God who would call some and not others.

The theme of Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness continues in the second section of the passage (8:31-39). This section is marked off grammatically in the form of a number of questions asked in the diatribe style.28 The setting is the eschatological court, where all who have been resurrected will appear before God. Again, God is the actor in this scene, as it is God who raises the dead and judges.

The questions Paul asks in the first part of this section (8:31-34) are an interesting play on Paul’s own defense of the God he preaches. In the eschatological court, it is the believers who are on trial, yet Paul’s questions center on God. Paul understands that the questions of the believers’ fate is only secondary to and hinges upon the person and actions of God. Therefore, Paul maintains that God is for believers (8:31). God gives believers everything along with the Son whom he has handed over to death for their sake (8:32). In this court scene that Paul describes, God does not accuse believers (8:33), but allows Christ—whom he has raised from the dead—to intercede for believers (8:34).

27 Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 531) notes that “in these verses Paul spells out the ‘purpose,’ or ‘plan,’ of God.”

28 Schlier (Römerbrief, 275) detects a “Wechsel der Diktion,” noting that the text evidences a “rhetorisch-hymnisch Charakter” as well as an “Element der Diatribe.”
In the second part of this section (8:35-37) Paul poses the question of what will separate believers from Christ. He gives a list of earthly forces that might be arrayed against the believer (8:35). This, however, is meant only as a rhetorical device. Paul highlights the question with a quotation from Ps 43:23 (LXX; Rom 8:36), which describes the problem of God abandoning his chosen people. Paul then concludes this part with his answer: believers are super-conquerors because of God (8:37).

The third part of this section (8:38-39) depicts a spectrum of cosmic forces that face the believer. Paul, however, states his confidence that nothing can separate the believer from the love of God in Christ (8:39).

From beginning to end, then, this section is about God. Although it is the believers who are justified by God’s love, Paul uses the image of the eschatological courtroom to justify God, whose ways are mysterious and opaque. While suffering, obstacles, and powers might be ranged against believers, the love of God is ultimately and decisively victorious. Thus, even though it may appear that Paul’s gospel presents God as abandoning Israel, this is not the case.

**Proximate and Remote Contexts**

By proximate context, I mean the rhetorical and literary section of the letter to which the passage belongs. By remote context, I mean the entire letter. Both are helpful to uncover

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29 Wright (*Romans*, 614) remarks, “Paul speaks of that which he knows; he had himself faced all these enemies, except perhaps the sword, and he must have known that at any moment this too might come his way, whether judicially in a Roman court or casually on the road (cf. 2 Cor 11:23-29).”

30 Jewett (*Romans*, 546) hypothesizes that “Paul’s discourse reflects a situation in which voices were being raised against the ‘weak’” and therefore suggest a divine disfavor in the form of “affliction and distress.”
Paul’s train of thought in order to comprehend not only the placement of the passage, but also its meaning. In order to shed light on this meaning, I will now look at both the proximate and remote contexts of the passage.

**The Proximate Context**

The proximate context of the passage is Chapters 5–8. In Romans 4, Paul brings to a close his discussion of sin and salvation that has dominated Romans 1–4. However, with Romans 5, he begins a new idea, and therefore it belongs with Roman 6–8. The confirmation that this is a discrete literary unit is the inclusio that is formed by Rom 5:1-11 and Rom 8:18-39.

This inclusio (5:1-11 and 8:18-39) is important for identifying the proximate context. In both 5:1-11 and in 8:18-39, Paul uses the words δικαίω (5:1, 9; 8:30, 33), ἐλπίς (5:2, 4, 5; 8:20, 24, 25), δόξα (5:2; 8:18, 21), θλίψις (5:3, 8:35), ὑπομονή (5:3, 4; 8:25), ἀγάπη (5:5, 8; 8:35, 39), ἀποθνήσκω (5:6, 7, 8; 8:34), σώζω (5:9, 10; 8:24), θάνατος (5:10, 8:38), and ζωή (5:10, 8:38). However, Paul not only uses the same words to tie these passages together, but he also employs a similar theme in both. He writes about present suffering and the hope for

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31 Here I disagree with Dunn (*Romans 1-8*, 242), who posits that Chapter 5 “as a whole must be regarded as a conclusion to the argument thus far... The backward links are too many and too deliberate.” I agree with Cranfield (*Romans 1-8*, 255), Schlier (*Römerbrief*, 137), Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 97-98), and Byrne (*Romans*, 162-64).

32 Dahl (“Two Notes on Romans 5,” 39) points out that Romans 8 develops themes first stated in Romans 5. Moo (*Epistle to the Romans*, 293-94) sees the main development of themes in Romans 5 & 8 forming a “ring composition as Rom 8:18-39 shares much in common with Rom 5:1-11, and Rom 8:1-17 shares themes with Rom 5:12-21.” Von der Osten-Sacken (*Römer 8*, 58) disagrees with Dahl that 5:1-11 is a preliminary to Romans 8—primarily because Dahl begins with Romans 8 and finds similarities in Romans 5. Instead, von der Osten-Sacken (ibid., 60) sees a ring composition as does Moo.
The future. This future in both passages is the glory of God, which will be manifested at the resurrection of the dead when the bodies of the justified are redeemed (8:23). In both passages Paul describes how those who have been justified by God now enjoy peace, and in 8:31 he clarifies that it is because God is on their side. In both passages, Paul also tells of God handing Christ over to death so that believers may share in his life (5:8, 10; 8:34, 39). Therefore, this inclusio (5:1-11 and 8:18-39) marks the beginning and the end of the proximate context.

The chapters within the inclusio (5:1-11 and 8:18-39), Romans 5–8, form a unit that is marked by the hope with which the believers now live. Although the word “hope” appears at both ends of the inclusio (5:1-11 and 8:18-39), Paul thematically characterizes the life of believers as living in hope of the age to come. This is made possible by freedom from sin and the law, and by the gift of the Spirit. In Romans 5, Paul describes that God’s gift of salvation is surprising, not only because God offers it to “outsiders,” but because God offers it at all. There is no one who deserves the salvation God offers. All are sinners, for all people have sinned after the pattern of Adam (5:12). With Adam’s disobedience sin entered the world, and with sin came death. However, Adam’s transgression cannot be compared to the overwhelming gift that is offered in Jesus Christ (5:15). His redemption overcomes the power of sin. Adam’s disobedience makes all slaves to death, but where that sin increased,

33 Byrne (Romans, 163) maintains that “hope” is the explicit theme in both parts of the inclusio.

34 Byrne (ibid., 163) states, “The affirmation of hope that forms the main theme of the new section of the letter that now begins (5:1–8:39) confronts what has aptly been called the ‘overlap’ situation of present Christian life.” With regard to relationship with God, the new age has begun; however, in their bodily life, they remain “anchored in the old age.” See also Johan Christiaan Beker (“Paul’s Theology: Consistent or Inconsistent?” NTS 34 [1988] 364-77, here 375) who states that “the subject matter shifts from the impartiality of God toward Jew and Greek to the victory of God in Christ over the alliance of the apocalyptic powers of sin, the law, the flesh and death, especially over the Master-lord of the powers, i.e, the power of death” (italics original).
Christ’s gracious gift transformed believers “superabundantly” (5:20) so that they will reign through righteousness for eternal life.

Believers are therefore dead to the rule of sin in their lives. Paul argues in Romans 6 that believers should not return to that death-dealing rule, for they have been freed from sin in order to live with Christ (6:8). His argument about sinful desires runs through Romans 7, where he explains that the God-given Law had become co-opted by sin. The Law itself is good, but because of humanity’s enslavement to sin and death, any attempt to fulfill the Law can only be frustrating. The Law pointed to a life lived according to God’s will, but could not of itself provide the power for living that way.

It is the Spirit that provides the ability to live according to God’s will, as Paul explains in Romans 8. It allows the believer to think with a spiritual thinking, that is, with the mind of God (8:5). The same Spirit by which God raised Jesus from the dead now dwells within believers, and by it God will raise their mortal bodies to eternal life also (8:11). This in-dwelling Spirit makes believers sons and daughters of God, as well as God’s heirs—terms previously reserved for Jews only, but now Paul applies them to all who believe in Christ.35 What is more, Paul writes, if believers are heirs of God, then they are also co-heirs with Christ (8:17). This inheritance brings glory, as Christ was glorified in his resurrection; but in order to fully share that inheritance, believers must first share in Christ’s sufferings.36

35 Moxnes (Theology in Conflict, 248) states that “‘heirs’ became a title for the charismatic community.” Paul therefore applies the promise to Abraham to the experience of the believers. It is the experience of “the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the children of God, who are also heirs (8:17).”

36 Jewett (Romans, 503) notes that συμπαθέω can mean either “suffer with” or “sympathize with.” “But in this passage in Romans, it clearly has the sense of believers suffering with Christ, in behalf of Christ.”
It is at this point that our passage occurs. Paul writes of suffering and glory and hope, but does so with an eschatological turn. The sufferings remain in the present, but the glory hoped for is in the future. It is a reprise and development of Rom 5:1-11, in which Paul first wrote of suffering and hope. At that point in the letter he boasted of tribulations since they produce endurance, which in turn leads to hope of God’s glory (5:3-5). In Romans 8, however, Paul elaborates on the details of the tribulations as well of the glory hoped for. This passage, and Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness that the reader has encountered in Romans thus far, raise questions about the fate of Israel, which Paul takes up in Romans 9–11.

The Remote Context

As the passage has a proximate literary context, just so it has a remote one, which is the whole of the letter. In his greeting to the Romans, Paul states that he is an “apostle set apart for the gospel of God” (1:1). Romans, then, is good news about God. Therefore, it is speech about God. Paul is eager to explain how the seeming problem of Gentile belief and Jewish unbelief makes sense as it is played out in salvation history, because God has acted on...
behalf of both Gentiles and Jews in the person of Jesus Christ. The Letter to the Romans may be structured in this way:

1:1-17  Salutation, Thanksgiving, and Theme

1:18–11:36  God’s Righteousness as Universal Salvation

1:18–4:25  God’s Righteousness as Salvation from the Universal Problem of Sin

5:1–8:39  God’s Righteousness Enables the Believer to Live in the Spirit, Free from Condemnation by Sin and the Law

9:1–11:36  God’s Righteousness as Salvation for the Problem of Unbelieving Israel

12:1–15:13  God’s Righteousness Enables the Believers in Rome to Live as One

12:1–13:14  God’s Righteousness Enables Love and Obedience

14:1–15:13  God’s Righteousness Enables Tolerance

15:14–16:27  Conclusion

15:14-33  Paul’s Missionary Plans for Spain

16:1-27  Commendation, Greetings and Doxology

The beginning of the letter contains Paul’s explanation of God’s salvation by making people righteous through faith (1:17). If the gospel is good news for both Jews and Gentiles, then Paul has to demonstrate its universal need. It is such a demonstration that he makes in Rom 1:18–3:20. All humanity finds itself under the power of sin. Paul explains that it is not only Gentiles who are without God’s Law and statutes, but also Jews who have proven themselves sinners by their inability to keep the Law. Paul therefore states that all have fallen
short of the glory of God and deserve God’s wrath. God however offers salvation to all through the redemption worked by Christ Jesus (3:21-26).

It is at this point in his argument, in Romans 4, that Paul shows God’s inclusive plan of salvation for all humanity, not only for Jews. Salvation comes from the Jewish Messiah, Jesus Christ, Son of David, but is available to all. In order to demonstrate this point, he describes the trust that Abraham put in God’s promise while Abraham was still a Gentile. “Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness” (4:3). If Abraham was included in God’s plan while not yet sharing in circumcision, then the inclusion of the Gentiles does not depend on their becoming Jews (the sign of which is circumcision), but rather on their trusting in God, as Abraham did: “It was written not only about [Abraham] that [his belief] was reckoned to him [as righteousness], but also about us, who will be so reckoned—to us who believe in the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over for our sins and was raised for our righteousness” (4:23-25).

After Romans 1–4, Chapters 5–8 follow, the unit which is the proximate literary context of the passage. It is in these chapters that Paul explains how God frees the believer from condemnation under sin and the law so as to live in the power of the Spirit. It is at the end of this second unit that our passage occurs. Paul engages the topic of suffering directly by turning to eschatology in his defense of God’s righteousness.

The theme of the next unit, Chapters 9–11, continues to be the question of God, and now Paul examines how God will save unbelieving Israel. Paul begins with an anguished lament over Israel (9:2), and then demonstrates why Israel is the elect of God: adoption,

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38 Beker (“Paul’s Theology,” 373) identifies the priority of Israel in the gospel as one of the two basic issues in Romans. The other is the eschatological unity of the Roman church.
glory, covenants, law, patriarchs—all are theirs, including the Messiah according to the flesh (9:4-5). But Paul maintains that God’s word has not failed (9:6); God is free to choose whom God wills, and God has chosen the children of the promise (9:8). Paul then goes on to demonstrate that the prophets had foretold the belief of the Gentiles (9:25-26) and the unbelief of Israel (9:27-29). Once again, Paul claims that righteousness is based on faith (9:30-33).

This faith, according to Paul, is justification for all who believe because Christ is the end of the law (10:4).\textsuperscript{39} No distinction exists between Jew and Gentile who believe in Jesus and confess that God raised him from the dead, for Christ is Lord of all (10:9-13). Israel has heard the same gospel preached to it that the Gentiles have heard. The difference is that the Gentiles have believed, while Israel has remained disobedient and querulous (10:16-21). This reversal will lead, Paul says, in Israel becoming jealous of the Gentiles.

Paul then uses an analogy of an olive tree whose branches are broken off so that wild branches may be grafted onto the trunk (11:13-24). In this analogy, the trunk is Israel, the broken branches are unbelieving Jews, and the grafted branches are Gentiles who have come to believe. Paul uses this comparison in order to demonstrate the rich heritage that the Gentiles have come into through their faith. But he also warns the Gentiles not to vaunt their faith over the Jews, for God can break off branches and re-graft them as he chooses (11:22-23).

\textsuperscript{39} I agree with N. T. Wright (Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991] who interprets τέλος νόμου as “end of the law,” with the nuance of climax or goal. Cranfield (Romans 9-16, 519) and Fitzmyer (Romans, 584) interpret the phrase similarly. For those who regard it as cessation or termination of the law, see Käsemann (Commentary on Romans, 283), Lagrange (Épître aux Romains, 253), Sanday and Headlam (Romans, 284-85), and Schlier (Römerbrief, 311).
Using disclosure language, Paul explains the mystery of Israel’s hardening (11:25-29). It is only in part, and it is for the sake of the salvation of the Gentiles (11:25). After that, he claims, “all Israel will be saved” (11:26). Here Paul has come to the heart of his defense of God’s righteousness with regard to Israel. Israel, he says, has been disobedient so that the Gentiles might be saved, but the call of God is “irrevocable” (11:29), and therefore Israel will receive mercy just as the once-disobedient Gentiles have received mercy (11:30-31). “For God locked everyone in disobedience, so that he might have mercy on everyone” (11:32). The defense of God’s righteousness for Paul, then, is centered neither on obedience nor on disobedience, but on the mercy of God.

Paul concludes this unit with a doxology that highlights just how opaque God’s ways are. No one knows the mind of the LORD, nor can anyone deserve a reward from him (11:34-35), but it is the inscrutable and unsearchable ways of God in his mercy that will win out in the end.

Chapters 12–15 are not so much expository as ethical, encouraging the Roman community to live as one. In this unit, Paul is concerned about the practical application of the defense of God that he has described. If God is the same God of the Jews and the Gentiles (3:29), then the Roman community ought to live as one, just as many parts make up one body (12:3-8). He encourages the Romans to love sincerely (12:9) and to live at peace.

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40 Krister Stendahl (Paul Among Jews and Gentiles [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976] 4) has pointed out that Paul does not explicitly state that Israel will accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Instead, Paul says only that “all Israel will be saved.” Some theologians have taken this to mean that there will be a Sonderweg, or special way for Israel to be saved. Bernhard Mayer (Unter Gottes Heilratschluß: Prädestinationsaussagen bei Paulus [FB 15; Würzburg: Echter Verlag] 292) points to this Sonderweg when he claims, “Wir sehen deshalb in dem ἰδιόμενος Gott selbst, nicht den Messias.” Other scholars disagree, for example, Reidar Hvalvik (“A ‘Sonderweg’ For Israel: A Critical Examination of a Current Interpretation of Romans 11.25-27” JSNT 38 [1990] 87-107, here 101) states: “Such an idea must be labeled as speculation. We can, therefore, conclude that Rom. 11.25-27 cannot be used for a basis of a theory that maintains a special way of salvation for the Jews.”
with all people (12:18). His admonition to “not be haughty” (12:16) tells the reader that a problem exists among the Romans—probably the case of the Gentile believers looking down on the Jewish Christians (see 11:20).

Paul then argues for obedience to governing authorities (13:1-7). Although earthly powers have had a role in the death of Christ, believers are called to share in Christ’s sufferings (8:17) in order to share in his glory. Paul must also realize the suspicion that Christians cause in Rome, for the expulsion is still a recent memory. Nonetheless, Paul’s exhortation fits with his defense of God’s righteousness. It is not the believer who will have the final say against any unjust authority, but God who will judge according to God’s own righteousness (8:31-39). It is no accident that Paul lists “the sword”—the punishment of Caesar—among the earthly powers arrayed against the believers (8:35).

Obedience to governing authorities is done through the believer’s power to love, which is the fulfillment of the law (13:8-10). Paul then warns the believers that the eschaton is not far off (13:11-14), and therefore they must live accordingly.

Chapters 12–15 are best known for the appeal that Paul makes for unity among the Romans (14:1–15:13). There is some disagreement in the Roman community over food matters and calendar days of observation. The result is that one group despises the others, while the other group passes judgment on the first. One group is known as the “strong” and

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41 Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 791) finds this exhortation somewhat puzzling: “Not only does it interrupt Paul’s elaboration of the nature and centrality of love, but it seems to give unqualified endorsement to an institution that belongs to an age that is ‘passing away’ (13:11-14) and to which we are not to be conformed (12:2).” For this reason, some scholars have thought this pericope an interpolation. See James Kallas, “Romans xiii. 1–7: An Interpolation,” NTS 11 (1964-65) 365-74.

42 Byrne (Romans, 408) states, “The argument for tolerance that makes up this section consists chiefly in the twin appeals—not to belittle and not to pass judgment.”
the other is called the “weak” (15:1). Paul identifies himself with the strong party, which indicates that it was the group that did not observe Torah law, but beyond that it is difficult to accurately describe each group. Paul’s solution is that the strong should make concessions for the weak. His answer is grounded in the theodicy that has characterized his whole letter. He instructs the community members to welcome one another as Christ has welcomed each of them (15:7). “For Christ became minister to the circumcised for the truth of God, to confirm the promises to the fathers, but [also] so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy” (15:8-9). Unity, then, is predicated on God’s mercy, which has been Paul’s defense of God throughout Romans.

The final unit contains Paul’s travel plans and a plea for the prayers of the Romans so that the collection will be accepted in Jerusalem. The churches in Macedonia and Achaia acknowledge their debt to the church in Jerusalem (15:26-27), for it is from Israel that their faith has originated. This explanation of the collection is, no doubt, meant to be an object lesson to the Romans, who are experiencing disunity among themselves.

The letter closes with Chapter 16, which consists of Paul’s commendation of Phoebe (16:1-2), many greetings to Gentile and Jewish Christians alike (16:3-16), a last plea to beware of those who create factions (16:17-20), greetings from Paul’s scribes and host—presumably in Corinth (16:21-23), and finally, a doxology (16:25-27).44

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43 For a full discussion of the possible composition of these two groups, see The Romans Debate (ed. Donfried) 175-242.

44 Although a doxology appears at the end of the letter in ℣, A, B, C, D, 81, and 1739, other MSS witness other placements; for example, ℣ places the doxology after 15:33. Fitzmyer (Romans, 753) states that the doxology “is probably not an authentic Pauline composition.” The differing in placement has called into question the integrity of Chapter 16. For an exhaustive treatment of the unity and integrity of Chapters 15 and 16, see ibid., 44-51.
To summarize, the remote context of Rom 8:19-39 is the entire letter, for within each of the units the reader is able to discern Paul’s concern with the question about God. And although the theme of theodicy comes to dominate in Chapters 9–11, Paul is engaged all throughout Romans with the defense of God’s righteousness. Viewing salvation history from his perspective, Paul is able to translate God’s mysterious and opaque actions into language that the community can understand and that has direct relevance for their situation. The question of Jews and Gentiles is ultimately a question about how God is acting in history, and Paul demonstrates that it is answered in the mercy of God who has acted in Christ and will act in the eschaton.

**Echoes of Theodicy in Romans**

There are allusive echoes of theodicy throughout Romans, which may be detected by transumption, or metalepsis. “When a literary echo links the text in which it occurs to an earlier text, the figurative effect of the echo can lie in the unstated or suppressed (transumed) points of resonance between the two texts. . . . Allusive echo functions to suggest to the reader that text B should be understood in light of a broad interplay with text A, encompassing aspects of A beyond those explicitly echoed.” 45 Inasmuch as Paul presents a defense of God’s righteousness in Rom 8:18-39, the allusive echoes throughout Romans prepare the audience to encounter it. Paul writes to the Christians in Rome about God and

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45 Hays (*Echoes of Scripture*, 20), uses the word “echo” to stand for the word “transumption” or “metalepsis.” He maintains (ibid., 34-83, here 38) that there is a difference between a stated theme and echoes within the text. This is despite what Anders Nygren (*Commentary on Romans* [trans. Carl C. Rasmussen; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1949] 65-92, here 85) claims, that Paul structured the whole of Romans 1–8 on the basis of Rom 1:17.
God’s righteousness, even when it seems that other subjects are in view.46 Once the reader grasps this, it is much easier to see how Paul is concerned with defending the righteousness of God against seeming discrepancies. Paul has carefully reflected on Israel’s election, its rejection of Christ, and the belief of the Gentiles. He has also considered the current suffering of believers despite the gift of the Holy Spirit. The question that he wrestles with is this: “Has God been faithful?” This is the context of Pauline theodicy inasmuch as some have called his gospel—and so his understanding of God—into question. For them, Paul preaches a God who seems capricious, and so Paul is engaged in a defense of God. It is with this background in mind that we can look for the echoes of theodicy that occur throughout the letter.

At the beginning of Paul’s exposition, while he is still introducing the letter, Paul quotes from the prophet Habakkuk: The one who is righteous will live from faith (Rom 1:17; Hab 2:4).47 While this quotation relates righteousness to faith (or fidelity) in a way useful to Paul, the original context of the quotation is one of theodicy.48 The prophet calls out to God who seemingly has abandoned his people to the advancing Chaldeans. “How long LORD have I cried for help and you will not listen?” (Hab 1:1). God, however, has abandoned

46 Frank Matera (Romans [Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010] 21) states, “From start to finish, Romans is about God.” Wright (Romans, 601) similarly writes: “The whole letter has been about God, God’s covenant faithfulness, God’s gospel revealed in the Son and the Spirit, and above all—not that this is a separate topic from all those—God’s love.”


48 Hays (Echoes of Scripture) 39.
neither prophet nor people and counsels patience for what the prophet does not understand. While the prophet stations himself, he receives this word from the LORD:

Write down the vision clearly on a tablet so that a runner can read it. Because the vision will be for a certain time and it will rise to the end and it is not empty. If it should lack, wait for it, because it will come and not take too much time. If anyone withdraws, my soul does not rejoice in him, but the one who is righteous shall live by my faith (Hab 2:2-4).\footnote{Italics mine.}

Paul uses the LXX instead of the Hebrew text, but omits “my” when he writes “The one who is righteous will live from faith (Rom 1:17).\footnote{Moody Smith ("Ω ΔΕ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ", 16) claims that “the evidence for an LXX text lacking the μονοθεία is weak indeed.” Joseph A. Fitzmyer ("Habakkuk 2:3-4 and the New Testament" in To Advance the Gospel: New Testament Studies [New York: Crossroad, 1981] 236-46, here 242) attributes this omission of the “my” to Paul’s filling the word πιστις with his own meaning.}

Paul has a double purpose for not including this word. First, he wants the reader to understand the reader’s own faith or fidelity. As Paul writes: “[God] will repay each one according to his deeds” (Rom 2:6). This statement occurs throughout Scripture (LXX Ps 61:13, Prov 24:12, Sir 16:12). But as Paul continues he demonstrates that, in fact, no one deserves any reward but the wrath of God, for all are sinners (Rom 3:23). The reader, therefore, must understand the missing “my” in a second sense, as referring to God.\footnote{Hays (Echoes of Scripture, 40-41) maintains that the original hearers of this letter would have been sufficiently familiar with the LXX version of Habakkuk to understand Paul’s double purpose in omitting the μονοθεία. For a similar position, see Dunn (Romans 1–8, 45).} The reader, who fails in his own efforts, obtains life and righteousness from God’s fidelity.

As for God’s faithfulness, it is no requirement on God’s part; yet God maintains fidelity. If one party to a covenant breaks faith, the second party is no longer under obligation. This is what Paul means when he writes concerning the Jews: “What then? If some were unfaithful doesn’t their unfaithfulness nullify the faithfulness of God? (Rom 3:3).
Paul’s answer is an emphatic “Not at all!” Instead, he explains that God “is true [faithful], even if every other person is a liar, as it is written: That you may be justified in your words and you will conquer when you are judged” (Rom 3:4). The quotation is from Ps 50:6 (LXX) that has the title: “A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet approached him after he slept with Bathsheba.” This is David’s working out the problem of God’s righteousness. He acknowledges that he has done wrong, but he also knows that others will judge God on his judgment. David’s solution is that God is justified and will conquer; that is, his judgment will be vindicated. In this quotation, then, we encounter a metalepsis that strengthens Paul’s own defense of God’s righteousness. God’s fidelity is not some necessity or obligation, but is rather God’s authentic self, which he freely manifests even in the face of unfaithfulness of humanity.

Paul’s most recognizable treatment of theodicy continues in Chapters 9–11, in which Paul’s discussion is limited to Israel. Along with Rom 8:18-39, theodicy is no longer an echo in these chapters, but an explicit theme. Although some people have questioned Paul’s preaching about God, Paul defends God’s righteousness. God is not fickle, nor is God unfaithful to his promises. Paul maintains in a clear and unambiguous way that God is faithful and trustworthy. Despite Israel’s failure to accept God’s Messiah, God has not rejected his people (11:1). Israel has stumbled only, not fallen indefinitely (11:11). God’s call is irrevocable (11:29), and Paul believes that through God’s mercy, “all Israel will be saved” (11:26).

After Chapters 9–11, theodicy once again becomes an echo throughout the background of the letter. Paul quotes Isa 45:23, “As I live, says the LORD, before me shall
bend every knee, and every tongue will acknowledge God” (Rom 14:11). In Isaiah, this verse comes after a strong rebuke of idols, for it is only God who knows all and can cause events to happen (Isa 45:19-21), and God has caused Israel’s Exile to take place. In the passage immediately preceding this, God states, “The clay does not say to the potter, ‘What are you making?’” (Isa 45:9). Isaiah’s answer to this seeming failure of God’s righteousness is found in the same chapter: “Israel, you will be saved by the LORD forever! You will be neither ashamed nor humiliated forever more” (Isa 45:17). The allusion, then, is between the world’s acknowledgement of God and Israel’s salvation, despite seeming disgrace and adversity in the Exile.

In Rom 15:3, Paul uses part of LXX Ps 68:10. “The insults of those insulting you fell on me.” The psalm is “by David” and describes the suffering of an innocent person. The allusion that the audience would hear is to the resolution of this problem of God’s righteousness, which comes in Ps 68:23-29. The psalmist prays for vengeance that only God can give. But this is not the end of the metalepsis. The conclusion of the psalm (Ps 68:30-37) describes how God hears the poor and will once again restore Zion.

As a final echo of the defense of God’s righteousness, Paul quotes from the Suffering Servant Song of Isaiah: “For those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand” (Isa 52:15; Rom 15:21). Because the servant in the passage was originally interpreted as Israel, Paul can use these words to great effect. He now reinterprets the Suffering Servant as Christ. God handed over the Servant for the guilt of us all (Isa 53:6). This theodicy in Isaiah turns to eschatology for answer. The Servant will see many descendants (Isa 53:10), and he will be named great and will share plunder of the mighty (Isa 53:10).

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52 Paul uses the image of potter and clay in Rom 9:19-29 when he discusses predestination.
53:12). For Paul however, the defense of God’s righteousness has occurred already. Although God once led the Servant into suffering, God has now led the Servant into glory. What remains in the future is the resolution to the suffering endured by the children of God; that glory will wait for the eschaton.

Echoes of theodicy, then, run throughout Romans by way of metalepsis. Most scholars confine Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness to Romans 9–11, where he discusses in detail the problem of Israel and its future. However, as this short survey has shown, the echoes of Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness begin at 1:17, surface again at 3:3, and become explicit at our passage, 8:18-39, where Paul discusses the suffering that all believers experience. After he discusses the situation peculiar to Israel in Romans 9–11, echoes return at 14:11, 15:3, and 15:21. It is essential for the reader to be aware of these moments and their allusions, so that Paul’s identifiable defense of God’s righteousness stands out even more clearly. These echoes are an important background for the message of the letter as a whole: Paul’s gospel of God who is trustworthy.

Conclusion

A text makes sense only within its context, and by examining the various contexts of Rom 8:18-39, I have elucidated its meaning. By remembering that Romans was a letter written to a particular community at a particular time, one can set the text within its historical context. Recognition of this history—and especially its difficulties—can also lead to a better comprehension of the defense of God’s righteousness that Paul makes to the Romans. There is the problem of the acceptance of Paul’s collection, the issue of Jews and Gentiles within
the Roman community, and a possible diplomatic overture on Paul’s part after his incendiary letter to the Galatians.

Just as important as the historical context, the literary context gives shape and meaning to the text. I have more clearly uncovered Paul’s train of thought by identifying both the proximate and remote contexts. In this case, the proximate context is Chapters 5–8, in which Paul talks of God enabling the believer to live in the Spirit, free from condemnation by Sin and the Law. Our passage occurs at the end of this unit and highlights the question of God’s righteousness, because believers suffer even though they enjoy the gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul’s answer is the eschatological triumph of God’s love for all who believe. The remote context consists of the entire letter. Paul has set out to defend his gospel, but is actually defending God’s righteousness. Countering accusations that his gospel proclaims a God who is not trustworthy, Paul demonstrates that God is faithful and merciful. His view takes in all of salvation history and finds particular expression in his exhortation to the Roman community to live as one. They have been divided along certain religious lines, but Paul encourages them to welcome one another as Christ has welcomed each one.

Finally, the reader must also be alert to the allusive echoes of theodicy throughout the letter. These echoes provide a subtle background within which Paul can discuss human suffering and divine faithfulness. Paul uses quotations from Scripture, and each one acts through metalepsis to “remind” the reader of theodicy in some other context. The effect is a building of references and allusions, so that when theodicy comes to the fore—as it does in Rom 8:18-39 and Romans 9–11—the reader is prepared for the discussion.
Having examined these various contexts, we begin the exegesis of the passage in the next chapter. The exegesis will follow the outline presented above, which views the believer’s participation in salvation history as seen from God’s perspective. The first section of the passage treats present suffering and future glory, and the first unit of this section looks at Pauline theodicy in light of the resurrection from the dead.
Chapter Three

Pauline Theodicy in Light of the Resurrection from the Dead

Introduction

Paul’s encounter with the risen Christ informed his belief in and understanding of the resurrection from the dead. It is this belief that Paul upholds for the Romans, and in doing so Paul upholds the righteousness of God. Believers can be confident in their future glorification despite suffering in the present because they can be confident in God who is righteous.

In the previous chapter I examined both the historical and literary contexts of Rom 8:18-39. These contexts aid the reader to understand Paul’s message better. In presenting the historical context I explored various elements and situations that would have concerned Paul while he composed Romans. These concerns include the collection for Jerusalem, the hostility between “weak” and “strong” members in the Roman community, and a possible diplomatic overture in his writing to overcome the harshness of his letter to the Galatians. In presenting the literary context, I located the passage first within its proximate context, that is, Romans 5–8, and then within its remote context, which consists of the entire letter. The proximate context describes the believer’s freedom from the power of sin and death, and the gift of the Spirit that God bestows. The remote context includes the many different parts of the letter, from its salutation to its final greetings and doxology. Finally, I introduced the hermeneutical tool of metalepsis or allusion. Through contact with allusive echoes
throughout the text, I showed that the reader is prepared for Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness in Chapter 8.

In this chapter I will explore Rom 8:18-25 and with that text Pauline theodicy in light of the resurrection from the dead. First I will again present the text with my translation, this time with text-critical issues. Next, I consider the limits of the passage and present an outline. After an explanation of the outline, I will proceed to exegete the passage. Then I will examine Paul’s language about God and what it reveals about Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness. Finally I will summarize my findings.

The Text¹

Translation of Rom 8:18-25²

| 18. Λογίζομαι γὰρ ὅτι σὺν ἁξία τὰ παθήματα τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ πρὸς τὴν μέλλουσαν δόξαν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι εἰς ἡμᾶς. | 18. For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory about to be revealed in us. |
| 19. ἡ γὰρ ἀποκαραδοκία τῆς κτίσεως τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεκδέχεται. | 19. For the eager longing of creation awaits the revelation of the children of God. |
| 20. τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη, | 20. For creation was subjected to futility— |

¹ The Greek text is NA²⁷.

² All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.
So that even creation itself will be set free from the slavery to corruption for the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

21. For we know that all creation groans together and is in labor pains together until now;

22. not only that, but also ourselves who possess the firstfruits of the Spirit—even not of its own will, but by the One who subjected it—in hope.

3 F and G witness οὐ̇ν θελοῦσα as an unambiguous correction for the adjective έκων, which as Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 414) and Fitzmyer (Romans, 507) translate, carries a nuance of fault. I prefer the translation I have provided.

4 The lemma ἐλπίζει appears 14 times in Romans, twice with the elided preposition ἐπ’ before the dative form of ἐλπίζω (4:18, 5:12). This elision without aspiration appears in P46, A, B2, C, D5, 33, 1739, 1881, 32. It is probably a scribal correction of the aspirated form of ἐλπίζω which appears nowhere else in the NT. It is witnessed by P46, M, B*, D*, F, G, Ψ. Francis T. Gignac (Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods, vol. 1: Phonology [Milano: Cisalpino, 1976] 136 & n. 2) attests that this form appears in Greek and Roman nonliterary papyri of the time, and the loanword from Coptic has an aspirated /h/. See also BDF §14.

5 The conjunction ὅτι appears in P46, A, B, C, D2, Ψ, 0289, 33, 1739, 1881, 32. However, διότι, which carries a more causal tone (“because”) is attested by M, D*, F, G, 945, pc. It is most likely a case of dittography from the preceding word ἐλπίζω. The shorter ὅτι is the more difficult reading, which I prefer. Nonetheless, Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 415), Dunn (Romans 1–8, 471), and Fitzmyer (Romans, 509) translate it with the causal tone. I agree with Byrne (Romans, 261) that ὅτι has a meaning of result.

6 Only F and G witness ὄδυνε, which seems to be an anomalous form of ὄδυνω, to be in pain.
limits of the passage and the outline

the portion of the text i consider in this chapter begins at 8:18 with a γὰρ explanatory clause. in 8:17, paul has written about the inheritance that awaits the children of god if only they suffer with christ. in 8:18, however, he contrasts this suffering with the glory that will be revealed in us. this γὰρ explanatory clause is important, then, in that it allows paul to move from certain suffering to incomparable glory and thus engage the question of god’s righteousness. believers place their hope in god’s righteousness, and god justifies this hope through their resurrection from the dead. paul discusses this hope in rom 8:24-25. this marks the end of the passage because rom 8:26 begins paul’s discussion of

we ourselves—groan within ourselves awaiting adoption, the redemption of our body.

24. For in hope we were saved. But hope of that which is seen is not hope—for who hopes for what he sees? 25. But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance.
the Spirit and how it helps us in our weakness. An outline of the passage will illustrate
Paul’s train of thought for this text.

**Theodicy in Light of the Resurrection from the Dead (8:18-25)**

- The Eager Expectation of Creation and the Revelation of Glory (8:18-19)
- Creation’s Own Subjection (8:20-21)
- The Groaning of Creation (8:22)
- The Groaning of Believers (8:23)
- The Role of Hope (8:24-25)

**Explanation of the Outline**

Romans 8:18-30 describes present suffering and future glory, and within this text 8:18-25 discusses theodicy in light of the resurrection from the dead. First, Paul considers that the suffering of the present not to be worthy of the glory that will be revealed in believers (8:18). He then portrays creation as awaiting that glory that will be the revelation of the children of God, the glory that will be their resurrected bodies (8:19). Paul describes creation as subjected to futility, but he also introduces the topic of hope (8:20). Creation’s hope is not only for the children of God but for itself, because it will share the freedom of the glory of those children (8:21). Paul then casts creation’s eager expectation in terms of groaning and labor pains (8:22). However, it is not only creation that groans so; believers do, too, while they await the redemption of their body (8:23). Paul returns to the theme of hope by declaring that in hope believers were saved. No one can hope in what he sees (8:24) but if one does not see, then he hopes, awaiting with endurance (8:25).

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8 Hahne (Corruption and Redemption, 353) notes that in this passage, Paul alternates between the dual themes of suffering and glory.
Exegesis of the Passage

The Eager Expectation of Creation and the Revelation of Glory (8:18-19)

Paul begins this passage by stating his belief that current sufferings do not compare with future glory. His explanatory γὰρ clause, “For I consider,” signals a comparative phrase.\(^9\) Paul makes a similar statement in 2 Cor 4:17: “This momentary insignificant distress of ours prepares us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” The sufferings of the present time are those that God’s children share with Christ in order to share his inheritance (Rom 8:17).\(^10\) The revelation that will appear in believers, then, is the inheritance that Christ already enjoys, namely, his glory.

The παθήματα that believers endure are not the ordinary daily sufferings of life but those that are suffered with Christ (8:17).\(^11\) Paul provides a list of the sufferings he has endured for the sake of Christ in 2 Corinthians, including labor, imprisonment, beatings, and brushes with death.

From the Jews I received five times forty lashings less one, three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; I spent a night at sea; on frequent journeys, dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my race, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers in the sea, dangers among false brothers; in hard work and labor, in much sleeplessness, in hunger and thirst, in frequent fasting, in cold and nakedness. Besides

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\(^9\) The only other time he uses this phrase (λογιζομαι γὰρ) in the first person is 2 Cor 11:5 as he compares himself to the “superapostles.”

\(^10\) Nigel Watson (“‘And If Children, Then Heirs’ (Rom 8:17)—Why Not Sons?” [AusBR 45 (2001)] 53-56) argues that Roman inheritance law was inclusive of daughters as well as sons, so the correct translation of υἱοί in these verses is “children.”

\(^11\) Here I disagree with Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 511) who believes that Paul uses παθήματα to mean regular daily hardships. Cranfield (Epistle to the Romans 1-8, 409) restricts the sufferings in this verse to those that suffered with Christ; however, “in vv. 19-22 the range of interest is much wider. They are τοῦ νῦν καὶ ἐρχόμενον.” That is, they will be concluded with the Parousia. I agree with Jewett (Romans, 510) who states that “these particular sufferings are a sign of eschatological solidarity with Christ.” See also Fitzmyer (Romans, 506).
these other things, every day there is before me the anxiety for all the churches. (2 Cor 11: 24-28)

Paul endures these sufferings for the sake of Christ, and he fully expects that other believers will have their share of hardship in Christ as well. Suffering in the Christian life, therefore, is not contingent upon circumstances or vocation, but necessary.\(^{12}\) The cruciform pattern of life in believers (Rom 8:17-18) is related to but also surpassed by the glory yet to be revealed in those same believers.

The sufferings are to be endured only for the present time, ὁ νῦν καὶ ὁ παρόντος. Paul uses this term two other times in Romans (3:26, 11:5) and once in 2 Corinthians (8:14). It indicates that he views the present period of time to be temporary and of short duration. He contrasts it with the acceptable time of Christ that has already broken into history (the νῦν ἡ ἡμέρα of Rom 3:21; 5:9, 11; 6:19, 21, 22; 7:6, 17; 8:1, 22; 11:30, 31; 13:11; 15:23, 25; 16:26). Paul’s statement that the breaking of the new age of glory into the old age of sin and suffering represents his belief that the end time has arrived with God’s righteous act in Christ.\(^{13}\)

Thus, Paul writes of the glory about to be revealed.\(^{14}\) This glory is the glorification of believers or, as 8:23 states, the redemption of their bodies. This glorification which is already possessed by Christ is the resurrection from the dead. It is the undoing of the sin mentioned in 3:23 (“for all sinned and lack the glory of God”). God’s answer to this

\(^{12}\) J. Christiaan Beker (“Suffering and Triumph in Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” HBT 7 [1985] 105-19, here 111) maintains that “the call to suffering is here a call by the Spirit and involves the communal solidarity and activity of the Body of Christ on behalf of God’s redemptive plan for his creation.”

\(^{13}\) Paul does not use the term “the age to come” but does use the phrase “new creation” in Gal 6:15 and 2 Cor 5:17.

\(^{14}\) As Lambrecht (“The Groaning of Creation,” 4) writes, “In reality it is not the suffering but the glory that gets the attention, more specifically, the ardent, impatient looking forward to the revelation of glory.”
predicament is to destine humanity to glory in the eschaton.\footnote{Rom 11:32, “For God has locked everyone in disobedience, so that he might have mercy on everyone.”} Thus, God is faithful despite human sinfulness. Paul believes that this glorification will happen soon—even within his lifetime. In 1 Thess 4:15 he writes, “For this I tell you by a word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, certainly will not precede those who have fallen asleep.” Paul’s expectation is that he will live to see Christ return and to partake in the revelation of glory that cannot compare with present suffering.

Paul’s use of ἀποκάλυψις in 8:18 and ἀποκάλυψις in 8:19 signals a revelation, an apocalypse. Albert Schweitzer was the first to claim that apocalypticism was the common thread that binds Paul to the teaching of Jesus.\footnote{Albert Schweitzer (Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History [London: Adam and Charles Black, 1912] x-xi, 244) calls the basis of the Gospel “Jewish-eschatological.” In this work he reexamines the scholarship on Paulinism up to his day.} Schweitzer believed that Jesus was an eschatological prophet, and that the only way to make sense of Paul’s teachings in the light of Christ was to focus on the eschatological message of both Jesus and Paul. Ernst Käsemann later declared that “Apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology.”\footnote{Ernst Käsemann (“The Beginnings of Christian Theology” in New Testament Questions of Today [London: SCM, 1969] 100) disagreed with his teacher Rudolf Bultmann (“The New Testament and Mythology” in Kerygma and Myth, ed. H. W. Bartsch [London: SPCK, 1953] 1.1-44) who held that Paul used Gnostic mythology for his apocalyptic, even though Paul himself was not a Gnostic.} With that statement he brought a scholarly focus once more to bear on a point of theology that had long remained dormant. Later still, J. Christiaan Beker sought to find the coherency of Paul’s gospel amid the contingency of his letters.\footnote{Beker (Paul the Apostle, 33) states that “coherent core and contingent contextualism constitute a dialectical movement in Paul’s thought in which those elements continually interact.”} He determined that “the apocalyptic
interpretation of the Christ-event constitutes the coherent center of Paul’s gospel."\(^{19}\) This means that apocalyptic thought is the center from which Paul understands the resurrection of Christ, the general resurrection from the dead, the judgment, and the coming reign of God. Most scholars have followed in the path of these three pivotal developments in Pauline scholarship, although not all agree.\(^{20}\)

The use of the word “apocalyptic” varies and it has been used in different ways in scholarship. Therefore, its definition is important. There is a difference between the literary form, or genre, of apocalyptic and its content.\(^{21}\) According to the Society for Biblical Literature Genres Project that was published in *Semeia* 14 (1979), the genre of Apocalypse is one of revelatory literature within a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.\(^{22}\)

\(^{19}\) J. Christiaan Beker, *The Triumph of God: The Essence of Paul’s Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 65: idem, *Paul the Apostle*, 135). Beker also writes (ibid., 143) that “it is my intent to press this new appreciation of apocalyptic for a fresh understanding of Paul, because only a consistent apocalyptic interpretation of Paul’s thought is able to demonstrate its fundamental coherence.”

\(^{20}\) See R. Barry Matlock (*Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul: Paul’s Interpreters and the Rhetoric of Criticism*, [JSNTSup 127; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996] 251) who holds that there are “fundamental interpretive issues where ‘apocalyptic’ is concerned.” Vincent P. Brannick (“Apocalyptic Paul?” *CBQ* 47 [1985] 664-75) goes so far as to state that “this apocalyptic interpretation exhibits a one-sidedness.” His study both examines the usefulness of the apocalyptic hermeneutic and suggests that Paul was open to later forms of “realized eschatology.”


While Rom 8:18-39 involves a separate, supernatural world, since it describes the heavenly court (8:31-39), it lacks a narrative framework and an otherworldly being who transmits this vision to Paul. But that is not the whole of this passage, because Paul also describes this present creation in terms of eschatological salvation. The language he uses is apocalyptic imagery insofar as it describes the tumultuous groaning and labor pains of creation (8:22), and refers to the redemption of the body (8:23). Thus, the genre of this passage is not apocalyptic, although the content is.

This passage contains a view of apocalyptic eschatology, which is characterized by “a transcendent eschatology that looks for retribution beyond the bounds of history.” This eschatology understands Satan and his allies as rulers over a corrupt world order; this view also looks forward to God decisively ending the present order in a cataclysm and replacing it with a new and perfect order which will resemble God’s original creation in its pristine state. Hence, Paul uses “this present evil age” in Gal 1:4. The new age, by contrast, will be one of glory and freedom (Rom 8:21). However, Paul does not envision a cosmic catastrophe for the end of this age. Instead, he describes a redemption of all that is corrupt and enslaved to sin. Since he compares present suffering with future glory, he engages in a type of apocalyptic reflection. He looks beyond the current age toward an age that is to come in its fullness.


24 Klaus Koch (Ratlos vor der Apokalyptik [Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1970]. English trans. *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* [London: SCM, 1972] 28-33) lists eight themes of apocalyptic: (1) urgent expectation of the end of the world in the immediate future; (2) the end will appear as a cosmic catastrophe; (3) the time of this world is divided into different “periods” that are predetermined; (4) armies of angels and demons in hierarchies of order; (5) a new salvation that is paradisal in nature; (6) the Kingdom of God becomes visible on earth; (7) a mediator with royal functions; (8) the prominence of the word “glory” to describe the final state of affairs. However, Koch admits that not all apocalypses have all these elements.
The subject of Rom 8:19 is “eager expectation,” but it is to creation that this expectation belongs. Creation (κτίσις) has as many as eight interpretations. Origen held that Paul meant this word to include only sentient beings, angels and humans. Another possible definition is the angelic world alone. I do not agree with these definitions because angels are not subject to corruption, to which κτίσις is clearly subjected in 8:21. Augustine wrote that creation in these verses refers to the human believer. A fourth view is that creation has in view all humanity, and a fifth holds that creation encompasses all humanity with sub-human creation. I do not agree with these definitions either, because 8:23 refers to “we” apart from creation, and so Paul cannot mean to include believers. A sixth definition of creation could mean all human unbelievers together with all created non-human material, and a seventh is all unbelievers only. I do not agree with these definitions because non-believers do not wait in eager anticipation for the revelation of the children of God, as creation does in 8:19. The eighth and final possibility for a definition is all created non-sentient material, and with this meaning I agree. The following diagram illustrates these definitions and my rebuttals:

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25 Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 411) lists the most possible definitions at eight: all creation including all sentient beings, all humanity, unbelieving humanity only, believers only, angels only, sub-human nature together with the angels, humanity and sub-human nature together, and sub-human nature only. Byrne (Romans, 255) lists five: all creation including believers, all creation except believers, non-human created world, all humanity, and angelic world. Christoffersson (Earnest Expectation, 19-21, 33-36) has three main groupings: universal, cosmic, and anthropological.

26 Augustine (Augustine on Romans, 53) wrote, “This is not to be understood simply as meaning that trees, vegetables, stones and the like sorrow and sigh–this is the error of the Manichaeans–nor should we think that the holy angels are subject to vanity or that they will be set free from the slavery of death, since they are immortal. Here ‘the creation’ means the human race.”

27 Hahne (“Corruption and Redemption,” 353) states that κτίσις is equivalent to the term “nature.”
| (1) angels. . . . . . . . . . | and humans | 8:21 subject to corruption, so cannot include angels |
| (2) angels alone | | |
| (3) human believer | with sub-human creation | 8:23 “we” are believers, so cannot be all humanity |
| (4) all humanity | | |
| (5) all humanity. . . | | |
| (6) all unbelievers. . | with sub-human creation | 8:19 waits for revelation, so cannot be unbelievers |
| (7) all unbelievers only | | |

Paul’s use of κτίσις later in the passage helps to guide my decision. In 8:22 Paul writes of πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις, and therefore he must intend all of creation. Additionally, in 8:20 creation is subjected against its will. The absence of volition suggests that this definition of creation cannot include human beings since humanity chose to sin (Gen 3:6; Rom 1:21-23; 3:23). Therefore, the definition that best fits κτίσις is all created non-sentient material. This definition also agrees with Paul’s use in Rom 1:20 of κτίσις, which is the created world that humans are able to perceive and that glorifies God. κτίσις is the original context for the flourishing of humanity and, Paul assures believers, will be the renewed context for a glorified humanity.

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28 I disagree with Käsemann (Commentary on Romans, 233) who writes, “There can be no doubt that non-Christians are included.” Scholars with whom I agree are Byrne (Romans, 256), Cranfield (Romans 1-8, 411-12), Fitzmyer (Romans, 506), Jewett (Romans, 511), Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 514), and Wright (Romans, 596). Scholars who agree with Käsemann include John G. Gibbs (Creation and Redemption: A Study in Pauline Theology [NovTSup 26; Leiden: Brill, 1971] 40), Susan Eastman (“Whose Apocalypse? The Identity of the Sons of God in Rom 8:19” JBL 121 [2002] 275), Arland J. Hultgren (Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011] 321), and Beverly Roberts Gaventa (Our Mother, Saint Paul [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007] 54) who writes, “This text and the larger context suggest that creation does include all of humanity along with the remainder of creation” (italics original).
The term ἀποκαραδοκία requires a definition. Its only other occurrence in the NT is Paul’s use of it in Phil 1:20 where its meaning is eager longing and it is linked to hope.²⁹ However, Theodore of Mopsuestia wrote, “καραδοκεῖν λέγεται τὸ ἐλπιζεῖν, ἀποκαραδοκεῖν δὲ τὸ ἀπελπιζεῖν” (καραδοκεῖν is read as hoping, but ἀποκαραδοκεῖν as despairing).³⁰ I disagree, since eager longing characterizes this text, not anxiety as dread.³¹ Together with ἀπεκδέχεσθαι, which means eagerly awaiting, Paul depicts a creation that is keenly expectant about what God is to reveal soon.

The revelation is μελλονυσιν δόξαν, and therefore in the future. Revelation, ἀποκάλυψις, means an uncovering, and the scene Paul describes is of all creation eagerly awaiting the removal of the veil which covers the future, alive with eager anticipation that what God will reveal will be good.³² Just as everything that God had created was originally “very good” (Gen 1:31), the final revelation of humanity will be “glorious.” The grammatical subject of the sentence is the eager longing of creation, thereby personifying creation as joining with believers in their hope for justification. This revelation will also take place through an act of God. It is God who is the agent in these verses, for it is God who removes the veil and it is God who will glorify believers.

²⁹ Fitzmyer (Romans, 507) suggests that Paul may have invented this word himself. Gerhard Delling (“Ἀποκαραδοκία,” TDNT, 1.393) states that “There are no instances of the term except in Christian literature.” He also indicates the link with ἐλπίς in Phil 1:20 and here in Rom 8:19, 24. See also Bertram Georg (“Ἀποκαραδοκία,” ZNW 49 [1958] 264-70, here 264) who states that this word belongs in the same semantic field as “hope.”


³¹ Cranfield (Epistle to the Romans, 410) writes that “the basic idea . . . is that of stretching of the neck, craning forward.”

³² Dunn (Romans, 470) writes, “The thought may be paralleled to that of a play in which the final curtain is drawn back to reveal the various actors transformed (back) into their real characters—creation being, as it were, the audience eagerly watching the human actors play their parts on the world stage.”
The δόξα for which believers and creation wait is the ἀνομία of God. It is the quality which belongs to God and should be accorded to God (Rom 1:21, 23; 3:7; 4:20; 9:23; 11:36; 15:6, 7, 9; 16:27). Humans may take part in this glory through participation (2:7, 10; 9:4, 23), but its source is God. Humanity does not yet perceive this glory in full, nor share in it fully. It still awaits the adoption of which Paul writes in 8:15. While believers already have this adoption in part, it will be fully revealed at their glorification. At present they possess the Spirit of Christ which is able to call out to the Father, but this possession is only the first fruits of the glory they await (8:23). Their complete adoption will be the redemption of their body, namely, the resurrection from the dead.

Creation’s Own Subjection (8:20-21)

Paul writes that creation was subjected to futility; he uses a theological passive (ὑπετάγη) to indicate that it is God who subjects it. The futility that creation now experiences is directly related to the futility of human reasoning that has led to idolatry (1:21-23). Because of humanity’s insistence on making creation what it was not meant to be, God has subjected it to futility (ματαιοτητης). This term is the LXX translation for ἀνομία, which

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33 Cranfield (Romans 1-8, 409 and n. 3) holds that this glory is already possessed in full; it is just not revealed as yet. Dunn (Romans 1-8, 468), however, disagrees. He maintains that “to understand at this point a present glory distorts and weakens the whole suffering-vindication motif on which Paul is evidently drawing here.” Jewett (Romans, 510-11) likens glory to the modern conception of “stardom” in which a person shines above others. He writes that Paul means his audience to understand “in the glowing faces around the circle of early Christian love feasts, the proleptic evidence” of God’s restoration of creation to glory.

34 Again, Cranfield (Romans 1-8, 409) writes that believers are already υἱοὶ θεοῦ (8:14) and all that remains is the revelation of their status. I disagree with his position, as it does not make sense of 5:2 (“we boast in the hope of the glory of God”). Neither does it take seriously Paul’s discourse on hope in 8:24-25.

35 I disagree with Byrne (Romans, 259-61) who holds that the original subdivider was Adam, and that the final subdivider will be the “last Adam,” that is, Christ. This view is also held by Sanday and Headlam (Critical and Exegetical Commentary, 208). In any case, it is not Roman imperialism, as Jewett (Romans, 513) makes clear. Lambrecht (“The Groaning of Creation,” 8) discounts Satan as a possibility. Neither Adam nor Satan can subject “in hope.”
occurs most prominently in Eccl 1:2 (ματαιότης ματαιότητων εἶπεν ὁ Ἑκκλησιαστής, ματαιότης ματαιότητων τὰ πάντα ματαιότης). The word means “vanity,” “confounding,” or “futility.” Its result is an object that suffers the frustration of not operating correctly.36

Because of human insistence on creation bearing the burden of being godlike, it now labors under the weight of this futility. It is not yet free to be the context for a glorified humanity.37

These verses recall Gen 3:17-19, where God curses the ground because of Adam and Eve’s sin, even though the ground itself did not sin.38 4 Ezra 7:11 represents the apocalyptic tradition of this theme, “For I made the world for their sake, and when Adam transgressed my statutes, what had been made was judged.”39 The corruption of creation is linked with humanity’s corruption which is also mentioned in 4 Ezra 9:19-20:

> But now those who have been created in his world, which is supplied both with an unfailing table and an inexhaustible pasture, have become corrupt in their ways. So I considered my world, and behold, it was lost, and my earth, and behold it was in peril because of the devices of those who had come into it.”

Paul writes, however, that God has subjected creation in hope. Hope is the opposite of futility. Creation’s hope can be likened to Abraham’s “hoping against hope” in 4:18.40

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36 Dunn (Romans 1-8, 470) likens futility to an object which has “been given a role for which it was not designed and which is unreal or illusory.”

37 O. Bauernfeind (“ματαιος, κτι.” TDNT 4.523) notes that unlike Qohelet, Paul writes with authority of a κτίσις beyond ματαιότης.

38 Jewett (Romans, 513) writes that the divine passive “points to God’s action in response to Adam’s fall.”

39 Osten-Sacken, (Römer 8, 78-101, here 88) searches for Vorpaulinisches Traditions gut for 8:18-27. He maintains that in 8:20 Paul has inserted “hope” into a tradition that already existed. I agree with Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 514) who states that “Paul probably knows of these traditions but gives little indication of dependence on them.”

40 Käsemann (Romans, 235) writes that ἀποκαραδοκία “does not accept the earthly status quo and whether it knows it or not is in quest of eschatological freedom. See also Osten-Sacken (Römer, 102).
Abraham hoped in God “who gives life to the dead and calls into being the things that are not” (4:17). In a similar way, creation now waits for the life-giving power of God to reverse its situation.

Freedom from the futility of idolatry is only part of what creation awaits. It also awaits freedom from slavery to corruption. This will not be a new creation, as much apocalyptic writing describes, but the same creation, only free.\(^41\) Here, again, creation presently shares humanity’s lot as φθαρτός, in contradistinction to God who is ἄφθαρτος (1:23).\(^42\) This slavery to φθορά will end only at the eschaton, when all believers are freed for glory. Humanity, however, does not exist without a context, and thus creation will appropriately be freed to be the fitting home for the redeemed and glorified children of God.\(^43\)

The allusive echo that Paul suggests is the Genesis story in which humanity hears the command of God, “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth” (Gen 1:28). This subduing and dominion of humanity over creation is the rightful place for both. At the glorious revelation of the children of God, believers will take their place as stewards of creation, as God intended from the beginning.\(^44\)

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\(^41\) This in contrast to what Paul writes in 2 Cor 5:16-17, where he describes those who are in Christ as καινὴ κτίσις, a new creation.

\(^42\) Günther Harder (“φθείρως, κτάλ..,” TDNT 9.93-106, here 104) notes this antithesis, as does Fitzmyer (Romans, 508).

\(^43\) Matera (Romans, 201) maintains that “just as humanity does not exist apart from creation, neither does creation exist apart from humanity. The fate of each is intimately related to the other.”

\(^44\) Wright (Romans, 596) states that humanity’s stewardship corresponds to being made in God’s image and will now find its rightful place again when glorified in the resurrection.
The Groaning of Creation (8:22)

Paul begins this verse with οἴδαμεν, which could signal common knowledge among his audience. I suggest, however, that Paul uses this word in a heuristic way, to point out to his audience what they should know. In this case, the knowledge may have included Jewish apocalyptic eschatology. The groaning of all creation may refer to the “messianic woes” that are to precede the end times. These woes will be a time of cosmic suffering and great distress.

There will be a time of tribulation such as has never happened from the beginning until that time. (Dan 12:1)

Similar descriptions are in 1 Enoch 62:4-5; 4 Ezra 5:1-13; 6:13-24; 9:1-7; 10:6-16; Sib. Or. 1:162-65; 2:154-73; 3:632-56, 796-806; 2 Apoc. Bar. 25:2-3; 26:1–27:15; 48:30-41. NT references to this idea may be found in Mark 13:8, 19, 24-25 (and parallels); John 16:21; and Rev 6:12-17. However, these woes were meant for humanity and not for creation, for it was humanity that sinned.

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45 Paul uses this word also in 2:2, 3:19, 7:14, 8:28.

46 Dunn (Romans 1-8, 472) and Cranfield (Romans 1-8, 416) maintain that Paul intends Jewish apocalyptic, whereas Jewett (Romans, 516) and Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 518) hold that Paul means the general corruption of nature.

47 Lambrecht (“Groaning Creation,” 13) holds this view, but Fitzmyer (Romans, 509) writes that this is debatable, since the “idea of ‘woes of the Messiah’ is known from later rabbinical literature” but it is not sure that Paul would have known the idea. Moo (“Isaiah’s Cosmic Covenant,” 83) holds that there is not any indication of creation’s groaning intensifying because of an imminent end. Instead, he suggests that Paul is adapting a more basic biblical image that may have given rise to the messianic woes tradition.

48 Byrne (Romans, 261) points out that “much of this material is later than Paul, reflecting the destruction of Jerusalem.”

49 Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 517 and n. 50) remarks that while Paul makes some statements about creation in these verses, “his focus is consistently on anthropology.”
The personification of creation occurs throughout the OT, for example, in Isa 35:1-10. This passage describes the desert exulting and rejoicing with singing at the return of the exiles. Paul similarly writes about the personification of creation as it stands in solidarity with humanity, both cursed because of humanity’s sin and in hopeful anticipation of humanity’s salvation. Humanity and the cosmos belong to God’s creation, and as such must receive their salvation from God. While they still await that salvation, they groan together.

This solidarity and groaning have an allusive echo in Isa 24:4-6:

The earth mourns (ἐπενθησεν) and withers (ἐφθάρη),
the world mourns (ἐπενθασαν) heaven and earth together;
The earth is defiled by its inhabitants,
for they have trespassed the law,
changed the ordinances,
broken the eternal covenant.
Because of this a curse devours the earth,
so that they who dwell there grow poor,
and there are few people left.

This passage captures both the groaning of creation and the corruption to which it was subjected.

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50 Hahne, *Corruption and Redemption*, 340. He goes on to say that “the most common type of personification in the Jewish apocalyptic materials is anthropopathism, i.e., ascribing human emotions to inanimate objects” (341). Another example of this is Isa 55:12, “Mountains and hills will break into a ringing cry before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.”

51 Gibbs (*Creation and Redemption*, 41) writes that the whole creation “takes part in the Heils geschichte” of the children of God.

52 Donald E. Gowan (“The Fall and Redemption of the Material World in Apocalyptic Literature” *HBT* 7 [1985] 83-103, here 86) states that it is usual to focus on the anthropocentric aspects of the fall of creation due to human sin, but “occasionally there appears an indication of concern about the well-being of the non-human world in its own right.”
Jonathan Moo maintains that there are a number of thematic links and verbal parallels with Rom 8:19-22 and Isaiah 24–27. He suggests that Paul has used Isaiah 24–27 as the primary source of the description of the corruption and groaning of creation. This chart demonstrates the specific verbal links:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isa 24:1 καταφθείρει</th>
<th>Rom 8:21 φθοράς</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24:3 φθοραὶ φθαρήσεται</td>
<td>8:22 συστενάζει</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24:7 στενάζουσιν</td>
<td>8:23 στενάζομεν</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 24:14 δόξη</td>
<td>8:26 στεναγμοῖς</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isa 24:15 δόξα</td>
<td>8:18 δόξαν</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 24:23 δοξασθῆσεται</td>
<td>8:21 δόξης</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 24:16 ἐλπίς</td>
<td>8:20 ἐλπίδι</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:17 ὡδίνουσα, ὡδίνι</td>
<td>8:24 ἐλπίς (2), ἐλπίζει</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:18 ὡδίνησαμεν</td>
<td>8:22 συνωδίνει</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are thematic parallels as well as verbal links. Isaiah 24–27 has many elements of apocalyptic literature. It describes a judgment of the world because of sin, a personification of the world in response to God’s judgment, the awaiting of the revelation of God’s glory, the theme of hope, imagery of laboring to give birth, death’s defeat, and life after death. Accordingly, this passage depicts the Lord’s judgment of both the earth and the cosmos because of the guilt of their inhabitants (Isa 24:1-23). The righteous await the

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53 Moo, “Isaiah’s Cosmic Covenant,” 74, also 84-87.

54 Moo (ibid., 84) holds that “each of these motifs may of course be found elsewhere, but nowhere are they all brought together and linked in quite the same way as they are in Isaiah 24–27.”
Day of the LORD and are in labor for salvation to dawn upon earth (Isa 25:1-5, 9; 26:1-19). However, the “dead will live and their bodies rise;” those who sleep in the dust will awake and sing. The earth will give birth to its shades (Isa 26:19). “The earth will uncover the blood upon her, and no longer hide her slain” (Isa 26:21). During the LORD’s rule, he will prepare a feast on his holy mountain. He will destroy death forever (Isa 25:8) and wipe away the tears from every face. On that day, a great trumpet will blow, and all the exiles will return to worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem (Isa 27:13). Because of the similarity of these passages, I suggest that Paul drew on Isaiah 24–27 for material in Rom 8:18-25.  

The Groaning of Believers (8:23)

While awaiting their revelation, believers groan together with creation. Paul places himself in this camp by writing “we ourselves.” His words indicate a unity with creation. While the cosmos groans, so too do those who are in Christ and whose lives are marked by the Spirit. Paul writes about believers groaning in 2 Cor 5:2, 4 as well. There, he writes about being out of the body or in the state of life after death, but before the resurrection. In Rom 8:23, believers groan because they possess the Spirit, demonstrating the Spirit’s role in anticipating the culmination of life in Christ rather than simply “as the agent of present blessing.” However, believers will receive their bodies back at the resurrection in a

55 Laurie Braaten (“The Groaning Creation: The Biblical Background for Romans 8:22,” BR 50 [2005] 19-40, here 33) maintains that because Paul frequently used material from Isaiah in Romans, “it is probably not a coincidence that there are similarities in thought and vocabulary between Isa 24 and Rom 8.”

56 Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 520) thus interprets ἐκκοιτει in a causal sense rather than a concessive one. In this, he agrees with Dunn (Romans 1-8, 473) against Käsemann (Romans, 237).
glorified state, and it is this destiny for which believers currently groan. Because believers are embodied creatures, their redemption happens only in the context of the redemption of creation as a whole.\textsuperscript{57} God’s intention for all creation is freedom from sin, death, and decay, and the salvation of nature is contingent upon the salvation of the children of God as God originally intended them.\textsuperscript{58} Conversely, the redemption of the children of God happens only at and in the context of the redemption of creation as God has destined it.\textsuperscript{59} Thus, “\textit{Urzeit} and \textit{Endzeit} will correspond to each other,” and God’s triumph in the eschaton will only underscore the original intention of goodness in God’s creation.\textsuperscript{60}

Believers possess the firstfruits of the Spirit. Firstfruits (\(\alpha\pi\rho\chi\nu\)) are the first portion of a harvest that are offered to God (e.g., Lev 2:12; 23:10; Num 15:20, 21; 18:12; Deut 18:4; 26:2, 10; 2 Chron 31:5; Neh 10:38). They are similar to a down payment or guarantee.\textsuperscript{61} They indicate that what has begun will come to completion. In this case, it is God who offers the firstfruits of the harvest of salvation to believers. Thus, what the Spirit has begun to work in believers will come to its fullness.\textsuperscript{62} The beginnings of salvation which believers currently

\textsuperscript{57} Beker (\textit{Triumph of God}, 26-27) writes that there is a “profound solidarity and interdependence not only among the people of the world, but also between my ‘inner world,’ my ‘social world,’ and my ‘ecological world.’ God, therefore, will only be then vindicated and people will only then be fully saved when God’s whole creation attains its glorious destiny.”

\textsuperscript{58} J. Christiaan Beker (“Vision of Hope for a Suffering World: Romans 8:17-30,” \textit{PSBSup} 3 [1994] 26-32, here 30) explains that Paul reminds Christians that they are still an “integral part of the unredeemed creation and will remain so until the day of God’s final deliverance.”

\textsuperscript{59} Gibbs (\textit{Creation and Redemption}, 41) states that “the world is not a neutral material but something which God has made. For this reason, Paul’s view of the deliverance of the physical world is not a dispensable footnote to his major proclamation of the gospel.”


\textsuperscript{61} Käsemann (\textit{Romans}, 237) states that the term refers to “a deposit on a purchase.”
experience in the Spirit’s presence in their life guarantees that salvation has a τέλος, and this is the revelation for which all creation is waiting and toward which it groans in anticipation. The eschatological redemption has already begun. It is the glorification of the children of God, namely, the resurrection from the dead.

The glory that will be revealed in believers is properly God’s own that God shares with humanity through the resurrection of his Son. This resurrection is possible because believers already possess the Spirit that makes them alive, even though the body may be dead because of sin (8:10). Resurrection, then, is the fullness of which the firstfruits of the Spirit are a down payment, because believers share the same Spirit by which God raised Christ from the dead (8:11).

Some Jews at the time of Paul believed that, at the end of time, the LORD would raise all people from their graves and judge them. This belief is most apparent in Daniel:

Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake; these to life eternal, and those to shame and eternal horror. But the wise will shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who bring many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. (Dan 12:2-3)

The belief also appears in Hosea:

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62 Dunn (Romans 1-8, 473) draws the analogy of first fruits to its logical conclusion. The harvest is the completion of which the firstfruits are only a part: “in this case the whole is the resurrection of the body, the harvest of dead men and women resurrected.”

63 Hultgren (Paul’s Letter, 324) writes that “believers experience proleptically . . . that which the creation as a whole does not yet know.”

64 John Paul Heil (Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Reader-Response Commentary [Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1987] 3) states that Paul and his Roman audience “both breathed the air of the apocalyptic-eschatological atmosphere that permeated first century Judaism whether in Palestine or in the many diaspora communities strewn throughout the Mediterranean regions.”

65 N. T. Wright (The Resurrection of the Son of God [Christian Origins and the Question of God 3; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003] 109) states that “There is little doubt that this refers to concrete, bodily resurrection.”
Come, let us return to the \textsc{Lord} our God, he has torn us but he will heal us; he has struck us down, but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will restore us, and on the third day he will raise us up that we might live before him. (Hos 6:1-2)\textsuperscript{66}

Ezekiel also has a vision in which he prophesies to a valley of dry bones. They assemble into corpses and the spirit comes and enters them so that they may come to life once more. The \textsc{Lord} says:

\begin{quote}
O my people, I am about to open your graves and raise you from your graves and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you will know that I am the \textsc{Lord}, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people. I will give you my spirit and you will live, and I will place you on your land, and you will know that I am the \textsc{Lord}. I have spoken and I will do it, says the \textsc{Lord}. (Ezek 37:12-14)\textsuperscript{67}
\end{quote}

Resurrection and judgment are part of the retribution for historical situations in which Jews were alienated from power and proper worship. This is the crux of theodicy as the Jews understood it: whether or not God could be faithful to his promises to Israel.\textsuperscript{68} The writings of Isaiah in Babylon and the chronicles of the Maccabees under the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes are examples of Israel’s desire for God to redress wrongs committed against Israel. With the realization that divine justice may not come during this lifetime, there arose

\textsuperscript{66} Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman (\textit{Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary} [AB 24; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980] 420) write that Hosea uses the metaphor of individual death and resurrection for the nation, and thus it is figurative. However, they maintain that “explicit hope for resurrection of the body can hardly be denied in this passage, but commentators have been reluctant to admit it.”

\textsuperscript{67} Moshe Greenberg (\textit{Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary} [AB 22A; New York: Doubleday, 1997] 749-50) maintains that this passage is a metaphor for national restoration of Israel. However, he admits that early Jewish communities, many early Christian communities, and many church fathers found in this passage a proclamation of the resurrection from the dead. “The Peshitta entitles the passage, ‘On the Resurrection of the Dead.’” And in \textit{b. Sanh.} 92b, the rabbis understand a literal resurrection from the dead, whether it was physical or merely in a vision. Only some early Christian sources mention the metaphorical reading for the restoration of Israel.

\textsuperscript{68} Moxnes (\textit{Theology in Conflict}, 38) states that what is at stake is the identity of the Jewish people and “the trustworthiness of God.” Cranfield (\textit{Romans 1-8}, 176-77) similarly writes that it is fundamentally “a question of the credibility of God.”
a belief that God would intervene in history and make a new creation.69 Isaiah writes, “Behold, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth, and the things of the past will not be remembered or come to mind” (Isa 65:17).

Paul’s vision of redemption does not, however, describe a new creation. Indeed, the same creation that Paul knows is groaning and expectant. The groaning of creation is directly linked to the sinfulness of humanity.70 This sinfulness need not refer only to the fall, but in the prophetic literature of the OT it refers to the sinfulness of the people of Israel (Hos 4:1-3; Jer 4:23-28; 12:1-4; 12:7-13; 23:9-12; Joel 1–2; Isa 7:18-25; 13:6-13; 32:10-14; 33:8-9; 34:10-15). As I have already suggested, Paul draws on material from Isaiah 24–27 for his material in Rom 8:18-25. Isaiah describes the earth mourning and languishing because of God’s judgment. The penalty for humanity’s sin is the Exile, and it is not until Israel’s return from the Exile that creation is able to rejoice again with humanity.71 Since Paul writes that the redemption of the children of God means the redemption of creation, I suggest that Paul’s hermeneutic for Rom 8:18-25, and thus for the resurrection from the dead, is the return from the Exile.

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69 Paul D. Hanson (The Dawn of Apocalyptic [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975, 1979] 11) maintains that apocalyptic eschatology finds its roots in prophetic eschatology. In the latter, the prophet proclaims what God intends for his people and the world and how the plans of the divine council will come about through history. Conversely, apocalyptic eschatology carries a pessimistic view of history due to “bleak post-exilic conditions.” The seer therefore discloses the cosmic vision in which Yhwh will act to deliver his people, usually disconnected from history, politics, and human instrumentality.

70 Braaten (“The Groaning Creation,” 34) maintains that the interplay between human sin and divine judgment is directly connected to creation’s fate.

71 William R. Millar (Isaiah 24–27 and the Origin of Apocalyptic [HSM 11; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976] 83) describes the Isaianic Apocalypse in terms of Yhwh’s march to battle the forces of chaos, and of the Second Exodus, the return of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem.
A number of scholars have detected different hermeneutical lenses through which to read Rom 8:18-25.\footnote{Kirk (Unlocking Romans, 133) provides a thorough list of these differing hermeneutics.} Dunn writes of an Adam motif.\footnote{Dunn (Romans 1-8, 467).} Douglas Campbell describes an Abraham theme.\footnote{Douglas Campbell, “The Story of Jesus in Romans and Galatians” in Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment (ed. B. W. Longenecker; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) 97-124, here 115.} Keesmaat and Wright describe the Exodus as the underlying story.\footnote{Keesmaat (Paul and His Story, 97-134); idem, “Exodus and the Intertextual Transformation of Tradition in Romans 8.14-30,” JSNT 54 (1994) 29-56; Wright (Romans, 598).} I propose the return from the Exile as the hermeneutic that makes most sense of this passage for several reasons:

First, the image of earth languishing at humanity’s sinfulness, then rejoicing at its forgiveness is prominent. I have already listed the many passages in Isaiah where creation is depicted as mourning. In addition to Isaiah 24–27, the passages that describe creation’s rejoicing are Isa 4:2-6; 29:17; 30:23-26; 43:19-21; 55:12-13. Especially important is the following passage:

Let the desert and the thirsty land exult; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom like the lily; it will bloom forth and rejoice with joyful song. And the LORD will gather those exiled and they will enter Zion rejoicing, crowned with everlasting joy. Happiness and joy will overwhelm them. Pain and grief and groaning (στεναγμός) will flee away. (Isa 35:1-2, 10)

Second, the image of childbearing is a metaphor for the return of exiles.\footnote{Dan G. Johnson (From Chaos to Restoration: An Integrative Reading of Isaiah 24–27 [JSOTSup 61; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1988] 78) writes that “the imagery of childbirth as a symbol” of the return from the Exile is well known in the Isaianic tradition. Millar (Isaiah 24–27, 113) similarly states that the return from the Exile is combined with a “mythic theme of a sterile creation come back to life.”}
Then you will say in your heart, “Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and avoided. I was left all alone, but where did these come from?” (Isa 49:21)

Rejoice you barren one who did not bear. Break forth and shout out, you who were not in labor (ωδίνωσα); for more numerous are the children of the deserted wife than her who has a husband, says the LORD. (Isa 54:1)

Before she is in labor (ωδίνωσαν) she gives birth; before the birth-pangs (ωδίνων) come upon her, she delivers a male child. Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen something like this? Can the earth be brought forth (φεδρεί) in one day, or a nation be delivered all at once? For as soon as Zion goes into labor (ωδίνει) she brings forth children. (Isa 66:7-8)

Third, at the end of Isaiah 24–27, a great trumpet blows which announces the return of the exiles.

On that day a great trumpet will blow (σαλπίγγι σάλπιγγι γιγάντι μεγάλη) and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were lost in Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem. (Isa 27:13)

Although Paul does not use the image of this trumpet in Romans, he does use it elsewhere:

Behold, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the blink of an eye, at the final trumpet (ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ σάλπιγγί); the trumpet will blow (σαλπίσει) and the dead will be raised incorruptible (ἀσθενοῦσι) and we will be changed. (1 Cor 15:52)

The Lord himself, with a cry of command, and the voice of an archangel, and the trumpet (ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ) of God, will descend from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thess 4:16)

This is an important if subtle intertextual reference. Paul’s use of images from Isaiah 24–27 would lead his audience to its conclusion, namely, the great trumpet blows and the exiles return to Jerusalem. That Paul uses this image in other letters signals that he makes the connection between the return of the exiles and the resurrection from the dead announced by the great, final trumpet. This point leads directly to the next:
Fourth, Isaiah 24–27 ends not only with the return of the exiles (Isa 27:13), it contains a reference to the resurrection from the dead.

Your dead will live, your corpses will rise. Awake and shout, dwellers in the dust! Because the mist is a mist of light, and the land of the dead spirits gives birth. (Isa 26:19)

This passage is a reference to a national resurrection rather than an individual one. It depicts the return of the exiles in terms of the resurrection from the dead. This is because in the Isaianic tradition the Exile is linked with death:

Therefore my people have been made exiles because they do not know the LORD. The multitude has become dead through famine and thirst. And Hades’ enlarged its throat and opened its mouth completely wide. Down go the noble and the great and the rich and those who are festive. (Isa 5:13-14)

Consequently, a return from the Exile is a re-creation, a rebirth. Having punished Israel for its sin, God now welcomes his people back to the home God has always intended for them.

Paul’s use of the word redemption (ἀπολύτρωσις, Rom 8:23) indicates some kind of return. Originally an economic term that means “setting free for a ransom,” pertaining to slaves and prisoners of war, redemption in Rom 8:23 signifies the redemption of the body of believers. In addition to the redemption of the individual bodies of believers, Paul writes of the redemption of the body as a whole. This unity corresponds to the corporate resurrection in Isa 26:19. Thus, Paul turns the metaphor around; the resurrection from the dead in Isaiah stands for the return from Exile, but now Paul uses the return from the Exile to signify the resurrection from the dead.

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77 Johnson (From Chaos to Restoration, 81) writes that just as God first created life out of chaos, so again will he re-create life out of the Exile.

Fifth, in the history of Israel, the Exile and its prophesied return was the hermeneutic for reading Isaiah. The book was read synchronically and not diachronically. Because Paul was using material from Isaiah, as I have suggested, then the Exile would be in his mind. His use of Isaianic material would have shaped his language and his thinking about redemption and the revelation of glory.

Thus, return from the Exile is the most appropriate hermeneutic from which to read Rom 8:18-25. It accounts for the different images that are found also in Isaiah 24–27, and provides a framework for understanding Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness. Paul argues that God is indeed faithful to his promises, and that all creation is yearning toward its fulfillment. Creation and believers groan together for the revelation of the children of God. When this happens, God will reveal believers as God’s children and creation will be freed from its slavery to frustration and corruption.

It is by divine intervention that the eschaton comes about and not through human activity. Thus, God is the principal agent in history. Paul writes that all creation is in labor

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79 Other scholars have demonstrated the connection between NT writings and Isaiah’s portrayal of the return from the Exile, among them Rikki E. Watts (Isaiah’s New Exodus and Mark; [WUNT 2/88; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997]) and David W. Pao (Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000]).

80 J. Ross Wagner (“Isaiah in Romans and Galatians” in Isaiah in the New Testament [ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken; London: T & T Clark, 2005] 117-32, here 129) writes that “Paul turns to Isaianic texts that speak of Israel’s deliverance from judgment and exile and finds there prophetic prefigurations both of the redemption God has now accomplished for Jews and gentiles in Christ and of the mission of those called to proclaim God’s salvation to the ends of the earth.” Idem, (Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans [Boston: Brill, 2002] 31 and n.110) states that “we do not have a Pauline exposition of Isaiah” but rather reflections on some of the prophetic text in response to the contingencies of the communities to which he writes.

81 David E. Aune (“Apocalypticism,” in The Dictionary of Paul and His Letters; ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne et al. [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993] 31) states that “salvation history and apocalyptic eschatology must not be considered antithetical, since the latter is simply a more specific and particular version of the former.”
together, but Isaiah writes that humanity cannot give birth to anything but wind (Isa 26:18).

“We cannot produce salvation on the earth.” It is only God who brings salvation to birth, for God “brings the dead to life and calls into being those things that are not” (Rom 4:17). Therefore, God causes creation to participate in the resurrection from the dead, for the resurrection brings forth the body of believers in the great revelation that it eagerly awaits.

The Role of Hope (8:24-25)

Hope is the opposite of futility, specifically the futility Paul describes in Romans 1–3. Humanity is mired in sin and creation is made futile by humanity’s perversion of its original purpose. Paul writes of this hope in Rom 5:4-5; hope is produced by proven character and it does not disappoint because the love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.82

This hope for what is not seen puts the believer in the same situation as Abraham who trusted in God and therefore it was accounted to him as righteousness. At the time of God’s promise to Abraham, he was a hundred years old, practically already dead, and the womb of his wife was dead as well (Rom 4:19). In a similar way, believers die with Christ in baptism (6:3) and now await the same resurrection that he experienced. Their hold on this promise is based solely on their belief in the resurrection of Christ. While this resurrection is visible in the risen Christ, it is not yet visible or tangible in the life of believers. Therefore, believers must cling to the hope that God will be faithful to his promises. Like Abraham, they “hope against hope” (4:18). While they await their revelation as the children of God, they together with creation groan and suffer. But the suffering of the believers is united to the crucified

82 I agree with Augustine, Luther, and Wright (Romans, 517) that ἀγάπη του θεοῦ is an objective, not subjective genitive. That is, it is the love the believer has for God. In this I disagree with Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 304), Dunn (Romans 1–8, 252), and Jewett (Romans, 356).
Christ; therefore, their hope lies in his cross and resurrection. Their existence in this age is marked by the Spirit, and while they await the new age in its fullness, hope becomes the hallmark of their lives.

This hope is utter dependence upon God’s faithfulness. Unlike human faithfulness that can be abrogated, God’s faithfulness does not fail. Even when believers are unfaithful, God is still faithful to his promises (3:3-4). “God must be true even though every person be a liar.” It is in this hope that Paul is able to claim that believers are already saved.

Hope looks to the future, while memory looks to the past. For this reason, it is interesting that Paul writes of salvation already granted in hope. He uses the aorist passive ἐσώθηκα (we were saved). Throughout his correspondence, Paul usually writes of salvation as something which is still awaited (Rom 5:9, 10; 9:27; 10:1, 9, 10, 13; 11:11, 14, 26; 13:11; 1 Cor 3:15; 5:5; 7:16; 9:22; 10:33; 1 Thess 2:16; 5:9; Phil 1:28; 2:12; 3:20).83 However, here he makes the claim that believers are proleptically saved by the Christ event.84 Paul uses the dative τῇ ἐλπίδι as instrumental. Believers share in the salvation that the Christ event offers through hope.

This accomplishment of hope in 8:25 brings to fulfillment its introduction in 5:1-11. In that passage, believers boast in the hope of the glory of God (5:2) and it is produced by proven character. Believers can even boast of their afflictions because hope does not put

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83 These references are from the seven uncontested letters. Within the broader Pauline corpus, salvation is something that is often already accomplished. See 2 Cor 2:15; 6:2; Eph 2:5, 8; 1 Tim 1:15; 2 Tim 1:9, 10; Titus 2:11; 3:5.

84 Fitzmyer (Romans, 515) notes that the Christ event once for all (ἐφέπαυσεν, 6:10) already achieves salvation. He adds that the aorist may also be gnomic, that is, valid for all time (see BDF §333).
them to shame (5:5). That is, it is not empty. Paul thus describes the answer to theodicy: it is built on hope. Any defense of God’s faithfulness must rely on what is not yet seen.85

**Pauline Theodicy in This Text**

The believer’s hope is placed in God’s righteousness which is upheld for believers in their resurrection from the dead. Paul defends God’s righteousness in the face of evil and suffering, and is able to do so because of what he has experienced in his own life: the resurrection of Christ. This resurrection is surety for the resurrection from the dead for believers. Paul’s defense of God, then, is the resurrection from the dead.

Paul was discovering this theodicy in his own life. This is why he can write with such conviction that he considers the sufferings of the present time “not worthy to be compared to the glory about to be revealed in us” (8:18). Because the resurrection of Christ announces the new age erupting into the present, his resurrection gives meaning to the believer’s suffering. Paul lets the revelation of the resurrected Christ inform his actions, and he knows that in order to be a co-heir with Christ one must also suffer with Christ (8:17). Amidst his suffering, Paul engages the mystery of the cruciform life, so that the resurrected life will shine through.

But we have this treasure in clay vessels, so that the surpassing power may be God’s and not ours. We are oppressed in every way, but not confined; perplexed but not despairing; persecuted but not forsaken; knocked down but not destroyed; always carrying around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our bodies. For we who are living are always being handed over to death for the sake of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our mortal flesh. (2 Cor 4:7-11)

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85 Moo (*Epistle to the Romans*, 522), Dunn (*Romans 1–8*, 476), and Wright (*Romans*, 598) connect Rom 8:25 with 2 Cor 4:18, “the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”
Paul knows that the Romans have not encountered the risen Christ as he has. While his encounter was a personal revelation, their relationship to Christ is a matter of belief. They have not seen Christ as he has, and so they must rely on his account. Hope, therefore, is an important component of the Christian life, since believers must rely on what they do not see (8:25). They hope for the resurrection from the dead, for the redemption of their bodies.

It is because of their hope in God’s saving righteousness that they, together with creation, groan. Their belief is that at the resurrection from the dead, they will be revealed as the children of God. Until that revelation they live amid a world that is subject to futility (8:20). Paul describes God as the one who subjected creation (8:20). He uses the aorist passive of the verb “subject,” indicating that it is God who does the subjecting. But this subjection is done in hope. God has subjected all creation to futility at the sinfulness of humanity, but God has subjected it in hope. God is the same God of Genesis, who brings creation into being out of nothing (4:17). Even though creation itself groans in labor pains, it is not able to give birth. It is God who brings to birth—first from nothing, and then from the dead (8:11).

This hope is universal; it causes all creation to groan and be in labor together. Hope for God’s future vindication of believers, therefore, is not limited to those believers but is a cosmic event. Creation hopes for freedom from the slavery to corruption and futility. God is also, then, the one who sets free. In the second exodus, the return from the Exile, creation is

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86 Neil Richardson (Paul’s Language about God [JSNTSup 99; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994] 21) acknowledges that scholars have recently questioned the use of the ‘theological passive.’ “It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the action of God is implicit in at least some of the passive verbal forms in Paul’s writings.”

87 In 8:19, 20, 21, and 22, Paul uses the noun “creation” which implies a Creator.
free from its curse to sing and shout for joy. Similarly, at the Parousia, creation will be free to be the appropriate home for the resurrected children of God.

God is the giver of the firstfruits of the Spirit, which guarantees believers their full adoption as children, the redemption of the body (8:23). God, then, is the redeemer who purchases back the captives of sin and death (6:22), and vivifies them with his own life. It is this resurrected life which is at the heart of Pauline theodicy, which can lead the Romans to place trust in Paul’s hope for the future beyond this life.

It is striking, however, that in Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness in this passage there are few theolegoumena. Instead, Paul uses verbs, nouns, and adjectives to describe God’s actions, and thereby communicates God who is faithful to his promises.

Therefore, in Paul’s defense of God, he names God as revealer, giver of glory, adopter and father of children (8:15), Creator, subjector, freer, giver of the Spirit, and redeemer. For using the word “God” so seldom, Paul says a surprising amount about God. His depiction of God is a positive one, one in whom believers may confidently place their hope.

**Conclusion**

In Rom 8:18-25, I have examined Pauline theodicy in light of the resurrection from the dead inasmuch as it treats of themes of apocalyptic eschatology. With an understanding that the created order is under the domination of sin, Paul describes the future hope toward which all creation yearns. He writes that creation eagerly awaits the revelation of the children of God (8:18), which is their full adoption. This is the redemption of the body
Creation itself—that is, all subhuman creation—also yearns for its own freedom from slavery to futility and corruption, to which the idolatrous actions of humanity have consigned it. Paul envisions the renewed creation as an appropriate context for the resurrected children of God.

In describing creation in anthropomorphic terms, Paul draws on material from Isaiah 24–27. This section of Isaiah describes creation’s sadness at the Exile and its joy upon the return from the Exile. Inasmuch as Rom 8:18-25 has verbal and thematic similarities to Isaiah 24–27, the return from the Exile is the most fitting hermeneutic for reading Paul’s apocalyptic imagery. Creation’s groaning and labor pains are direct links to Paul’s text, but so are the themes of hope and redemption.

Hope is the hallmark of the believer’s life; it makes possible the endurance for the sufferings of the present time. Paul’s proclamation that “in hope we were saved” (8:24) reintroduces the theme of hope from 5:1-11 and simultaneously brings it to its conclusion. Believers live in the hope of the glory of God to be revealed in their lives and, indeed in their very bodies. What they hope for themselves is yet unseen; it is based on the belief in the resurrected Christ.

Finally, I have examined the Pauline theodicy present in 8:18-25. Inasmuch as Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness relies on the resurrection from the dead, it is Paul who has witnessed the resurrected Christ, and not the Romans. Therefore, hope plays an important role in the life of the believer. Hope in what the believer has not seen must inform the life of the believer and give it a cruciform shape in the midst of suffering. Additionally, in this final section Paul employs few theolegoumena, yet its theme is God and God’s activity. Verbs,
adjectives, and nouns have God as their referent, and therefore these terms are part of Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness.

Thus, Rom 8:18-25 develops its theodicy in light of the resurrection from the dead. Paul’s vision is cosmic in scope. It looks forward with hope to an imminent accomplishment and yearns with all creation for the revelation of glory. This revelation will far outstrip any tribulation of the present and will confirm God’s righteousness. Until that fulfillment, believers must wait in hope upon God whom Paul describes as faithful and trustworthy.
Chapter Four
Pauline Theodicy in Light of Paul’s Presentation of the Spirit

Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined Pauline theodicy in light of the resurrection from the dead. In his description of this future for which he hopes, Paul uses themes of apocalyptic eschatology. He acknowledges that creation is under the domination of sin, but he also writes of the hope for which creation eagerly awaits: the revelation of the children of God. This revelation is their glorification inasmuch as it is the redemption of their bodies, namely, their resurrection from the dead.

Creation also hopes for its own freedom from slavery to futility and corruption, because when it was subjected to these powers it was also given hope by the Creator. Paul describes creation in anthropomorphic terms, drawing on material from Isaiah 24–27. This section of Isaiah links creation’s sadness to the Exile and its joy at the return from the Exile. Because Rom 8:18-25 has verbal and thematic links to Isaiah 24–27, the return from Exile is an appropriate hermeneutic for interpreting Paul’s apocalyptic eschatology.

Paul once again employs the theme of hope that he introduced in Rom 5:1-11. He declares that “in hope we were saved” (8:24). This anticipatory statement is a guide for the lives of believers: believers must live in hope of the glory of God which will be revealed in their own bodies.

Finally, I examined the Pauline theodicy in Rom 8:18-25. Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness relies on God’s promise of the resurrection from the dead. Although Paul has
seen the risen Christ, the Romans have not. Therefore they must live in the hope of something they have not seen.

In this chapter, I will explore Rom 8:26-27, and through that text I will explore Pauline theodicy in light of Paul’s presentation of the Spirit. First, I will again present the text with my translation, taking into account text-critical issues. Next, I will consider the limits of the passage and present an outline. After an explanation of the outline, I will exegete the passage. Then, I will examine Paul’s language about God and what it reveals about Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness. Finally, I will summarize my findings.

The Text

Translation of Rom 8:26-27

26. In the same way, even the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as is necessary, but the Spirit itself makes intercession with unspoken groanings.

27. And the One who searches hearts

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1 The singular “weakness” is found in Β, Β, Β, D*, 81, 104, 630, 1739, 1881, pc, vg, syb, co. The plural form (“the weaknesses”) is attested in K, L, P, Ψ, 33, 256, 424, 1175, 1241, 1319, 1319, 1573, 1912, 1962, 2464, sy. F and G attest “of prayer,” while Ambst reads “the weakness of our prayer.” These variants seem to be clarifications of the more difficult “weakness.”

2 “For us,” ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, appears in Β, Ψ, 33, sy, lat, sy, co. It does not appear in Β*, A, B, D, F, G, 6, 81, 945, 1506, 1739, 1881, pc, b. This phrase mirrors the first part of the verse and also clarifies for whom the intercession is intended, therefore these words seem to be a scribal insertion.
Limits of the Passage and the Outline

The portion of the text I will consider in this chapter is two verses, beginning at 8:26 with ὑσαύτως together with δὲ. This adversative conjunction signals a new direction in thought although connected to what has come before. In 8:23 Paul has written that believers groan even though they possess the first fruits of the Spirit. In 8:26, however, he writes that the Spirit itself groans. Thus the introductory ὑσαύτως links the groaning of the believers with the groaning of the Spirit. God’s own Spirit helps believers with intercession and therefore shows God’s faithfulness. God searches hearts and knows the mind of the Spirit, because it intercedes for the saints according to God. Paul discusses this relationship between God and the Spirit in Rom 8:27. This marks the end of the passage because Rom 8:28 begins a different subject, Paul’s discussion of God’s plan and the topic of predestination. An outline of the passage illustrates Paul’s train of thought for this text:

**Theodicy in Light of Paul’s Presentation of the Spirit (8:26-27)**

The Groaning of the Spirit (8:26)
The Intercession of the Spirit (8:27)

Explanation of the Outline

Within the larger discussion of present suffering and future glory (8:18-30), Paul defends the righteousness of God in 8:26-27 in light of his presentation of the Spirit. First,
Paul compares the groaning of the Spirit to the groaning of believers (8:26). Then he contrasts these two types of groaning, because believers do not know how to pray but the Spirit does. The Spirit makes intercession with “unspoken groanings.” Paul next describes how God searches the hearts of believers and understands the mind of the Spirit (8:27). The Spirit intercedes for believers according to the mind of God. Thus, Paul first discusses the groaning of the Spirit and then clarifies the Spirit’s role in interceding for believers.

Exegesis of the Passage

The Groaning of the Spirit (8:26)

This verse begins with ὑσαρξοποίησις, which connects it to the previous passage. The comparison that Paul makes is that the Spirit participates in the groaning of creation and believers. This comparison makes the most sense if καὶ is translated as “even,” as I have done. Thus, even the Spirit knows the longing of both creation and believers. Paul believes that the Spirit knows this deep desire because it is the Spirit of God. In 8:20 Paul writes that God subjected creation to futility in hope of its ultimate freedom. Therefore, the Spirit of God also knows of this hope. For this reason it groans with creation and believers. The

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3 Paul uses ὑσαρξοποίησις in 1 Cor 11:25 where he describes the Last Supper (“In the same way, also the cup”). The word also appears six times within the broader Pauline corpus: 1 Tim 2:9, 3:8, 3:11, 5:25; Titus 2:3, 6. All of these except 1 Tim 5:25 occur within household codes, and in all the passages the word connects a phrase with that which immediately precedes it.

4 On this point, I disagree with Jewett (Romans, 521) and Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 523) who maintain that the similarity that the Spirit shares with believers is “waiting with endurance” (8:25), and that it does not mean that the Spirit groans with creation (8:22). Also, Geoffrey Smith (“The Function of ‘Likewise’ [ὤσαρξοτοις] in Romans 8:26,” TynBul 49 [1998] 29-38) holds the improbable position that “likewise” points the reader back to the Spirit’s action in 8:16. Instead, I agree with Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 421), Byrne (Romans, 266), Hultgren (Paul’s Letter to the Romans, 325), and Fitzmyer (Romans, 517) who hold that the comparison is to the groaning of creation and believers, which Paul writes about in 8:22-23.
Spirit does not groan with futility but with hope and the earnest desire of the revelation of the children of God.

The Spirit helps believers in their weakness. ἄσθένεια refers to the present sufferings in 8:18. By using this word, Paul recognizes that believers live between two ages: the present corrupted age and the glorious age which is erupting into the present. Believers must rely on the help of the Spirit until the future age is completely revealed, when believers will experience the resurrection from the dead and the redemption of their bodies. Paul elsewhere acknowledges the weakness that believers must endure in this present age: “Therefore, I am pleased with weaknesses, with insults, with troubles, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:10). ἄσθένεια also means the weakness of believers who struggle to have hope. In Rom 8:24-25 Paul writes of the saving effect of hope and of the need to wait with endurance. Yet, hope can waver even in the staunchest believer, for the Romans to whom Paul writes have not yet seen the resurrection and the glorification for which they hope (8:24). Therefore, the Spirit helps believers in their weakness by providing hope with endurance. The very possession of hope, then, is a sign that God keeps his promises, for it is the Spirit that enables believers to cry out “Abba” to the Father (8:15). It is not a spirit of fear which leads the believer back to slavery but rather one of adoption.

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5 Jewett (Romans, 522) points out that Paul judiciously uses “our weakness” and so includes himself in the same state that the Romans are in.

6 Kurt Niederwimmer (“Das Gebet des Geistes, Rom. 8, 26 f.” TZ 20 [1964] 252-65, here 255) says that ἄσθένεια bezeichnet hier metaphorisch das kreatürliche Unvermögen, im Gebet dem Anspruch Gottes zu genügen.” I agree insofar as the believer lacks endurance in prayer, but I also think that ἄσθένεια designates a wider range of concrete difficulties in life.
Paul writes that believers do not know how to pray as is necessary. This may mean both that they do not know what to pray for and how to pray. As Origen writes, it is the attitude and the content that is in question, not the mere mechanics of prayer. Paul has already stated that believers know how to cry “Abba, Father!” (8:15). But here, Paul is addressing the mode of prayer. That is, it should be with endurance (8:25). In this way, the Spirit helps believers in their weakness, for they are unable to sustain the enduring prayer that gives them hope during the present sufferings. Most scholars agree that Paul writes that believers do not know what to pray for. While I agree that believers may be ignorant of the object of their prayer, I maintain that Paul writes that believers do not know how to pray in the correct attitude. The article τό governs the whole phrase and makes it the object of οἶδαμεν. Therefore, it is how believers pray that is in question.

Paul writes that the Spirit comes to the help of believers because they do not know how to pray, that is with endurance (8:25). The word that Paul uses for help, συναντιλαμβάνεται, appears in Ps 88:22 (LXX) and also in Luke 10:40 as the word for the help which Martha desires from Mary. The preposition συν, meaning “with,” is compounded

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7 Origen *Prayer* 2.1 “It is essential then, not only to pray, but to pray as one ought, and to pray for what one ought. For the understanding of what we ought to pray for is ineffective unless we know also how we ought to pray. And what use is it to us to know how to pray if we do not know what to pray for?”

8 Ibid. 2.1. Similarly, Gordon D. Fee (God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994] 580) holds that it is the manner of prayer which is at question.

9 Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 523), Jewett (Romans, 522), Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 421) and Käsemann (“The Cry for Liberty in the Worship of the Church” in Perspectives on Paul [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971] 122-37, here 127) maintain that τὸ γάρ does not provide the object of the verb, but instead it is provided by τί.

10 Here I follow Origen. Other scholars who think similarly are Sanday and Headlam (Epistle to the Romans, 213), Lagrange (Épitre aux Romains, 211-12), and Dunn (Romans 1–8, 477).
to the verb.\textsuperscript{11} \textit{συναντιλαμβάνεται} means “coming to the aid of.”\textsuperscript{12} More precisely, the verb means “to take hold of at the side, so as to support.”\textsuperscript{13} It is the Spirit’s help that enables believers to pray as is necessary. More precisely, the Spirit helps believers to bear the burden of prayer which is too much for their weakness.\textsuperscript{14}

Paul describes the necessity of prayer by \textit{kαθό δεῖ}.\textsuperscript{15} For believers, prayer \textit{is} necessary. It is the resource of hope during difficulties in life, and it is the witness of believers’ spirits with the Spirit of God that testifies to the filiation of believers (8:16). Without prayer, believers think their own groaning is empty and futile. The sufferings of the present overwhelm hope, and creation itself seems to be groaning for no reason. However, Paul writes that glory and redemption will take the place of present distress, and that freedom will replace slavery to corruption as creation experiences it. The possibility of the endurance of the believers’ prayer, then, is given by the Spirit which has been poured into the hearts of believers (5:5). Paul is confident that the hope that comes with this endurance will not put believers to shame with disappointment but will instead lead to the believers’ love for God in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Brendan McGrath (“‘Syn’ Words in Saint Paul,” \textit{CBQ} 14 [1952] 219-26, here 219) argues that compound words are in harmony with the agglutinative nature of Greek.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} The verb governs the dative case, and so the literal translation is “The Spirit helps our weakness.” Wright (\textit{Romans}, 598), and Moo (\textit{Epistle to the Romans}, 523 and n. 80) provide this translation. However, Balz (\textit{Heilsvertrauen}, 71) writes, “Der Geist kann nicht mit Schwachheit zusammen etwas tun. Vielmehr ist hier das Objekt des Handelns des Geistes in \textit{ημων} verborgen, das ein vorangehendes \textit{ημων} unmöglich macht.”
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Sanday and Headlam (\textit{Epistle to the Romans}, 213). BDAG (s.v. \textit{συναντιλαμβάνομαι}) lists both “to take part with,” and “help.” Dunn (“Spirit Speech: Reflections on Romans 8:12-27” in \textit{Romans and the People of God: Gordon D. Fee FS}; ed. Sven K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999] 82-91, here 88) describes the image as “shouldering a burden too heavy for the weakness of the human condition to support.”
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Dunn (\textit{Romans 1–8}, 477) links \textit{ἀσθένεια} to 8:3, “For what the law, weakened by the flesh was powerless to do, God has done.” Dunn maintains that weakness connotes humanity’s creatureliness, “as creature and not creator, with all that that implies for man’s need of transcendent support.”
  \item \textsuperscript{15} BDAG (s.v. \textit{δεῖ}) notes that \textit{δεῖ} connotes “a compulsion of any kind.”
\end{itemize}
spite of the difficulties of life. It is this love which makes it possible for the believers to boast about their difficulties (5:3).

It is significant that Paul describes the Spirit as groaning. Along with believers and all creation, the Spirit groans. However, there is an important difference. The Spirit makes intercession with groanings that are unspoken. Because the Spirit is the Spirit of God (8:9, 11, 14), this means that God groans, too.\footnote{Wright (Romans, 598) holds that God is not an observer of the labor pains of humanity but that “God, indeed, is groaning in labor too.”} The use of στενάζω and στεναγμός in the OT reveals that groaning is associated with heavy burden and deep longing:

To the woman he said, “I will most certainly increase your pain and your groaning [στεναγμόν]; in pain you will bear children and your turning will be toward your husband, and he will dominate you.” (Gen 3:18)

God is intimately concerned with humanity’s groaning, as with the groaning Israelites in Egypt:

After many days the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel groaned [κατεστέναξαν] and cried out because of the labor, and their cry because of the labor rose up before God. And God heard their groaning [στεναγμόν], and God remembered his covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. (Exod 2:23-24)

Similarly, God hears Israel’s groaning for deliverance after the time of Joshua:

And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was also with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD pitied their groaning [στεναγμοῦ] because of how their oppressors besieged them. (Judg 2:18)

God is moved with compassion by the groaning of the needy:

“Because of the misery of the poor and the groaning [στεναγμοῦ] of the impoverished I will arise,” says the LORD; “I will place him in the safety for which he earnestly desires.” (Ps 11:6)

At the return from Exile, God decisively eliminates groaning forever:
And those gathered by the LORD will return and enter Zion with gladness, and eternal joy will crown them; for over their heads will be praise and rejoicing and gladness will overtake them, while pain and suffering and groaning [στέναγμός] have fled. (Isa 35:10; see also Isa 51:11)

This final passage further suggests that the return from Exile is a fruitful hermeneutic for Paul’s apocalyptic imagery, because it provides a guiding metaphor for interpreting redemption.

These examples of God’s response to the groaning of his people demonstrate that God is intimately involved with the life of believers. Paul describes God’s involvement not only as responding to, but also as entering into, their groaning. It is the desire for the redemption of their bodies which produces their groaning (8:23), and the Spirit’s groaning bears witness that their redemption is what God desires as well.

The Spirit makes intercession with unspoken groaning. Scholars argue whether or not Paul refers to glossolalia here. Prayer in the ancient world, like reading, was done aloud. In view of this, it would be difficult to imagine the Spirit’s intercession within the believers without any words. However, silent prayer is not unknown in the OT, as the prayer of Hannah attests: “As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli was watching her mouth, for Hannah was speaking from her heart. Only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard” (1 Sam 1:12-13).17 The question then is the meaning of ἀλάλητος. It could mean without words or with inexpressible words such as the ἄφρητα ῥήματα that Paul heard in his vision of Paradise (2 Cor 12:4). If the words are incapable of being uttered in human language, then it

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17 Fee (Empowering Presence, 581) points out that much of the exegesis of this prayer has been done from a modern, Western culture where prayer is mostly private and silent. He cites as examples of oracular prayer Daniel (Daniel 6) and Jesus (Luke 11:1; 18:9-14; and the Synoptic accounts of the prayer in the Garden).
is possible that they can be spoken only as babbling.\textsuperscript{18} This would argue for glossolalia, which is the phenomenon of speech from the Spirit that the speakers do not themselves understand.\textsuperscript{19} This groaning of the Spirit is related to the groaning of believers (8:23) and of creation (8:22). However, both of those groanings are inaudible, since creation’s groaning is a metaphor and the groaning of believers is εν ἑαυτοῖς. Therefore, ἀλάλητος must refer to something that is silent within believers.\textsuperscript{20} Additionally, when describing speaking in tongues, Paul uses the λαλέω root.\textsuperscript{21} However, here Paul uses the alpha privative, ἀλάλητος, which has the same root and indicates that Paul is not describing glossolalia.

The Spirit itself makes intercession. Human bodies, subject to decay and corruption, stand in need of the Spirit’s intercession within them. This intercession is not for the saints themselves, since that would have Paul repeat himself in the next verse. Instead, this intercession is the Spirit’s intercession for the world as it still awaits the revelation of the

\textsuperscript{18} Käsemann (Romans, 241) holds that Paul addresses a liturgical practice which is being abused. This cannot be the “Abba!” cry of 8:15, but rather the gift of tongues in 1 Cor 14:15-19. See also Käsemann (Perspectives on Paul, 130-31) and Neill Q. Hamilton (The Holy Spirit and Eschatology in Paul; SJT Occasional Papers 6 [Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957] 36).

\textsuperscript{19} 1 Cor 14:14, “For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unproductive.”

\textsuperscript{20} In this I agree with Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 423) who writes that the Spirit’s words are not spoken. Fee (Empowering Presence, 579-85) mounts a formidable argument in favor of glossolalia. He makes eight points in his defense: (1) the ancient practice of oral reading as well as oral prayer; (2) the correspondence of these verses with “praying in the Spirit”; (3) the fact that it is the Spirit who prays while the believer need not understand the prayer; (4) the existence of different Greek verbs for “inexpressible” and “silent;” (5) the necessity of the Spirit’s groaning to be audible; (6) the ability of God to know what the Spirit prays; (7) the assumption that Paul is reflecting on an experience in the Spirit; and (8) the lack of any other phenomenon in the early church than glossolalia which approximates what Paul describes here. However, Fee has since changed his mind (“Toward a Pauline Theology of Glossolalia” in Pentecostalism in Context: William W. Menzies FS; ed. Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies; Journal for Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 11 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997] 24-37, here 29-30). While holding that the believer still experiences prayer in the Spirit, Fee now believes the inarticulate groanings of the Spirit describe prayer that is “too deep for words.”

\textsuperscript{21} Wright (Romans, 599) cites 1 Cor 12:30; 13:1; and 14:2 as examples.
children of God (8:19). The prayer of the Spirit must be a prayer that is connected to all humanity—indeed to all creation. It is not an insular prayer that separates believers from the world. Such an understanding would lead to Gnosticism.\footnote{Käsemann (Perspectives, 136) states that because Paul places service of God within the quotidian (Rom 12:1–13:10), prayer therefore “must on no account remove us from this real, everyday world.”}

The verb ἐνπροχάνω means to appeal. In this verse, Paul uses the prefix ὑπερ-, which indicates “on behalf of.” Prayer for Paul is directed to God through Christ by the power of the Spirit.\footnote{Krister Stendahl (“Paul at Prayer” in Meanings: The Bible as Document and Guide [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984] 151-61, here 157) notes that the collects of the Western church have retained this same Pauline formula. They are directed to God in the name of Jesus Christ.} It is unusual, then, that Paul writes that the Spirit itself intercedes. The OT has examples of many intercessors: Abraham (Gen 18:23-33; 20:17), Moses (Exod 8:8, 12, 28-30; 9:28, 33; 10:17-18), kings (2 Sam 12:16; 1 Kgs 8:22-54; 2 Kgs 19:15-19; 2 Chr 30:18-19), priests (Lev 16:21-22; Num 6:23-27; Ezra 6:10), prophets (1 Kgs 18:22-40), and angels (Tob 12:12), but not the Spirit.\footnote{T. A. Obeng (“The Origins of the Spirit Intercession Motif in Romans 8.26,” NTS 32 [1986] 621-32, here 621) writes that in the OT, “There is no mention of the intercession of the Spirit or even an allusion to it.” He also demonstrates that no such reference exists in pre-Christian writings.} Paul alone describes the Spirit’s intercession, and then only here in 8:26 and 8:27 (where the verb ἐνπροχάνω appears without any prefix). The use of this verb relates this verse to 8:34, which describes Christ interceding for believers at the right hand of the Father. Similarly, Paul writes in 8:27 that the Spirit intercedes for believers. However, in 8:26 he notes that the Spirit makes intercession with unspoken groanings. Since he has written that believers do not know how to pray, that is, with endurance, Paul describes the Spirit supplying what is needed. This prayer is common to all believers and yearns for the glory of God to be revealed, both in creation and in their very selves.\footnote{Because they are}
subject to the sufferings of Christ, believers may lose heart. It is for this reason that the Spirit intercedes for them, in their deepest need.26

The Intercession of the Spirit (8:26)

This verse begins with the conjunction δέ, which links it to the verse directly before it. I have translated it as a weak “and.”27

“The One who searches hearts” is a periphrasis for God. In 1 Chr 28:9, “the LORD searches all hearts.” Similar phrases appear in 1 Sam 16:7 (“the LORD looks into the heart”); 1 Kgs 8:39 (the LORD alone “knows the hearts of all the sons of men”); Pss 7:11 (the righteous God “tries hearts and minds”); 17:3 (the LORD tries the heart); 44:22 (God “knows the secrets of the heart”); 139:1 (the LORD searches and knows the person), 2 (the LORD discerns a person’s thoughts from afar), 23 (God knows the heart); and, Prov 15:11 (the hearts of men lie open before the LORD).28 In the LXX, however, the verb ἐρευνάω is predicated of God only in Prov 20:27 (ὁς ἐρευνᾷ τομίεια κοιλίας).29

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25 Hamilton (Holy Spirit and Eschatology, 36) states that the groanings of the Spirit are “for an eschatological fulfilment (sic) still outstanding.”

26 Wright (Romans, 599) writes that the Spirit intercedes within the Christian at the point of futility where there are “no words left to express the misery” and longing.

27 In this I agree with Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 526), Byrne (Romans, 266), Dunn (Romans 1–8, 466), Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 404), the NAB, and the NRSV.

28 Paul uses similar imagery in 1 Cor 3:20 (“The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise”), which he draws from Ps 94:11.

29 Fitzmyer (Romans, 519) additionally points out the NT usage of this verb in Rev 2:23 as well as similar ideas in Acts 1:24; 15:8; and 1 Cor 4:5.
In Hebrew thought “the heart,” יְבַלְתָּה is where a person’s will and emotions reside. It is here that the Spirit intercedes with groanings that are inaudible. They are too deep for words, but they are not inaccessible to God. It is within the believer that God speaks to God. The Spirit knows what God’s intention is, as “The Spirit searches (ἐρωτεύεται) everything, even the depths of God” (1 Cor 2:10). Conversely, the One who searches hearts knows the mind of the Spirit. God must know the desires of his own Spirit. Therefore, the groans that the Spirit experiences alongside believers and creation reveal the desire and yearning that God himself desires.

The mind of the Spirit is “peace and life” (8:6), as opposed to the mind of the flesh, which is death. God searches the heart and knows the mind of the Spirit, manifested in the groanings that the Spirit makes within believers. At its deepest level, this is prayer, initiated by God and heard by God. It is outside the understanding or awareness of believers, yet it happens within the hearts of believers. This silent prayer is what believers cannot do for themselves (8:26), and so the Spirit supplies what is lacking. This aid of the Spirit longs for the fullness of life and glorification that believers await. As members of the new age of the resurrected Christ, believers still live within the present corrupt age and therefore must

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30 Jewett (Romans, 524) adds that the heart is the source of a person’s intentionality.

31 Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 424) holds that since God searches human hearts, he must a fortiori know the intention of his own Spirit.

32 Jewett (Romans, 525) writes, “Paul is insisting not only that God knows and intercedes at the point of the deepest human confusion but also that God communicates with God’s self.”

33 τὸ γὰρ φῶνημα τῆς σαρκὸς θανάτου, τὸ δὲ φῶνημα τοῦ πνεύματος ζωῆς καὶ εἰρήνης (8:6): For the mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace.

34 Niederwimmer (“Das Gebet des Geistes,” 262) holds that “der Geist Gottes wirkt nicht bloß außerhalb, sondern er wirkt zugleich in uns” (italics original).
endure present sufferings. Believers, along with creation, are subject to the frustration of corruption and are not able to pray with endurance. Their longing for the redemption of their bodies and for the freedom of creation cannot be sustained with their own strength. Therefore, the Spirit intercedes. It can yearn for life in a more powerful way than believers can. And this prayer, made in the heart of believers, is God’s own desire. What Paul writes here, then, is that God both desires and speaks from within believers, and that prayer is heard by God.35

The Spirit intercedes for the saints. Paul occasionally employs oí ἄγιοι to refer to the Palestinian Jewish Christians (Rom 15:25-26, 31; 1 Cor 16:15; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:1, 12), but here without the definite article it means believers in general, since Paul has already addressed the Romans as “saints” (1:7) and will address them again as such at the conclusion of the letter (16:2, 15).36 In the NT, the Greek ἄγιος takes its meaning from the Hebrew ṣārām.37 Holiness is a matter of separation from the profane in order to be devoted to God.38 By using this term, Paul is reminding the Romans that they are called apart to be holy as God is holy.39

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35 Fee (Empowering Presence, 586) maintains that even though the believer does not understand the “inarticulate groanings” of the Spirit, the believer can be sure that God does understand. God knows the mind of the Spirit.

36 Paul addresses his letters to ἄγιοι in 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1. Ephesians (1:1) and Colossians (1:2) are also addressed to ἄγιοι.

37 Fitzmyer, (Romans, 239) states that the OT sense of the word is “dedicated” or “consecrated.”

38 Karl Georg Kuhn, “ἄγιος κτλ.” TDNT 1. 100, notes that holiness for the Israelites first meant separation from the Gentiles and their idolatry, and only secondarily meant separation from sin, especially licentiousness.

39 Dunn (Romans 1–8, 467) holds that by using this term “Paul clearly intends his readers to understand that the blessings they are inheriting are Israel’s.”
The prayer of the Spirit is received by God because it intercedes according to God. Some scholars translate κατὰ θεόν as “according to God’s will.”\(^{40}\) However, Jewett translates it “by God,” and Dunn renders the phrase “as God would have it.” I agree with Fee who translates it “according to God.”\(^{41}\) This phrase allows more breadth of interpretation. The Spirit does intercede according to God’s will, but it also inhabits the hearts of believers according to the economy of God. Not only can believers pray “Abba,” they can live according to the Spirit (8:4-5). Living in the Spirit is the antithesis to living in the flesh, which is characterized by hostility toward God (8:8). But believers are not in the flesh (8:9), inasmuch as the Spirit of God dwells within them and prays according to God. Furthermore, the prayer of the Spirit is in the language of God, undiluted by any human preoccupation.\(^ {42}\)

It is true prayer.

As believers live according to God, they inevitably come to share in the suffering of Christ (8:17). In this way, κατὰ θεόν is related to καθό δεῖ. The Spirit prays within a person according to God, and this prayer is the necessary prayer. It conforms believers to the praying of Jesus, who prayed, “Abba!”\(^ {43}\) Faced with the sufferings of the present, believers

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\(^{40}\) Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 424) and Wright (Romans, 600) translate it this way; similarly Byrne (Romans, 266) and Fitzmyer (Romans, 516) “in accordance with God’s will;” Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 507) “in accordance with the will of God;” and Käsemann (Romans, 242) “according to his (God’s) will.”

\(^{41}\) Paul uses the phrase κατὰ θεόν also in 2 Cor 7:9-11. He uses κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν in Rom 5:5, κατὰ κύριον in 2 Cor 11:17, κατὰ πνεύμα in Rom 1:4; 8:5; and κατὰ σάρκα in Rom 1:3; 4:1; 8:4, 5, 12, 13; 9:3, 5. κατὰ σάρκα also appears 12 more times in the Pauline corpus.

\(^{42}\) Fee (Empowering Presence, 586) states that the Spirit’s appeal “will never be muddied by our own personal agendas.”

\(^{43}\) Julie L. Wu (“The Spirit’s Intercession in Romans 8:26-27: An Exegetical Note,” ExpTim 105 [1993/94] 13) holds that because Paul writes about the Spirit’s prayer after mentioning the sufferings in Rom 8:17-25, he means to “draw a parallel between Jesus’s (sic) prayer in the garden of Gethsemane and the believers’ attitude as children of God.”
are able to look forward with eschatological hope by relying on God who saves. The future glorification of God’s children is his plan as much as the sufferings which conform the believers to the Son. Believers are not alone in their suffering. Paul assures them that Jesus suffered (3:24-26) and that the Spirit groans within them. The necessary prayer (καθὸ δὲὶ) is undertaken by God himself (καὶ τὸν θεὸν).44

Pauline Theodicy in This Text

The hope of believers is grounded in God’s reliability and ability to keep his promises. The very existence of hope within believers points toward something other than the present suffering. This hope sets believers apart from those who do not believe: “But we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, concerning those who have fallen asleep, so you will not grieve like the rest who have no hope” (1 Thess 4:13). God gives access to this hope through Christ (Rom 5:1-2), and the Spirit assists believers with the prayer that is necessary. On their own, believers are unable to sustain the endurance in prayer that is required, both for their own sake and for the sake of the world. Believers hope for what they do not see, remembering that in hope they were saved (8:24). The Spirit, then, is the sustainer of hope.

Paul defends God’s righteousness in this text by describing the faithfulness of God. In response to the tragedy of sin (3:23; 5:12), God has not turned away from humanity but has come to its aid. Through Christ, God gives the Spirit to believers (8:9). This Spirit is not only the Spirit of Christ, it is the Spirit of God (8:11). By this Spirit believers enter a filial relationship with God, being able to cry, “Abba! Father!” (8:15), and through this Spirit,

44 Jewett (Romans, 525) writes, “Even the ‘sufferings’ that cause human groaning are being drawn by the Spirit into ‘the future glory revealed to us,’ the glory of a dialogue within deity itself.”
believers will be raised from the dead (8:11). Paul defends God’s righteousness by assuring the Romans that this Spirit assists them with prayer because they do not know how to pray as is necessary (8:26). They lack the endurance that such prayer requires. Therefore, God’s Spirit prays within them.

Furthermore, God’s Spirit groans with believers and the rest of creation. This groaning, while not perceptible to human sense, is God’s participation in human yearning inasmuch as the Spirit of God reveals God groaning as well. Paul explains to the Romans that what they desire and what God desires is the same: the glorification of God’s children and the freedom of creation. Thus, God responds to human sin, not with abandonment but with compassion.

The heart of the believer is the locus for this compassionate groaning. The Spirit intercedes within believers. However, neither the depth of the prayer nor its interiority renders it opaque to God. God is the searcher of hearts, and God knows the mind of the Spirit. Therefore, God is on both sides of this prayer: God initiates the prayer and God receives the prayer. Inasmuch as it is the Spirit of God who prays, the prayer is made according to God. That is, the prayer is free from petty preoccupations that believers may mistake as prayer. This groaning, compassionate prayer, by and to God, is another sign of God’s righteousness and faithfulness. In the midst of present suffering, then, believers find that their own hearts are the temple of God where appropriate prayer is made: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Cor 3:16).

Although Paul uses θεός only once in these verses, he once again tells us a surprising amount about God and God’s Spirit. God is the giver of the Spirit. God’s Spirit groans along
with believers and creation. God’s Spirit intercedes within the believer. God searches the heart and knows the mind of the Spirit. God’s Spirit intercedes according to God.

Paul defends God’s righteousness by instructing the Romans that God’s Spirit is praying within them and that this prayer is heard by God. Rather than being abandoned because of sin, believers can be confident that their filial relationship is strong because of God’s own intercession. They find that what they hope for is already anticipated by God inasmuch as God desires the glorification of his children.

**Conclusion**

In Rom 8:26-27, I have examined Pauline theodicy in light of Paul’s presentation of the Spirit. Inasmuch as he acknowledges the weakness and suffering that believers must endure in the present age, Paul describes the Spirit coming to the aid of believers. Because believers do not know how to pray with endurance, the Spirit makes intercession with unspoken groanings. Therefore, the Spirit groans along with creation and believers. This groaning is significant, because it reveals that God yearns along with believers to bring them to glory. God has intimate knowledge of the groaning of believers and responds to their groanings by means of the Spirit.

God’s yearning is expressed by the Spirit which groans with unspoken groanings. Since the Spirit’s groanings are unspoken, they cannot be the phenomenon of glossolalia. The groanings are not made with words of any kind; they are silent and deep within the believer.
However, by groaning within the believer, the Spirit makes intercession. The One who searches hearts knows the mind of the Spirit. Paul, therefore, assures believers that this intercession is part of a divine dialogue. God is the initiator of the prayer as well as the receiver. Believers, then, may be surprised to learn that their prayer is already God’s prayer. God’s desire anticipates their own, and it is for this reason that the Spirit intercedes according to God in pure prayer.

Pauline theodicy in 8:26-27 defends God’s righteousness in terms of God’s faithfulness. God gives the Spirit to believers neither as a compensation nor as a remedy for present suffering, but instead as a midwife in suffering. God enters into the groaning of creation and believers through compassion, and in this compassion desires to bring to birth a renewed cosmos and glorified children. Until then, the Spirit of God groans within believers in way that they themselves do not know how to sustain, preparing them for the glory that is to come. Thus, God does not abandon believers to senseless suffering but accompanies them through their suffering.

This accompaniment gives meaning and hope to the suffering that believers endure. Rather than suffering senselessly, believers conform their own sufferings to that of Christ and thereby hope in his glory. The hope of believers in God’s faithfulness provides the context for Paul’s defense of God. The very existence of hope communicates something of God’s righteousness. Hope does not leave believers ashamed (5:5) but rather promises vindication for both believers and God. Believers will be vindicated in God’s gift of glory, and God will be vindicated as the giver of glory. By writing of the Spirit’s role in believers’ lives in these
verses, Paul demonstrates that it is God and God’s activity which form the core of Pauline theodicy.

Romans 8:26-27 develops its theodicy in light of the Spirit’s life within believers. Like Rom 8:18-25, it tells of yearning. It explains that God is compassionate and also desires what believers hope for: the revelation of glory. Until that glory is revealed, believers must endure present sufferings—but believers are not bereft of aid, for the Spirit helps them in their weakness.
Chapter Five

Pauline Theodicy in Light of the Plan of God

Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined Pauline theodicy in light of Paul’s presentation of the Spirit. Turning from themes of apocalyptic eschatology, Paul writes to the Romans regarding their present experience of prayer. He tells them that the Spirit comes to the help of believers because they do not know how to pray with endurance. Believers already know the “Abba” prayer (8:15), but they are ignorant of how to sustain this prayer. Inasmuch as they possess the firstfruits of the Spirit (8:23), the Spirit is able to come to their aid.

The Spirit prays within believers. Like creation and believers (8:22-23) the Spirit groans, but unlike them it groans with unspoken groanings. This prayer of the Spirit is not glossolalia, for Paul describes this prayer as inexpressible groanings, using the alpha privative ἀλάλητος. This inexpressible groaning of the Spirit reveals God’s desire for creation. Thus, through the Spirit’s groaning within them, believers come to desire the same thing which God desires: the glorification of God’s children and the freedom of creation.

For the present, the Spirit makes intercession for the world and for believers. It yearns for life more powerfully than believers themselves are able to yearn for it. The Spirit is the sustainer of hope because it assists them in the midst of their present sufferings (8:18). With the Spirit’s support, believers are able to hope in what they do not yet see (8:24-25).

Because of the Spirit’s aid, believers can be confident that God hears their prayer, for the One who searches hearts knows the mind of the Spirit. The Spirit intercedes according to
God. Such prayer is true prayer, unadulterated by petty concerns. It is also the necessary prayer that conforms the prayer of believers to the prayer of Jesus. In the midst of suffering, believers find that their hearts are the temple of the Spirit where appropriate prayer is made.

Finally, I examined the Pauline theodicy in Rom 8:26-27. Paul defends the righteousness of God by telling the Romans that God’s own Spirit comes to their aid in suffering. As they groan, so too does God’s Spirit groan, desiring to bring to birth a renewed cosmos and the glorified children of God. Because God’s Spirit within them prays, they may be certain that this prayer is God’s own prayer. This prayer is the same prayer as that of God’s own Son. Paul assures the Romans that God has not abandoned them; instead, God assists them in their hope and endurance. Insofar as believers possess hope, God is shown to be righteous, because hope will not leave believers ashamed (5:5). God nurtures this hope through the gift of the Spirit.

Having examined how the Spirit sustains believers, in this chapter I will explore Pauline theodicy in light of the plan of God as revealed in Rom 8:28-30. First, I will present the text with my translation, taking into account text-critical issues. Second, I will consider the limits of the passage and present an outline of it. Third, I will offer an explanation of my outline. Fourth, I will exegete the passage. Fifth, I will examine Paul’s language about God and what it reveals about Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness. Finally, I will summarize my findings.
The Text

Translation of Rom 8:28-30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28. οἴδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα ὑπερέχει εἰς ἁγαθον, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὕσιν.</td>
<td>28. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, for those who are called according to his plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. ὅτι ὁς προέγνω, καὶ προορίσεν συμμόρφος τῆς εἰκόνος τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἄδελφοῖς;</td>
<td>29. Because those whom he foreknew he also predestined to share the form of the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn of many brothers and sisters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. οὓς δὲ προορίσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσεν καὶ οὔς ἐκάλεσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδικαίωσεν οὖς δὲ ἐδικαίωσεν, τούτους</td>
<td>30. Those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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1 Ψ46 alone reads πᾶν rather than πάντα. Matthew Black (“The Interpretation of Romans viii 28,” *Neotestamentica et Patristica*, FS Oscar Cullman, NovTSup 6 [Leiden: Brill, 1962] 166-72, here 172) suggests the possibility of an accidental transposition of the letters in the abbreviation for Spirit (thus ΠΝΑ became ΠΑΝ). However, it is more likely that the plural πάντα was changed to the singular πᾶν in order to agree with the singular verb συνεργεῖ.

2 Ψ46, A, B, 81, sa; read συνεργεῖ ὁ θεός whereas K, C, D, F, G, Ψ, 33, 1739, 1881, Ὠ, latt, sy, bo; Cl do not read ὁ θεός. Schlier (*Der Römerbrief*, 270) includes ὁ θεός as the subject with τὰ πάντα in the accusative: “Denn auf alle Fälle ist der Sache nach Gott als der zum Guten Wirkende gedacht, und zwar in allen Dingen, auch im Leiden, ja im eschatologischen Leiden.” Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 523) omits ὁ θεός, agreeing with Metzger (*TCGNT*, 458) that συνεργεῖ implies a personal subject. Cranfield (*Romans 1–8*, 427) holds that τὰ πάντα is the subject of συνεργεῖ, but states that “what is expressed is a truly biblical confidence in the sovereignty of God.”

3 προέγνω, “Foreknew,” is read by A alone. It is undoubtedly a scribal attempt to match the word in 8:30 with the “foreknew” in 8:29.
Limits of the Passage and the Outline

This portion of the text begins with the Pauline formula ὡδέμεν ἕ. The conjunction ἕ, while not an adversative here, nonetheless denotes a new thought. In 8:26-27 Paul describes the action of the Spirit which groans and intercedes for the saints according to God. In 8:28 the topic is God’s plan, which Paul discusses in relationship to call and election. All things, he writes, will work out for the good for believers. He further illustrates his theme with the verbs “foreknow” and “predestine.” The destiny that God has set for believers is that they are to share the form of the image of his Son. Paul concludes these verses with a sorites employing the verbs: predestine, call, justify, and glorify. He predicates all these of believers. This chain marks the end of the passage because Rom 8:31 is set off by a question and the particle οὐν. These are verbal indicators for the beginning of a new thought: in this case, that of Paul’s description of the eschatological courtroom. My outline of the passage illustrates Paul’s train of thought for this text:

### Theodicy in Light of the Plan of God (8:28-30)

- 8:28 Those called according to God’s plan
- 8:29 Predestination of the justified
- 8:30 The glorification of the justified

**Explanation of the Outline**

Paul’s discussion of present suffering and future glory spans Rom 8:18-30 and, within these verses, he defends the righteousness of God in 8:28-30 in light of the plan of God. He
first reminds the Romans that all things work to the good for those who love God (8:28) because God has a plan, and believers are called according to that plan. Second, Paul reveals the scope of God’s plan (8:29). The destiny of those who are called is to become like the glorified Christ. Finally, Paul explains that there are various moments in God’s plan: predestination, call, justification, and glorification (8:30). Thus, Paul assures the Romans that God has a plan to bring them to glory, despite the setbacks and suffering they presently endure.

**Exegesis of the Passage**

**Those Called According to God’s Plan (8:28)**

This verse begins with οἶδαμεν δὲ, indicating that Paul is introducing a new thought. In 8:26 Paul declared that believers do not know how to pray as is necessary. However, in 8:28 he states that believers *do* know something: that all things work together for those who love God.⁴

There is a significant debate about the subject of the verb συνεργεῖ. This debate arises, in part, from the strong witness of Ψ⁴⁶, A, B, and 81 which read ὁ θεός. This longer reading appears to be a scribal insertion to eliminate doubt about the subject. The resultant οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἡγαπώσιν τὸν θεόν πάντα συνεργεῖ ὁ θεὸς εἰς ἀγαθὸν reflects a clumsy

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⁴ Moo (*Epistle to the Romans*, 527) understands the particle δὲ here to be continuative. Similarly, Frank Pack (“A Study of Rom 8:28,” *ResQ* 22 [1979] 44-53, here 46) prefers to translate it as “and” or to leave it untranslated, as in the *RSV.*
style by repeating ὁ θεός so soon after τὸν θεόν.⁵ This variation also ameliorates the difficult reading of πάντα.

Paul’s other uses of συνεργέω provide no clue to its subject here. In 1 Cor 16:16 he employs the participle συνεργοῦντες to express human coworkers in spreading the faith, and in 2 Cor 6:1 he uses the same participle to describe his own cooperation in Christ’s work. His use of the similar root verbs, ἐνεργέω and ἔργαζομαι, does not clarify this matter either, as the subjects for the verbs range from God (1 Cor 12:6) to the Spirit (1 Cor 12:11) to death (2 Cor 4:12).

Some scholars have chosen to supply the subject ὁ θεός. In this way, they accept the reading of the majority of manuscripts, but such a reading permits πάντα to be translated in one of two ways. The first alternative is that πάντα is an accusative of respect. Therefore the translation would read, “God works in all things for the good for those who love God.”⁶ Such a reading seems implausible since Paul could have written κατὰ πάντα (as in Rom 3:2) or ἐν πᾶσιν, which would have been much clearer than an accusative of respect. The second alternative is that πάντα is the direct object. This would render the translation, “God works all things for the good for those who love God.”⁷ Although this translation ameliorates the difficult πάντα and is theologically acceptable, there is no other example of συνεργέω used

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⁵ Black ("The Interpretation of Romans viii 28," 168) states that Paul could not have been such a poor stylist as to repeat himself in this way.


⁷ Many scholars prefer this translation, including Sanday and Headlam (Romans, 215), Lagrange (Romains, 213-14), Hultgren (Paul’s Letter to the Romans, 327), Peter R. Rodgers ("The Text of Romans 8:28," JTS 46 [1995] 547-50), and the translators of the RSV.
transitively.\textsuperscript{8} In either case, these scholars argue that God is the subject in the previous verse ("the One who searches hearts") and therefore is also the subject of this verse.\textsuperscript{9}

Other scholars attempt to make sense of this difficult phrase by supplying τὸ πνεῦμα as the subject.\textsuperscript{10} One argument for this reading is that nowhere else does Paul employ πάντα as the subject of an active verb; either he uses πάντες as nominative plural masculine, or πάντα as accusative plural masculine or accusative plural neuter.\textsuperscript{11} However, this argument ignores 1 Cor 10:23 (οἰκοδομέω) and 2 Cor 6:10 (κατέχω), in which the nominative plural neuter πάντα governs these active verbs.

Another argument for supplying τὸ πνεῦμα is that the verb συνεργεῖω echoes the same συν- prefix that appeared in 8:16 (συμμαρτυρεῖ) and in 8:26 (συναντιλαμβάνεται). Because τὸ πνεῦμα is the subject of these verbs, it could also be the subject of συνεργεῖ in this verse. This argument, however, does not account for the other συν- compound verbs that do not have the Spirit as the subject. In 8:22 it is κτίσις that is the subject of both συστενάζει and συνωδίνει, and in 9:1 it is Paul's συνείδησις that is modified by the particle συμμαρτυροῦσις.

\textsuperscript{8} Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 426-27) states that he has not found any evidence to support such a reading.

\textsuperscript{9} Wright (Romans, 600) regards "the sudden and unexplained change of subject at the end of v. 28 (from the Spirit to God) as a fatal objection to making the Spirit the subject here."


\textsuperscript{11} Examples of the nominative are found in Rom 3:12, 23; 9:6, 7; 10:16; 14:10; 1 Cor 1:10; 8:1; 9:24; 10:1, 3, 4, 17; 14:23, 24, 31 (3); 15:22 (2), 51 (2); 2 Cor 13:12; Gal 3:26, 28; Phil 2:21. Some examples in the accusative are found in Rom 8:32; 11:32 (2); 14:2; 1 Cor 2:10, 15; 9:12, 23, 25; 10:31, 33; 11:2; 12:6; 13:7 (4); 14:40; 15:27 (2), 28 (2); 2 Cor 7:14; Gal 3:22; Phil 2:14, 26, 3:21; 4:13, 18; 1 Thess 5:21. Examples of πάντα as a nominative governing an intransitive verb are found in 1 Cor 3:21; 6:12 (3); 10:1; 12:19, 26; 16:14.
A third argument for the Spirit being the subject is the combination of the words \( \textit{pneu/ma} \) and \( \textit{sunergei} \) in the \textit{Testament of Gad}:

For among all men the spirit of hatred works by Satan through human frailty for the death of mankind; but the spirit (\( \textit{pneu/ma} \)) of love works (\( \textit{sunergei} \)) by the Law of God through forbearance for the salvation of mankind. (4.7)

While it is possible that Paul may have known of this text, this lone literary source provides rather thin support for this argument.\(^{12}\)

The strongest argument for reading \( \tau \circ \textit{pneu/ma} \) is to be found within the text itself. Paul writes in 8:26 that believers “do not know” how to pray and therefore the Spirit comes to their aid. By saying that believers “do know” in 8:28, Paul may be linking both verses with the Spirit’s action. While I believe that Paul is contrasting what the believers do and do not know, Paul seems to be using a formula to refer to shared knowledge among believers.\(^{13}\)

The best choice for the subject of \( \textit{sunergei} \) is the nominative plural neuter \( \textit{pa,nta} \).\(^{14}\) Inanimate plural neuter nouns often take verbs in the singular. Furthermore, this reading makes the most sense of the textual evidence, both externally and internally. \( \textit{pa,nta} \textit{sunergei} \) is both the more difficult and the shorter reading, since \( \dot{o} \textit{theo,c} \) seems to be an addition.\(^{15}\)

Supplying \( \dot{o} \textit{theo,c} \) or \( \tau \circ \textit{pneu/ma} \) would render the verb transitive, but \( \textit{sunergei} \) occurs nowhere.


\(^{13}\) Cranfield (\textit{Romans} 1–8, 424) notes that Jewish parallels exist and that Paul “is deliberately incorporating a piece of traditional teaching.”

\(^{14}\) Most scholars favor this translation; among them are Käsemann (\textit{Commentary on Romans}, 243), Cranfield (\textit{Romans} 1–8, 428-29), Fitzmyer (\textit{Romans}, 523-24), Dunn (\textit{Romans} 1–8, 466, n. i), Moo (\textit{Epistle to the Romans}, 527-28), Byrne (\textit{Romans}, 271-72), Vg, and the translators of the \textit{NAB}.

\(^{15}\) Fee (\textit{Empowering Presence}, 587 n. 337) holds that \( \dot{o} \textit{theo,c} \) is “secondary not only because it clarifies the ambiguity but also because one cannot imagine a reason for its being omitted.”
else as a transitive verb. Therefore, the subject πάντα preserves the intransitive meaning of the verb.

One objection to this choice is that the change of subject from 8:27 to 8:28 is too harsh. Scholars who prefer to supply τὸ πνεῦμα as the subject point out that the Spirit is the subject of the clause which immediately precedes 8:28. Therefore they deduce that it must also be the subject of 8:28.\textsuperscript{16} I disagree with this because the subject of 8:27 is “the One who searches hearts,” that is, God. I have already shown that God is not the subject of 8:28.\textsuperscript{17} This argument also ignores the many changes of subject in this passage so far: “I” (8:18), “eager expectation” (8:19), “creation” (8:20), “we” (8:22), “hope” (8:24), “Spirit” (8:26), “the One who searches hearts” (8:27). Furthermore, it would require reading this οἶδαμεν formula differently than all other Pauline usages. In 2 Cor 5:1 the subject is known from the first person plural conjugated verb, and in all other cases Paul names the subject (Rom 2:2; 3:19; 7:14; 8:22; 1 Cor 8:1, 4; also 1 Tim 1:8). The subject for συνεργεῖ, then, is πάντα.\textsuperscript{18}

The meaning of πάντα includes “present sufferings” which Paul mentions in 8:18 and which he lists in 8:35, as well as all created things which he catalogues in 8:38-39. However, it also encompasses the work of the Spirit which Paul details throughout Romans 8.\textsuperscript{19} All

\textsuperscript{16} E.g., Fee (ibid., 589) thinks that this would be “the more natural way to read the text.”

\textsuperscript{17} In this, I agree with Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 426) and Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 528) who hold that 8:29-30 is closely related to 8:28, and so Paul has already changed subjects in this verse.

\textsuperscript{18} Byrne (Romans, 272) states that πάντα as subject renders the smoothest Greek reading of the options.

\textsuperscript{19} Mark S. Gignilliat (“Working Together with Whom? Text-Critical, Contextual, and Theological Analysis of συνεργεῖ in Rom 8, 28,” Bib 87 [2006] 511-15) suggests that it is the Spirit who works together with God in all things for good. He claims that this interpretation makes the best sense of the συν- prefix in συνεργεῖ. Because the Spirit is the subject of συναντησαμβάνεται in 8:26, it might also be the unstated co-subject of συστηνέει and συνωδίνει in 8:22.
things, good and bad, are at work for believers. Thus, even failings and sin have a part to play in bringing believers to salvation. Paul writes in 3:23-24, “For all sinned and lack the glory of God. They are justified without cost by his grace which is in Christ Jesus.” He writes to the Gentiles with respect to the Jews,

For just as you once disobeyed God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so now they disobeyed in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they may receive mercy. For God locked up all in disobedience, in order that he may have mercy on all. (11:30-32)

Thus, even disobedience—that is, sin—cannot obstruct God’s plan. It therefore works together with all other things to bring believers to glory.

Paul writes to assure the Romans that all things work together “for good.” He normally uses ἀγαθὸς to denote moral goodness, but that is not the meaning here. It is not to be understood in a bromidic sense, either. Its interpretation can be elucidated from similar usages:

You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good. (Gen 50:20)

Though a sinner do evil and live a long life, I know that it will be well for those who fear God. (Eccl 8:12)

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20 Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 428) holds that both sins committed against believers as well as their own sins are included in πάντα.

21 Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 529) holds that the scope of πάντα should not be restricted.

22 Moo (ibid., 529) writes that such an interpretation would be inappropriate.

23 Johnson (Reading Romans, 141) notes that “for some Christians the verse has become a kind of pious slogan.”
Paul employs this word in this sense in Romans as well:

καὶ μὴ καθὼς βλασφημοῦμεθα καὶ καθὼς φασίν τινες ἡμᾶς λέγειν ὅτι ποιήσωμεν τὰ κακά, ἵνα ἐλθῇ τὰ ἄγαθά;
And why not say—as some accuse us of saying—“Let us do evil, so that good may come of it?” (3:8)

ἔκαστος ἡμῶν τῷ πλησίον ἀφεσκέτω εἰς τὸ ἄγαθὸν πρὸς οἰκοδομήν.
Let each one of us please his neighbor for the good, for edification. (15:9)

“Good” in this sense means benefit or profit. It represents not only present good, as in the case of Joseph and his brothers (Gen 50:20), but eschatological good as well, as in the examples from Ecclesiastes and Sirach. Paul employs this word in 8:28 to assure the Romans that in God’s plan there is a purpose, and it is a beneficial one. The τέλος for God’s creation is, therefore, goodness in terms of salvation in Christ.

That God would direct the outcome of events in the lives of the righteous reflects a mindset of the ancient world. For example, Socrates placed his faith in divine activity:

But you, too, gentlemen of the jury, must cherish a good hope with regard to death, and be convinced of this one truth, that no evil befalls a good man either in life or after death, nor are his affairs neglected by the gods. (Plato, Apol. 41c-d)

A similar view appears in the Psalms of Solomon:

καὶ πᾶν αἵτιμα ψυχῆς ἐλπιζούσης πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐπιτελεί ὁ κύριος εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὁ ποιῶν ἔλεος τοῖς ἁγαπῶσιν αὐτὸν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ
And the Lord fulfills every request from the soul that hopes in him;

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24 Paul utilizes this word in a similar way in 1 Thess 5:15 and Phlm 1:6.

25 Dunn (Romans 1–8, 481) affirms that in the context of this verse, Paul “has in view the eschatological climax which God has purposed for ‘all things.’”

26 Hildebrecht Hommel (“Denen, die Gott lieben . . . Erwägungen zu Römer 8,28,” ZNW 80 [1989] 126-29) demonstrates that this idea also occurs in Plato Rep. X 612e-d: τῷ δὲ θεοφιλεῖ οὐχ ὀμολογήσωμεν, ὅσα γε ἄτο θεῶν γίνεται πάντα γίγνονται ὡς οἰάν τε ἀρίστα; “Will we not agree that all things that come from the gods work together for the best for the one who loves the gods?”
praised is the Lord, who shows mercy to those who truly love him. (6:6)

For he will straighten the ways of the righteous, and will not bend (them) by discipline; and the mercy of the Lord is upon those who truly love him. (10:3)

The Lord is faithful to those who truly love him to those who obey his discipline. (14:1)

That this belief appears across a broad spectrum of cultures demonstrates its deep-seated popularity. Some have argued that Paul knew of the texts of Plato as well as the Psalms of Solomon.  

Paul’s interpretation of God’s activity for the good of believers, however, does not mean that they will possess every comfort or material good in this lifetime. His description of present sufferings (8:18) and the groaning of creation (8:22) and believers (8:23) indicate otherwise. Instead, Paul interprets this concept in a christological way. That is, he grounds God’s action for believers in the saving action of Christ, which includes the experience of the cross.

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28 Carroll D. Osburn (“The Interpretation of Romans 8:28,” WTJ 44 [1982] 99-109, here 101) holds that “whatever else Paul may have intended to connote in this verse, it is certain that he did not intend to infer that Christians would be spared innocent sufferings.”

29 Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 424) states that this traditional teaching is transformed as it is taken over by Paul and other Christian writers.
Paul describes believers as oĩ ἀγαπῶντες τὸν θεόν.\textsuperscript{30} This phrase reflects an OT designation for Israel.\textsuperscript{31}

καὶ γνώσῃ ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεός σου, οὕτως θεός, ὁ θεός πιστός, ὁ φυλάσσων διαθήκην καὶ ἔλεος τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτὸν καὶ τοῖς φυλάσσουσιν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ
And know that the Lord your God, He is God: the faithful God and the keeper of covenant and of mercy with those who love him and keep his commandments. (Deut 7:9)\textsuperscript{32}

φυλάσσει κύριος πάντας τοῖς ἀγαπῶντας αὐτὸν καὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀμαρτωλοὺς ἔξολοθρεύσει
The Lord guards all those who love him, but all those who sin he will utterly destroy. (Ps 144:20)

Paul employs this phrase elsewhere:

αὐτὸς ὁ δὲ τὸς ἀγαπᾶ τὸν θεόν, οὕτως ἐγνωσται ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ.
But if anyone loves God, that one is known by him. (1 Cor 8:3)\textsuperscript{33}

The love that believers have for God has been poured into their hearts, made possible by the Spirit which has been given to them (Rom 5:5).\textsuperscript{34} Thus, believers become God-lovers

\textsuperscript{30} Oda Wischmeyer ("ΘΕΩΝ ΑΓΑΠΗΝ bei Paulus: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Miszelle," ZNW 78 [1987] 141-44, here 143) argues that Paul adapts a traditional Jewish teaching with these words.

\textsuperscript{31} Fitzmyer (Romans, 522) notes that the idea of loving God is “first enunciated in the Decalogue (Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10).”

\textsuperscript{32} Most of the OT formulations of this idea appear as ἀγαπῶν κύριον τὸν θεόν. Examples include Deut 6:5; 11:1, 13, 22; 13:4; 19:19; 30:6,1 6, 20; Josh 22:5; 23:11; 2 Chron 9:8; Pss 17:2; 96:10; 121:6.

\textsuperscript{33} The phrase also occurs in Eph 6:24: ἡ χάρις μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἀγαπῶν τοῦ κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν ἐν αἰφνησίᾳ. “Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in immortality.”

\textsuperscript{34} Wright (Romans, 601) holds that this love which has been given to believers enables them to fulfill the fundamental precept of the Torah. “The most basic command is, of course, the Shema: ‘Hear, O Israel, YHWH our God, YHWH is one; and you shall love YHWH your God.’”
because God has first loved them, not because of a prior love on their part.35 It is their love
for God that enables them to trust that everything is working to their good, a capacity that
nonbelievers lack.

Paul writes that those who love God have been called. In 1:1 Paul describes himself
as one who is called to be an apostle. He likewise tells the Romans that they are called to
belong to Jesus Christ (1:6) and are called to be saints (1:8).36 Paul connects God’s calling
with creation and with resurrection because he writes that Abraham believed in God “who
gives life to the dead and calls into being the things that do not exist” (4:17). This verse
echoes the creation story of Genesis in which God creates the cosmos by the power of his
word (Gen 1:1–2:4).37 God’s call is powerful and successful, effecting God’s purpose for
life and salvation.38 God, who once created all things by his call, now creates anew by his
call. Through Christ, God calls, summons, and creates a people capable of loving him.39 In
this way, God calls people to salvation.

35 It is in this love that the LORD chose Israel: “Yet the LORD chose to love your ancestors and chose
you, their seed after them, from all the nations, as he has done this day” (Deut 10:15).

36 Paul often employs the motif of God’s call, with the adjective κλητός (1 Cor 1:1, 2, 24), the verb
καλέω (Rom 4:17; 9:7, 12, 24, 25, 26; 1 Cor 1:9; 7:15, 17, 18 (2), 20, 21, 22 (2), 24; 15:9; Gal 1:6, 15; 5:8, 13; 1
Thess 2:12, 4:7; 5:24), and the noun κλήσις (Rom 11:29; 1 Cor 1:26; 7:20; Phil 3:14). καλέω appears also in
Eph 4:1, 4; Col 3:15; 2 Thess 2:14; 1 Tim 6:12; and 2 Tim 1:9, and κλήσις is used in Eph 1:8; 4:1, 4; 2 Thess
1:11; and 2 Tim 1:9.

demonstrates that when Paul employs καλέω, God is almost always the agent and humans the object of God’s
call. He further argues that the verb is not only designatory (as in “God calls you Christians”), but also and
more importantly causative (as in “God calls you to become Christians”).

38 Käsemann (Romans, 244) writes that God’s call holds sway over all things, even earthly troubles,
and “in spite of them and through them achieves its goal” in believers.

39 Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 530) states that κλητοί δόσιμον “describes Christians not as the
recipients of an invitation that was up to them to accept or reject, but as the objects of God’s effectual
summoning of them to become the recipients of his grace.”
God’s call is according to his πρόθεσις. Paul assures the Romans that their call has meaning within the context of the present and the future, as well as the past. All of life is unfolding under God’s providence. God reveals his πρόθεσις in the gospel, and it is the basis for Christian hope (8:24-25). This hope may be secure, since it relies on God bringing his plan to its completion rather than on human achievement. Believers can be confident because they love God, and so they understand that God is able to make all things work for the good.

Paul’s only other use of πρόθεσις in Romans is 9:11, in which he discusses God’s choice of Jacob over Esau. Paul employs this example to illustrate the graciousness of God’s choice in drawing a people to himself. It is a key component of Paul’s argument in Romans 9–11, where he discloses his theology of God in the face of Israel’s rejection of God’s Messiah. The uses of πρόθεσις in 8:28 and in 9:11 show that these arguments are related inasmuch as both describe God’s plan in his election.40

Predestination of the Justified (8:29)

The next verse begins with a causative ὅτι since it answers the question, “Why do all

40 A full discussion of Romans 9–11 is outside the scope of this dissertation. However, Paul’s use of πρόθεσις in 9:11 sheds light on its meaning for election. Joel S. Kaminsky (Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election [Nashville: Abingdon, 2007] 75-78) writes that OT stories of sibling rivalry and election have a number of common elements: (1) humans are free to act as they wish, but their actions nevertheless contribute to the divinely ordained plan, even in ironic ways; (2) a younger sibling eclipses an elder brother or brothers; (3) the younger sibling is seriously flawed; and (4) these narratives “probe the emotional life and behavior of the non-elect in relation to the elect, most especially when jealousies become inflamed over such favoring.” Paul seems to employ the same criteria when exploring God’s choice of those in Christ before Israel. Such reasoning is perhaps best revealed in 11:11, “Through their (Israel’s) trespass, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make them jealous;” and 11:30-31, “Just as you once disobeyed God, but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so also now they have disobeyed in order that, through the mercy shown to you, they may receive mercy.” Therefore, Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness is rooted in God’s mercy.
things work together for good for those who love God?” The answer to this question is contingent upon the two verbs that Paul uses, προγνώσκω and προορίζω. The προ- prefix on both verbs indicates beforehand or ahead of time. Paul employs προγνώσκω in 11:2:

οὐκ ἀπώσατο ο θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἃν προέγνω
God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.

Whereas in 11:2 Paul writes of Israel, in 8:29 he treats of believers generally.41 The notion of “knowing” someone in the OT can connote “election” and “choice.”42

Paul employs προορίζω both in 8:29 and 8:30, and in 1 Cor 2:7 as well:

ἀλλὰ λαλοῦμεν θεοῦ σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίῳ τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην, ἢν προορίσασαν ὁ θεὸς πρὸ τῶν αἰῶνων εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν
But we speak God’s wisdom, hidden in mystery, which God predestined before the ages for our glory.43

Here, Paul has in mind predestination or foreordination. His use of προορίζω is noteworthy since the word does not appear in the LXX.44 The temporal designation of both προγνώσκω and προορίζω indicate that God’s plan has been in place from the beginning of time.45

41 To the perplexing situation that Israel has rejected God’s Messiah, Paul’s partial answer is that there is a faithful remnant of Israel (including him) which has believed (11:5). The other part of his answer is the mystery which was revealed to him that “all Israel will be saved” (11:26).

42 Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 431) understands this verb to denote “that special taking knowledge of a person which is God’s electing grace.” See Gen 18:19; Jer 1:5, and Amos 3:2. Dunn (Romans 1–8, 482) demonstrates that this meaning of the word has evident influence elsewhere in the Pauline corpus: 1 Cor 8:3; 13:12; Gal 4:9; and 2 Tim 2:19.

43 It is noteworthy that this verse is also closely related to the phrase, “those who love God” (1 Cor 2:9).

44 However, the verb appears twice more in the Pauline corpus, both times in Ephesians: “He predestined us for adoption as children in Jesus Christ according to the pleasure of his will” (1:5); and “In him we were made God’s private possession, predestined according to the plan of the one who is at work in all things according to the purpose of his will” (1:11).

45 Walter A. Elwell (“Election and Predestination,” in Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, 225-29, here 228) writes that some scholars suggest that these two verbs are virtually synonymous terms. Hultgren (Paul’s Letter, 328) similarly argues that “there can be hardly much difference between the verbs.” However, Byrne (Romans, 272) disagrees, stating that προορίζω “adds the sense that God has formed a plan in respect of those who have been chosen.”
It is in 8:29 that Paul reveals the purpose of God’s πρόθεσις: believers are to be conformed to the εἰκών of God’s son. The word εἰκών echoes Gen 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6; Wis 2:23; and Sir 17:3, texts that indicate that humans are created in the image of God. In Rom 1:23 Paul employs εἰκών where he says that sinners have “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the likeness of an image (εἰκόνας) of mortal man or birds or four-footed beasts or snakes.” Now, Paul discloses that believers are being transformed into the image of God’s Son through the experience of the cross that they share, and through the glory of the resurrection. Thus, the idolatry that enslaved humanity since the Fall is now reversed by Christ.

Paul’s other uses of εἰκών demonstrate that he connects this term with the glory of God that is brought about in Christ.

καὶ καθὼς ἐφορέσαμεν τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ χοικοῦ, φορέσομεν καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανίου.
And just as we have borne the image of the one of the dust, so also we will bear the image of the one of heaven. (1 Cor 15:49)

ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτρίζομεν τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφώμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος.
And all of us, gazing with unveiled faces on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into that same image from glory into glory, as from the Lord, who is Spirit. (2 Cor 3:18)

46 Johnson (Reading Romans, 142) argues that it is difficult to find a more succinct expression of God’s πρόθεσις than “that humans be shaped according to the identity of Jesus.”

47 This is the same word that is used, for example, in Deut 4:16: “Do not corrupt yourselves and make for yourselves any graven thing, any image (εἰκών), whether in the likeness of male or female.”

48 Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 432) states that Paul is thinking not only of the final glorification of believers, but also of their “growing conformity to Christ here and now in suffering and obedience.” Scholars who agree with this include Käsemann (Romans, 244-45), Balz (Heilsvertrauen, 113-14), and Jewett (Romans, 529). Those who argue that Paul has in mind only final glory include Sanday and Headlam (Epistle, 218), Lagrange (Romains, 216), Byrne (Romans, 273), Dunn (Romans 1–8, 483) and Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 535).
In whom the god of this age blinded the minds of the unbelievers so that they may not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Cor 4:4)

Thus, Paul employs ἐικόνα first to describe Christ and subsequently to describe how believers will ultimately participate in God’s πρόθεσις.  

It is the ἐικόνα of the Son into which believers are being transformed. They will bear his glory in the resurrection of the dead, but they are learning to bear that glory now. It is through the sufferings of the present that they experience the cross, and thus learn the obedience of the Son. It is also through their yearning, together with that of all creation and the Spirit, that they anticipate God’s glory in their bodies that will occur at the resurrection from the dead. Thus, God’s πρόθεσις is to have many children who participate in the resurrection glory of his Son. In this way, Christ will be “the πρωτότοκος of many brothers and sisters.”

The term πρωτότοκος occurs throughout the OT to indicate the firstborn son. These sons belong to the LORD (Exod 22:29), for he consecrated them to himself on the day he slew all the firstborn in Egypt (Num 8:17). The firstborn son must be redeemed upon his birth

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49 The word ἐικόνα also appears twice in Colossians: “He is the image (ἐικόνα) of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (1:15); and “(You) have put on the new person, which is being renewed, according to the knowledge of the image (ἐικόνα) of the One who created it” (3:10).

50 This transformation is the same transformation of which Paul writes to the Philippians: “He will transform the body of our humiliation into the same form (σῶμαφός) of the body of his glory, according to the power by which he is able to subject all things to himself” (3:21). Paul writes to them of his own transformation (σωμαιρίζομαι) in Phil 3:10.

51 Josef Kürzinger (“Συμμορφώσας τῆς ἐικόνος τοῦ ισότυπου (Röm 8, 29),” BZ 2 [1958] 294-99, here 296) points out the importance of the many συμ- words in Rom 6:4-8 that lead to this transformation: συνετάφημεν, συνεκαυτώθη, συζητομεν and especially συμμορφος.
(Exod 34:20; Num 18:15). His birthright is to inherit a double portion upon the father’s
death (Deut 21:17). In the NT, πρωτότοκος describes only Christ and it appears only twice
apart from Rom 8:29, both times in Colossians: “he is the firstborn of all creation” (1:15),
and “he is firstborn from the dead’ (1:18).

Paul writes that Christ is the πρωτότοκος of many brothers and sisters. The glory that
is his in the resurrection is what they will inherit at the resurrection from the dead (8:17).
Paul understands that Christ’s status of sonship is that to which believers are coheirs. God
will fully reveal this adoption with the “redemption of the body” (8:23).52 Paul writes in 1:4
of what God had destined for Jesus Christ through resurrection:

> τοῦ ὄρισθέντος υἱὸν θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἁναστάσεως νεκρῶν,
> Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν,
> (The gospel about) the one who was destined Son of God in power according to a
spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Just as God destined (ὁρίζω) the full revelation of the glory of the Son in the resurrection, so
has he predestined (προορίζω) the glorious revelation of believers, who are God’s children.53
The glory of the status of their adoption, then, will be fully revealed ἐξ ἁναστάσεως νεκρῶν
(8:11, 14-17, 18-19, 23).54 Therefore, inasmuch as Christ is the firstborn from the dead, he is
also the firstborn by his appointment as Son of God.

52 J. R. Daniel Kirk (“Appointed Son(s): An Exegetical Note on Romans 1:4 and 8:29,” Bulletin for
Biblical Research 14 [2004] 241-42) writes, “Given the close connection between becoming a child of God and
dying and rising with Christ, it is somewhat curious that the connection between Rom 8:29 and 1:4 has been
largely overlooked by commentators.”

53 Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 62) maintains that “Christ’s resurrection was scarcely the ground for his
exaltation; but it was the event which was the beginning of his exalted life.”

54 Fitzmyer (Romans, 229-30) states that Rom 1:3-4 is a pre-Pauline formula because it contains
many uncharacteristic elements for Paul: reference to Jesus as Son of David, the only use of the verb ὄρίζω, the
Semitic phrase “a spirit of holiness,” as well as no mention of Christ’s crucifixion or death. However, even if
polloi should not be read in a restrictive manner. Paul employs the word in similar ways in Romans 5:

'αλλ' σὺν ώς τὸ παράπτωμα, οὕτως καὶ τὸ χάρισμα· εἰ γὰρ τῷ τοῦ ἐνός παραπτώματι οἱ πολλοὶ ἀπέθανον, πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ δωρεὰ ἐν χάριτι τῇ τοῦ ἐνός ἀνθρώπου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐπερίσσευσεν.

But the gift is not like the trespass; for if by one person’s trespass many died, how much more did the grace of God overflow for many by the gratuitous gift of the one person Jesus Christ. (5:15)

ώσπερ γὰρ διὰ τῆς παρακοής τοῦ ἐνός ἀνθρώπου ἀμαρτωλοὶ κατεστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί, οὕτως καὶ διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἐνός δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί.

For just as through one person’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also through one person’s obedience many will be made righteous. (5:19)

Therefore, Paul intends polloi to carry an inclusive rather than an exclusive sense. Paul is not developing a theology whereby some individuals are destined for salvation and others for damnation. Because of his use of polloi, he indicates that he is writing about many believers.55 Individual inclusion is not at issue. Instead, he is addressing Jewish and Gentile believers alike, and his purpose is to demonstrate how the biblical belief of election pertains to those who are in Christ.56 Paul writes to reassure the Romans that nothing within their lives can obstruct God’s purpose, which is to bring them to glory.57

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55 On this point, I disagree with Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 533) who states that “the purpose of Paul is to assure individual believers—not the church as a whole—that God is working for their ‘good’ and will glorify them” (italics original).

56 Byrne (Romans, 272) writes that Paul’s perspective is positive and inclusive, “indicating God’s will to bring all to the fullness of humanity.”

57 Augustine (Cont. duas Epist. Pelag. ii. 10. §22 in Answer to the Pelagians II; The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, 1:24; trans. Roland J Teske, S.J. [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1998] 158) distinguishes between two types of call, “Not all who have been called have been called according to his choice, because many are called but few are chosen.” He also writes (Cont. Julian v. 4. §14 in Saint Augustine: Against Julian, trans. Matthew A. Schumacher, C.S.C.; FC 35 [New York: Fathers of the Church, 1957] 258), “Though all men, of the same mass of perdition and condemnation, unrepentant according
Paul writes about predestination from God’s point of view, rather than from the point of view of believers. That is, in the sight of God, all people are sinful and destined for condemnation (3:23). However, God intends glory for humanity rather than condemnation. To this end, God has planned from all eternity a glorious τέλος for humanity: its conformity to the resurrected Christ. God’s purpose is cosmic in scope (8:19-22). God’s predestination for humanity is to share in the image of his Son.58 Seen in an eschatological light, Paul’s message is good news for believers who undergo suffering. Present distress is not the final word regarding their relationship with God; rather, Paul encourages them with the message that God intends to bring humanity into a filial relationship with God by conforming humanity to the Son.

The Glorification of the Justified (8:30)

In this verse Paul employs four verbs in the aorist: προορίζω, καλέω, δικαιώω, and δοξάζω. These verbs, together with προγίνωσκω in 8:29 (also in the aorist), signify God’s
to the hardness of their heart, treasure up wrath to themselves on the day of wrath when each will be repaid according to his works, God through his merciful goodness leads some of them to repentance and according to his judgment does not lead others.” Jean Calvin (Institutes III. xxv. 5 in Richard A. Muller, Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins; Studies in Historical Theology 2 [Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1986] 22) based his doctrine of predestination on that of Augustine, writing, “We call predestination God’s eternal decree (aeternum Dei decretum), by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition, rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death” (italics original). Many scholars view predestination in these terms; however, I argue that Paul has not developed this doctrine and does not intend individual salvation or damnation.

58 Yeo Khiok-khng (“Messianic Predestination in Romans 8 and Classical Confucianism,” in Navigating Romans Through Cultures: Challenging Readings by Charting a New Course, ed. Yeo Khiok-khng; Romans Through History and Cultures Series [New York: T & T Clark, 2004] 272) cautions that the language of predestination not be read as “a divine prediction or a closed system of fate; otherwise the narrative of Christ could be comprehensive and yet rigid, or could be specific and yet exclusive.” I understand the first to be universal salvation without regard to belief, and the second to be individual salvation or condemnation in terms of double predestination.
action in his πράξεις. With these words, Paul explains what God has done. God’s action is not limited by time. However, human perception of God’s action is within history and therefore is limited to past events. By using the aorist aspect, Paul communicates that believers may be certain of God’s action in the future as well. Since that aorist is not confined entirely by any time designation, Paul is able to employ this “tense” with all five verbs. In doing so, he is able to relate these actions to one another with a growing rhetorical momentum. The order of these verbs is as follows:

ôús προέγνω
   καὶ προώρισεν
ôús ὤν προώρισεν
tούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσεν
   καὶ ὤν ἐκάλεσεν
tούτους καὶ ἐδικαίωσεν
ôús ὤν ἐδικαίωσεν
tούτους καὶ ἐδόξασεν

Paul employs the relative pronouns in order to explain “those who are called according to his plan” (8:28). In this sorites, or chain of syllogisms, Paul describes the progression of believers to their ultimate destination: conformity to the εἰκών of the Son of God.

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59 Daniel B. Wallace (Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996] 554-65) lists seven uses of the aorist: constative, ingressive, consummative, gnomic, epistolary, proleptic, and immediate past. These many usages of a single verbal aspect indicate distinctions that do not always translate into a simple indicative verb in English. Stanley E. Porter (Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood [New York: Peter Lang, 1989] 233-38, here 237) categorizes these verbs as “timeless aorist” and translates them in the present tense. While I agree with his assessment, I have chosen to translate them in the past tense.

60 Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 535) maintains that the relative pronouns in the sorites “leaves little room for the suggestion that the links in this chain are not firmly attached to one another, as if some who were ‘foreknown’ and ‘predestined’ would not be ‘called,’ ‘justified,’ and ‘glorified.’”

61 Sanday and Headlam (Epistle to the Romans, 218) argue that these steps are not exhaustive; that sanctification could be inserted after justification. Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 433) agrees with them, but Dunn (Romans 1–8, 485) claims that these scholars miss the breadth of δικαίωμα.
However, these steps of God’s πρόθεσις are not accomplished by the believers themselves. Paul makes this point very clear; it is God who is the subject of these verbs. God foreknew and predestined believers before time. God called and justified believers within history. God will glorify believers in the eschaton.

Paul is not developing a doctrine of double predestination such as is found in later theology. His objective in this passage is to demonstrate to the Romans that God is not only on their side but in control of history as well, despite the present sufferings that they endure. Insofar as they have become God-lovers (5:5), they may be assured that God foreknew them and predestined them for adoption. Their predestination is manifest in their call, which has come through the gospel. Their answer to God’s call has resulted in God justifying them. Their justification in turn will lead to their glorification. Inasmuch as Paul presents these discrete steps on the way to salvation, he also encourages believers that the suffering of the cross is not God’s final word in their lives.

Justification is the action of God in declaring a believer righteous. In the OT, δίκαιος describes a person who is in right relationship with others, both humans and God. A judge or tribunal may declare someone δίκαιος (Exod 23:7; Deut 25:1) or God may judge a person to be so (Gen 7:1, 1 Kgs 8:32; 2 Chr 6:23; Ps 7:10). Paul illustrates this judgment by making use of the image from Gen 15:6, in which “Abraham believed God and it was accounted to

Yet another sign that Paul does not write primarily about individual salvation is his use of the plural relative pronouns.

Matera (Romans, 204) clarifies Paul’s position as such: “All who accept the gospel—which excludes none who do so—will be justified and glorified.”

Gottlob Schrenk (“δίκη κτλ.” TDNT 2. 174-225, here 185) notes that in the rest of the Greek world, one is δίκαιος by satisfying civic duties in the most general sense, whereas in the LXX, “the δίκαιος is the man who fulfils his duties toward God and the theocratic society, meeting God’s claim in this relationship.”
him as righteousness” (Rom 4:3). Paul employs δίκαιος in his assessment of humanity, first by stating that only “those who fulfill the law will be justified” (2:13), and then declaring that “there is no just person, not even one” (3:10). But there is a remedy. Paul quotes Hab 2:4, “the just one by faith will live” (Rom 1:17). Therefore, in order to be justified, one needs to believe in what God has done in Christ.

διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς δίκαιου κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί.
Through one person’s obedience many will be made righteous. (5:19)

The obedience of Christ was manifested in his passion and death, whereby God proved his righteousness by forgiving sins and justifying those who have faith in Jesus (3:25-26; 5:9). Paul presents Christ as the sole means of justification, because Christ is the revelation of the δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ. Inasmuch as Christ crucified is the manifestation of God’s righteousness, he is able to justify all who believe in him. Justification, then, is an expression of the δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, and is not an action which has any human origin.

Justification leads to the transformation of the justified into the εἰκών of Christ, which is their glorification. Paul places δοξάζω at the end of the sorites, since it is God’s τέλος for humanity. Paul first hints at this goal in 3:23, and plainly states it in 8:17 and 8:18-21. Humanity, which was not able to give glory to the Creator (1:21), will be glorified by the Creator.67 The glory of God in the resurrected Christ will be the glory of believers.

65 Fitzmyer (Romans, 117) maintains that “Paul insists on the utter gratuity of this justification.

66 Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 535), however, cautions that “we do well to remember that Paul’s focus in these verses on the divine side of salvation in no way mitigates the importance of human response.”

67 Dunn (Romans 1–8, 485) notes that this is a “finely conceived reversal,” whereas Byrne (Romans, 273) calls the reversal ironic.
In 8:17 and 8:18-21 Paul describes the glorification of believers as a future gift. Scholars have labored to interpret the aorist of the verb, δοξάζω. Some think that with this verb Paul is looking backward into history from the perspective of the eschaton, in an anticipatory or proleptic way. Others see this glorification as something that is already accomplished in Christ and is now awaiting its final revelation. Still other scholars see it as part of a baptismal formula. However, glorification, as it stands at the end of the sorites, mirrors the life of Christ in the lives of believers. Paul employs the aorist of δοξάζω, whether referring to current or future glorification, as the ultimate goal in shaping the lives of believers according to Christ.

Two of the important concepts that Paul discusses in this verse—calling and glorifying—echo language similar to that which Isaiah employs to describe Israel’s return from the Exile. In terms of calling, Isaiah writes:

οὐ ἀντελαβόμην ἀπ’ ἀκρων τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐκ τῶν σκοπιῶν αὐτῆς ἐκάλεσά σε καὶ εἶπά σοι παῖς μου ἔξελεξάμην σε καὶ οὐκ ἐγκατέλειπόν σε
You whom I took from the ends of the earth and called you from its heights; I told you, “You are my servant. I have chosen you and not left you behind.” (Isa 41:9)

With regard to calling and redemption, Isaiah writes:

68  Lagrange (Romains, 217) declares it an “anticipation de certitude.” Dunn (Romans 1–8, 485-86) understands this glorification as “the process seen from its end point and completion.” Fee (Pauline Christology, 249) comments that, with these verbs, Paul looks back into history from the eschatological future.

69  Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 433) compares the use of δοξάζω in this verse to the aorist of σώζω in 8:24. Schlier (Römerbrief, 273) understands the glorification as “ein jetziges Geschehen.” Osten-Sacken (Römer 8, 283) writes, “Paulus kann also aoristisch von der Verherrlichung sprechen, weil Gott der Garant des Heils ist und weil er bereits begonnen hat, seinen Heilswillen durchzusetzen” (italics original).

70  Käsemann (Romans, 245) compares this chain of aorist verbs to an enthusiastic baptismal tradition in Eph 2:5-22. Jewett (Romans, 530) believes this choice is the most satisfactory as it highlights the process of formation into the image of God in the earlier verses of the pericope.

71  Wright (Romans, 603) speculates that these verbs reflect Christ’s incarnation, baptism, resurrection and ascension.
Now thus says the LORD, who created you, Jacob, and who formed you, Israel, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name and you are mine.” (Isa 43:1)

Paul also writes of the glory that will be revealed in believers at the resurrection from the dead (8:18) in language similar to that found in the Book of Isaiah:

Shine forth! Shine forth, Jerusalem! For your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. Behold, darkness will cover the earth and thick darkness the nations, but on you the LORD shines and his glory will appear over you. (Isa 60:1-2)

The sun will not be your light by day nor the rising of the moon shine for you at night, but the LORD will be your light forever and God your glory. (Isa 60:19)

Just as Israel endured the Exile and hoped for salvation, so believers endure present sufferings and hope for salvation. They may not fully understand God’s πρόθεσις, but Paul assures them that its end is their glorification, just as once Isaiah encouraged the scattered people of Israel. What is more, believers can be confident of their salvation in Christ (8:10) because in the gift of the Spirit they have received the down payment of their glorification (8:23). Theirs is a destiny of glory, as children of God (8:15, 29) and conformed to the εἰκών of his Son (8:29).
Pauline Theodicy in This Text

Paul begins these verses with a message of confidence. He states what believers should already know: All things work together for good for those who love God (8:28). He does not intend this statement to be a pietistic platitude, as if he does not consider the present sufferings or the current situation of believers to be of any account. Instead, this statement is a declaration of Paul’s own faith. All things, including suffering, will work toward God’s beneficial purpose. Paul is able to state this belief with integrity, because he is a man who has suffered much for the gospel. This experience has sharpened Paul’s faith rather than dulled it. He is eager to remind the Romans of this shared knowledge so that they will trust God even more.

In 8:26 Paul explains to the Romans what believers do not know, that is, how to pray with endurance. Now in 8:28, he reminds them of what they do know. God’s righteousness is the framework for the operation of all created things, and within that framework all things work together for good. Those who love God, then, are able to trust in the δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ. Even if they do not recognize the current outworking of all things as advantageous, they are able to believe in the goodness of God which renders all things right and, therefore, good. Paul also may be giving the Romans a gentle reprimand because of their divisions, since the community is factionalized (“strong” and “weak”). In this statement, Paul may be hoping for support for his mission to Spain as well.72

Paul defends the righteousness of God by revealing God’s plan of salvation for the justified. Believers are not subject to chaos or to the whims of the gods of the Pantheon

72 Jewett (Romans, 527) writes that “Paul’s wording implies divine and human co-responsibility in the face of adversity,” which means not only daily work but also the support of the “risky mission to Spain.”
because God has a purpose; namely, to bring his children to glory (8:18). The full revelation of God’s plan will be at the resurrection from the dead (8:23). For now, however, believers must live and work in an existence that is often hostile. Their allegiance is to Christ the Lord, and not to Caesar (Phil 2:11). The believers in Rome would be aware of issues regarding belonging and not belonging: Roman citizenry, free status, Jew or Gentile. These categories do not allow for compromise; either one belongs or does not. Inasmuch as believers respond to God’s call, Paul assures them that they are not forgotten in God’s plan, and that they belong to God’s care.

In regard to the justified belonging to God’s plan, Paul presents God’s plan as inclusive rather than exclusive. He assures the Romans that their travails are not a sign of abandonment by God. Instead of developing a doctrine of double predestination, as some scholars maintain, Paul is writing a theology of encouragement to those who suffer. God-lovers are not outside the scope of God’s providence, even though it may sometimes seem that way.

Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness explains the sufferings of believers in terms of being conformed to Christ’s suffering on the cross. This conformity is not limited to afflictions, however, because God’s Son was not defined only by the cross. He was also glorified in the resurrection. Therefore, Paul assures believers of future glorification. The glory that will be revealed in believers (8:18) is the final step in the plan of God as revealed by Paul (8:29-30). In this way, believers come to resemble Christ who is the πρωτότοκος. They will bear his εἰκὼν in the renewed and freed creation, thereby giving witness of God’s
The righteousness. The εἰκὼν of God that Adam could not sustain is now available to believers through Christ, their elder brother.

Believers are able to love God (5:5) because God has loved them first. This love is manifest in their call (8:28). Paul reminds the Romans of the divine initiative in their relationship with God and each other. God calls them to become saints (1:7) and his call is effective. Their response to God’s call allows them to possess the first fruits of the Spirit (8:23), which in turn intercedes for them (8:27). Through God’s Spirit, love for God has been poured into the hearts of believers (5:5), rendering them God-lovers (8:28).

God’s plan works itself out in history, but cannot be limited to what occurs in history. From all eternity, God foreknew and predestined believers (8:29). Within history, God called believers and justified them through the death and resurrection of Christ. At the eschaton, God will glorify believers (8:30). Through Paul’s revelation of God’s plan, believers find that they participate in something greater than their own lives. God’s plan is comprehensive and it encompasses all of history. Accordingly, Paul defends God’s righteousness by teaching the Romans that God’s plan comes to fulfillment with their glorification; for God is trustworthy.

With only a few exceptions, God is the subject of the many verbs in these verses. Paul’s amassing of active verbs points to the activity of God. God does not stand by and watch his children suffer; God brings them to glorification. God foreknows, predestines, calls, justifies, and glorifies believers. God’s activity carries out his plan to its glorious climax. God is, therefore, intimately involved in the lives of his children.
Conclusion

In Rom 8:28-30 I have examined Pauline theodicy in light of the plan of God. Within these verses, I have argued that Paul defends God’s righteousness in terms of both God’s intention and activity. God’s intention is to bring his children to glory, so that they may be conformed to the εἰκόνα of his Son. God’s activity precedes and makes possible every step along the way to that glorious destiny. Because God has a πρόθεσις, his children are able to have a πρόθεσις as well. Their lives are not characterized by random or meaningless activity. Their lives carry the purpose that God intends. They are free to cooperate in the working of all things for the good (8:28).

Because Christ is the revelation of God’s righteousness, his εἰκόνα is therefore the righteousness of God. Believers will bear at the eschaton the same εἰκόνα as the Son, who is their elder brother in resurrected life. This means that they themselves become the revelation of the righteousness of God in the renewed creation. Inasmuch as God is transforming them in the present, they are being transformed into the εἰκόνα of Christ now. Their current lives, amid pain and suffering, conform them to the cross of Christ so that they may share the resurrection of Christ (8:17).

Believers who have responded to God’s call by faith in Christ find themselves in a new relationship with God and others since God declares them δίκαιοι in relation to himself and to all of creation. These relationships reflect the communal nature of salvation. Paul is not primarily concerned with the predestination of the individual. Rather, he reveals that God has made possible a glorious destiny for all the justified. Those who respond to God’s
call recognize their duty to be ἀγίοι (1:7). They have the responsibility to reflect God’s righteousness both in the world and within the believing community.

The final step in God’s προδοσίας is glorification. All creation awaits this climactic revelation of the children of God (8:19). When God redeems the bodies of believers at the resurrection from the dead, believers will share fully in the sonship of Christ. This ultimate victory over sin and death will vindicate their hope in God’s righteousness. Their future glorification gives meaning and purpose to their present suffering (8:18). Paul assures believers that their hope is the same as that for which creation and the Spirit groan: that God will bring his προδοσίας to a glorious conclusion.

The tone of Paul’s message in Romans 8:28-30 is filled with hope and confidence. He develops his theodicy in light of the predestination of the justified through declarative sentences that admit of no question about God’s purpose and God’s ability to bring that purpose to fulfillment. Because of Paul’s confidence, the Romans can also be confident that God, who called and justified them, will ultimately glorify them with his Son.
Chapter Six

Pauline Theodicy in Terms of Paul’s Confidence in God’s Victory

Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined Pauline theodicy in light of the plan of God within Rom 8:28-30. I have argued that Paul defends God’s righteousness by teaching the Romans that God has a πρόθεσις. First, Paul reminds them of something that they should know, namely, that all things work to the good for those who love God (8:28). Even sin cannot frustrate God’s plan to bring his children to glorification. Inasmuch as believers have received the firstfruits of the Spirit, they are God-lovers. This is because the Spirit has poured love for God into their hearts (5:5). As God-lovers, believers are responding to God’s call to be ἀγαπων.

Paul further encourages the Romans by telling them that those who have been called have also been predestined. That is, their belonging to the πρόθεσις of God is not random, but rather planned from before all time. The goal of God’s πρόθεσις is to bring believers to share in the εἰκών of God’s Son. This εἰκών is resurrection glory. Inasmuch as Christ has already been raised and glorified, he is the πρωτότοκος of many brothers and sisters. The resurrection glory that God destined for Christ, God has predestined for believers.

Paul identifies different moments in salvation, all with reference to the activity of God: foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified. This chain of verbs describes a progression that cannot be contained within history, since God foreknew and predestined before time began and God will glorify at the eschaton. God calls believers and justifies
them within history. God’s call is efficacious; as it once created all things, it now creates and summons a people to love God. God justifies those who answer his call. By declaring them δικαιοί, God has placed believers in new, right relationships with others and with him.

Finally, I explored Pauline theodicy in light of the plan of God. Because God’s activity on the part of the justified is not limited to time, believers are assured that their lives have meaning greater than their present sufferings. God’s activity is not limited by sin but can use all things to work for the good for those who love him. In Rom 8:28-30, Paul defends God’s righteousness in terms of both God’s intention and God’s activity. God’s intention is to bring his children to glory, so that they may conform to the εἰκόνα of his son. God’s activity precedes and makes possible every step along the way to that glorious destiny. Because God has a πρόθεσις, his children are able to have a πρόθεσις as well. Their lives are not to be characterized by random or meaningless activity, nor are they to languish in frustration. Their lives now carry the purpose that God intends. They are free to cooperate in the working of all things for the good (8:28).

In this chapter I will explore Rom 8:31-39, and through that text I will explore Pauline theodicy in terms of Paul’s confidence in God’s victory. Pauline theodicy is Paul’s way of defending the righteousness of God despite what may seem to be lapses in God’s ability to keep promises, such as current suffering and Israel’s rejection of the Messiah. In this chapter I will, first, again present the text with my translation, taking into account text-critical issues. Second, I will consider the limits of the passage and present an outline. Third, I will offer an explanation of the outline. Fourth, I will exegete the passage. Fifth, I
will examine Paul’s language about God and what it reveals about Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness. Finally, I will summarize my findings.

The Text

Translation of Rom 8:31-39

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>οὐν ἐροῦμεν πρὸς ταύτα; εἰ ὁ θεὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμὼν, τίς καθ’ ἡμὼν;</td>
<td>What, then, should we say about these things? If God is for us, who could be against us?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>ὁ γὰρ τοῦ ἱδίου υἱοῦ οὐκ ἐφείσατο ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πάντων παρέδωκεν αὐτόν, πῶς οὐχὶ καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα ἡμῖν χαρίστηκι;</td>
<td>He who did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for all of us, how will he not give us everything along with him?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>τίς ἐγκαλεῖ σει κατὰ ἐκλεκτῶν θεοῦ; θεὸς ὁ δικαιῶν·</td>
<td>Who will bring a charge against the chosen of God? God who justifies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>τίς ὁ κατακρινὼν;</td>
<td>Who is it who will condemn?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 D, F, G, read οὐδὲ, which would render the sentence “not even his own son.” It is a minor scribal correction and not widely attested.

2 The majority of manuscripts read κατακρίνων, the penultimate accent of which renders it a present participle. Only 1506, pc, read κατακρινών with its ultimate accent making a future participle. Ψα, Ν, A, B*, C, D*, F, G all read without any accent. The future tense of the participle makes the most sense and agrees with the future verb ἐγκαλέσει of the previous verse and the eschatological tenor of the text as a whole.

3 The variant ἀμα δὲ, attested by Ψ*, is a minor introductory addition to the sentence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Χριστός ὁ ἀποθανόν, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐγερθεῖς, δὲ καὶ ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ, δὲ καὶ ἐντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν; τὸς ἡμᾶς χωρίσει ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Χριστοῦ; θλίψεις ἢ στενοχωρία ἢ διωγμὸς ἢ λιμὸς ἢ γυμνότης ἢ κίνδυνος ἢ μάχαιρα;</td>
<td>Christ who died—or rather was raised, who is also at the right of God, and even intercedes for us? Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Affliction, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword? As it is written: “For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we are considered as sheep for slaughter.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35. **καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι Ἑκεκεν σοι θανάτωμεθα ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν, ἐλογίσθημεν ως πρόβατα σφαγῆς.**

36. **καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι Ἑκεκεν σοι θανάτωμεθα ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν, ἐλογίσθημεν ως πρόβατα σφαγῆς.**

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4 Χριστός Ἰσούς appears in Ψδειδ, Ν, A, C, F, G, L, Ψ, 6, 33, 81, 104, 365, 1505, al, sy, lat bo. Χριστός alone appears in B, D, 0289, 1739, 1881, Ἠ, ar, m, sy; Irлат, Ambst. Metzger* (Textual Commentary, 458) notes that the editors of Nestle-Aland⁶, ²⁷ have placed Ἰσούς in brackets, indicating that evidence for and against this reading is “evenly balanced.” Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 537) notes that it was the tendency of scribes to expand divine titles, thus adding Ἰσούς to Χριστός. Because of this tendency, the importance of the Alexandrian texts, and the apparent assimilation to Χριστός Ἰσούς in 8:39, Χριστός alone is the best reading.

5 “Raised from the dead” ἐκ νεκρῶν is witnessed by Ν⁴, A, C, Ψ, 0289, 33, 81, 104, 1506, pc, co. “From the dead” does not appear in Ψ²⁹id, ⁴⁶, Ν², B, D, F, G, 1739, 1881, Ἠ, latt, sy; Irлат. The words seem to be a scribal insertion that agrees with 8:11. Furthermore, these words may have belonged together in a set formula for worship.

6 Ν, A, C, 0289, 81, 629, 945, 1506, pc, it, vgʷʷ, bo; Irлат do not read καί . . . καί in this sentence. Jews (Romans, 532) notes that this omission reflects “the tendency of the Alexandrian tradition toward stylistic improvement,” in this instance removing a repetitive series of “and . . . and.” The text as I have presented it appears in Ψ²⁷, ⁴⁶, Ν², B, D, F, G, Ψ, 33, Ἠ, b, vgʷʷ, sy, sa.

7 Ν, 365, 1506, pc, t, sa attest θεοῦ, and B reads θεοῦ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰσοῦ, while Χριστοῦ is witnessed by C, D, F, G, K, L, Ψ, 33, 1739, 1881, Ἠ, lat, sy, bo; Tert, Or. The texts in Ν and B seem to be scribal corrections to match 8:39, “from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

8 The conjunction ἢ does not appear in Ψ⁴⁶, D⁴, F, G and seems to be a scribal omission. The conjunction does appear in Ν, A, B, C, D², K, L, Ψ, 33, 1739, 1881, Ἠ, lat, sy, co; Cyp.
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| 37. ἀλλ᾽ ἐν τούτοις πᾶσιν ύπερνικώμεν διὰ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος ἡμᾶς. | 37. But in all these things we are superconquerors by means of him who loved us. |
| 38. πέπεισμαι γὰρ ὅτι οὐτε θάνατος οὐτε ζωὴ οὐτε ἀγγελοὶ οὐτε ἐνεστῶτα οὐτε μέλλοντα οὐτε δυνάμεις | 38. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, 39. nor heights, nor depth, nor any other kind of creature can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. |

### Limits of the Passage and the Outline

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9 Rather than the masculine genitive single participle τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος, D, F, G, latt read the masculine accusative single participle τῶν ἀγαπήσαντα. Since only a few texts read this minor variation, I have not included it.

10 D, F, G, b; Ambst read the singular ἀγγελοὶ instead of the plural, which appears in the majority of texts.

11 D alone attests to έξουσία οὐτε ἀρχαί, whereas C, 81, 104, al, sy, read ἀρχαί οὐτε έξουσίαι. These variants, appearing in so few texts, do not seem to be as probable as the lone word, ἀρχαί.

12 C, D, Ψ, 33, 81, 104, 撺, place δυνάμεις “powers” directly after ἀρχαί “rulers.” These words are separated by ἐνεστῶτα οὐτε μέλλοντα “present things nor future things” in ¹²⁷vol.⁴⁶); A, B, C, D, F, G, 0285, 1505, 1739, 1881, pc. The latter, while not presenting an orderly and gradated list, seems to have the better textual witnesses. See Metzger (TCGNT) 458-59.

13 The indefinite pronoun τις does not appear in in ⁴⁶, D, F, G, 1505, lat, sy. However, it does appear in A, B, C, 0285, 33, 1739, 1881, 撺, (t); Cl.
The passage I consider in this chapter begins at 8:31 and ends at 8:39. This portion of the text starts with the Pauline formula τί οὐν ἐροῦμεν. Paul uses these words, as he does elsewhere in the letter, to further his argument. The particle οὖν signals that a conclusion will follow from what has just been written. In 8:28-30 Paul has described God’s plan in terms of predestination and God’s call. This revelation of God’s προcbcςεις brings a close to the first section of my pericope. In 8:31-39, the second section, Paul concludes the pericope of 8:18-30 and, as some scholars argue, the entirety of Chapters 5–8. Beginning with 8:31 Paul describes the victory of the love of God within the setting of the final judgment. This section commences with a series of rhetorical questions. Thus it is grammatically set off from what precedes it, but it is also thematically different. The scene is the eschatological courtroom, and the rhetorical momentum of Paul’s successive questions is like that of the closing statement of a trial lawyer. The concluding words of his argument, “in Christ Jesus our Lord,” have the force of a formula of a prayer or doxology. The whole pericope ends with these words, since the next verse begins with “I speak the truth in Christ” and the topic becomes the future of Israel according to the flesh (9:1). I have outlined the passage illustrating Paul’s train of thought for this text:

8:31-39  In the Eschatological Court

8:31-33  Questions about God
8:31  God is for us
8:32  God withholds nothing from us
8:33  God does not accuse us
8:34  God raised Christ, who makes intercession for us

8:35-37  Question about separation from Christ
8:35  Earthly powers which try to separate us from Christ
8:36 An example of theodicy from LXX Psalm 43
8:37 We are super-conquerors through the one who loved us

8:38-39 Confidence in God’s Victory
8:38-39a Cosmic powers which try to separate us from God’s love
8:39b God’s love in Christ Jesus is victorious

Explanation of the Outline

To this point, Paul’s focus in my pericope has been the righteousness of God which will be manifested in the future glory of believers. He now considers God’s victorious love in the setting of the eschatological court. Although there are roles of possible accusers, it is God as judge and justifier who is central to Paul’s exposition. Even though at the last judgment it will be all the resurrected who will be on trial, Paul’s language is that of one who is defending God and God’s righteousness.

This section begins with six questions that concern God and God’s love for believers (8:31-33). There is scholarly debate as to how many questions or statements are contained within 8:33-34. I have interpreted all four of these sentences as questions. There are at least six alternative forms. First, every clause may be a question, resulting in seven questions. Second, some clauses may be combined, resulting in five questions (“Who will bring a charge . . . ? God who justifies? Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus who died? But even more so . . . for us?”). Third, there may be two questions and two statements (“Who will bring a charge . . . ? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ

14 In this I agree with Fitzmyer (Romans, 528).
15 Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 541 and n. 27) lists five alternative punctuations.
16 Jewett (Romans, 539-42) interprets the passage in this way.
Jesus . . . for us.”).\footnote{17} Fourth, there may be a question, a statement, and two more questions. Fifth, there may be three questions and a statement.\footnote{18} Sixth, three questions that result from combining clauses (“Who can bring any accusation against those that God has chosen? When God grants saving justice, who can condemn? Are we not sure that it is Christ Jesus . . . who is adding his plea for us?”).\footnote{19} However, four questions is the best interpretation of the text because it continues the rhythm of questioning that characterizes Paul’s other statements in this section, both what precedes (8:31-32) and what ensues (8:35).\footnote{20} One may observe a similar rhythm in, for example, modern day Pentecostal preaching or in political speeches. The speaker asks a series of questions to which the audience gives the same answer, often growing in intensity. In the case of this text, the letter was intended to be read aloud in the communities of Rome, and the communal answer to Paul’s rousing questions would be “No one” or “No.” (Who will bring a charge? No one! God who justifies? No! Who is it who will condemn? No one! Christ who died . . . for us? No!)

Paul next poses a question concerning separation from Christ (8:35). He provides a catalogue of possible difficulties that believers may encounter in life. This, too, is in the form of a question but the unstated answer is that none of these events has the power to separate believers from the love of Christ. Paul then quotes Ps 43:23 (LXX) as an example

\footnote{17} Dunn (Romans 1–8, 496), Wright (Romans, 612-13) and the editors of the NIV have chosen this interpretation.

\footnote{18} Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 437-38) and Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 541) argue for this interpretation. The editors of the UBSGNT\textsuperscript{4} and the NA\textsuperscript{27} also punctuate these clauses in this way.

\footnote{19} This is the translation of the NJB. The editors of the RSV similarly combine clauses in order to render three questions.

\footnote{20} Although Käsemann (Commentary on Romans, 248) argues that “it is impossible to understand [these] whole statements as questions,” he does not provide any rationale for his argument.
of theodicy (8:36) and declares that believers are super-conquerors through the one who loved them (8:37).

Finally, Paul brings his argument to a close by asserting that no created thing has the power to separate believers from the love of God in Christ (8:38-39). He presents a wide range of cosmic forces arrayed against believers. Paul maintains that God’s righteousness, manifested in God’s love in Jesus Christ, is ultimately victorious. With regard to believers, Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness is complete. These verses conclude the section that I explore in this chapter, but they also bring to a close the pericope as a whole.21

Exegesis of the Passage

God Is for Us (8:31)

This verse begins with τί ἐρωτομεν, a formula that Paul employs also in 3:5; 4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 9:14, 30.22 Here, however, he modifies the formula by adding “about these things.” ταύτα may refer to only the πρόθεσις of God which Paul has just revealed in 8:28-30, but I argue that it refers to all of 8:18-30. Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness in light of “the

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21 Lagrange (Romains, 217) holds that these verses conclude the “dogmatic section” of the letter, Chapters 3–8. Käsemann (Commentary on Romans, 246), Byrne (Romans, 274), Fitzmyer (Romans, 529), and Jewett (Romans, 532) argue that these verses bring 5:1–8:39 to a close. Osten-Sacken (Römer 8, 309) maintains that 8:1-30 finishes the argument for Chapters 5–8, and that 8:31-39 concludes all of Chapters 1–8. Similarly, Balz (Heilsvertrauen, 116), Cranfield (Romans I–8, 434), Moo (Épistle to the Romans, 537-38), and Wright (Romans, 609) hold that these verses are the climax of the letter from 1:1 to this point. Dunn (Romans I–8, 497) argues that this section concludes Chapters 6–8. A. H. Snyman (“Style and the Rhetorical Situation of Romans 8.31-39,” NTS 34 [1988] 218-31, here 227) maintains that this section is a peroration of Chapters 5–8, which intends not only to recapitulate the argument thus far, but also to make “an emotional appeal to the audience.”

22 Fitzmyer (Romans, 432) notes that Paul sometimes uses this transitional rhetorical question as part of his diatribe style.
present sufferings” constitutes his theodicy, and he is now concluding that larger thought.

This conclusion is signaled by his use of τί ἐροῦμεν.

The language in this passage reflects a law court. Paul employs the question τί ἐροῦμεν in the same way that a trial lawyer would make his closing statement. Similarly, the next question, “If God is for us, who could be against us?” brings to mind a trial. There are other juridical terms in this passage: bring a charge, condemn, justify, and intercede. That Paul envisions the eschatological court is clear by use of verbs in the future tense: χαρίσεται, ἐγκαλέσει, κατακρίνων, χωρίσει. This court is similar to the heavenly court settings described in Ps 88:8 (LXX); Job 1:6-12, 2:1-7; Zech 3:1-7; Isa 41:1-20, 21-29; 44:6-23; Dan 7:9-14; and to judgment scenes encountered in Hos 4:1-4; 12:3; Mic 6:1-2; Isa 3:13-14; Jer 2:9.

In Rom 2:1-3 Paul contrasts human judgment with the judgment of God. Human judgment is flawed, even hypocritical, because humans who judge engage in the same actions they judge against. The judgment of God, however, is true (2:2). It will come at the end of time, Paul writes, “on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of people through Jesus Christ” (2:16). Paul often refers to God as judge:

κρινεῖ ὁ θεός τῶν κόσμων
God will judge the world. (Rom 3:6)

πάντες γὰρ παραστησάμεθα τῷ βῆματι τοῦ θεοῦ
For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. (Rom 14:10)

τοὺς δὲ ἔξω ὁ θεός κρινεῖ
God will judge those on the outside. (1 Cor 5:13)

Sometimes in the Pauline corpus, it is Jesus Christ who is judge:
The one who judges me is the Lord. Therefore, do not prejudge anyone until the Lord comes, who will bring secrets to light out of the darkness and reveal the plans of hearts. (1 Cor 4:5)

But when we are judged by the Lord we are being disciplined, so that we may not be condemned along with the world. (1 Cor 11:32)

I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus who will judge the living and the dead. (2 Tim 4:1)

Paul introduces this scene with the question, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” The first clause is not a question in itself (i.e., “Is God for us?”), but rather the protasis of the sentence. The sense of this clause is not conditional, but rather without qualification. Its meaning is therefore “Since God is for us,” or “Because God is for us.” What is more, the clause reveals that the judge in the eschatological court has already taken the side of the defendants. The apodosis (“Who can be against us?”) provides further confidence for believers, because Paul assures them that no prosecutor or accuser is able to prevail over them.

“God for us” encapsulates well Paul’s argument thus far in the letter. God’s gospel is the power of salvation for all who believe (1:16). God is the giver of the promise to Abraham (4:13). God proves his love for believers in that Jesus died not for the righteous, but for sinners (5:6-8). God gives eternal life (6:23). God gives the Spirit (5:5) in order to raise believers from the dead (8:11), meanwhile making believers children of God and eventually

23 BDAG (s.v. ἐὰν) states that when the conditional particle if is combined with a verb in the indicative, it expresses a condition thought of as real. It further states that in Pauline literature the verb is very often lacking and must be supplied from the context.
coheirs with Christ (8:14-17). ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν is the formula that Paul employs in 5:8 to describe that Christ died “for us.” This same formula describes Christ’s death “for us” in 1 Thess 5:10; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; Eph 5:2; and Titus 2:14. Similarly, ὑπὲρ ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν is employed in reference to Christ’s death in 1 Cor 15:3 and Gal 1:4. In Rom 8:31, 32, and 34 Paul employs ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν interchangeably with regard to the actions of God and Christ, and therefore reveals their common stance. Paul’s use of this phrase in this manner indicates that he desires the Romans to understand that God is the source of the saving action of Christ. The subject of Paul’s letter is the righteousness of God, and the use of this phrase, equally predicated of the actions of God and Christ, indicates that Christ acts within God’s πρὸς τοίς. In 8:31, 32, and 34, ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν signals that, in the eschatological court, both God and Christ will openly favor the defendants. Thus, believers may hope in the glory that God promises them (5:2; 8:18, 24-25).

The opposite of ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν is καθ’ ἡμῶν. In light of the protasis, the apodosis of 8:31 (“Who can be against us?”) proclaims that anyone else is insignificant by comparison. It may even be an acclamation of monotheism on Paul’s part. Because of their assurance in their judge, believers need fear no other entity, not even cosmic powers. The Pantheon was testimony to the many entities that Romans may have feared, but with this one question Paul recognizes that they are all impotent.

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24 ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν appears twice in a related manner: 1 Cor 1:13 in reference to Christ’s crucifixion; and 1 Cor 11:24 when at the Last Supper the Lord proclaimed, “This is my body for you.”

25 The Spirit, too, similarly intercedes ὑπὲρ ἀγίων (8:27). Wright (Romans, 600) sees here a reference to the triune God.

26 Jewett (Romans, 536) argues for this point. Although he points out that demonstrative rhetoric does not attack people by name (therefore the use of the indeterminate τις), he holds that the “who” of these questions remains unspecified so as to imply “that no power or person can prevail against the one true God.”
God Withholds Nothing from Us (8:32)

Paul writes that God did not spare his own Son, and therefore he highlights that it was God who handed Christ over to death. φείδωμι is the same word used in Gen 22:12, 16. As Abraham prepares to sacrifice his own beloved son, Isaac (τοῦ υἱοῦ σου τοῦ ἐγκατατού), the angel of the Lord calls to him and stops the sacrifice. He acknowledges that Abraham did not spare (οὐκ ἐφείσω) his son. Because of the similarities in wording, some scholars hold that Paul is referring to this passage in Rom 8:32. Other scholars argue that Paul refers here to the Akedah, which understands Abraham’s sacrifice in an expiatory and vicarious way.

However, Paul also employs φείδωμι in his metaphorical description of the Gentile faith being grafted onto the olive tree of Jewish faith. In 11:21 he writes that God did not spare the natural branches (the unbelieving Jews) and so he will not spare the grafted

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27 Fee (Pauline Christology, 251-52) calls the allusion “real and deliberate.” Dunn (Romans 1–8, 501) holds that the reference to Genesis 22 is regarding Abraham’s faithfulness, and thus Rom 8:32 becomes a statement about the faithfulness of God. However, Daniel R. Schwartz (“Two Pauline Allusions to the Redemptive Mechanism of the Crucifixion,” JBL 102 [1983] 259-68, here 265-67 and n. 29) proposes that the allusion Paul makes is to 2 Sam 21:1-14. His argument, though, does not give full weight to the significance of Paul’s use of παραδίδωμι.

28 Byrne (Romans, 275) suggests that God has done what he did not require Abraham to do. Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 540) also recognizes the allusion. Alan Segal (“‘He who did not spare his own son...’: Jesus, Paul and the Akedah,” in From Jesus to Paul: FS Francis Wright Beare; ed. Peter Richardson and John C. Hurd [Waterloo, ONT: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984] 169-84, here 177) argues that the Akedah figured prominently in Jewish exegesis by the time of Jesus. Phillip Sigal (“A Prolegomenon to Paul’s Judaic Thought: The Death of Jesus and the Akedah,” Proceedings of the Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies 4 [1984] 222-36, here 229) holds that it is difficult to date rabbinic texts; some “texts dating to after Paul’s time might be drawing on pre-Pauline tradition.” However, Fitzmyer (Romans, 531-32) demonstrates that the tradition of the Akedah dates to between 200 to 500 A.D. in the Amoraic period. He further concludes that the Pauline allusion to Genesis 22 is not clear. Shalom Spiegel (The Last Trial: On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice: The Akedah [New York: Schocken, 1967] 68-69) theorizes that the intent of the Akedah was to initiate proxy offerings, but haggadah of this meaning of vicarious sacrifice is not pre-Christian.
branches (the believing Gentiles) should they become proud (οὐκ ἐφείσατο, οὐδὲ σοῦ φεύσεται). This usage of the verb is closer to 8:32, since both describe God as not sparing. This first clause (“He who did not spare his own Son”) is modified by the second (“but handed him over for all of us”) and therefore stands in relation to it. God’s not sparing corresponds to his handing over. The meaning of παραδίδωμι thus informs the meaning of οὐκ φείδομαι in this verse.

παραδίδωμι appears elsewhere in the Pauline corpus with various subjects, including God (2 Cor 4:11), Christ (1 Cor 15:24; Eph 5:25), sinful Gentiles (Eph 4:19), the community at Corinth (1 Cor 5:5), and Paul himself (1 Cor 11:2, 23; 13:3; 15:3; 1 Tim 1:20). The objects which are handed over are tradition (1 Cor 11:2, 23; 15:3), the kingdom (1 Cor 15:24), believers (2 Cor 4:11) sinners (1 Cor 5:5; Eph 4:19; 1 Tim 1:20), and Paul’s own body (1 Cor 13:3).

παραδίδωμι is used in reference to Christ’s death as handing himself over:

ο λέγειν ζών σαρκί, ἐν πίστει ζών τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ τού ἁγιάραντός με καὶ παραδόντος ἐαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ.
But I live now in the flesh by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and handed himself over for me. (Gal 2:20)

καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ παρέδωκεν ἐαυτόν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὁμοίαν εὐωδίας.
And walk in love, just as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a fragrant aroma. (Eph 5:2)

However, in Rom 4:25 Paul employs παραδίδωμι to describe Christ’s death as God handing him over:

ὁς παρεδόθη διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν καὶ ἠγέρθη διὰ τὴν δικαιώσειν ἡμῶν.
He was handed over for our transgressions and raised for our justification.

29 It is only in Romans that God is the subject of sparing; all other usages in Paul’s letters refer to Paul himself (1 Cor 7:28; 2 Cor 1:23; 12:6; 13:2).
Furthermore, in Romans, God is the only agent who hands over. In 1:24, 26, 28, God hands over sinful Gentiles to “impurity,” “dishonorable passions,” and “a corrupt mind.” In 6:17, God hands believers over to a “pattern of teaching.” Therefore, Paul emphasizes God’s agency in the narrative of salvation. If God has handed sinners over to powers arranged against God (1:24, 26, 28), then God has handed over his own Son to those same powers (4:25; 8:32).30 These are the cosmic powers that have been καθ’ ἡμῶν (8:31). By handing over his Son to these powers, God has acted ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πάντων in order that those powers may be destroyed and believers may be made righteous. Humanity need no longer be handed over to these powers. Thus, in 8:32 Paul depicts the undoing of humanity’s slavery to Sin which he described in Chapter 1.

In the OT, παραδίδωμι often refers to God handing over Israel to Babylon. Its use, especially in the prophets, is therefore frequently in connection to the Exile:

When they will sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you set upon them and hand them over to enemies and they will capture them and carry them captive to a land far or near. (3 Kg dms 8:46)

Therefore, I have set my face against this city for evil and not for good; into the hand of the king of Babylon will it be handed over and he will burn it with fire. (Jer 21:10)

30 Beverly Roberts Gaventa (“Interpreting the Death of Jesus Apocalyptically: Reconsidering Romans 8:32,” in Jesus and Paul Reconsidered: Fresh Pathways into an Old Debate, ed. Todd D. Still [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007] 125-45, here 136) states, “It is not sufficient to describe God’s handing over only as a loving, sacrificial act, a gracious giving up; it is also an event in the ongoing struggle between God and anti-god powers.”
And I will bring you out from the midst of [the city] and I will hand you over into the hand of foreigners and I will execute judgments upon you. (Ezek 11:9) 31

Having handed over Israel, God brought them back from Exile. In a similar way, God handed over his own Son to death, and then raised Christ from the dead. God spared neither Israel nor Christ, but handed them over. In this way, οὐκ ἔφεσατο corresponds to παρέδωκεν. Thus, I argue, the metaphor of the Exile—and neither the Akedah nor an allusion to Abraham—is the most fruitful for reading Rom 8:32. 32

Like 8:31, the protasis of this sentence (God did not spare his own Son) renders the apodosis a foregone conclusion rather than a question. Because God has handed over his own Son, then God will indeed give believers everything along with him.

Throughout the letter, Paul employs χάρις (1:5, 7; 3:24; 4:4, 16; 5:2, 15, 17, 20, 21; 6:1, 14, 15, 17; 7:25; 11:5, 6; 12:3, 6; 15:15; 16:20) and χαρίσμα (1:11; 5:15, 16; 6:23; 11:29; 12:6), but the verb χαρίζω, which has the same root, appears only in 8:32.

χαρίζω may also mean to forgive, as in 2 Cor 2:7, 10; 12:13; Eph 4:32; Col 2:13; 3:13; but that translation is incompatible with σὺν αὐτῷ in this verse; therefore it means to give as divine gift.

It is σὺν αὐτῷ that believers will receive τὰ πάντα, as Paul explains in 1 Cor 3:21-23:

πάντα γὰρ ὑμῶν ἔστω, εἴτε Παῦλος εἴτε Ἀπολλώνης εἴτε Κηφᾶς, εἴτε κόσμος εἴτε ζωῆς εἴτε θάνατος, εἴτε ἐνστάσει εἴτε μέλλοντα: πάντα ὑμῶν, ὑμεῖς δὲ Χριστὸς δὲ θεὸς.


32 Conversely, the metaphor of the Return from Exile is the most appropriate for understanding Paul’s description of the resurrection from the dead, as I have argued in Chapter Three.
For all are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or present things or future things: all are yours, and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.

In Rom 4:16 Paul states that God promised the world to Abraham and his seed. It is this promise to which Paul now refers. Believers are coheirs with Christ (8:17). Their portion thus far has been the firstfruits of the Spirit (8:23), but in the future they will share in the glory of Christ in their resurrected bodies (8:18, 19, 21, 23, 29, 30).

God Does Not Accuse Us (8:33)

Paul continues his barrage of rhetorical questioning by using vocabulary that reinforces the image of the law court. εγκαλέω means to accuse or bring a charge against someone. It appears in the OT (Exod 22:8; Prov 19:5; Wis 12:12; Sir 46:19) and, other than this usage in Rom 8:33, appears in the NT only in Acts (19:38, 40; 23:28, 29; 26:2, 7), sometimes with its related noun εγκλημα (Acts 23:29; 25:16). The use of εγκαλέω is forensic in all the NT occurrences.33 It describes action similar to that which is depicted in Job 1–2 or Zech 3:1-2 where Satan stands as accuser or, in the Roman courts, κατηγορω.

In Rom 8:33, however, Satan is not the accuser.34 Instead, the answer to Paul’s question is that there is no accuser. This court without an accuser is similar to that depicted


34 Käsemann (Commentary on Romans, 248) maintains that to imagine Satan as the accuser “does not pay sufficient attention” to Paul’s rhetoric. Fitzmyer (Romans, 533) similarly holds that no one, not even Satan, can bring a charge against the believers whom God defends. Scholars who argue against this view include Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 438 n. 3), Dunn (Romans 1–8, 502), and possibly Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 541-42) and Byrne (Romans, 275-76).
in Isa 41:26-27, where the interlocutors disappear at the end of the courtroom scene. There are no other gods; they simply do not exist. In the same way, the cosmic forces that oppose God and his elect will, at the eschaton, be destroyed. They will no longer be able to accuse or lay charges against believers.

Because Paul has already declared God ἐπὲ ἡμῶν, it would be nonsense for God himself to accuse. God is the one who justifies, how then could God accuse believers? δικαιοῦω means to place in right relation with God and others. This favored relationship underscores the graciousness of the judge who refuses to accuse or punish. Some scholars have seen an allusion to Isa 50:8 in this verse:

οὐ γὰρ ἐγινεν οἱ δικαιώσας με τίς ὁ κρυπτόμενος μοι ἁπάντης μοι ἀμα καὶ τίς ὁ κρυπτόμενος μοι ἐγγιότατο

The one who justifies me is near. Who judges me? Let him stand up together with me! And who judges me? Let him approach me!

There are two main differences between Isa 50:8 and Rom 8:33. First, while Isa 50:8 may be about an individual (the Suffering Servant), Rom 8:33 is about a community (the elect of God). Second, the verse from Isaiah treats of the individual’s innocence, whereas the verse

35 Jewett (Romans, 541) emphasizes that “righteousness is a matter of status rather than of forgiveness.” Similarly, F. Gerald Downing (“Justification as Acquittal? A Critical Examination of Judicial Verdicts in Paul’s Literary and Actual Contexts,” CBQ 74 [2012] 298-318, here 317) states that there is no distinction between judicial status and practical effect in ancient usage. “Courts assembled either to punish or refrain from punishing.” Therefore, he argues, the justified are not acquitted but rather spared from punishment. However, his view agrees neither with Exod 23:7 or 1 Kgs 8:32 which speak of justification in connection with acquittal and innocence, nor with Rom 3:23-25 in which Paul describes justification in terms of the forgiveness of sins.

36 Käsemann (Commentary on Romans, 248) holds that “the divine predicate ὁ δικαίων is probably taken from Isa 50:8.” Balz (Heilsvertrauen, 117) argues that, more than vocabulary, the structure of “question/statement—question/ statement” is drawn from Isa 50:8. Osten-Sacken (Römer 8, 45) maintains that the “memory” of Isa 50:8 may inform Rom 8:33. Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 542) sees the allusion to Isa 50:8, as does Schlier (Römerbrief, 277). Shi-Lun Shum (Paul’s Use of Isaiah in Romans: A Comparative Study of Paul’s Letter to the Romans and the Sibylline and Qumran Sectarian Texts; WUNT 2/156 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002] 201) argues that the linguistic link between Rom 8:31-34 and Isa 50:8-9 is “a bit weak.” However, he holds that thematically and syntactically, the link is “very strong.”
from Romans is about the unmerited grace that God shows his chosen ones. Paul acknowledges the guilt of all humanity before God (Rom 3:9). His depiction, therefore, of God defending believers echoes his earlier claim that believers are justified gratuitously through redemption in Jesus Christ (3:24).

Paul calls believers God’s chosen ones. ἐκλεκτοί appears in Pauline literature in Rom 16:13; Col 3:12; 1 Tim 5:21; 2 Tim 2:10; Titus 1:1. In the OT it is the title of the children of Israel (1 Chr 16:3; Ps 104:6, 43; Isa 65:9, 23 LXX).37 Paul employs the corresponding verb, ἐκλέγομαι, in 1 Cor 1:27-29:

But God chose the foolish of the world in order to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world in order to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, the things that are nothing, in order to bring to naught the things that are, so that no one can boast before God.38

This usage of the verb demonstrates that, once again, the initiative rests with God and not with believers. Paul recognizes God’s choice of the foolish, weak, lowly, and despised, and this surprising choice may also inform his message to the Romans, who have a division between the “strong” and the “weak” (Rom 15:1). ἐλεκτοί in 8:33 refers to those whom God foreknew (8:29) and called (1:6, 7; 8:28).39 In 4:17 Paul tells the Romans that God calls into being the things that were not, and in 8:30 he proclaims that those whom God calls, he also

37 Schlier (Römerbrief, 277) holds that Paul employs the term as the title of the new Israel in Gal 6:16.

38 ἐκλέγομαι also appears in Eph 1:4: “He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy and blameless before him in love.”

39 Paul describes believers as κλητοί also in 1 Cor 1:2, 24.
justifies. God’s call to believers, which they have answered, therefore bestows on them the status of the justified in the eschatological court. They need fear nothing, for the only one who could bring an accusation against them is the very one who justifies them.

**God Raised Christ Who Makes Intercession for Us (8:34)**

In the same way that there is no one to make an accusation against believers, there is no one to condemn them either. In 2:1 Paul tells the Romans that they are condemned by the same judgment with which they judge other people. He describes all of humanity on trial in 2:1-16, and the whole world accountable to God in 3:19. However, *now*—as Paul emphasizes—Christ’s death and resurrection precludes condemnation for believers:

\[ \text{Oúdèv ãéra vàn kàtákrima toîs èn Ἐριστῶ Θήσωv} \]

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (8:1)

God has condemned sin in the flesh (8:3) in order that believers may live in righteousness according to the Spirit (8:4).

The entire role of Christ in salvation history has been *ûpèr ημῶν*. Having stated that Christ was handed over *ûpèr ημῶν πάντων* (8:32), Paul describes the contents of that handing over. Christ died, and even more was raised; he is also at the right hand of God and intercedes—all *ûpèr ημῶν* (8:34).\(^{40}\) But this power to act *ûpèr ημῶν* comes from God, of whom Paul originally predicates the phrase (8:31). As it is God who handed over Christ to betrayal and death, so also it is God who raised Christ and glorified him. Finally, it is to God

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\(^{40}\) Osten-Sacken (*Römer 8*, 47) sees a catechetical formula in this statement reflecting Christ’s death, resurrection, exaltation and intercession on behalf of believers.
that Christ makes intercession. If Christ acts ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, Paul clarifies that it is God’s stance first (5:8). Because God is ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, God’s Christ is also.

μᾶλλον recalls 5:15, in which Paul explains that there is no comparison between the first Adam and the new one. The grace of God and the free gift of the grace of the one person Jesus Christ have overflowed for the many, thus the gift is not like the trespass. By employing μᾶλλον in 8:33, Paul similarly explains that the gift of the resurrection is more than only the gift of God handing Christ over to death; it is also the gift of justification which comes from God raising Christ from the dead (4:25).

Christ’s position ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ refers to Ps 109:1 (LXX):

εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου κάθοι ἐκ δεξιῶν μου ἐὼς ἐν θῷ τοὺς ἐχθροὺς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου
The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at my right, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

It is a psalm of enthronement.41 Christ, exalted by God and placed in the position of power, now makes intercession for believers.42 The author of Hebrews links this intercession with the high priesthood of Christ (Heb 7:25; 9:24), but Paul’s image is that of a courtroom and a judgment seat, not an altar. Christ’s intercession in Rom 8:34 (ἐνυγχάνει) parallels the work

41 Gerhard Dautzenberg (“Psalm 110 im Neuen Testament,” in Liturgie und Dichtung: Ein interdisziplinäres Kompendium I; ed. H. Becker and R. Kaczynski; Pietas Liturgicas 1 [Erzabtei, St. Ottilien: Eos, 1983] 141-71, here 143-44) recognizes the psalm’s employment throughout the NT: Col 3:1; Eph 1:20; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22. He further notes that the Question/Answer form of 8:31-34 is characterized by a participatory style, such as one finds in liturgy.

42 Dunn (Romans 1–8, 504) argues that to appreciate the significance of this psalm’s employment in 8:34, two things must be considered: (1) the original psalm was a “highly honorific way of asserting that Israel’s king was appointed by God”; and (2) in Paul’s time “there seems to have been a fair degree of speculation regarding heroes of the faith having been exalted to a glorious throne in heaven.” The Christian usage of Ps 109:1 is notable because of the claim it made to someone of recent memory—e.g., the Teacher of Righteousness at Qumran and contemporary failed messianic prophets (like Theudas the Egyptian) were not referred to in the same fashion.
of the Spirit in 8:27 (ἐντυγχάνει) and 8:26 (ὑπερεντυγχάνει).\(^{43}\) That which the Spirit is doing now, during the lives of believers, Christ does at the eschatological court.\(^{44}\) Therefore, it is not only the Spirit who helps believers in their weakness but also Christ, for those who have faith in Christ have no condemnation.

Paul describes a one-sided court, indeed! A judge and an intercessor are biased in favor of the defendants, while neither prosecutor nor condemner will appear for the proceedings. Sinners are declared righteous in anticipation of their vindication. This forensic scene for Paul sums up the reality of God and Christ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν.

**Earthly Powers Which Try to Separate Us from Christ (8:35)**

Paul poses the next rhetorical question in terms of separation from Christ’s love. ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ may be an objective genitive (the love of believers for Christ), but Paul’s logic in this passage argues for a subjective genitive (the love of Christ for believers). Not only does this reading account for Paul’s description of Christ who was handed over and intercedes ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, but it also recalls Gal 2:20 in which Paul states that “Christ loved me and gave his life for me.”

Throughout the letter, Paul writes of life and righteousness χωρίς νόμου and χωρίς ἔργων (3:21, 28; 4:6; 7:8, 9). Now he asks of the impossibility of believers being χωρίς τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Χριστοῦ. This question, like the ones before it, is rhetorical and requires a

\(^{43}\) Wright (Romans, 613) suggests that “we should detect a reference to the intercessory work of the servant of the LORD in the fourth song, at Isa 53:12.”

\(^{44}\) Fitzmyer (Romans, 533) likens Christ as intercessor in Rom 8:34 to Christ as the Paraclete in 1 Jn 2:1.
negative answer. If Paul, cast as a trial attorney, is asking εἰς, the answer then is a resounding οὐδὲ εἰς.

Nonetheless, Paul provides a catalogue of earthly sufferings that befall believers. This list transforms the rhetorical nature of the question into a glimpse of the reality of forces that are opposed to believers. These powers threaten believers who live in the time between the Resurrection of Christ and their own resurrection from the dead. Paul presents these forces in a tribulation list, the form of which was popular in the first century A.D.45

Paul employs tribulation lists also in 1 Cor 4:10-13; 2 Cor 4:8-9; 6:4-5, 8-10; 11:23-29; 12:10; Phil 4:12. He writes concretely of the hardships he suffers, even while sometimes contrasting them to the well-being of the Corinthians. In Rom 8:35, the tribulations he lists are either actual or anticipated, not only for the Romans but also for all believers. By their participation in these hardships, believers are united with Christ’s suffering (8:17).

Tribulation lists appear in the OT as well. Job 5:19-23 catalogues famine, sword, malicious gossip, destruction, beasts of the earth, and stones of the field. Sirach 39:28-34 lists winds, fire, hail, famine, disease, wild beasts, scorpions, vipers, and sword. In 2 Sam 24:13 Gad asks David to chose between famine, flight before his foes, or pestilence because of his census of God’s people. In 2 Sam 3:29 David delivers a curse which lists suffering from a discharge, leprosy, unmanliness, sword, and famine. In 1 Kgs 8:37 and in 2 Chr 6:28 Solomon prays against famine, pestilence, blight, mildew, locusts, sieges by the enemy, plague, and epidemic of any kind. In 2 Chr 20:9 Jehoshaphat lists evil, sword, judgment,

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45 Robert Hodgson (“Paul the Apostle and First Century Tribulation Lists,” ZNW 74 [1983] 59-80, here 60) argues that Paul drew upon a widespread literary convention of the first century, employed also by Josephus, and appearing in the pharisaic Judaism of the Mishnah as well as in the early Gnosticism of the Nag Hammadi library.
pestilence, and famine. Ezekiel catalogues arrows of hunger, famine, wild beasts who eat children, pestilence, blood, and sword (Ezek 5:16-17). In Lev 26:14-33, the LORD threatens terror, wasting, fever, foreign rule, drought, hardness of the earth, plagues, wild beasts, destruction of livestock, sword, pestilence, famine, cannibalism, and Exile.

A notable OT comparison to the catalogue in Rom 8:35 occurs in Deut 28:48.46

καὶ λατρεύσεις τοῖς ἐχθροῖς σου οὓς ἐπαποστελεῖ κύριος ἐπὶ σὲ ἐν λιμῷ καὶ ἐν δίψῃ καὶ ἐν γυμνότητι καὶ ἐν ἐκλείψει πάντων καὶ ἐπιθήσει κλοιονὸν σιδηροῦν ἐπὶ τὸν τραχηλὸν σου ἐως ἐν ἐξολοθρεύσῃ σὲ

And you will serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in famine and in thirst and in nakedness and in utter poverty, and he will put an iron yoke around your neck until he utterly destroys you.

While the adjective γυμνός occurs 34 times throughout the LXX, the noun γυμνότης occurs only once, in this verse. The two words from Paul’s tribulation list, λιμῷ and γυμνότης, create an echo with the tribulations in Deut 28:48. Furthermore, Deut 28:15-68 contains the threats the LORD makes to Israel should it disobey the commandments and break the covenant. Additional tribulations within the chapter are sickness, wasting, fever, drought, blight, wind, defeat, oppression, boils, tumors, eczema, itch, fruitless labor, invasion, siege, plagues, and Exile. Moses lists the dreaded Exile twice (Deut 28:36-37, 63-68); it forms a large part of the chapter and the chapter concludes with it.

This intertextual echo of the Exile therefore exists in Rom 8:35. But Paul proclaims to the Romans that their Exile will be at an end. The afflictions and tribulations of life have not separated them from their spiritual homeland (8:19-21); there exists no power to separate them from the love of Christ (8:35a). Sufferings and hardship are not signs of divine

46 Gerhard Münnderlein (“Interpretation einer Tradition: Bemerkungen der Röm 8, 35f.,” KD 11 [1965] 136-42, here 138-39) provides an extensive list for the combined occurrence of these tribulation terms in the LXX. He argues that the strongest frequency of like terms in Rom 8:35 in the LXX occurs in Deut 28:48.
displeasure, but instead of union with Christ. In 2 Cor 12:10 Paul counters the claim of the “superapostles” that his affliction and distress disqualify him from ministry. In Phil 3:10 Paul considers his ministry as a share in the sufferings of Christ by being conformed to his death. Of the adversities Paul lists in Rom 8:35—affliction, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword—he has experienced all but the final one.

The difference between Paul’s tribulation list in Rom 8:35 (and in his other lists as well) and the OT tribulation lists is that Paul’s experience of the sufferings is a result of his faithfulness, not unfaithfulness. The faith of all believers will meet with such hardships. Paul does not tell the Romans that such adversities do not exist; instead he tells them that such adversities have no power stronger than the love of Christ. Believers will necessarily encounter these tribulations because of their relationship with Christ (8:17-18), but Paul’s message is that they should not fear them.

**An Example of Theodicy from LXX Psalm 43 (8:36)**

Paul employs the formula “as it is written” to introduce a passage from Scripture. This formula occurs frequently throughout the letter whenever Paul quotes the OT (1:17; 2:24; 3:4, 10; 4:17; 9:13, 33; 10:15; 11:8, 26; 15:3, 9, 21). Paul’s use of Scripture is a

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47 Jewett (*Romans*, 546) argues that Paul’s discourse reflects the situation in Rome where the “strong” Gentile community accused the “weak” Jewish community of “divine disfavor and inadequate faith” because of the distress and affliction they had suffered in being expelled from the city by the Edict of Claudius.

48 Wright (*Romans*, 614) comments that Paul must have known that even the sword might at any moment come his way, “whether judicially in a Roman court or casually on the road.”

49 This formula appears also in 1 Cor 1:31; 2:9; 2 Cor 8:15; 9:9. Paul employs a similar formula, “for it is written,” in Rom 12:19; 14:11; 1 Cor 1:19; 3:19; 9:9; Gal 3:10; 4:22, 27.
reinterpretation in light of the Christ event.\(^{50}\) He often quotes the OT according to the LXX, but not always word for word (e.g., Rom 1:17 where he quotes Hab 2:4b, but without the word μου). In Rom 8:36, however, his quotation of LXX Ps 43:23 is verbatim.

Psalm 43 is a psalm of lament, describing a communal disaster. Many scholars agree that it reflects the Babylonian Exile.\(^{51}\) The psalm begins with praise for God’s deeds, an acknowledgement of God’s role in Israel’s history. With God’s help they were able to conquer their enemies and establish their homeland. It was not on their swords or bows that the people relied, but on God, in whom they boast (43:1-9). Then the psalm moves into a bitter complaint against God, who seems to have rejected his own people (43:10-23).

\[\begin{align*}
\text{εὐδωκάς ἡμᾶς ὡς πράβατα βρώσεως } \\
\text{καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐθνεσιν διέσπειρας ἡμᾶς } \\
\text{ἀπέδου τὸν λαὸν σου ἀκευ τιμῆς } \\
\text{καὶ σὺκ ἴν πλῆθος ἐν τοῖς ἀλλάξασιν αὐτῶν }
\end{align*}\]

You gave us up like sheep to the slaughter and among the nations you scattered us.

You sold your people without a price and there is no profit in their sale. (43:12-13)

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\(^{50}\) Charles H. Giblin (“‘As It Is Written . . .’—A Basic Problem in Noematics and Its Relevance to Biblical Theology,” \textit{CBQ} 20 [1958] 327-53, 477-98, here 483) states that Paul engages a Scripture in its theological sense, and not primarily in its literal sense. This theological meaning “is perceived in light of the Paschal Mystery.” Hays (\textit{Echoes of Scripture}, 158-59) argues that Paul’s great struggle is a dialectical one: “to maintain the integrity of his proclamation in relation to Scripture and the integrity of Scripture in relation to that proclamation, to justify his startling claims about what the God of Israel had elected to do in Jesus Christ.”

\(^{51}\) Dalit Rom-Shiloni (“Psalm 44: The Powers of Protest,” \textit{CBQ} 70 [2008] 683-98, here 693) argues for a dating during the Exile, as does Adele Berlin (“Psalms and the Literature of Exile: Psalms 137, 44, 69, and 78,” in \textit{The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception} [ed. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller; VTSup 109; Leiden: Brill, 2005] 65-86). Richard J. Bautch (\textit{Developments in Genre between Post-Exilic Penitential Prayers and the Psalms of Lament} [SBL Academia Biblica 7; Atlanta: SBL, 2003] 25) holds that this psalm dates “to a time before or at the exile.” However, Michael D. Goulder (\textit{The Psalms of the Sons of Korah} [JSOTSup 20; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982] 85-87) argues that “the lament is clearly in face of a national military disaster” and dates from before 722 B.C.E. Artur Weiser (\textit{The Psalms: A Commentary} [trans. Herbert Hartwell; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959, 1962] 354-55) notes that the early church fathers of the Antioch school dated the psalm to the time of the Maccabean wars, but this dating is not probable since he points out that nowhere does the psalm speak of religious persecution. He concludes that the psalm had its origin in the “cult of the Covenant Festival,” and does not fix an exact date on the psalm’s composition.
The verbs in verses 10-15 are all second person singular with the object in the first person plural (You rejected us; You shamed us; You made us turn back; You gave us up; You scattered us; You made us a disgrace; You made an example of us). All this God has done to Israel,

καὶ οὐκ ἐπελαθόμεθα σοι
καὶ οὐκ ἠδικήσαμεν ἐν διαθήκῃ σοι
But we did not forget you
or be unrighteous to your covenant. (43:18)

Had Israel been unfaithful, then there would be cause for punishment. But, the psalmist maintains, Israel has not forgotten God, nor engaged in idol worship. God has brought this disaster upon Israel despite its faithfulness, and the psalmist’s cry demonstrates the depth of his confusion. If Israel has been faithful, does that mean that God is not faithful?

ὁτι ἑνεκα σοῦ θανατοῦμεθα ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν
ἐλογίσθημεν ὡς πρόβατα σφαγῆς
For your sake we are being put to death all day long;
we are considered as sheep for the slaughter. (43:23)

It is this verse which Paul employs in order to capture the confusion of the Romans under duress. Both his tribulation list in 8:35 and the psalm verse in 8:36 describe the results of faithfulness, not faithlessness. The complaint of Israel in Exile now becomes the complaint of the Romans. Their metaphorical Exile continues as long as they and creation groan for redemption (Rom 8:22-23). As they suffer all the conditions which conspire to separate them from the love of Christ (8:35), they may wonder, like the psalmist, if God has forgotten them altogether. Their faithfulness does not seem to be matched by God’s faithfulness. Thus, they feel as if they are led to the slaughter like sheep, shepherded to their death by the one whom they trust.
Paul, however, employs this verse in a manner which emphasizes unity with Christ and not separation. The psalm echoes Isa 53:7,

ως πρόβατον ἐπὶ σφαγήν ἤχθη
like a sheep led to the slaughter,

a part of the fourth song of the Servant of the LORD, which early believers interpreted in light of the death of Jesus. The psalm also echoes Isa 52:3,

ὅτι τάδε λέγει κύριος
δωρεάν ἐπράθη
cαι σύ μετὰ ἀργυρίου λυτρωθήσεσθε
For thus says the LORD,
"You were sold for nothing,
and without money you will be redeemed."

Isaiah 52:1-12 is the passage which immediately precedes 52:13–53:12, the song of the Suffering Servant. This prior passage foretells the return from Exile; therefore the song should be read within the context of return from Exile. The context in turn informs Paul’s

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52 Acts 8:30-35 reflects this early interpretation. Christopher R. North (The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah: An Historical and Critical Study [London: Oxford University Press, 1948, 1956] 3-4) maintains that there are four theories of interpretation: (1) that the Servant was an anonymous contemporary of Second Isaiah; (2) that the Servant was Second Isaiah; (3) that the Servant was a collective entity (e.g., Israel); and (4) that the Servant was the hope for a Messiah. Peter Stuhlmacher (“Isaiah 53 in the Gospels and Acts,” in The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources [ed. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004] 147-62, here 149) argues that the Christological interpretation is not the result of a post-Easter faith, but rather “Jesus’ own understanding of his mission and death.” Similarly, Steve Moyise (“Jesus and Isaiah,” Neot 43 [2009] 249-70, here 261) concedes that Jesus knew of the text and perhaps even identified with the servant, but argues that “there is not enough evidence to deduce how he understood it or what he wished to convey by his allusions” (italics original). On the other hand, John W. Miller (“Prophetic Conflict in Second Isaiah: The Servant Songs in the Light of Their Context,” in Wort—Gebot—Glaube: Beiträge zur Theologie des Alten Testaments; FS Walter Eichrodt [ed. Johann Jakob Stamm, Ernst Jenni, and Hans Joachim Stoebbe; Zurich: Zwingli, 1970] 77-85, here 83) holds that the context demands an interpretation which understands the prophet, Second Isaiah, as the subject. Mordecai Schreiber (“The Real Suffering Servant: Decoding a Controversial Passage in the Bible,” JBQ 37 [2009] 35-44, here 39) argues that the Suffering Servant is Jeremiah. Murray Rae (“Texts in Context: Scripture and the Divine Economy,” Journal of Theological Interpretation 1 [2007] 23-45, here 45) argues for hermeneutical plurality with regard to this text; “It is no threat to the Christological reading of Isa 53 that God has also used this text to comfort Israel in Exile and holocaust.”
quotation of Ps 43:23 LXX. The connection emphasizes that just as God did not forever abandon his people in the Exile, just so God did not forever abandon Christ to suffering and death. God raised Christ from the dead. In the same way, God does not abandon believers forever to their metaphorical Exile but will, in the end, bring them back and raise them up. Thus, a psalm verse which on first glance seems to be only a lament of abandonment and suffering is revealed to have underlying themes of hope, redemption and the faithfulness of God.

Because believers suffer ἐνέκα σοῦ, their sufferings are united with Christ’s. This unity with Christ happens during the lifetime of believers, and not only in the eschaton. Believers are conformed in their own suffering to the passion and death of Christ in order that they may share in his glory (8:17).

We Are Super-conquerors through the One Who Loved Us (8:37)

Having provided Scriptural support for his position, Paul returns to the question he asked in 8:35. The answer to each item on his tribulation list was “No.” None of these earthly events has the power to separate believers from the love of Christ. Neither does “being put to death all day long” constitute a separation from Christ’s love. “In all these things,” Paul proclaims, believers are super-conquerors. “All these things” must therefore refer to the earthly sufferings enumerated in the previous two verses.

53 Hays (Echoes of Scripture, 63) holds that Paul “hints and whispers all around Isaiah 53 but never mentions the prophetic typology” of Christ and Israel. This is an example of metalespsis, in which the transumptive silence requires the reader to complete the connection.

54 Paul expresses similar ideas in 1 Cor 15:31; 2 Cor 4:11; Phil 1:29.
The verb *nika,w* means to be victorious in battle, in athletics, or in the court. Believers may then understand their struggles within this range of meaning. The legal imagery corresponds with the courtroom setting of this passage. Paul tells believers that even though they undergo many earthly trials, they are nonetheless victorious before the judgment seat of God.

The prefix ὑπερ- transforms *nika,w* into an intensive verb, “super-conquer.” With this word, Paul tells the Romans that in the eschatological court, there will be no question of their victory. By employing the prefix ὑπερ-, Paul means to transcend ordinary notions of conquering and victory. The Romans to whom Paul writes are in the midst of a civilization that prides itself on its conquering abilities. Therefore, they are familiar with brute force, large armies, domination, and occupation. However, Paul intends to communicate something more than victory—a reality of God’s power that is supreme and reaches beyond ordinary notions of conquering. God’s version of victory subsumes all other realities, in this case the earthly trials that attempt to separate believers from the love of Christ. It evokes 1 Cor 15:54-55:

οταν δε το φθαρτην τουτο ενδυσηται αφθαρσιαν και το θητην τουτο ενδυσηται άθανασιαν, τοτε γενησεται ο λογος ο γεγραμμενος, Κατεπόθη ο θανατος εις νικος. που σου, θανατε, το νικος; που σου, θανατε, το κεντρον;

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55 BDAG s.v. νικάω.

56 The theme of athletic contest occurs frequently in the Pauline corpus; e.g., 1 Cor 9:24-27; Phil 2:16; 3:13-14; 1 Tim 1:18; 2 Tim 2:5.

57 Schlier (*Römerbrief*, 279) notes how often Paul employs this prefix: ὑπερπεπεισεων ( Rom 5:20; 2 Cor 7:4); ὑπερφρονειν ( Rom 12:3); ὑπερψυχον ( Phil 2:9); ὑπεραυξανειν ( 2 Thess 1:3); ὑπερπλεουσαζειν ( 1 Tim 1:14).

58 BDAG s.v. ὑπερνικάω, translates the verb as “winning a most glorious victory.”
When the corruptible clothes itself with incorruptibility and the mortal clothes itself with immortality, then the saying that is written will come to pass, “Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your sting?”

This reality is so far beyond victory as to be total confidence. It is sure and unquestioned success. It bespeaks of God who will be “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28). God, who created and sustains all things, desires this surpassing certainty. It is the outworking of God’s πρόθεσις, demonstrating yet again that God is ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν.59

This confident stance of believers is available only through love, and it is bestowed as a gift. It is not a result of the actions of believers. Paul writes that it is through the one who loved us. The aorist participle ἐγιαπῆσαντος refers to a single incident, and not an ongoing love.60 It recalls 5:6-8 which tells of God’s love being manifest in the single act of Christ’s sacrificial death. It also brings to mind Gal 2:20, in which Paul declares that he lives in the faith of “the Son of God, who loved me and handed himself over for me.”

By writing in terms of “super-conquering,” Paul may also be looking forward to his mission to Spain (15:24, 28). Unlike the Lord Caesar who with his armies conquers lands to occupy and despoil them, the Lord Jesus and his ministers are able to “super-conquer” with the gospel.61 This hyper-victory, in the face of many opposing forces, is certain “because of the one who loved us.”

59 Dunn (Romans 1–8, 500) holds that it is the faithfulness of God to God’s own people which Paul articulates. God is ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν; “not merely for himself.”

60 Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 544) holds that the participle makes sense only in the light of 8:35, and therefore refers to Christ.

61 Jewett (Romans, 550) holds that believers experience a “transformed type of imperialism, based on victories of inclusion under the aegis of love.”
Cosmic Powers Which Try to Separate Us from God’s Love (8:38-39a)

Having discussed total success and surpassing confidence, Paul begins this next verse with a declaration of his own complete certainty, πέπεισμαι. His certitude of God’s victory now reaches beyond earthly powers to encompass cosmic forces which may be arranged against the elect of God. Such confidence does not mean that believers will not have to suffer or to engage with these powers; on the contrary, engagement and suffering are part of the life of faith (8:17). Instead, Paul expresses his belief that such forces have no power to separate believers from God’s love.

Paul lists ten cosmic forces in pairs with the exception of “powers.” These forces describe the temporal, celestial, and spatial reality that comprises Paul’s cosmology. The list begins with death. Paul sees death as the great enemy of humanity. It entered the world through sin (5:12) and reigned from the time of Adam to Moses (5:14). Its rule over the created order has been checked only “through the one who loved us:” that is, by the death and resurrection of Christ. Death stands at the top of this list of powers because of its prominence in Chapters 5–8, and not only because of its mention in 8:36. Paul writes of death in 5:1, 14, 17, 21; 6:10, 21; 7:5, 10, 11; and of rising from the dead in 6:5, 8; 8:10-11. He considers death an adversary also in 1 Cor 15:26:

εἰςχαρτος ἐχθρὸς καταργεῖται ὁ θάνατος
The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

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62 Byrne (Romans, 274-75) argues that Paul describes a “symbolic universe” in which angelic powers are not necessarily evil but are basically unfriendly and agents of divine wrath.

63 Rudolf Bultmann, “θάνατος κτλ.” TDNT 3.17, holds that more than its destructive dimension, death wields power over life “even now” and robs it of its true quality.
Similarly, death is the opponent which the resurrection vanquishes (1 Cor 15:56-57).  

In this catalogue of powers, life is paired with death. By life, Paul may mean the sufferings and tribulations of this world (Rom 8:17). Another possibility is that he means temptations and distractions, but when he discusses such a life he writes of walking according to the flesh (8:4-9), employing the term σάρξ, not ζωή (Paul’s own comparison between the two is in 8:12-9). In Philippians, life is a positive reality:  

 ως πάντοτε καὶ νῦν μεγαλυτήσεται Χριστός ἐν τῷ σώματί μου, εἰτε διά ζωής εἰτε διὰ θανάτου.  
Even now, as always, Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. (Phil 1:20)  

εμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζήν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος  
For to me life is Christ and to die is gain. (Phil 1:21)  

In 1 Cor 3:22 Paul again pairs life with death: εἰτε ζωῆς εἰτε θανάτος. By juxtaposing these two entities, Paul is referring to the full range of human experience. Outside of resurrection from the dead, which will be new life, all human existence is encapsulated by life and death.  

Paul next lists together angels and rulers. In other letters, Paul sometimes employs ἄγγελοι with a negative connotation (1 Cor 6:3; 11:10; 2 Cor 12:7; 1 Gal 3:19; and possibly 1 Cor 4:9), and at other times with a positive one (1 Thess 4:16; 1 Cor 13:1; 2 Cor 11:14; Gal  

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64 This echoes Isa 25:8: κατέπνευ ὁ θάνατος ἵσχύος, He swallowed up death in his strength.  

65 Dunn (Romans 1–8, 507), in referring to 8:17, holds that Paul understands “life in this age as one of suffering.”  

66 Fitzmyer (Romans, 535) holds that Paul engages in rhetorical merismus. Jewett maintains that in 1 Cor 13:3 Paul appears to favor death over life. Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 545) argues against more precise definitions in Paul’s terminology than his rhetorical purpose would justify.
It is possible that Paul here refers to the fallen angels of Gen 6:1-4, the Nephilim. It is more probable that Paul describes all celestial beings. Whether benevolent or malevolent, all spiritual beings are impotent to separate believers from God’s love.

\( \alpha \rho \chi \eta \) appears only this time in Romans. To ascertain its meaning by looking at its usage elsewhere does not yield certitude. Its employment in 1 Cor 15:24, which describes Christ delivering the kingdom to the Father when he has destroyed every ruler, could refer to either a cosmic force or an earthly, political power. If Paul intended a political power in Rom 8:38, he would have employed \( \alpha \rho \chi \omega \), as he does in Rom 13:3 (with its related verb \( \alpha \rho \chi \omega \) in 15:12). However, \( \alpha \rho \chi \omega \) can also mean a spiritual force; such a ruler could be the angel that governs a nation (Dan 10:13). One may argue that Paul uses the word in this way in 1 Cor 2:6-8; he does not specify “the rulers of this age.” Within the wider Pauline corpus, both Colossians and Ephesians interchangeably employ \( \alpha \rho \chi \eta \) and \( \alpha \rho \chi \omega \) for spiritual powers...

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67 Within the broader Pauline corpus, angels appear malevolent in Col 2:18; 1 Tim 3:16 and good in 2 Thess 1:7; 1 Tim 5:21.

68 1 Enoch 1–6 also details the fall of the angels. Charlesworth (OT Pseudepigrapha, 7) dates this passage to the late pre-Christian period.

69 While Jewett (Romans, 552) holds that Paul has in mind only the fallen angels, Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 544) maintains that Paul refers to the good angels. Fitzmyer (Romans, 535) argues that it is not clear whether these spiritual beings are good or bad. Wesley Carr (Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning, and Development of the Pauline Phrase Hai Archai Kai Hai Exousiai; SNTSMS 42 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981] 112-13) and Dunn (Romans 1–8, 507) hold that by not specifying good or bad, Paul intends the whole range of heavenly beings.

70 Guy Williams (The Spirit World in the Letter of Paul the Apostle: A Critical Examination of the Role of Spiritual Beings in the Authentic Pauline Epistles; FRLANT 231 [Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2009] 130) argues that there is no evidence that \( \alpha \rho \chi \eta \) applies to a hostile spiritual force before the time of the Pauline epistles.
(Eph 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:10, 15). In this case, the context of its pairing with ἄγγελοι convinces me that Paul intended a spiritual meaning for this word.71

The pairing of “present things” and “future things” does not necessarily denote celestial beings. Paul employs this same pair in 1 Cor 3:22.72 While it is possible that these terms refer to astrological forces or to the Greek notion of Fate, together they most probably mean the entirety of time.73 At any rate, Paul declares that the force of time cannot prevail over God’s love.74

Paul sometimes employs δυνάμεις, the only unpaired term in this catalogue, to mean “miracles” (e.g., 1 Cor 2:4; 12:10, 28, 29; 2 Cor 12:12; Gal 3:5; 1 Thess 1:5). However, that does not seem to be the meaning here, because Paul uses “power” and “miracles” in a positive sense. In the LXX δυνάμεις translates ἡβάτον (e.g., Ps 23:10 reads κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων for “LORD of hosts”).75 Therefore, the term means armies of angels. 1 Enoch 40:9 names Gabriel as the angel who is “set over all exercise of power.” In Matt 24:29 the coming of the Son of Man will be accompanied by the stars falling from the sky and

71 Jewett (Romans, 552) argues that ἄρχη refers to a political leader, whereas Carr (Angels and Principalities, 112) holds that the pairing of angels and powers should be read “conjunctively and not disjunctively.”

72 Carr (Angels and Principalities, 113) suggests that one meaning of this language is the two ages. Käsemann (Commentary on Romans, 250) argues for this meaning.

73 Jewett (Romans, 553) produces the arguments for the possible interpretations of both astrology and fate, but does not find them to be convincing enough. Similarly, Moo (Epistle to the Romans, 545) holds that evidence is lacking for these terms to mean spiritual beings.

74 Dunn (Romans 1–8, 507) states that “it is not necessary to assume that hostile beings are in mind.”

the powers of the heaven will be shaken. (par. Mark 13:25; Luke 21:26)

In this case the powers are astronomical, but there is a history of the belief that the stars were themselves angels.\textsuperscript{76} Paul employs δυνάμεις in 1 Cor 15:24 together with ἀρχή and ἐξουσία in a context that, again, can be either political or spiritual. But because Paul has already catalogued earthly opponents in Rom 8:35, and because of the strong witness of the LXX translation of “heavenly hosts,” it is certain that Paul intends here a spiritual meaning to the word.

The final pair of terms is ὑψωμα and βάθος. Some scholars argue that these terms are astrological: ὑψωμα being the highest point in the sky reached by a planet (the apogee), and βάθος being the lowest point in the sky for that planet.\textsuperscript{77} However, the usual term for a planet’s farthest point from its zenith is ταπείνωμα.\textsuperscript{78} Whether or not these terms are astrological, they are indeed spatial.\textsuperscript{79} With them, Paul describes the encompassing power of God’s love similar to Ps 138:7-10 (LXX).\textsuperscript{80}

If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I descend to Hades’, you are there.

\textsuperscript{76} 1 Enoch 43:3; 72:1; 82:8.

\textsuperscript{77} Schlier (\textit{Römerbrief}, 280-81), Fitzmyer (\textit{Romans}, 535) and Moo (\textit{Romans 1–8}, 508) argue for these meanings.

\textsuperscript{78} While Carr (\textit{Angels and Principalities}, 113) writes that ὑψωμα and βάθος are both found in astrological writings, Jewett (\textit{Romans}, 554) argues that there is only one such reference that employs βάθος.

\textsuperscript{79} Ephesians 3:18 lists four dimensions in space: breadth and length and height and depth.

\textsuperscript{80} Carr (\textit{Angels and Principalities}, 113) suggests this similarity.
There is no place to escape God’s love. Conversely, God’s love is not confined by any spatial reality.  

Paul concludes this list with τις κτίσις ἐτέρα. Because Paul employs ἐτέρα instead of ἀλλή, he means “a different kind” rather than simply “another.” With these words, he sums up all creation. God is Creator, and everything else is God’s creation. Paul here emphasizes that there is no created thing—nothing—that has power against God’s love. This is Paul’s answer to the distressing situation of the creature in Rom 1:25; in God’s love, creation is free to be what God intended and no longer has to carry the burden of being mistaken for the Creator. This freedom from futility will come at the eschaton, along with the revelation of the children of God (8:21).

While Paul does not exhaust all terms at his disposal in this catalogue, he nonetheless intends it to be all-inclusive and comprehensive. Paul describes a cosmology, a created order as opposed to chaos. Within this order humanity finds its place, and believers are aware of their calling and their future glorification (8:30). Paul employs these terms in order to relate the total reality of existence. These forces with which humanity must contend are not necessarily evil, but may have the ability to be so. Even so, Paul argues, their power is no match for the love of God.

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81 The heights and depths of heaven and the underworld are described also in 1 Enoch 18:11.
82 Fitzmyer (Romans, 535) makes this important distinction.
83 Jewett (Romans, 554) calls this final term “inclusive and cumulative.”
84 Byrne (Romans, 274) holds that these powers, “while not necessarily evil, are basically unfriendly” to humans and are ready to be agents of divine wrath. Williams (The Spirit World, 133) argues that attempts to categorize these powers only as evil “is likely mistaken.”
God’s Love in Christ Jesus Is Victorious (8:39b)

Paul’s final words in this passage are ones of absolute victory. Nothing will be able to separate believers from God’s love. The victory of which Paul writes is the victory of God. Believers are super-conquerors through God’s love (8:37), but it is God’s love which is the active force and not believers acting on their own. Paul’s exclamation of God’s goodness is akin to what he writes in 2 Cor 9:15:

χάρις τῷ θεῷ ἐπὶ τῇ ἀνεκδοτήτω ἀυτοῦ δώρεῳ
Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

In Rom 8:39, however, Paul acknowledges that God’s love has come through the saving act of Christ’s death and resurrection. In this way, his words here are similar to 1 Cor 15:57:

tῷ δὲ θεῷ χάρις τῷ διδόντι ἡμῖν τὸ νίκος διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

And, in an abbreviated form:

χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν
Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ! (Rom 7:25)\(^{85}\)

Romans 8:39 echoes what Paul writes in 8:35 and forms a small inclusio with it, based on the verb χωρίζω and the noun ἀγάπη. Both verses ask rhetorical questions about the impossibility of separation from love, from that of Christ’s (8:35) and from that of God’s in Christ (8:39).\(^{86}\)

The final verses of Romans 8 form a larger inclusio with Rom 5:1-11. In Rom 5:1 Paul writes that believers have “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” In Rom

\(^{85}\) Paul repeats his christological phrase also in Rom 5:11, 21; 6:11, 23.

\(^{86}\) Elsewhere, Paul employs the verb χωρίζω with regard to husbands and wives (1 Cor 7:10-15), and masters and slaves (Phlm 15). These usages, however, do not treat of love, but of social institutions.
5:11 he states that believers “boast of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” The peace and reconciliation achieved by Christ’s death and resurrection is the concrete proof of God’s love. Believers were reconciled while still enemies to God (5:10), and Paul proclaims that there is no power on earth or in heaven that will be able to subvert God’s reconciling love (8:35, 39). Therefore, believers boast in the hope of the glory of God (5:2).87

Thus, Paul brings his argument to an end with this triumphant assertion. God has shown that he is ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν. This basic stance has been borne out in history through Christ, who died and was raised, so that all who believe in him might know the righteousness of God (3:22).

**Pauline Theodicy in This Text**

Much like a trial lawyer, Paul rounds off his final argument with a tour de force. He uses words that describe the eschatological courtroom, where believers will stand before the judgment scene of God. However, it is not believers whom Paul defends, but the righteousness of God.

Paul understands that the problems of belief and praxis that the Romans experience stem from their understanding of God who seems to have abrogated the promises he has made to Israel. Paul argues the exact opposite, though: God’s love evidenced in Christ is the perfection of his covenantal faithfulness. Christ’s death and resurrection has initiated the great return from Exile, the resurrection from the dead, which is God’s triumphant victory

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87 Osten-Sacken (Römer 8, 319) argues that the question in Rom 7:24 finds its answer in the Spirit-inspired boast of Rom 8:38-39.
over the powers that would oppose him. In two great catalogues, Paul lists these powers. First, he names earthly powers and situations that would attempt to separate God’s love from believers; second, he names celestial and cosmic powers that would do the same. In each case the result is the same. Paul’s point of reference, however, is God. These powers which he catalogues would contend with believers to keep them from God’s love, but Paul maintains that nothing will hinder God’s love. That is, even though believers may feel beleaguered and experience suffering, the forces which are arranged against them cannot stand against God. God is the true victor, and it is in his love that believers become superconquerors.

Paul’s ultimate theologoumenon is that God is ὑπέρ ἡμῶν (8:31). God declares himself on the side of humanity through the death and resurrection of his Son (8:32). This is the essence of the gospel. ὑπέρ ἡμῶν describes how humanity has experienced God, Christ (5:8; 8:34), and the Spirit (8:27). Paul depicts God who is faithful and generous. God, who has handed over his Son ὑπέρ ἡμῶν (8:32), has given that which is dearest to him. Paul is convinced that God will not withhold anything else from believers. However, believers do not escape suffering. Instead, they suffer along with Christ (8:17, 36). Now that their life is united with his, they should expect a life similar to his, and that includes the cross. Their suffering comes despite their faithfulness, not as a sign of their

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88 Fee (*Pauline Christology*, 249) argues that in 8:31-39 Paul’s focus is theocentric, but that he also brings together “two basic christological emphases.” In 8:32 Paul presents Christ as “Son,” and in 8:34 he presents Christ as “Lord.” These two titles respectively represent Christ’s past and present role in salvation history.

89 Romans 5:6-11 provides a parallel argument: But God demonstrates his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us (5:8).
unfaithfulness. Nonetheless, Paul affirms that the final vindication of believers will be God’s love.

These verses reveal the depth of Pauline theodicy, which is Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness in the face of “the sufferings of the present time.” Not only is Paul’s argument one of eschatology, but most importantly, it is one of love. Paul makes his defense of God’s δικαιοσύνη in language of ἀγάπη. One may wonder whether there are any limits to the love of God. It would appear not. Paul repeatedly tells his audience that God’s love is greater than anything they can ever encounter or imagine. No danger or opposing force can withstand God’s love.

This love is elective, that is, God’s choice and call reveal his love. This choice and call has come “in Christ.” Paul begins Chapter 8 by declaring that now there is no condemnation for those who are “in Christ Jesus” (8:1). He ends the chapter by asserting that there is nothing greater than the love of God “in Christ” (8:39). It is only “in Christ,” therefore, that one may begin to discern the enormity of God’s righteousness, for the gospel reveals God’s love “in Christ.” If this is so—and Paul maintains that it is—then believers are assured that God keeps his promises. They have been kept “in Christ,” who died and was raised ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, and they will be kept “in Christ,” who will intercede ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν in the eschaton.

90 Grieb (The Story of Romans, 82) argues that “the very status of being a Christian may subject believers to additional hardships and persecutions.”

91 Wright (Romans, 614) points out that “even justice is not the final word about this God, love is.”

92 Käsemann (Commentary on Romans, 251) argues that believers find “even in the midst of painful experience that the claim of the powers to dominion is illusory.”
Conclusion

In this chapter I have investigated Rom 8:31-39, and within that text I have examined Pauline theodicy in light of Paul’s confidence in God’s victory. Paul begins these verses with a number of rhetorical questions, and ends them with a declaration of absolute certitude. His words ring out like a closing argument in a courtroom, and he argues in defense of the righteousness of God.

Paul argues his case because believers in Rome have questioned the righteousness of God. God’s chosen people, Israel, have not accepted his Messiah. This rejection makes the Romans question whether God can be faithful to his promises. That is, will he save Israel? Will he also be able to save those who believe in Christ?

Romans 8:31-39 concludes not only Chapter 8, but the entire first eight chapters in which Paul expounds on God’s righteousness. He writes in Rom 1:17 that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel. He explains that God’s saving righteousness has been manifested in Christ (3:21-22), and that those who believe in Christ are justified (3:24). This justification leads to a new way of life, which is not enslaved to Sin or Death, but lived in the freedom of the Spirit (6:14; 7:6; 8:2, 9, 15). This Spirit makes believers children of God (8:16) and joint heirs with Christ (8:17).

With regard to God’s faithfulness to believers, Paul argues in Rom 8:18-39 with a turn to the eschaton. There will be suffering in the present, and it may seem that God does not attend those whom he has called, but at the end of time glory will be revealed in believers (8:18). Until then, believers, creation, and the Spirit groan together in anticipation of humanity’s salvation and the freedom of creation (8:21-23, 26). When the eschaton arrives,
there will be nothing at all more powerful than God’s love (8:35, 38-39). Paul, then, explains
God’s righteousness in terms of his love, both of which are available to believers “in Christ.”
Romans 8:18-39 prepares for Romans 9–11, where eschatology and love play a great part in
solving the dilemma of Israel’s rejection of God’s Messiah.

Ultimately, Pauline theodicy relies on trusting in God’s love in Christ. Paul argues
that because God has been trustworthy in the past, God will be trustworthy in the future.93
The human response to this love of God is πίστις. Paul announces at the beginning of the
letter that he has received the apostolate to bring about “the obedience of faith” among the
nations (1:5). The gospel is God’s righteousness revealed “from faith to faith” (1:17). It is
the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ for all who believe (3:22).94 Faith
was credited to Abraham as righteousness (4:9). Justification through faith brings peace with
God (5:1). Again and again, Paul names faith as indispensable to those who would seek an
answer as to whether God can be faithful or not. Believers are those who have leapt the great
chasm of doubt and withstand the powers that confront them, trusting that, in the end, God’s
love wins out.

93 Wright (Romans, 618) argues that a “hermeneutic of trust” should replace a hermeneutic of
suspicion.

94 I have translated πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as a subjective genitive. That is, faith is a quality that
Christ possessed. This translation does not exclude the translation of the phrase as an objective genitive
(believers’ faith in Jesus Christ), but instead allows for both senses. On this point, see Matera (Romans, 93)
who further argues that if the subjective genitive is the correct reading in δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, “then both concepts
are present in 3:22. . . . The faithfulness of Christ is the concrete manifestation of God’s own faithfulness.”
Wright (Romans, 470) holds that the subjective genitive is the correct reading. Byrne (Romans, 130) maintains
that both possibilities are open. Fitzmyer (Romans, 345), however, argues that reading a subjective genitive
would “run counter to the main thrust of Paul’s theology.” Similar arguments are made by Schlier (Römerbrief,
105), Käsemann (Commentary on Romans, 94), Dunn (Romans 1–8, 166), Cranfield (Romans 1–8, 203), Moo
(Epistle to the Romans, 224-25), and Jewett (Romans, 278).
Chapter Seven

Paul’s Defense of God’s Righteousness

Introduction

This dissertation has investigated Pauline theodicy in Rom 8:18-39. Pauline theodicy is Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness. His theodicy, therefore, does not fit the classical philosophical definition of theodicy. That is, it is not only the question of why a good and omnipotent God allows evil and suffering. Instead, Pauline theodicy also questions why God, despite his covenant with Israel, allowed Israel to suffer defeat at the hands of unbelieving nations. The issue really is one of abandonment rather than pitting omnipotence and goodness against evil. How is it that the evil prosper while the innocent are abandoned? Pauline theodicy encompasses more than the question of God’s goodness in the face of suffering. It asks—and it answers—how God is present to his people when he seems to be absent. Its topic is the faithfulness of God, and throughout Romans Paul makes a sustained defense of this faithfulness in terms of God’s righteousness.

Scholarly work on Pauline theodicy is often confined to Romans 9–11. It is in these chapters that Paul makes his defense of God’s righteousness while considering Israel’s rejection of its Messiah. However, as I argue in this dissertation, Paul begins his specific defense of God’s faithfulness in Rom 8:18-39. That is, Pauline theodicy is no longer a background concern but comes to the fore in this passage. In Chapter One I examined what other scholars write about Rom 8:18-39. Many focus on the role of eschatology in the passage. These authors explore the glory that awaits the justified and the role of creation in
these verses. These investigations are mostly in commentaries on Romans. Other scholars examine what Paul writes about God in this passage. These authors explore the Pauline theologoumena within these verses insofar as they examine what Paul writes about predestination and theodicy. These explorations are done in articles and monographs, and therefore do not treat the whole of Rom 8:18-39. My investigation includes all of these verses and examines them specifically in terms of Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness—that is, Paul’s theodicy.

In Chapter Two I presented the text and contexts of the passage. The literary context is divided into proximate and remote contexts. The proximate context is Romans 5–8, since Rom 8:18-39 forms an inclusio with Rom 5:1-11. This inclusio is both verbal and thematic. The remote context is the entire letter. I also presented the historical context in which Paul writes. There are three areas of attention: the expulsion of the Jews from Rome with the resultant split in the Roman community between the strong and the weak; the possible diplomatic gesture that Paul attempts after his polemical letter to the Galatians; and Paul’s desire to inaugurate a mission in Spain after his delivery of the collection to Jerusalem. All of these situations provide historical context for the letter as a whole.

In Chapters Three through Six I examined Pauline theodicy in Rom 8:18-39. Paul begins the passage by contrasting present sufferings with future glory. He goes on to state that all creation is waiting for and even groans along with the children of God as it and they await the redemption of the bodies of God’s sons and daughters. Therefore, in Chapter Three I examined Pauline theodicy in light of the resurrection from the dead. Paul articulates his defense of God’s righteousness in the form of apocalyptic eschatology, but he also
understands God’s righteousness in terms of what Paul has experienced already. That is, the resurrection of Christ is the foretaste of what God has in store for all believers. Because Paul has witnessed the resurrected Christ, he knows that which awaits the believer and therefore encourages the Romans with his knowledge.

In Chapter Four I examined Pauline theodicy in terms of the role of the Spirit. God gives the Spirit as the firstfruits, the down payment of what believers hope for. This gift of the Spirit enables them to anticipate the final glory that is to be revealed in them. This glory is only nascent now; it will be fully realized in the eschaton. The Spirit at the present groans within them and intercedes for believers and for the whole world. Because the Spirit’s prayer is heard by the One who searches hearts, believers may be assured that the prayer that wells up from within them—even their unspoken, unheard prayer—is a prayer that has its origin and end in God. Paul defends God’s righteousness in these verses by describing the Spirit as a midwife in the suffering of believers, praying with them as they anticipate their future glory.

In Chapter Five I examined Pauline theodicy in terms of God’s plan. Paul reveals that despite the present sufferings of believers, God has a plan and believers have a place in that plan. They are predestined, called, justified, and glorified. They are not outside the scope of God’s plan. In fact, nothing is: all things work together for good according to the plan of God. This means that nothing—not even sin and death—can frustrate God’s plan. Paul is not developing a doctrine of double predestination in this chapter, by which God predetermines some people for glory and predetermines others for damnation. Paul writes instead that God has predestined believers to share the image of his Son, that is, his
resurrected glory. Those who are called also are justified and glorified. Paul’s use of the aorist signals that God intends all actions for all believers. The accent is not on who are included in God’s plan and who are outside it, but rather the emphasis is on the belief that God has a plan which believers do not lie outside of. Thus, Paul’s defense of God’s righteousness lies in his encouragement that believers are in God’s plan and that everything works together for the good of that plan.

In Chapter Six I examined Pauline theodicy in terms of Paul’s confidence in God’s victory. By his language and style, Paul describes the eschatological courtroom where believers stand before the judgment seat of God. However, although believers may be on trial at the eschaton, it is not believers whom Paul defends; rather it is God and God’s righteousness. After illustrating a courtroom in which the judge (God) and prosecutor (Jesus) are for the defendants, and neither accuser nor condemnor appears (Rom 8:31-34), Paul proclaims that nothing can separate believers from the love of Christ (8:35-39). He produces a tribulation list comprised of earthly obstacles for the believer. He also catalogues temporal, celestial, and spatial obstacles to the love of God. None of these proves to be an impediment, however, because believers are super-conquerors through the one who loved them. That is, they are beyond the categories of conquering and defeat, for all is subsumed in God’s love. God’s love is victorious in all situations. There is nothing greater that anyone can imagine than God’s love in Christ. Thus, Paul ultimately makes his defense of God’s righteousness in Romans 8 not only in terms of eschatology but especially in terms of love. It is in this love that God has created all things, and it is in this love that God will bring his creation to glory. God’s love overcomes present sufferings and the apparent failure of God’s plan.
Analysis

Important to my exegesis is the discovery that a fruitful hermeneutic for interpreting Pauline theodicy is the Return from the Exile. In Chapter Three I demonstrated that Paul describes the resurrection from the dead in terms and imagery taken from Isaiah 24–27. In Chapter Six I showed how God’s handing over and not sparing his own Son is related to exilic language. I also demonstrated in this chapter how the tribulation list that Paul employs is linked to the Exile. I make these exegetical claims by way of metalepsis or allusive echo. Metalepsis occurs when an older text is echoed in a newer text. The allusive echo which then results suggests that the newer text is best understood in relation to the older text. The echo may be verbal or thematic and need not be explicit.

For example, Rom 8:18-25 contains many terms that are also found in Isaiah 24–27: corruption, groaning, hope, glory, and labor pains. But the links are thematic as well as verbal: judgment of the world because of sin, personification of the world, the theme of hope, imagery of laboring to give birth, the defeat of death, and life after death. These similarities indicate a relationship in which the Book of Isaiah informs Paul’s text. The Book of Isaiah describes the world rejoicing at the return of the exiles, whereas Rom 8:18-25 describes creation anticipating the revelation of the children of God. Isaiah 27 ends with the blowing of a great trumpet and the gathering of all the exiles on the holy mountain of the LORD. Elsewhere, Paul writes of the last trumpet (1 Thess 4:16; 1 Cor 15:52). I argue that the interplay of these texts indicates that Paul depicts the resurrection from the dead in terms of the Return from the Exile.
Similarly, I argue that the verbs παραδόσωμι and φεύγωμεν, which Paul employs in 8:32 to describe God handing over and not sparing his Son, are verbs employed throughout the OT to indicate God handing over Israel to Babylon. Also, Paul’s tribulation list in Rom 8:35 is also related to Deut 28:48, which is located in a chapter in which the Exile plays a large role. Both Rom 8:32 and 8:35 are informed by their relationship with these earlier texts and therefore, I again argue, Pauline theodicy is cast in terms of the Return from the Exile.

In Chapter One I proposed to examine my findings from the methodology of intertextuality and metalepsis against Hays’s sevenfold criteria. Although the criteria are not of equal weight, together they provide a check against random linkages or “parallelomania.”

The first criterion to be considered is that of Availability, which asks if the proposed source of the echo was available to either the author or the original readers or to both. It is safe to say that Paul is familiar with the Book of Isaiah, since he quotes it explicitly in Romans (e.g., 2:24; 3:15-17; 9:27, 28, 29, 31; 10:11, 15, 16, 20, 21; 11:8, 26-27, 34; 14:11; 15:12, 21). Because of these same direct quotations, it is also likely that the original audience in Rome knew of Isaiah and the broad topic of the Return from the Exile that is to be found in that book. Certainly, the Jewish believers would have known, read, and studied the Book of Isaiah, and those Gentile believers who are God-fearers would have had a similar exposure. Therefore, in the case of the metalepsis which I identify in Rom 8:18-25, both author and original readers would have had access to the proposed source of the echo.


2 Hays (ibid., 30) claims that Paul “was acquainted with virtually the whole body of texts that were later acknowledged as canonical within Judaism, and that he expected his readers to share his acknowledgment of these texts as Scripture.”
Similarly, the interplay between Psalm 43 LXX and Isa 53:7 and 52:3 is possible because these texts would have been known to both Paul and his readers. By the same reasoning, I argue that both Paul and the Romans were familiar with Deuteronomy and the proposed source of the echo of the tribulation list that is found in Deut 28:48. Furthermore, the Romans very well could have had access to Paul’s own tribulation lists in his letters to the Corinthians (1 Cor 4:10; 2 Cor 4:8-9; 6:4-5, 8-10; 11:23-29; 12:10). In conjunction with Rom 8:35, these texts provide rich sources for metalepsis that were available to both Paul and the Romans.

The second criterion, Volume, inquires as to the amount of word repetition or syntactical pattern. In Rom 8:18-25 and Isaiah 24–27, this repetition is quite high. Paul repeats key words such as corruption, groaning, glory, and hope two and three times. The recurrence of these words in such a short passage favors the proposed allusive echo. Repetition is not high, however, in Rom 8:35 and Deut 28:48. Instead, Paul repeats two words of the deuteronomistic tribulation list, famine and nakedness. What is noteworthy about this repetition is that it is the only occurrence in the LXX of the word nakedness. Its appearance, however, together with famine in a tribulation list that threatens Exile, identifies the intertextual matrix at play.

Volume is high in Rom 8:36, because Paul quotes Ps 43:23 LXX verbatim. This psalm reflects the Babylonian Exile, and therefore its quotation also evokes the Exile. However, volume is also high between this psalm verse and Isa 53:7 and 52:3, both of which occur in the context of Isaiah’s prophecy of the Return from the Exile. Consequently, this
high volume between all these verses (Rom 8:36; Ps 43:23 LXX; Isa 52:3, 53:7) contributes to the identification of the allusive echo.

The criterion of Recurrence seeks to establish how often Paul elsewhere cites or alludes to the same scriptural passage. Paul quotes from four books most frequently in his letters: Isaiah, Psalms, Deuteronomy, and Genesis, in that order. I argue that Paul’s twenty-eight citations from Isaiah demonstrate his willingness to incorporate the prophet’s eschatology. Isaiah not only foretells the Return from the Exile, but he also foresees the assembly of Gentiles on the LORD’s mountain at the end times (Isa 2:1-5). This combination of Jews and Gentiles speaks directly to the situation of the Romans, whom Paul addresses with the refrain, “Jew first, and then Greek” (Rom 1:16; 2:9, 10; 10:12).

The fourth criterion is Thematic Coherence, which asks how the allusive echo fits into the argument that Paul is developing. The intertextual matrix that I identify in Paul’s argument serves to highlight his larger narrative of God’s saving activity in history. Salvation history, according to Paul, describes a creation perverted by human sin and groaning to become free again at the eschaton. Humanity, too, hopes for its redemption as God’s plan comes to perfection in Christ. It is within this larger narrative of salvation history that Paul engages in theodicy; that is, he seeks to defend the righteousness of God. Therefore, Paul describes the languishing and hope of humanity and creation, as well as their redemption, in terms of the Exile and Return. Within this story, it is not Exile which has the final word, but God’s saving restoration.

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Historical Plausibility, the fifth criterion, asks two questions. Could Paul intend the alleged allusion? And could his intended audience understand it? I argue that Paul probably intended the allusive echo of the Exile and the Return. Deuteronomy 27–32, which Paul employs five times in Romans (10:6-8, 19; 11:8; 12:19; 15:10), emphasizes that disobedience to the law results in “curses”—especially Exile. This Exile can be reversed through Israel’s repentance, restoring it to its covenant relationship and its land. James M. Scott names this pattern Sin-Exile-Restoration. These predictions in Deuteronomy became real when Jerusalem fell to Babylon in 587 B.C.E. The prophets offered hope of a restored Temple and a restored homeland where a Davidic heir would rein and Gentiles would obey God and his people. However, disappointing results after the return and restoration continued to postpone the hope of final restoration through the time of the Second Temple and beyond.

As early as the composition of Daniel 9, Israel understood itself continually under the curse of the law which had originally brought about the Exile. “Daniel 9 understands the exile as a state of judgment that is to be ended only by the intervention of God and the inauguration of the eschatological era.” What is more, Israel sees itself as still in the Exile. “The exile is no longer an historic event to be dated to one period; it is much nearer to being

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4 James M. Scott, “‘For as Many as are Works of the Law are Under a Curse’ (Galations 3:10),” in Paul and the Scriptures of Israel, 187-221, here 197.

5 Ibid., 201.

6 Jacob Neusner (Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: Exile and Return in the History of Judaism; South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 3 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990] 1-3; 33-35; and throughout) argues that all Judaic systems recapitulate a single experience: that of the Exile. However, since the restoration did not happen in the sixth century, as the Torah which was completed in that period foretold, these same Judaisms continued to see themselves as living in an exile situation while still anticipating a restoration in the future.
a condition from which only the final age will bring release.”\(^7\) Therefore, Israel at the time of Paul not only had high eschatological hopes, but these hopes sprang from and were nurtured by their history and recollection of the Exile.

Paul speaks to this eschatological longing with his vision that begins in Rom 8:18-39 and continues throughout Romans 9–11. He matches expectation with hope—not only hope drawn from Scripture, but most importantly with hope that he offers to believers drawn from his experience of the Risen Lord. This hope is couched in terms and themes drawn from the language of Exile and Return.

Paul’s message would find an understanding audience that has been shaped by Exile and Return. Not only are their Scriptures full of this imagery, but their lives mirror their belief. That is, the Jewish believers were exiled from Rome in 49 C.E. under Claudius and not allowed to return until after the death of the emperor in 54 C.E. In the meantime, the structures and worshiping patterns of the believing communities had changed enough to cause friction between those whom Paul terms the “strong” and the “weak.” Therefore, exiled believers find Paul narrating their own story in terms drawn from their belief and experience: Exile and Return.

Thus, the imagery of Isaiah and the Psalms that Paul employs to describe his theodicy finds resonance with the Romans to whom he writes. Their own experience of Exile prompts them to ask questions as to the intent of God in letting his people suffer, not only that part of Israel that has rejected the Messiah, but also that part that has not. Is there a plan, and do

\(^7\) Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968) 242. He goes on to write that “though bound to the historical reality of an exile which actually took place in the sixth century, the experience of exile as such had become a symbol of a period, viewed in terms of punishment, but also in terms of promise.”
they have a place in that plan? As for believers, Paul answers this question definitively in Rom 8:28-30. God’s plan has not overlooked them, and indeed even their suffering contributes to the plan’s outcome, “We know that all things work together for the good for those who love God, who are called according to his plan” (8:28). As for Jewish unbelievers, he devotes Romans 9–11 to solving that dilemma. Therefore, I argue that Paul could very well intend the allusive echo of Exile and Return, and that the audience would readily understand it.

The history of interpretation seeks to determine if other scholars have interpreted this passage in the same way as I have. Hays has provided an exegesis of the theodicy in Rom 8:36 and Ps 43:23 LXX from which it is taken. Grieb explores Rom 8:18-39 through the hermeneutic of theodicy, which she claims is the proper lens through which to read all of Romans. Keesmaat and Wright engage in exegesis that reads Rom 8:18-39 in terms of the Exodus narrative which, they argue, is the primary narrative of Israel. David I. Starling argues that because the Exodus typology often used in interpreting Romans in fact employs “citations from texts that relate to the post-exilic restoration of Israel it is probably this ‘second exodus’ redemption. . . that is closer to the foreground of Paul’s thinking here.” I do not find any scholar, however, who has interpreted the whole of Rom 8:18-39 in light of theodicy which specifically employs the terms of Exile and Return.

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The final criterion of Satisfaction asks if the proposed reading makes sense, with or without clear confirmation from the other criteria listed. I have attempted to demonstrate that Paul describes the problems of Sin and Death and God’s eschatological answer of glory in terms of the Exile and Return. Israel interprets much of its self-perception at the time of Paul in such a light. It provides the undergirding narrative in Rom 8:18-39, and also prepares for and joins together with the larger discourse of Romans 9–11, in which Paul treats the dilemma of Israel’s rejection of its Messiah. Therefore, there is a large degree of satisfaction—a good fit—for the proposed reading with the text and the rest of the letter. Together, all of these criteria provide a warrant for reading the hermeneutic I have proposed.

**Paul’s Defense of God’s Righteousness**

Beker differentiates between the coherent message of Paul and the contingencies of his letters. In light of this distinction, I argue that Pauline theodicy—that is, the way Paul understands God’s faithfulness despite suffering and disbelief—is not dependent upon the situation of the communities to whom Paul writes. God is faithful. Neither does suffering depend only on a community’s situation. Paul presents this truth along with his proclamation of God’s righteousness. Those who are joined to Christ should expect this suffering, as Paul’s tribulation lists provide eloquent witness. Exile for the Romans is not contingent, in the sense that some members experience it and others do not. This is Paul’s message to the Romans: both have experienced the Exile, Jews and Gentiles. Jews have undergone the expulsion from Rome; Gentiles have been a people “who were not my people” (Rom 9:25-

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26; Hos 2:25). Coming together at the end of the Jewish expulsion from Rome, this believing community (communities) of outsiders is called to live as one eschatological community, giving witness to the glory of God that will be revealed in them.

Conversely, God’s faithfulness is the coherent element of this narrative. God is always faithful despite appearances to the contrary. God did not allow Israel to languish in Exile forever. God did not allow Christ to remain dead but raised him. God does not regard the Gentiles as “not my people” forever. Paul proclaims the righteousness of God who does not abandon his people forever.

However, Paul writes to the Romans that suffering is necessary in order to participate in the inheritance with Christ (8:17). In the same way, there can be no Return unless there is Exile first. Therefore, God does hand his people over and this is on account of their sin. It is true for both Jews and Greeks alike; Paul writes that there is no just person, not one (3:10). All have fallen under the power of Sin and Death. Paul’s genius is that he understands the Sin-Exile-Restoration paradigm as necessary for all humanity and applicable to both Jews and Gentiles. This story is the story of Israel as well as the story of the Gentiles (“Jew first, and then Greek”). Just as God handed over Israel to Babylon, so God handed sinful humanity over to impurity and degrading passions and undiscerning minds because of his wrath (1:24, 26, 28). But Christ, who was also handed over, is the faithful son of Israel and the firstfruits of the eschatological return from the Exile through his resurrection (8:32). This return will be eventually predicated of all believers, not merely in an individual sense, but more importantly in a corporate one (8:23).
Therefore, Paul can confidently write of God’s πρῶτος: the world marred by the Fall is subjected in hope (8:20). This hope reveals the paradox that the sin-caused Exile is the universal necessary condition for redemption. God has locked all in disobedience so that he might have mercy on all (11:32). Thus, God applies the Exile universally and not only to Israel. Paul identifies the condition that all find themselves outside of grace in order to be welcomed into it. God shows his righteousness in mercy (9:16) and in love (8:37).

Paul’s rethinking of the Sin-Exile-Restoration paradigm is an important component of his defense of God’s righteousness. In this schema, past events give meaning to present and future ones. Paul is a very creative theologian who, given his experience of the risen Christ, endeavors to make sense out of his Jewish belief and the Scriptures. Exile, then, describes anything that attempts to separate God’s people from God. However, God’s covenant faithfulness is not frustrated. Present suffering, groaning, and tribulations—even sin and death—are not able to hinder God’s πρῶτος: the resurrected glory of many children conformed to the image of God’s Son.

God’s call is effective, and Paul’s theology—his speech about God—proclaims and defends God’s righteousness in calling Gentiles as well as Jews to be his chosen people. Paul also details God’s faithfulness in his description of the glorious future which awaits believers: bodily resurrection and renewal of all creation. He describes the participation of believers in salvation history despite powers that attempt to thwart them. However, Pauline theodicy does not only look to the future for its answer; it is not only eschatological, it is also historical. With Paul’s assistance believers realize that, in the narrative of their lives, it is God who is the prime agent. God creates, subjects in hope, predestines, calls, justifies, leads
back from Exile, and glorifies. It is God whose love was decisively shown in the saving act of Christ. It is God who is the giver of the Spirit. God’s actions reveal the key to Pauline theodicy, that is, God is for us.
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