

Bible Study of Romans
Romans 8:16-23

In the previous verses we have read precious truths God is speaking through Paul to the believers in all ages. In summary, the message in these verses is that believers are led by the Spirit and therefore are not slaves but children. Being adopted as children, they are no longer to be oppressed with fear as they were when they lived in paganism or in Judaism or even more, when they came under the conviction of the law. As fruit of the Spirit's indwelling, the dread that once filled them is now taken away as they are filled with a sense of freedom and confidence as they approach God as their Father. 'Abba' is the word all children use to address their father and therefore points to a childlike openness.

When Paul mentioned 'adoption' we need to bear in mind that he is referring to it as in the Roman culture instead of our Western practice. In our culture parents who cannot have children will adopt children that are parentless. In the Roman culture, however, a rich man would adopt a prospective 'son' to whom he would all his property as well as his name. Naturally, such a rich man would look for the best of the 'sons' as he would bequeath all his property to him.

God's adoption practice is of a completely different nature. He has adopted 'lost and hopeless sinners' who have indicated by their life journey to most unreliable and unpromising.

Vs. 16

1. Does this verse speak about one or two witnesses? Compare Romans 2:15 and 9:1.

2. What do the witnesses witness about?

3. How does the Spirit bear witness with the spirit of the believers regarding his or her adoption? What is the purpose of the witness bearing?

4. Struggles with the assurance of one's salvation are not uncommon. What may make a child of God doubt his or her adoption?

Vs. 17

5. What are Paul's logical conclusions drawn from the above adoption?

6. Let's mediate on this promised inheritance Scripturally. What is it and how does it differ from an earthly inheritance?

7. Is the second half of vs. 17 Paul refers to the sufferings that true Christians endure, either in the opposition of a hostile world or in the afflictions God leads them through. This reality appears to stand in contradiction with the comfort of being adopted as sons and daughters.
 - a. What are the purposes of God in allowing His people to suffer?

 - b. What is meant with 'suffering with Him' since Christ is now above all suffering?

 - c. What is the consolation in all such sufferings with and for Christ? Collect some Scriptural promises to support this comforting expectation.

Vs. 18:

8. *I reckon that ...* must be understood as 'I am firmly convinced.' Paul is therefore convinced that all our sufferings on this earth are not worthy to be compared with the glory that each saint will possess hereafter. Ponder how the two compare over against each other and what would make him convinced the future glory will silence the present groans?
9. What 'sufferings in the present time' is Paul thinking of?
10. What are the glories Paul is thinking of?
11. What was Paul's (Spirit's) purpose in this consideration?

Vs. 19-22

12. In these verses Paul shed light upon the real nature of our surrounding world. Though still so pretty to our eyes, it obviously is not as beautiful or comfortable as we think it is.
 - a. Who are the 'creatures' that are filled with an earnest expectation in vs. 19?
 - b. What are these creatures waiting for?
 - c. What is the significance of Paul's words that the whole creation 'groans and travails in pain'?
 - d. In the light of the sufferings of the creation, what is our Christian duty towards caring for the creation? Are we to sharpen our Christian sense of responsibility in caring for the quality of our surrounding world?

Vs. 23

13. How does this verse fit within the subject of 'assurance'?
14. What is meant here with 'adoption?' Is this future or past?
15. Define 'waiting' Biblically. Collect some other verses to prove that this waiting is actually an exercise of saving faith.
16. Are we believers waiting eagerly or too satisfied where we are at present?