

# “THE GLORY WHICH SHALL BE REVEALED IN US”

[ROMANS 8:18–25]

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“If we were to compare Holy Scripture with a ring, in my opinion Paul’s Epistle to the Romans would be the pearl, whose brightest sparkling point is reached in the eighth chapter.” In this unique, but striking way Philipp Jakob Spener expressed his high regard for the eighth chapter of Romans, a portion of which is the subject of our present study. One hundred years before, Luther had called this chapter the masterpiece of the New Testament. In this chapter of Romans the Christian’s faith reaches its grandest heights. Here is unsurpassed comfort for the Christian who, in his earnest but often seemingly futile struggle and striving against the sin in him, is moved to exclaim with Paul: “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (7:24). The chapter opens with the joyful and encouraging announcement: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (v. 1). In words based on our eternal election in Christ, the chapter closes with the most reassuring and comforting message that we, still mortal and struggling children of God, could ever wish to hear: “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (vv. 38, 39).

A climax in this chapter is reached in the section before us, which speaks of our Christian hope of future glory. Actually Paul had introduced this subject in the previous section, where, speaking of our Spirit-initiated and Spirit-confirmed sonship with God, he added: “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (v. 17). Lest, however, his readers forget, Paul reminds them that their union with Christ and His inheritance presupposes also a being united with Him here in His suffering: “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (v. 17). It is to get them to see this suffering in its proper perspective and to keep them from becoming impatient and frustrated under it that Paul expands as he does in what now follows. The section contains a verse, verse 21, about which there has been considerable controversy and which may in part have prompted this assignment. While we shall not lightly pass over it, we dare not let our study and discussion of it so occupy our attention as to lose out on the precious message this paragraph has for us. We might summarize the content of this section:

## **The Consolation in Christ That Lifts Us up Above All the Tribulations of this Life.**

Verse 18.

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

*For I am of the considered opinion that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be (or, destined, certain to be) revealed in us (lit., to us).*

With γὰρ Paul introduces this section as a further explanation of what he has just said about the Christian being joined together with Christ in His suffering as well as His glory. Thus the word παθήματα without question at least includes the cross the Christian endures because of his faith and his confession of Christ before men. However, there is no reason why we should restrict τὰ παθήματα to the Christian’s cross and so to exclude suffering in general, which the Christian has in common with all men, some

of it brought about by his own fault. This would also seem to be indicated by the modifying phrase τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ, “of the now time,” all the sufferings endured in this life. With the word ἄξια Paul sets the sufferings of this life over against the glory which awaits the Christian. The word ἄξιος, frequently translated “worthy,” seems to be associated with the idea of weight. Thayer’s Lexicon shows it to be derived from ἄγω with the meaning “drawing down the scale.” The picture then is this: Put all the sufferings of this present time on one side of the scale and our future glory on the other, and the sufferings would not be able to draw down the scale. In a similar way Paul speaks of our sufferings in II Corinthians 4:17: “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding weight (here he uses βάρος) of glory.” Whether or not we find in ἄξια the idea of weight, Paul in our verse is making a comparison and with it telling us that by comparison with (πρός) the glory awaiting us our sufferings here and now are not worth considering. How can they be when we remember that we will be joined with Christ in His glory, will, as Paul stated earlier in this letter (5:2), be “sharing the glory of God” (RSV)?

There is some question among scholars as to how to render the periphrastic future participle (μέλλουσαν with Inf. Aor. Pass. ἀποκαλυφθῆναι), modifying δόξαν, “glory.” Does it here express certainty, as the Sanday-Headlam (S-H) Commentary renders it: “Is destined to, is certain to” be revealed? Or, does it have the force of a punctiliar future pointing to one great future act, as the Robertson Grammar takes it? The sense then would be: Though this glory will endure forever, though it already is ours, the actual revelation of it for all to see will take place on that great day of Christ’s return (I John 3:2). No doubt both views are supported by usage and both fit well into Paul’s thought. By what has been said we have practically stated our understanding of the phrase εἰς ἡμᾶς. It can hardly mean merely “to us,” for then the glory to be revealed would be God’s glory. The entire context shows that more is meant. About as good a rendering of it as any is that of the S-H Commentary: “to reach and include us in its radiance.”

What Paul has told us in this verse was by no means based on a snap judgment on his part. That is why I translated λογίζομαι “I am of the considered opinion.” Certainly Paul could talk when it came to sufferings and affliction. For even up to the time of writing this letter he had endured many things at the hands of the enemies of Christ and His Gospel. But he had also been privileged to receive a foretaste of the glory of heaven (II Cor. 12). His words, moreover, are the inspired words of God and so merit our unqualified acceptance. Surely we all have need often to ponder them. We are so apt to look too hard at our sufferings and afflictions, “at the things which are seen,” as Paul calls them (II Cor. 4:18), and when we do, we so easily blow them up out of proportion. Instead we need and ought to keep our eyes riveted on the “things which are not seen,” the eternal glory awaiting us. This, Paul assures us also in the verse before us, will make our present afflictions pale into insignificance.

It is just this that Paul purposes with the words which follow, introduced by another γὰρ, this time probably more causal than explanatory.

Verse 19.

ἡ γὰρ ἀποκαρδοκία τῆς κτίσεως τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεκδέχεται.

*For the eagerly watching Creation (lit., the eager watching of the Creation) is patiently waiting for the revelation of the sons of God.*

In support of what he had said, he introduces, probably much to our surprise, the Creation, ἡ κτίσις. Whom or what does Paul mean with the κτίσις? Hardly the whole creation or the rational creation. This would include the children of God, which however it cannot since the κτίσις is placed over against them. Or—it would include the unbelievers, of whom Paul certainly would not say what he does of the κτίσις, that it was subjected “unto hope” (v. 20). κτίσις then can only refer to the irrational creation, which Paul is here personifying and to which, speaking rhetorically, he is ascribing experiences peculiar to man.

The word ἀποκαραδοκία (used only by Paul, here and Phil. 1:20) is most interesting. Literally it means watching with the head (κάρα) erect or outstretched, as when one is waiting for someone or something with eagerness and suspense. Though ἀποκαραδοκία is a noun followed by the genitive of κτίσις, which is doing the watching, we may well render it as a participle modifier and translate “the eagerly watching Creation.” The subject ἀποκαραδοκία is followed by an equally descriptive and expressive compound verb ἀπεκδέχεται, which comes very close in meaning to ἀποκαραδοκία, “to wait eagerly” (German *abwarten*), and thus helps to picture the intensesness of the watching of the Creation. And what is it so eagerly watching and waiting for? τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ θεοῦ, “the revelation of the sons of God,” the day when it will be visibly and publicly demonstrated that they are the sons of God, when Jesus will set them on His right hand and welcome them with: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34).

Verses 20, 21.

τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἢ κτίσις ὑπετάγη, οὐχ ἑκοῦσα, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα, ἐφ’ ἐλπίδι διότι καὶ αὐτὴ ἢ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ.

*For to futility (frustration) the Creation was subjected, not willingly (of its own will), but because of Him who subjected it unto (for) hope;  
Because (or, that) the Creation itself shall be freed from the slavery of (or, to) corruption into the glorious liberty (lit., the liberty of the glory) of the children of God.*

Why should the Creation be so interested in and so eagerly look forward to the revelation of the sons of God? Paul answers this in the next two verses, again introduced by a causal γὰρ. The simple answer is, that the Creation is very much involved. To begin with, Paul tells us: τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἢ κτίσις ὑπετάγη, “the Creation was subjected to futility.” ματαιότης can mean emptiness, and in this sense Paul uses the adjective μάταιος of our faith (I Cor. 15:17); it would be emptied of worthwhile content if Christ had not been raised. It is also used in a closely related meaning of purposelessness, futility, and therefore frustration, which fits best in our verse. Creation has been subjected to a service that is contrary to its original purpose, to glorify God, and is for that reason frustrating. What this frustrating service is, Paul defines more explicitly in verse 21, where he speaks of the Creation’s release ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς, “from the slavery of corruption.” It matters little if we take the genitive τῆς φθορᾶς as appositional, denoting the nature of the slavery, or as objective, denoting that to which Creation is enslaved. The key word is φθορᾶς. Is it to be understood in the physical or ethical, moral sense? Instances of its use in the ethical, moral sense are frequent in the New Testament. Peter speaks of fleeing “the corruption (φθορᾶς) that is in the world through lust” (II Pet. 1:4); of those who walk in the flesh, that they “shall utterly perish in their own corruption” (φθορά, II Pet. 2:12). In the same chapter he calls these “the servants of corruption” (φθορᾶς, 2:19). Also the cognate verb φθείρω is used in this sense, by Paul in I Corinthians 15:33, where he says that “evil communications (companionships) corrupt (φθείρουσιν) good manners (morals),” and in Ephesians 4:22, where he tells us to put off the old man “which is corrupt (φθειρόμενον) according to the deceitful lusts.” Corruption in the physical sense is obviously the meaning in Colossians 2:22, where speaking of things forbidden by the legalists, Paul adds “which all are to perish (εἰς φθορὰν) with the using.” This may also be the meaning in I Corinthians 15:42, where speaking of the resurrection of the dead, Paul says: “It is sown in corruption,” though here the idea of ethical, moral corruption might at least be included. Both meanings would seem to fit in our passage. Almost all commentators understand the word in the sense of physical corruption or decay, in which case the genitive generally is considered to be appositional: a slavery which consists in corruption. Luther takes the other view. As quoted in

Pieper's Dogmatics he says: It is "subject to vanity, that is, to the devil and the wicked world." Eberle has these words of Luther on our verse: "What then is this groaning and yearning of the creatures? It is not this, that the leaves wither each year and the fruits fall off and decay; for this is our God's order of creation, that each year new fruits are to grow; rather is it this, that Creation is so altogether unwillingly subject to the ungodly, or, as St. Paul calls it, subjected to futility." Luther apparently equates futility with the wicked. For he also writes: "Better, however, is it, to take futility to refer to man, as also Psalm 39 (39:5) states: 'Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.'" In this case the genitive φθορᾶς would be objective, designating that to which the Creation is enslaved. The meaning, "corrupt use," may well be intended here since this δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς set in when the κτίσις was subjected to ματαιότητι.

Paul's addition, οὐχ ἐκούσα, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα, "not willingly (of its own will), but because of Him who subjected it," would also seem to support this view. The Creation was not at fault for its being subjected to this frustrating service of corruption, but man by his fall into sin. However, while man was at fault, Paul very likely is not referring to man, but to God when he adds "because of Him who subjected it." Paul might well have had in mind God's words to Adam after the fall: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow thou shalt eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee" (Gen. 3:17).

This subjection to futility and corruption was never intended by God to go on forever. That is why Paul closes verse 20 with the phrase ἐφ' ἐλπίδι, "for," or, "unto hope." Just as Paul had ascribed to Creation ἀποκαρδοκία and ἀπεκδέχεται, so now he ascribes to it the ability to hope.

What that hope is Paul states in verse 21. Before we, however, get into the substance of the verse, we need to ask, which of the two variants for the first word is to be preferred: διότι, which would introduce the reason for the hope, or ὅτι, which would give the object or content of the hope. The Nestle text (the 1953 edition) still retains the first, the new Bible Societies edition of 1966 has the second, though it can give it no better rating than a C. No matter which reading we follow, in either case the verse expresses the object of Creation's hope, which can at the same time be looked upon as the reason for its hoping.

Just what is the Creation here spoken of hoping for? The first part of the verse offers no problem: αὐτῇ ἢ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς, "the Creation itself shall be set free from the slavery of corruption." Here is the reason why the Creation longingly and eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God: at that time its own slavery to corruption shall come to an end. The problem in this verse lies in what follows: εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ, specifically in the preposition εἰς. The most natural way to render it would be as the King James Version does, with "into," the idea then being that Creation itself will somehow share in the glorious liberty (lit. "the liberty of the glory") of the children of God. Though using a variety of expressions, this is the understanding conveyed by practically all translations. Here are some: Luther, *zu der herrlichen Freiheit* ("to the glorious liberty"); RSV (also followed by Nygren), "and obtain the glorious liberty"; Phillips, "and have its share in"; NEB, "and enter upon"; TEV, "share"; Menge, *zur Teilnahme an der Freiheit*. Most commentators also express themselves in accord with this view. Luther writes: "Let the learned explain this passage as they understand it. I take it to mean not that the creature will cease to exist absolutely, but that it will no longer be subject to vanity (*nicht mehr vergänglich sein wird*), for it will appear in glory." Luther goes on: "For now the creature serves, to its own harm, the wicked, for it is subject to their abuse. But then, delivered from corruption, it will serve the children of God in glory." Stoeckhardt writes: "And the creature will share in the liberty and glory of God's children. As it now bears the disgrace and curse of sinful men, so it will then be glorified together with perfect, glorified men. All traces of death and perishableness will be removed. The creature will be revealed as a creature of God. It will live and be active according to its own inclination, according to its own nature in the service of God, its Creator, and will reflect more purely and more beautifully than in the beginning His honor and glory. This great change, which the creature will experience, implies the continuation of the same beyond the end of the world." This view is followed by many others: Lenski, John Murray, Hodge, Dr. M. Franzmann, to name some of them. But by no means all go along with

this. Dr. William Arndt in his Romans notes (p. 57) says: “That view (that all creatures will become partakers in some way of the glories of heaven) cannot be substantiated from any part of the Holy Scriptures, and the words of Paul can be given a different translation.” Farther on he says: “Paul is speaking of the liberty which is ushered in as it were by the glory of the children of God. When the sons of God enter into glory, the creation will enter into the state of liberty.... But what is the liberty that Paul is speaking of? It is simply liberty from the bondage in which all creation now finds itself. It is true that this liberty will be caused by annihilation, but at any rate the bondage will cease.” Dr. Hoenecke in his Dogmatics (IV, p. 344), without specifically commenting on our verse (though he lists it among others), writes about the destruction of the world: “The essence of this destruction will not only be a change of the present form of the world, not only *transformatio*, or *qualitatum alternatio*, but what the word in its fullest sense designates, *substantiae abolitio* and *totalis annihilatio*.” In fact, he lists the other view under his antitheses (p. 348f.). And he claims to have Luther on his side in a quotation (p. 347) from a sermon on the Gospel for the second Sunday in Advent. “Thus on the last day heaven and earth with all its elements, and all things everywhere, together with the bodies of all men, will be dissolved and pulverized, so that nothing but fire remains anywhere. And presently again most beautifully created anew, so that our bodies will shine brightly as the sun and seven times more brightly than it now is. Of this II Peter 3:10 speaks.” But this statement of Luther hardly seems to support Dr. Hoenecke’s view. Gerhard, too, as quoted by Pieper takes the view of “a destruction according to the substance as corresponding more fully to the statements of Scripture.” But he adds: “We do not defend our opinion of the destruction of the world according to its substance as an article of faith, but we assert that this opinion is more in conformity with the emphatic statements of Scripture concerning the end of the world. Hence we do not rashly accuse those of heresy who are of the opposite opinion and describe the destruction of the world as a transformation. Many therefore would rather reserve judgment in this question and leave this matter to future experience than take a definite stand now.” Our own Prof. John Meyer in his dogmatics notes (page 121f.) expresses himself in favor of the restoration idea: “On Judgment Day the present universe will be destroyed, to give place to a new heaven and earth. a) The present world is under the curse. b) Hence it will disappear:—1) In a mighty catastrophe (Here he includes II Pet. 3:10–12).—2) This will hardly cause a material annihilation.—3) More likely a restoration will take place. (Here he gives as references I Cor. 7:31; Matt. 19:28; and our verse, Rom. 8:21). c) We expect a new heaven and a new earth.” You may have noticed that Prof. Meyer uses the word “hardly” when speaking of annihilation, and “more likely” when speaking of a restoration. Thus, as Gerhard, he did not want to bind anyone’s conscience to his view nor did he want anyone to bind him to the other view. What else can we say in the matter? It is hard to get away from the understanding of our verse as speaking of the Creation’s somehow sharing in the glorious liberty of the children of God. At the same time, Peter’s words seem to support the idea of an annihilation in substance. Stoeckhardt’s words on this deserve consideration: “Yet neither does this (his view of our verse) contradict such statements of Scripture as II Peter 3:1–12. There we are only taught that the present state of the world will perish in the fire. ‘The perishing of the world is the perishing of its form (I Cor. 7:31), on which its transformation is conditioned.’ Meyer. ‘Not the *κόσμος*, but the *σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου*.’ Philippi. Out of the world conflagration, out of the atoms, into which heaven and earth will then have dissolved themselves, the Creation will emerge newly rejuvenated, glorified, the new earth and the new heaven will emerge, in which dwelleth righteousness. II Peter 3:13.”

Verse 22.

οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν.

*For we know that the whole Creation is groaning and suffering birthpains until now.*

Whichever understanding of verse 21 we might favor, the thought expressed in verse 22 fits into the picture. Paul says: πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν, “the whole Creation is groaning and suffering birthpains together until now.” This verse presents no particular problems. It merely substantiates

(γὰρ) what has been said, especially the eager waiting of the Creation for the revelation of the sons of God and its own liberation. By using *πᾶσα* Paul hardly means to include more than with the plain *κτίσις*, surely not now also man, or the Christian, for *πᾶσα ἢ κτίσις* is contrasted to *ἡμεῖς*. *πᾶσα* rather shows that every part of creation is affected. This is very likely also the reason for the prefix *συν-* before the two verbs, which again hardly means “together with the Christians,” of whom Paul comes to speak and say the same things in the next verse. He is no doubt rather thinking of all the things that make up the Creation, all of which join together in this eager watching and waiting. Philippi, quoted by Murray, stated it well: “The entire creation, as it were, sets up a grand symphony of sighs.” The verbs themselves picture this watching and waiting as so intense that Paul can speak of it as a groaning, yes, as a pain like that of a woman in childbirth. Might this latter verb give support to the view that out of the great holocaust will come forth the new heaven and the new earth? Luther comments: “She is suffering birthpains, i.e., she is anxiously straining for the end of her corruption, in order to give birth to glory.” But how can Paul, how can we (for he includes us) be so positive of all this groaning and travailing of Creation as to say: *οἴδαμεν*, “we know”? We note that Paul does not say *γινώσκουμεν*, but *οἴδαμεν*. We know this, not from personal experience, but from our observation of what is going on about us, better still, from the revelation of God, such as given us here through the inspired words of the Apostle.

Verse 23.

οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἔχοντες ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν  
υἰοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι, τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν.

*But not only (the Creation), but also we ourselves who have the certification of the Spirit,  
also we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly awaiting our sonship, the redemption of our  
body.*

With verse 23 Paul returns to what he began in verse 17 and 18, the point he was aiming at also in what he said about the Creation. And with his *οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ*, “not only (the Creation), but also we ourselves,” he is not merely putting us on the same level, into the same class with the Creation. It is rather as if he said: “If already Creation, how much more we.” This is strongly suggested by the participial modifier of the subject “we”: *τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἔχοντες*, “who have the certification of the Spirit.” There appears to be no special reason for taking this clause in the concessive sense, as some do: “Although we have the certification of the Spirit, yet we groan.” Viewed in the light of the other participial clause in the sentence, *υἰοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι*, “awaiting the sonship,” it seems better to understand it in the causal sense: “Because we now have the certification of the Spirit, we groan, eagerly looking forward to our sonship.” The word *ἀπαρχή* is generally rendered “firstfruit,” and the question arises: What kind of genitive is *τοῦ πνεύματος*. It can hardly be a partitive genitive, for then it would mean that we now have only part of the Spirit, and the Scriptures never speak in that way. It could be intended as a subjective genitive, in which case the thought would be that the Holy Spirit has given us the firstfruit, hope, now, and the realization will surely follow. The most likely is, that Paul intended it as an exegetical or appositional genitive: God has given us the Holy Ghost as firstfruit, and so our hope cannot fail of fulfillment. This would coincide well with II Corinthians 1:22, where God is spoken of as having given us the Holy Spirit as *ἀρραβῶνα*, “down payment or pledge,” in our hearts. The same understanding of the genitive would apply if we render the word *ἀπαρχή* as “certification.” I found this meaning for the word *ἀπαρχή* in an article by C. Clarke Oke, in the periodical *Interpretation* of October 1957 (p. 455–460). He refers to the discovery of the use of the word in *papyri* in the sense of “certification,” a technical term for the birth certificate of a free person. With this in mind he translates our verse: “We know that the whole creation has been groaning and travailing in unison until the present; and not only nature but we ourselves also since we possess the certification of the Spirit within ourselves, as we eagerly await full adoption, the

redemption of our bodies.” Obviously this meaning of the word ἀπαρχή fits well and could be used in translating.

But what are we waiting for so eagerly, especially since we have the Holy Spirit as certification or firstfruit? Most translators and commentators take υἰοθεσίαν as object of ἀπεκδεχόμενοι and the remaining words of the sentence as apposition to this object. Luther connects υἰοθεσίαν as object to στενάζομεν. Except for the fact that στενάζω is an intransitive verb and therefore could not have an object, Luther’s rendering of this part of the verse makes good reading. It is better, however, to follow the other construction. In either case we might ask: Why speak of eagerly awaiting our sonship? Don’t we have it now? Certainly, and so John can say: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God” (I John 3:2). But also John adds: “And it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” What we are waiting for is the full consummation of our sonship. What is still lacking is stated in the apposition: τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν, “the redemption of our body.” Obviously Paul has in mind something that is to take place in the future, at Christ’s return on the last Day. He uses the same word “redemption,” most likely also with reference to something we are still to experience, in I Corinthians 1:30, where he says Christ “of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Has he in mind our resurrection? Yes, but undoubtedly the especially wonderful feature of our resurrection which he speaks about at length in I Corinthians 15:42–44: “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” In Philippians 3:21 he says the same thing in these words: “Who (Christ) shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” The really wonderful thing about our resurrection, which is wonderful in itself, is that our resurrection bodies will be perfect again, not merely physically, but spiritually, completely minus the sinful σὰρξ or flesh. No wonder Paul can say of us more so even than of the Creation: στενάζομεν, “we continually groan” in this life filled with sorrow and affliction, not because we are not willing to bear our afflictions, but because we know from God’s Word what is in store for us.

Lest, however, we become impatient through it all, Paul continues:

Verses 24, 25.

τῇ γὰρ ἐλπίδι ἐσώθημεν· ἐλπίς δὲ βλεπομένη οὐκ ἔστιν ἐλπίς· ὁ γὰρ βλέπει τίς, τί καὶ ἐλπίζει; εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ βλέπομεν ἐλπίζομεν, δι’ ὑπομονῆς ἀπεκδεχόμεθα.

*For unto hope were we saved; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a person sees, why also hope for it (or, who hopes for what he sees);  
but if we hope for what we do not see, we are waiting for it with patience.*

It seems best to take the dative τῇ ἐλπίδι as dative of destination (also called *dativus commodi*) rather than as dative of means. Paul is hardly saying, We were saved by hoping (KJ has “by hope”), but rather, We were saved for hope. In other words, when we were saved, we were placed into a state of hope. This seems to be Luther’s understanding of Paul’s words, when he translates: “For we are indeed saved, yet in hope” (*Denn wir sind wohl selig, doch in der Hoffnung*). Thus Paul evidently is also thinking of hope in Ephesians 4:4, where he speaks of our having been called ἐν μιᾷ ἐλπίδι τῆς κλήσεως ὑμῶν, “in one hope of your calling,” that is, through our calling we have been placed into a state which is characterized by hope. We are in possession of salvation now, but we have it in the form of hope. For this reason Paul adds: ἐλπίς δὲ βλεπομένη οὐκ ἔστιν ἐλπίς, “but hope that is seen is not hope,” and immediately continues, ὁ γὰρ βλέπει τίς, τί καὶ ἐλπίζει, “for what a person sees, why also hope for it?” The variant reading, which omits the τί καὶ and is adopted by the Bible Societies edition with a C rating, “for who hopes for what he sees?”, does not alter the thought. It is an obvious truth: Once a person comes to see what he has been hoping for, there can be no more talk of hope. But we have not yet reached that stage. In II Corinthians 5:7 Paul writes: “We walk by faith, not by sight.” And so he closes our

section by saying: *εἰ δὲ δὲ οὐ βλέπομεν ἐλπίζομεν, δι' ὑπομονῆς ἀπεκδεχόμεθα*, “but if we hope for what we do not see, we are waiting for it with patience.” With the conditional clause Paul is by no means calling into question what he is saying, but is rather presenting the situation as it obtains and will continue to obtain as long as we are in our present bodies here on this earth: We don’t as yet see the great glory that is ours as children of God, but must content ourselves with looking forward to it. That being the case, we will be patient, even though troubled on every side with sorrow, grief or pain, yes, patient, yet at the same time comforted and strengthened by the fact that we can look forward with confidence and unfailing hope to the day when all our sorrows will be turned into joy, when our hoping will be exchanged for seeing, when we will no longer walk by faith, but by sight, when we will exchange our cross for a crown, yes, when without even the slightest interruption we will to all eternity participate in the glory with which all the sufferings of this present time cannot begin to be compared. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!”