

Ever have a knotted shoelace you had to set aside for the moment, but had to come back to? Or a pregnant, tangled passage in an Agatha Christie mystery you marked to revisit and unravel?

Well, a knotty situation we have with this section of Chapter 8 of Romans from the hand of St. Paul. So, first, scenery from Genesis, then onto groaning and adopted children.

Do you recall that marvelous passage from Genesis that begins with God, Adam and Eve in personal contact with each other in the garden of Eden..when things and people were perfect as God created them to be?..when Adam could hear our Father's footsteps rustling beside him?

St. Paul takes Genesis 3 quite literally. In his letter to the Romans, Paul follows his conviction that the sin of Adam affected not only relations between God and Man and Man to Man..or woman. Adam's sin had an effect on creation itself : “”For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the **creature** waiteth for the manifestations of the sons of God.””

The **creation** is what is meant by Paul's word , “creature”. Look around us: that creation now produces thistles and thorns and ever more storms along with fruit worth eating, although even strawberries are not what they were in '62, wouldn't you agree? : “”For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.””

The perpetual interaction of energy and matter, of coming into being and passing on to dust, of coming together and falling apart, of thirst for life and the necessity of dying.. This is the bondage of corruption. **Our** efforts to be rid of it are **vanity**.

Now He who has subjected the “creature” is God..and thence emerges **Hope**. All those things which are so manifestly observed by men are **hidden** in God: life and death, darkness and light, good and evil, nobility and depravity. IN GOD break forth the contrasts which mark the vanity of the creature. The suffering by which the whole created world of men and things is controlled is His, His action, His question, and His answer. Once our utter bondage is recognized and we see the nails we continue to hammer through his wrists, then we are free. Once perceive the frightfulness of corruption.. and there is hope of resurrection.

“Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God”

The “liberty of glory” for which the new woman or man, the child of God..-**he that I am not yet**-waits, with groaning and yet blessing, is what is promised; and in this **promise** even the body, even man-**he that I am**-even the **created** world, SHARE. For to me, the child of God, it is precisely a blessed world, the world of creation and of the Life that has been promised. Paul’s point is that if men are freed, the creation must be freed also. If men are one with another, there must be in the world no “this vs. that”, no growth vs decay, no predator vs. prey. When the sons of God shall appear, because of their appearing by Jesus’ resurrection, Nature.. which never leaps..makes one leap, and that a leap for joy; for then it knows that at last and for the first time, it has attained its goal.

What then do we know? We know that we have cause to be dumb before God. We know that when we speak of the glory of God, we speak of a future which can never be in time. For we know that what we know and shall know for a little while longer is a thing groaning and travailing in pain, a thing wrenched from the garden, adrift from its origin, separated from the absolute by an abyss. We know that every created temporal thing-of uncreated, infinite things we have no knowledge-bears its **eternal** existence in itself as unborn, eternal future, and seeks to give it that birth which can never take place in time. We know that everywhere this hope-full distress and this distress-full hope are linked.

Who, then, are we? And who am I? Well, I am a man who possesses the first fruits of the spirit as you do, who is invisibly redeemed by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, who is nudged out of slumber by the Spirit, occasionally seized by the Holy Ghost for an insight, driven to joyous distraction to please my fatherly God..a free man..a child of God. Were this not so, how could I cry, “Abba, Father!”? How could I hear the groaning of the travailing creature?

The new man, the inheritor of the Father’s world, has been **born**. But I..You..the temporal and corporal man of this world, are NOT the new **man** God intends for you to be to Him. My final possibility..and yours..is to GROAN..and to await the promise. We are citizens of the coming order!

About “adoption”

For a four year old foster child, his adoption into the arms of a loving father makes his becoming who he was meant to be more likely. He perhaps comes from a place of hurt or abuse, has learned the art of disobedience, or

has such resentment towards his natural parents, that his face resembles that of Adam being expelled from the garden in Masaccio's Expulsion from Eden.

A four year old boy entering his new home has not the slightest idea of what his new father and mother have desired for him, what vistas shall open and what freedoms a father or mother will make available to him, how many times they will save him from himself...He has no idea of the human love stored up to be lavished on him, no idea of what becoming more perfect with discipline is like from the hand of a patient father...He has no inkling of the promise his parents see in him and have in store for him..such underserved gifts are also **for us** but unthinkably, immeasurably, ineffably greater when we attempt analogizing to our eternal home..when **God is Father**. But the analogizing simply breaks down.. the scale of love of which we now attempt to speak is too grand. We who are sinners simply find ourselves at a loss for words for what awaits us. Out of divine love, our Father's promise is our being made perfect so that we can enjoy his company at long last.

But a **promising** life for a four year old is not the **perfect** one which awaits him on Jordan's far shore. As he grows, he will grow as well into the "groaning" of all created things.. and learn he **of himself** is not free to be all he was meant to be. He will inevitably join his groans to those of the creaturely chorus.

For a Christian woman of four-score years, brighter light from heaven shines on the word "adoption".The Greek word for adoption comes from the word for"son", or "huios" attached to the word, "thesis", meaning "placement". It means that she who believes in God has been given the full privileges of kinship in God's family beginning with her baptism. Furthermore, at the same time, God places the spirit of His Son into the organ

of life, her heart, so that she become in effect, His natural born child. As His natural born children we are clearly not adopted in the sense the word now conveys. We are genuinely **iu** by God.

“Adoption’ from Paul’s lips means **the redemption of the body**, that is, the complete identification between Christ and us of which I spoke earlier. The resurrection of the dead is, in this present time and place, a matter of faith only. And THIS is adoption: She is purified, renewed, transformed and someday transfigured, made a participant of the divine nature and the divine life, with God..with Him in her and she in Him. Our ability to pronounce such wonders means that God is our Father.