

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

TOTAL GLORY AND RADICAL HOPE: READING ROMANS 8:18-25 WITH AN  
ANTHROPOLOGICAL-SOTERIOLOGICAL EMPHASIS WITHOUT DIMINISHING  
COSMIC REDEMPTION

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Total Glory and Radical Hope: Reading Romans 8:18-25 With an Anthropological-Soteriological Emphasis Without Diminishing Cosmic Redemption

The realities of cosmic redemption are often vaguely construed leading to gross misunderstandings and a lack of appreciation for the hope promised therein. A.T. Robertson declares: “This mystical sympathy of physical nature with the work of grace is beyond the comprehension of most of us. But who can disprove it?”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, in the spirit of faith seeking understanding, this paper will dive deep into the glories of the wider redemption resonating from the grace found only in the Triune God. Romans 8:18-25 declares an all-encompassing redemption stemming from God’s redemption of his elect, thereby restoring non-rational creation and providing a basis for profound hope for believers currently suffering.

The passage has been taken by some to put forward a theology for panentheism, while others reduce Paul’s declarations as simply as basis for Christian environmentalism.<sup>2</sup> On the less radical side of the debate scholars and commentators disagree over the emphasis of what Paul says. Some say that Paul is referring to a redemption which focuses primarily on human salvation and then only secondarily to creational redemption. Others, however, see human salvation and creational redemption as separate entities with equal importance.<sup>3</sup> Those arguing for a more divided view of total salvation from the curse of sin posit that Paul is “making distinct and definite cosmological assertions about creation rather than poetic or symbolic statements universalizing [Paul’s] experience of personal salvation.”<sup>4</sup> These cosmological statements arise completely outside the ontological realities of human redemption.

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<sup>1</sup> A.T. Robertson, *The Epistles of Paul*, vol. 4, Word Pictures in the New Testament (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), 375.

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988) and Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). See also John Bolt, "The Relation Between Creation and Redemption in Romans 8:18-27," *CTJ* 30, no. 1 (1995), 34.

<sup>3</sup> Bolt, "The Relation Between Creation and Redemption, 35

<sup>4</sup> Bolt, "The Relationship Between Creation and Redemption," 36.

The line of thought which subordinates the non-human redemption from sin stems from the thought of Gerhard von Rad who saw redemption's beginning as prior to creation thereby rendering creation as a primarily a backdrop for human history.<sup>5</sup> This is a primarily anthropocentric view of soteriology which sees history from a man centered point of view.<sup>6</sup> When applied to Rom 8:18-25 this view declares that Paul intends to say that whatever redemption comes to the larger creation is only incidental to God's work of reuniting elect human beings to himself.<sup>7</sup> However, what we see in vv. 18-25 is a salvation which is anthropologically based but does not in any way diminish the glories of the redemption of non-rational creation. In fact, Paul makes it clear that man's salvation actually restores creation to its proper function.

### Commentary on the Text

Romans 8:18-25 follows a logical progression which centers on the believer's basis for hope as follows:

**18** Λογίζομαι γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ ἄξια τὰ παθήματα τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ  
πρὸς τὴν μέλλουσαν δόξαν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι εἰς ἡμᾶς.

**19** ἢ γὰρ ἀποκαρδοκία τῆς κτίσεως<sup>8</sup>  
τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν  
τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεκδέχεται.

**20** τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη,  
οὐχ ἔκοῦσα<sup>9</sup>  
ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα,  
ἐφ' ἐλπίδι<sup>10</sup>

**21** ὅτι<sup>11</sup> καὶ αὕτη ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται<sup>12</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See "The Theological Problem of the Old Testament Doctrine of Creation," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. L. W. Trueman Dickens (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 131-43.

<sup>6</sup> Bolt, "The Relationship Between Creation and Redemption," 37.

<sup>7</sup> Bolt, "The Relationship Between Creation and Redemption," 38.

<sup>8</sup> (All proceeding textual notes in logical progression will be from the NA28 Greek text) Manuscripts 2464 *pc* read πιστεως.

<sup>9</sup> ουκ εκουσα is replaced by ου θελουσα in a small number of manuscripts.

<sup>10</sup> Variant listed as επ ελπιδι.

<sup>11</sup> Some manuscripts begin with διοτι, but the text line reads οτι. This is a change from NA25 (See discussion under commentary section.)

<sup>12</sup> Variant seen in at least one papyri recording the ending of the word as -ρουται.

ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς

εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν

τῆς δόξης

τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ.

**22** οἶδαμεν γὰρ

ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει<sup>13</sup>

ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν·

**23** οὐ μόνον δέ,

ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ<sup>14</sup>

τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἔχοντες,

ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ<sup>15</sup> ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν

υἰοθεσί<sup>16</sup> ἀπεκδεχόμενοι,

τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν.

**24** τῇ γὰρ ἐλπίδι ἐσώθημεν·

ἐλπίς δὲ βλεπομένη οὐκ ἔστιν ἐλπίς·

ὁ γὰρ βλέπει τίς<sup>17</sup> ἐλπίζει<sup>18</sup>;

**25** εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ βλέπομεν ἐλπίζομεν,

δι' ὑπομονῆς ἀπεκδεχόμεθα.

With the first word of Rom 8:18, *gar*, Paul places the immediate context of our discussion as the suffering which all human beings face in this life.<sup>19</sup> Although believers face various sufferings of many kinds, Paul states emphatically that we will be included in the glory to come that will be so magnificent as to render any present suffering but a mere shadow.<sup>20</sup> He urges the reader to weigh the present suffering against the future glory. We will inevitably see that the realities of total redemption put our present distress in the proper context so that we have hope.<sup>21</sup> The present time that he refers to does not mirror our commonly used phrase, “the time being.” Paul uses the term in a technical, redemptive-historical fashion contrasting the present

<sup>13</sup> Variant reading of συνοδουει.

<sup>14</sup> Various minor variants exist including και ημεις αυτοι and και αυτοι ημεις οι. One papyrus leaves out the phrase altogether.

<sup>15</sup> Various variants exist including και ημεις αυτοι, αυτοι ημεις, and αυτοι. The text line reading is well attested to through the presence of its reading in a major papyrus and Sinaiticus. These variants most likely resulted from scribal error due to the close wording in two consecutive lines.

<sup>16</sup> Often omitted from the text (See commentary section for details).

<sup>17</sup> Some majuscules as well as the Majority Text read τις, τι και while other variants read τις, τι and τις και. Note the text line reading is a change from NA25.

<sup>18</sup> Word replaced by υπομενει in Sinaiticus and a small number of other minor manuscripts.

<sup>19</sup> Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, SP (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 257.

<sup>20</sup> Robertson, *The Epistles*, 375.

<sup>21</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996, 511.

age with the age that is to come (Matt 12:33; Rom 12:2; Gal. 1:4; Eph 1:21).<sup>22</sup> The age to come is not yet revealed time of resurrection and glory which entails much more than solely the paradise of heaven for the believer's soul.<sup>23</sup> This age to come is the redemptive historical age of consummation when all things are made right on heaven and earth and believers receive a perfected body. The elect will finally be the full image of God as the Father intended for us to be in Christ.<sup>24</sup> At the present time, however, believers must live out redeemed lives in the "arena" of a fallen creation.<sup>25</sup>

The ESV renders the substantive term *apokaradokia* of v. 19 as creation "waiting with eager longing." The word stems from a compound verb joining *apo*, *kara*, and *dokeo* meaning most literally off from, head, and watch. Put together the term gives the sense of "to watch eagerly with outstretched head."<sup>26</sup> From this, we gather that creation is stretching its head to its utmost while waiting longingly for the sons of God. John Murray calls for believers to "be astride the creation itself" in holding to persistent longing for the coming of Christ.<sup>27</sup> Some translate v. 19 in a way which declares creation to not know that it eagerly awaits the revealing of the sons of God. To make this move one must take the phrase "not willingly" of verse 20 to connect to the main verb seen in v. 19. However, grammatically speaking, it would not seem to make sense to make this connection. The conjunction "but" of v. 20 links itself most directly to creation's subjection to sin rather than to the phrase which describes the eager waiting. Then again we see in v. 22 that creation groans and travails together, thereby solidifying the rendering of *ktisis* to be referring to non-human creation. It is clear that vv. 20-22 elaborate the claim made

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<sup>22</sup> The phrase *tou nyn kairou* parallels Paul's typical use of the word *aiōn* seen in the trans. "present evil age." See Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 512.

<sup>23</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968), 300.

<sup>24</sup> Byrne, *Romans*, 257.

<sup>25</sup> Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 512.

<sup>26</sup> Robertson, *The Epistles*, 375.

<sup>27</sup> Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 301.

in v. 19.<sup>28</sup> By theological reasoning we can gather that Satan, the demons, and humans are not included in the meaning of *ktisis* because it cannot be said that they have been subjected to the futility of the curse unwillingly (v. 20).<sup>29</sup> We conclude, then, with Douglas Moo who relates,

“Like the Psalmists and prophets who pictured hills, meadows, and valleys ‘shouting and singing together for joy’ (Ps 65:12-13) and the earth ‘mourning’ (Isa 24:4; Jew 4:28; 12:4), Paul personifies the subhuman creation in order to convey to his readers a sense of the cosmic significance of both humanity’s fall into sin and believers’ restoration to glory.”<sup>30</sup>

Paul declares in v. 20 that creation is put under the rule of futility or vanity. The word for vanity, *mataioteti*, is the same Greek word which the LXX uses to describe Qoheleth’s problem in Eccl when he states that all is vanity or futility. The writer of Ecclesiastes reflects on the fact that creation is out of joint. Man cannot properly subdue the earth (before Christ has come to redeem) so all that is left is “prevention or at least reduction” of the frustrations that both creation and man in creation experience.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, we know that all of creation was subjected to this futility, but God has provided a glorious redemption through his Son which is graciously given to mankind in Christ and then to the restoration of the world through the revealing of God’s children.

Ultimately, we must declare that God himself who is sovereign over all subjected the non-rational creation to futility. This subjection, however, was most certainly because of the sin

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<sup>28</sup> Bolt, “The Relation of Creation and Redemption,” 40.

<sup>29</sup> Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 302. For the various views on the interpretation of *ktisis* see C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. I, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 411-412. Longenecker provides a summary of Cranfield as well as some other options; see Richard Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2016), 720-721.

<sup>30</sup> Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 514.

<sup>31</sup> William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans: Chapters 1-8*, vol. I, NTC (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 268

of man. John Chrysostom emphasizes the human role in bringing about the subjugation of non-rational creation to the curse. He states, “For because you have a body which has become mortal and subject to suffering, the earth too has received a curse...the creation suffered badly because of you...but it has not been irreparably damaged.”<sup>32</sup> Paul could only believe that absolute hope remained because it is God who decreed the curse.<sup>33</sup> The Triune God set a definite time period for the subjugation of nature.<sup>34</sup> God decreed that redemption should come at the proper time thereby giving all of creation certainty of the outcome leading to hope.<sup>35</sup> It is possible that Paul is thinking of Gen 3:15 when describing the hope that creation itself has for redemption.<sup>36</sup> If one takes this claim as true, it becomes clear that the redemption of creation is only hoped for in the context of anthropological salvation through Jesus Christ.

As we come to v. 21,<sup>37</sup> Paul describes the freedom which creation will obtain from the “glory of the children of God,” the word *doxeis* is an attributive genitive which functions as an adjective but with much more emphasis.<sup>38</sup> The glory that God’s children receive in redemption

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<sup>32</sup> John Chrysostom, “Homilies,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 11.444.

<sup>33</sup> Note that by implication the reference to hope in light of the curse of sin directly contradicts eschatological claims of total annihilation of the material creation. There is nothing positive in a coming annihilation. Hope implies a future freedom corresponding to the liberty revealed in the glory of redeemed man. See Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 304.

<sup>34</sup> J.G. Vos, *Romans* (Pittsburg, PA: Crown and Covenant Publications, 2013), 107.

<sup>35</sup> Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 303.

<sup>36</sup> Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, 414. Fritzmyer rejects the claim that Paul loosely references Gen 3:15 because the verse “expresses not victory, but lasting enmity between the serpent and its offspring and the woman and her offspring. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 505. The majority of all conservative scholarship understand crushing the serpent’s head to point to Christ’s conquering of death through the resurrection. This would seem to thematically fit well with Rom 8:18-25 which points to Christ’s redemption being poured out upon his chosen people as well as creation as a whole, all through the work of the Spirit.

<sup>37</sup> The best manuscripts that are oldest consider the first word of the verse to be *oti*. The text variant present is the word *dioti*, but most likely, this reading is an accidental copying coming from the previous word *elpidi*. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 517.

<sup>38</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Greek Grammar*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 48-49. Wallace distinguishes between the *attributive* genitive and the *attributed* genitive. The two types appear to be the same in structure, but the attributed genitive the head noun essentially works like as attributive adjective See Andreas J Kostenberger, Benjamin L. Merkle and Robert L. Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 90-91.

will be so entirely glorious that all of creation will be freed by it. The bondage of decay (*phthoras*), which refers to the concrete state of vulnerability and subjectivity to perishing, will be thrown off in light of the freedom then delivered.<sup>39</sup> John Murray denotes that *phthoras* here does not have an ethical connotation. He argues that the word follows the non-ethical sense seen in Col 2:22 and II Pet 2:12.<sup>40</sup> However, we know from Scripture that creation is considered to be good by God (Gen 1:31). Non-rational creation is placed under the curse and therefore subjected to futility precisely because of man's ethical action of rebellion against God (Gen 3). J.G. Vos relates, "Vanity, or futility or frustration, is the present condition of the world of nature because of subjection to the law of decay – the destructive forces that resulted from man's sin."<sup>41</sup> Nature did not subject itself to decay and death; it was enslaved to evil by man's sin. The non-rational creation itself longs for the perfection it will receive in the age to come.<sup>42</sup>

As v. 22 begins, Paul states that "we know" how creation groans. It is possible that he is here referring to the inevitable suffering and violence which we experience in natural disasters.<sup>43</sup> The following words *systemazei* and *sunoōdinei* which describe the present longing of creation, literally translated refer to groaning and travailing. Translators typically take this phrase to refer to groaning as in childbirth.<sup>44</sup> This groaning as in childbirth highlights the sense of hope which is to come in a new birth. Ultimate death will not be the result of the present struggle.<sup>45</sup> The picture of groaning as in childbirth is taken by some to be most prominently a reference to the Israelites

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<sup>39</sup> BAGD, s.v. "φθορα"

<sup>40</sup> Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 304.

<sup>41</sup> J.G. Vos, *Romans*, 106.

<sup>42</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible in One Volume*, ed. by Leslie F. Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 1773.

<sup>43</sup> Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 518.

<sup>44</sup> See ESV.

<sup>45</sup> Hendriksen, *Romans*, 268.

groaning under the bondage of Pharaoh while in Egypt.<sup>46</sup> Israel represents the embodiment of God's work of redemption. God's people were in bondage to Pharaoh awaiting God to come and bring the new birth of salvation thereby assuring his redemptive purposes should come to fruition (Rom 8:15; 8:21; Exod 20:1).<sup>47</sup> However one may take the emphasis of the passage, the result is that a new reality of redemption is to be born which brings much hope.

In approaching v. 23 we see Paul emphasizing that believers also groan for redemption in much the same way that nature does.<sup>48</sup> Hence, Paul connects our redemption to the world's redemption because we both eagerly await (*apekdechomenoi*) this full salvation. However, Paul specifies that more than that Christians wait for adoption, namely the redemption of our bodies. The verse seems to be referring generally to the fullest sense of adoption where body and soul have been reunited in the resurrected body.<sup>49</sup> As Christians, we have already received adoption as a result of our union with Christ and having the first fruits of the Spirit, but we have not yet received the final gift resulting from being brought into the family of God.<sup>50</sup> Although we do not yet have the final gift of a resurrected body, we can be sure that our bodies will overcome death and decay in the end. As Cyril of Alexandria relates, "For the time being this is a hope, because it is not yet present, but it is a future certainty."<sup>51</sup> We have received the first fruits of the Spirit

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<sup>46</sup> J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 159.

<sup>47</sup> Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story: (Re)Interpreting the Exodus Tradition* (JSNT Sup 181; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 104-105.

<sup>48</sup> In verse 23 some manuscripts leave out the word for adoption as sons (*uiiothesian*). The third edition UBS Greek New Testament renders the variant a C rating for certainty. However, the fifth edition renders the presence of the word in the text as an A rating. Metzger seems to decide that omitting the word would make sense when he states that "copyist doubtless found [it] to be both clumsy in the context and dispensable, as well as seeming to contradict v. 15." See Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 571.

<sup>49</sup> Robertson, *The Epistles of Paul*, 376.

<sup>50</sup> Vos, *Romans*, 109.

<sup>51</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Romans*, ACCS (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 229.

and we cannot help but to long for more. The redemption of our bodies will be a manifestation of our own selves being made like the resurrected Christ (Phil 3:21; I Cor 15:42).<sup>52</sup>

Verse 24 of Romans 8 speaks of the hope that comes to those who believe.<sup>53</sup> By its nature, hope implies that there is something left to hope for. Believers longingly wait for the revealing of the glory of God's children so that we may receive the full adoption as sons thereby receiving a glorious new body. The hope that we look forward to implies that true Christianity must have an eschatological aspect.<sup>54</sup> In v. 24 When Paul says that we were saved (*esothenen*) he uses the aorist form of the verb which is somewhat unusual for Paul's use of this particular word for save.<sup>55</sup> However, because Paul is speaking in the context of a generally past reality of believing while also looking forward to a future hope, the emphasis of the aorist seems to be appropriate.<sup>56</sup> In light of the hope that we have for the things which are yet to come, we are told to wait patiently (v. 25). "Our way is rough and long, though he seem to tarry" we know without doubt that Jesus will return to make all things new.<sup>57</sup>

### Theological Conclusions

Verse 18 begins with the statement that our present sufferings will pale in comparison to the future glory. The rest of the section (including down to v. 30) elaborates on the prior

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<sup>52</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, 1773

<sup>53</sup> Note that verse 24 includes two text variants both occurring side by side at the end of the verse in Paul's rhetorical question to the reader. The shortest, and therefore most likely, reading is that of *tis* without the added conjunction *kai* or the reading of *tis, ti kai* which most likely rises out of the lack of punctuation given after *blepei*. The next variant proposes a more difficult decision to be made. The word seen in the UBS and the NA Greek texts is *elpidzei*. The variant reading of *upomenei* is the most difficult reading and would normally be accepted as the most likely original. However, according to Metzger, the Committee was not convinced because of limited testimony in older manuscripts, and no other example of the use of *upomenei* can be found in the NT. The reader should be aware, however, that *upomenei* was a commonly used word in this sense in the LXX. See Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 571.

<sup>54</sup> Vos, *Romans*, 109-110.

<sup>55</sup> Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 520.

<sup>56</sup> See A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 830-831.

<sup>57</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, 1773.

statement.<sup>58</sup> In context, Paul is drawing on Ps 44 which he explicitly quotes of v. 22 in Rom 8:36 declaring “for your sake we are being killed all the day long. Our text deals intimately with the question that all believers must face in light of the present suffering: if we are redeemed and salvation has come, why do we still groan waiting for all things to be made right? Paul gives the answer by explaining the eschatological tension of the already-yet aspect of adoption.<sup>59</sup> The church has been redeemed now and will be redeemed with resurrected bodies in the future. The hope of salvation that we have is all-encompassing as seen in vv. 19-25 which move from a general salvation to a particular. The section begins with a general longing of all of creation for salvation which includes the sons of God and then moves into a specific redemption in v. 23 where God’s chosen ones receive fully redeemed resurrected bodies.<sup>60</sup> However, we must not turn a blind eye to the way in which both the general and the particular point to the wonderful nature of the coming glory which provides for us great hope.

The inclusion of creation as a whole into redemption must be carefully placed with the proper logical order of God’s salvific plan. Paul explicitly applies the image of groaning to both creation and to the now saved sinner who still exists under the not yet fully revealed existence. The framework for understanding salvation which we glean from Rom 8:18-23 shows that Adam’s fall brought sin, death and bondage to decay for both humans and the material creation (Rom 5:12-14).<sup>61</sup> The picture Paul paints for the reader is grounded in humanity’s act of submitting themselves and the entire creation to rebellion to God. We know from Genesis that God entrusted the world to humankind’s dominion under him as vicegerent (Gen 1:26-28).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Tom Schreiner, *Romans*, ECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 434.

<sup>59</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 57-59.

<sup>60</sup> Bolt, “The Relation Between Creation and Redemption,” 38-39.

<sup>61</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 505.

<sup>62</sup> Byrne, *Romans*, 256, 258.

When Adam and Eve fell into sin, the curse ensued but did not abrogate man's stewardship. Human sin drastically marred the world which was entrusted to our care. Therefore, "the first step in the process of redemption...is that the oppressors (the human race) must be liberated from their own sin."<sup>63</sup>

This logical process of redemption must absolutely be highlighted. An integral connection exists between the revelation God's chosen elect and the renewal of non-rational creation.<sup>64</sup> Total salvation for non-rational creation lies first and foremost within the scope of human salvation through the proclamation of the gospel. The hope for God's people and for creation is that Christ has secured redemption and will return to make things right once again.<sup>65</sup> Redemption for creation only begins to occur when it is set free from *sinful* human dominion. When the elect are revealed in glory freed from the slavery to decay, the non-rational creation under humankind is also restored to bring full glory to God.<sup>66</sup> The language that Paul uses to describe the coming revealing of resurrected bodies and creation's hope for this echoes Rom 1:18-23. In the first chapter of Romans, Paul explains that humans no longer see creation as a medium for bringing praise to God. Instead, man is "futile in their thinking" and given over to idol worship (Rom 1:23). Undoubtedly, one aspect of the hope that non-rational creation has is that when the sons of God are revealed, creation will once again be used "as a vehicle of true human glorification of God."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth*, 160.

<sup>64</sup> Jonathan Gibson, "For Whom Did Christ Die?: Particularism and Universalism in the Pauline Epistles" in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. by David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 311, 329. A definite yet to be realized redemption; contra a universal potential "re-creation."

<sup>65</sup> Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 723.

<sup>66</sup> Byrne, *Romans*, 258.

<sup>67</sup> Byrne, *Romans*, 258.

In the fullness of time after the once sinful elect have received their full adoption as sons with resurrected second bodies, God's creation will once again be totally under dominion of humans seeking to bring glory to God.<sup>68</sup> Since salvation in Christ by the Spirit includes freedom from the slavery of sin, we grasp that both the sinner and the creation will be completely freed from sin's enslaving curses. Thus, redemption entails a cosmic scope.<sup>69</sup> The time of futile striving will be completed once and for all, and the earth will be purged from the sin of man so that "the conditions of perfection obtaining in heaven will be found throughout God's gloriously rejuvenated universe."<sup>70</sup> Paul discusses the cosmic scope of salvation in order to encourage believers in what is to come in glory. The ever present reality of the hope for total redemption to come supplies the Christian with grounds for unshakeable hope. In fact, Herman Ridderbos goes as far as to say that "hope in the appearing of Christ is accordingly the distinguishing mark of the Christian life."<sup>71</sup>

Christians ought to place a supreme importance upon the eschatological realities to come. These realities of a redeemed creation and resurrected bodies are the final aspects of our adoption as sons. Therefore, in light of the presence of current suffering, the weight of eternal glory by far outweighs our current state (Rom 8:18). This is not to say that we reject the current world.<sup>72</sup> As we have seen, the current world matters and even eagerly waits for its own redemption through us. We should acknowledge the responsibilities that we have as dominion holders under God in both the sinful world now and the perfected age to come. As a result of the Fall, creation often finds itself abused by sinful man and even used as an instrument for sin.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth*, 160.

<sup>69</sup> Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth*, 160.

<sup>70</sup> Hendriksen, *Romans*, 269.

<sup>71</sup> Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 488.

<sup>72</sup> Vos, *Romans*, 109-110.

<sup>73</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, 1772.

Matthew Henry relates that “we have reason to pity the poor creatures that for our sin have become subject to vanity.”<sup>74</sup> Therefore, as previously mentioned, the reason that creation groans for the revealing of the elect is because the time of future glory will be when creation is once again restored to its own proper function of being an instrument for humans to bring glory to God.<sup>75</sup>

Vogt believes that “it is not at all obvious how the expectant waiting of the creation justifies the suffering of the present age that is not to be compared with the glory to come” if non-rational creation longs for man’s redemption.<sup>76</sup> His view, however, does not do justice to the glorious realities that a fully redeemed cosmos will bring. Because of the curse resulting from the Fall, nature works against humans causing natural disasters, disease, striving in toil, and the list could go on.<sup>77</sup> When Christ returns to reveal God’s elect, all of this futile striving, referred to by the writer of Ecclesiastes, will be done away with once and for all. The creation and human beings will be once again restored to their proper place in communion with God so that the lion and the lamb lie together in precious peace (Isa 11:6; 65:25).<sup>78</sup>

The redemption Paul discusses centers on an anthropological salvation which then also provides salvation for creation. Bolt declares that seeing the creation’s longing for redemption as related to man’s salvation undercuts Christ’s lordship over creation.<sup>79</sup> We want to affirm with absolute certainty that Christ is Lord over all (Matt 28:16-20). However, Bolt’s thesis forgets about the continuing role of humans as dominion holders under God. Bolt creates a false

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<sup>74</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, 1773.

<sup>75</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 434. See also Byrne, *Romans*, 258.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Bolt, “The Relation Between Creation and Redemption,” 41. Kittle also rejects constricting *ktisis* here to referring to only humanity. See Foerster, “κτιζω,” TDNT, E:1029.

<sup>77</sup> Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 511.

<sup>78</sup> Hendriksen, *Romans*, 269.

<sup>79</sup> Bolt, “The Relation Between Creation and Redemption,” 45. Fitzmyer too balks from understanding salvation from an anthropological point of view; however, one doubts that his reason for doing so is to protect the lordship of Christ. See Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 505-506.

dichotomy between Christ's lordship over creation and man's.<sup>80</sup> To say that creation's longing and groaning is related to man's salvation as being revealed as the sons of God is not to say that man has authority instead of Christ. Adam received dominion from God only to rebel against the Father. In Romans 8:18-25, Paul is alluding to Gen 3:17 and 5:29 which declare that "the ground is cursed" because of Adam's sin.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, it is ultimately God who subjected the non-rational creation under the curse (as previously stated),<sup>82</sup> but it is Adam (and subsequently all humans) who bear the responsibility for bringing about the punishment due for our sins.<sup>83</sup> We must not forget, the Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1:26-28 is upheld even after the Fall and then expanded in the Great Commission. Jesus has received all authority and has restored humankind to their proper place as vicegerent under God.<sup>84</sup> Even in the greater work of proclaiming the gospel, God intends for redemption to be brought about through the work of human messengers under the power of the Spirit. Romans 8:18-23, therefore, supports and upholds the larger Biblical plan for total redemption that the Triune God foreordained before the foundations of the world to redeem the totality of creation.

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<sup>80</sup> Schreiner too is careful to avoid placing any authority implied by the term *hypotaxanta* onto mankind or Adam. He states that "subjecting the world to frustration connotes control over the world, whereas Adam lost dominion over the world by succumbing to sin." See Schreiner, *Romans*, 434-435. However, Christ's coming as a man and living the perfect life that those in the first Adam could not thereby restores those in Christ to their proper place as vicegerents.

<sup>81</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 505. See also Charles E. Hill, "Revelation" in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*, ed. by Michael J. Kruger (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 535.

<sup>82</sup> See Herman Ridderbos, *Paul*, 92.

<sup>83</sup> Hendriksen, *Romans*, 267-268.

<sup>84</sup> Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*, 111. See also Dan G. McCartney, "Ecce Homo: The Coming of the Kingdom as the Restoration of Human Vicegerency," *WTJ* 56, (1994): 1-21.