

**HANG IN THERE, YA'ALL.** In this session, Paul begins to let up on the mind-numbing comparisons and to apply his theology to life's experiences. You'll discover a wonderful definition of the Good News in this session. You'll even find a little discourse of the experience of evil. Keep stretching! Pastor Bill

**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
IHOP BIBLE STUDY**

**# 13 Romans 8: 18 - 27, "Spirit Help: In weakness" -- with commentary**

**The purpose of the Letter to the Romans is to develop a "Model for Living the Awakened/Transformed Life." Today's study is the 13th of 27 lessons.**

**According to our Study Chart** we are studying the 3rd section of "Embrace The Work of Christ and the Spirit" This is one of seven sessions under the rubric of "Spirit Help." This is the first session in this series. Remember, the focus of the Book of Romans is to provide us "The Model For Living The Awakened/Transformed Life."

**KEEP YOUR "GUT TRIP ANALYSIS CARD" IN YOUR BIBLE FOR REFERENCE!**

**BACKGROUND:**

Looking at the Romans' chart it is apparent that Paul makes a profound shift at this point. Until now the topic is Sin and The Law and our personal relationship to these experiences. One commentary observed that in these verses Paul never directly mentions Sin or The Law.

In a stunning move, Paul associates our personal situation with the whole of creation (the cosmological). The natural world is stuck in the same way the human world is stuck. Paul makes the point here that the entire universe is linked to the same future as to the believers.

In the commentary written by *The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, the following point is made:

As it [creation] shares in the penalty of corruption brought about by sin, so also will it share in the benefits of redemption and future glory that comprise the ultimate liberation of God's people ([Romans 8:19-22](#)). After patient endurance in steadfast expectation, the full harvest of the Spirit's presence will be realized. On earth believers enjoy the firstfruits, i.e., the Spirit, as a guarantee of the total liberation of their **bodies** from the influence of the rebellious old self ([Romans 8:23](#)). (*The word "bodies" is highlighted for emphasis. The Abingdon One-Volume Commentary on the Bible notes that the Greek word at this point is singular: body. The author then makes the point that the physical body is not implied. Rather, it is the "personal" or the "self" that is guaranteed liberation. At some earlier points, we have used the word "personality" to note this profound change. p. 784.*)

**WS: To begin the IHOP Bible Study I told two stories to set the context for the adoption material in today's study, and to re-ground the elusive experience of the Good News.**

**THE LOST COIN:** I'll not retell the whole story, but it is a parable I wrote to illustrate how we were created as perfect "elements," even with our own atomic number so that we could be clearly recognized by Mr. Most Important. Having been

misled by Tem-Ter, this element is re-created into an Al-Loyite. Now, Mr. Most Important can't recognize his elements. Finally, the element-Al-Loyite is discovered in the Pawn Shop and redeemed through the efforts of the son of Mr. Most Important.

The three points to remember: 1) We are created as sons and daughters of God This is our intended purpose. 2) Life mixes us into that which we were not created to be. 3) Even unrecognizable, we are adopted as sons and daughters of God.

(Copies are available by request to [wsalmon@cox.net](mailto:wsalmon@cox.net).)

**THE BUS STOP STORY:** An individual moves to a new town to look for work. Outside his apartment is a bus sign that reports, "Bus Stops Every 15 Minutes." In the morning, the man stands by the bus stop for 15 minutes, and then another 15 minutes. A nearby neighbor, comes up and asks the individual, "Are you waiting for the bus?" The individual replies, "Yes, I am." The neighbor then reports, "Well I've got GOOD NEWS for you. The bus doesn't stop here anymore."

The question is, "How is this Good News.?"

The conclusion is, now the individual can stop waiting for the bus and start walking.

It is apparent that all of us live with "wish dreams." We want a Lone Ranger experience. That is, we want someone to ride into our lives on a white horse, shoot all of our problems, leave a silver bullet symbol, and ride away into the sunset singing, "Heigh Ho Silver. Away!"

Theologically, this is called the "Savior Syndrom." However, listen to this GOOD NEWS!

**The one who comes to tell you there is no Lone Ranger, is the Lone Ranger!** This is worth repeating: The one who comes to tell you there is no Lone Ranger, is the Lone Ranger!

The authentic Savior is the one that holds us against reality and does not allow us a "wish dream."

**EVIL:** At this point, the IHOPers raised the question about evil as being bad things that happen to us. NOT SO! In Gut Trip Analysis, evil is the "wish dream;" it is the lie. Reality is never evil. Reality is simply and always The Way Life Is (TWLI). **Pain is never a lie;** it is reality. Evil is the message that we are victims to our circumstances.

The Good News of Jesus Christ is that we face the reality of having to die to our illusions and wish dreams. This is the activity of the **Cross**. When we do this, we face in our reality the alternatives of choosing to be victims or victors. It is the **resurrection** that demonstrates victory!

**GROUND THESE WORDS (Use a commentary, if necessary)**

1) Vs. 21 -- **bondage to decay:**

**WS:** Everything is fated to die.

2) Vs. 21b -- **the freedom of the children of God.**

**WS:** Our freedom is to live free from angst. As we learn to surrender to God everything we are and have, then we are no longer victims but victors.

3) Vs. 23 -- **firstfruits of the Spirit:**

**WS:** The harvest of Awakening. The Spirit always represents awakening and our freedom to choose.

4) Vs. 23 -- **For what does the Spirit “groan inwardly?”**

**WS:** The Spirit always wants for us to live the Good News that the pain/joy of reality is not our enemy. Reality is where we experience God. God can not be experienced in a wish dream. This is why our surrender to God is called Good News.

5) Vs. 23 -- **What is the significance of “our adoption as sons (and daughters),” [and] “the redemption of our bodies?”**

**WS:** The translator of Romans uses the word “bodies.” The commentaries note that the Greek word actually is “body.” Again, *The Abingdon One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (p. 784.) makes the point that this term does not refer to our physical body, but rather to our “self” or to our “person” that is redeemed and/or transformed. I’ve found the use of the term “personality” to be helpful.

Of course, the term “adoptions as sons and daughters” refers to The Lost Coin story in the material above. The term “redemption of our body” refers to The Bus Stop story in the material above.

After you are certain about your experience of these words, **then read the assignment: Romans 8: 18 – 27.** Be sure to review the “Background” statement written above before you begin.

**I. Read vss. 18 to 21:**

Write a summary statement of what Paul is trying to get said here. (If creation and humanity live in futility (frustration), then how does Paul describe our situation and then what is our hope?)

**WS:** The world is going to hell (living in the absence of God), through the misuses that unawakened people bring to the table of life.

1. Vs. 20 -- What does the world look like when it is frustrated? Read the newspaper headlines.

2. Vs. 18 -- What does the world look like living in glory? It looks like it is fulfilling its intended purpose of living surrendered to God. Remember, according to

Paul, hope only is found in hopelessness. When we discover the "bus doesn't stop here any more," we can rail against the darkness, or we can start walking.

**II. Read vss. 22 to 24:**

Write a summary statement of what Paul is trying to get said here. (What does it mean for individuals, and the whole universe to have the "firstfruits," and what difference does it make?)

**WS:** Creation is groaning as if in childbirth. In this instance, the deep interior groaning is not because of hopelessness, but rather in anticipation of our redemption or transformation - our childbirth. Ah, yes. Christmas is coming!

1. The first fruits of our spiritual harvest arrives in The Christ. In terms of the Early Church experience, the Christ is revealed in Jesus who is the demonstration of the Good News in the Gospel story.

**III. Read vss. 25 to 27: ". . .hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."**

Write a summary statement of what Paul is trying to get said here. (How does the Spirit help us, both individuals and the whole universe?)

**WS:** Again, it is important to affirm that hope always comes in hopeless. Or, as Paul says, hope comes when there is no reason to have hope.

(Viktor Frankl promotes this same idea. He observed in the Nazi concentration camps that those who survived were the ones who had a hope when there was no reason for hope.)

Now, waiting for it patiently is another concern. However, Paul notes that we have enormous help from the Spirit of Awakenment. As we experience the benefits of our surrender to God as At-One-Ment, we learn to embrace our human reality/pain no longer as our enemy.

This lesson is learned as we live "in accordance with God's will. The learning is to surrender our reality into God's care. Then we are transformed. The burdens are the same, but we have changed!

I submit to you, this is the authentic Good News of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Alright folks, talk to me!**