

All Creation Waits

A Reflection by Robert Jackson

Romans 8:19 is my favourite verse in all Scripture. I do not count myself to be any more capable of interpreting this great text than anyone else, and this is not really my purpose here. My purpose is to share some of my own reflections on the verse, which I have been accumulating in note books for quite a while. I hope that you enjoy it.

Opening the Door

The first time I heard the verse, I was in the car, and playing on the stereo was a tape of a motivational series by an incredibly rich guy named Bob Proctor. He quoted something which he attributed to Einstein – or, at least, he said that Einstein had etched it into his desk. Bob's version of the verse was more men centred than what the Bible actually says. His version was:

[The creation waits for the revealing by the sons of man.](#)

The message contained in this is an eternal one, which in some sense drives everyone who can truly be described as great. It defies analysis, and can scarcely be paraphrased, or translated. I was honestly astounded when, some months later, I discovered that this quote is actually from the Bible! Since then, I have explored the verse at length, both in commentaries and from the Greek. The Worldwide English version does a commendable job at translating it:

[The whole world is waiting for the time when the sons of God will be seen.](#)

Clarence Jordan, in his dynamic rendition, *The Cotton Patch Version of Paul's Epistles*, says,

[In fact, the fondest dream of the universe is to catch a glimpse of real live sons and daughters of God.](#)

I love that rendering. It properly captures Paul's sense, and retains the same grammatical subject – "the creation" is actually a subordinate. If I were to translate, I would strive to follow that sense as well:

[The eager expectation of the entire creation is intensely longing for the revelation of the sons of God.](#)

That is literal – It is the “expectation” which is actually doing the “intense longing.” If I were being more dynamic, I would take liberty:

[There is an intense longing in the heart of everything that God has made; and that desire is to see the glory of God's sons revealed.](#)

The message is incredibly powerful, and I want to reflect on it here by "unfolding" the major aspects of what the verse is saying, continually interrupting myself with definitions and interludes (points of interest). Much of this is highly speculative, which is why I have called this a "Reflection", not an analysis or exposition. I would recommend reading Romans 8 in entirety before continuing.

The First Fold: *All creation waits...*

In the lead-up to the verse at hand, Paul has been talking about our suffering, and saying that our future glorification will make it all worthwhile. This glorification, of course, will take place on the final Day – the Day of Reckoning. In order to convince us of this, he goes so far as to say that this glorification is so incredible, such a "world-stopper", so to speak, that everything that has been made is actually yearning for it! The nature of this yearning, and the reasons for it, are the subject of this paper.

The "waiting" is "eager" – it is a pining and a longing; a groaning (v22), which parallels the groans of God, the Spirit (v26). But what is the Spirit yearning for? On That Day, God alone will be exalted (Isaiah 2:11). Surely God is not waiting for His own glorification! The Spirit, you see, is actually yearning for *us*. Verses 26 and 27 are all about the Spirit interceding (praying) for us, for His people, because we are so much on His heart. The context of v27 is still our suffering (compare verses 18, 23 and 26).

Sometimes, the fact that we know that heaven awaits makes suffering all the more unbearable. But God intensely longs for His people to be complete; for them to feel secure in Him. And so, when people groan, they do not groan alone. The Spirit prays even without our knowledge – it is He who longs for us to be protected, and who works out the details of God's will for our lives. God is groaning for us; He is in search of us – this is a realisation powerfully affirmed here in Romans 8.

It is worth making crystal clear that *God is in search of us*. Take Jesus, the second person of the Trinity. Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-39) – He desperately longed to gather His people together, and He so often voiced that desire. Jesus even longed to give *Himself* as a sacrifice. It is not unknown for a hen to be found dead after spreading her wings to protect her chicks in a burning barn. Jesus wept for His people, and longed to die for them. He spent His life searching for faithful people, and He's searching for us today. Even when we're like Jerusalem, and constantly turn away, then, more than ever, Jesus is on His knees, crying out for us. God tearfully longs for us to be reconciled with Him.

Jesus revealed God's human face, His living image; He said it all, but His message was not new. It's *us* who Jesus makes new, not the Father! The Father's loving-kindness had shone through all history and creation well before a second virgin fell pregnant. In truth, the fact that God longs for us and is in search of us has been clear since the dawn of time. See Genesis 3:9 – the first question which God is recorded to ask: "Where are you?" God was searching for Adam, and wanted to alert him to that fact. A great catastrophe had occurred: Man had run away from God, and hid himself from Him. And so, God was running after him – He was never going to let us go! He is like a loving father throwing his baby daughter up into the air – he will always be there to catch her;

he will never let her fall. Now, as always, God is in pursuit of us, and wants us to know that He desires a personal, familial and intimate relationship with us.

God longs for us, through and through, in every aspect of His being: Spirit, Son and Father. Yet Paul is prompting us – even challenging us – to go beyond this *realisation*; to transcend it and reach a *revelation*:

[God is in search of us, and yet we also are in search of Him.](#)

Paul is intensely aware of suffering. He was flogged with 39 lashes on 5 different occasions (2 Corinthians 11:24) – meaning that every time he lay down to sleep, or every time he went walking, he was reminded of his suffering for Jesus. He is also intensely aware of the suffering of the world, as this passage shows. The world is a dark, horrific place, with constant violence, turmoil and suffering. This is the "frustration" of the very next verse, the "bondage to decay" in the verse after. Paul is writing against the back drop of anguish – personal and global.

That is why he is so eager to make us see that man is in search of God! In pointing this out, Paul has miraculously dredged up from the devastating ashes of this dark and profane world a *cosmic order*; a harmony, a balance, a rightening. Finally, through God, we can look to this world and find hope, meaning and understanding. We can look through spiritual eyes to see a fallen mankind tearing itself apart, *because it is estranged from its Creator*, and cannot yet comprehend the object of its own desire. It is the ultimate frustration to not know what you want, or what its all for, or why you live; why you breathe and learn, why you eat, sleep, work, fight and make love. It is this frustration which man unleashes upon *himself*, because, ultimately, he has no other object to blame, hurt or victimise.

As I have said, this is due to an estrangement from God, and that, in turn, is due to sin; a decision to follow the desires of our flesh. Can it be said that *all* man's suffering is due to his frustration at not finding God? Probably not – there are still earthquakes and other natural disasters which would assail us anyway...

[But the vast majority of human suffering is inflicted by humans.](#)

And as we understand more and more of God's word, and as we see just how clearly "the human condition" is really a spiritual condition, the more we see just how clearly man's self-destructive behaviour is due to his own frustration with himself; his own frustrated desires. And this understanding ought to give us hope, because our desire to find God is a desire that *can* be fulfilled! We can find God, hope is not lost. God is in search of man, and man is in search of God. Through the mist of agony and tears, a transcendent hope and divine order is revealed. And so, our understanding of Romans 8:19 *commences*...

A Definition: The Creation

It is worth clarifying here the use of a very subtle term: The Creation. In times that have gone before us, people seemed to have a much clearer understanding of this concept. The creation is that which has been created. A *creature* is a being that is part of the

creation. To see yourself as a creature is to profess that you have a Creator, and this entails a great many responsibilities toward our natural superior – our great Originator.

Man's great sin was (and still is) to *deny his creaturely status*. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, it is because they wanted to "be like God" (Genesis 3:5) – but God is uncreated, and the natural order cannot be reversed. Modern man hates any notion of innate hierarchy, and continually seeks the greatest achievement: *independence*. This is utterly unattainable for any creature; for we are in utter dependence on our Originator for life and breath and everything else (Acts 17:25).

The Greek word, *ktisis*, has this exact sense, but there is some debate as to whether it refers, in this verse, merely to people, or to the entire creation. The word appears in the genitive articular, as we would expect, with no qualifier to explicitly specify "all". Hence, saying that "the eager expectation of the creation..." is literal, while saying "the entire creation" or "all creation" is interpretative.

But in my reading, the verse clearly refers to the entire Creation – all that which is "not God". The entire universe is longing for real live sons of God. The "creation" encompasses everything that God has made, after all! What, logically, can be excluded from the designation? I think that it is worthwhile reflecting this in translation. Every atom, ever quasar, every soul, every angel – they are all longing for the one and the same conclusion to time, space and the universe: The revelation of the glory of the sons of God. In light of this, we may continue with the reflection.

Another Definition: Transposition

Sorry to interrupt you again, but I really must define another term which is more and more dimly understood as materialism encroaches on humanity. Transposition is when something is imperfectly represented by something else. A simple example is a drawing – a two dimensional sketch on a piece of paper, which represents something real and substantial in the world somewhere. That is a basic transposition.

Paul says in Romans 5 that Adam was a type (or pattern) of Christ (verse 14). The universal impact of Christ's atonement was *transposed* through Adam, who also transformed the spiritual nature of mankind by introducing sin into the world. The Old Testament is full of these transpositions of Christ, which theologians call *typologies*.

Idolatry is another example of transposition, although it is very negative one. When we worship an idol, such as money, we are replacing the spiritual object of our soul's desire (God) with something material. We think that money will provide us with all our wants and needs – that it will sustain and fulfil us, if only we served it more diligently and hoarded it more carefully. Hence, our transposition of God becomes a destructive idolatry. In the next fold of my reflection, I will reveal how God can be transposed (or mediated) in a positive way in our lives.

The Second Fold: ...for the sons of God...

So, we have established that just as God is in search of man, so the cosmic order is such

that man is in search of God, and this is evident throughout all the earth. The next "fold" is a little more subtle than that. It is that

[The search for God is mediated through God's children.](#)

This is why the creation is awaiting "God's sons", and not God himself. How can this be explained? I would approach the text in this way: Man is material in his aspect, and, on this side of eternity, will always, ultimately, fear the spiritual. The study of pneumatology (or spiritology) is the study of man's greatest fear; the fear of the unseen, unknowable and uncontrollable forces which manipulate every breath and lie in the shadow of every moment.

In fact, it is this insanely intolerable fear of the insensible and ethereal which generally underlies man's self-destructiveness, and, above all else, his *capacity* for destruction. Man hordes weapons and defences both in his personal emotional shell and in his supra-personal national arms store, especially in times of peace, due to a perverse and irrational horror at the unspeakably Perverse and chaotically Irrational. Third world countries pour millions, billions, into missiles while their people starve and die of leprosy and tuberculosis. Developed countries emasculate themselves for regional superiority at times when war is the most distant thing imaginable.

The dilemma of man is the fear of the Unknown. This is our ultimate enemy, against which we have no defence, but, in spite of which, we will move heaven and earth to defend ourselves from. Our fear of death is a mere symptom. Mortality is a side-effect. It is horror that clutches the soul of man – horror of the Unknown.

However, this condition does nothing to suppress our deep longing for the Divine Creative Original who underpins us and sustains us. No, it is not suppressed, but it is channelled. It is mediated. It is side-swiped into a desire for God's sons. It is the sons of God who manifest His glory and walk the path to Eternity, yet their personage is both substantial and comprehensible. What I'm saying is that our yearning for the Transsubstantial becomes a desire for its Substantial representative.

I don't want to get too "psyched out" on this one (although you probably think that I already am!), but I honestly believe that all man's idolatry, in every form (totems, greed, iconography, infatuations etc.) is due to a horrendous *mis-transposition* of this otherwise perfectly righteous desire. Remember that the basis of this second revelation is that God works through people – He always does, He's happy to; He's excited for people to find Him through His children! Just like the master of the banquet who sends his slaves into the countryside (Luke 14:21-23), God is happy for people to come to His eternal banquet at the bidding of His servants. Ultimately, they were all sent by Him anyway!

It is just as much a tragedy that this desire is corrupted into idolatry as it is that man's general desire for God has degenerated into frustration. Man is searching for God, but cannot see Him, so he is frustrated and violent, as I argued previously. Man is designed to find God through a material medium – that of other people, yet he refuses to see this, and instead transposes this desire into idolatry. That is what I am arguing here.

Idolatry is worship of the physical, instead of the spiritual. We were never designed to worship the medium; we were designed to worship the source – God. The goal of all

worship is to become like what you worship. If you are greedy (which is idolatry – Colossians 3:5), then you will become materialistic and start seeing everything in terms of cost. If you worship mute idols, you will become dull and shallow. If you worship a particular person, you will not necessarily become like them, because it is in fact a *false ideal* of the person that you are worshipping – so, instead, you will become false, deceitful and easily deceived.

If you worship the living God, you will become a well-spring of eternal life (John 4:14).

But back to my main point. God has set it up for people to find Him through His sons – us. No honour can approach the glorious privilege of being a child of God, nor does any responsibility come close its magnitude! God invests in His people to be the ambassadors of His glory (2 Corinthians 5:20). He's set up the cosmos such that people desire to see *us* (Romans 8:19), and, through us, to find Him. As we unveil the way that God has spirited man, we unveil God Himself, revealed through His eternal plan. All people are made in the spiritual image of God, but it is only His sons who fully reveal his spiritual and moral character to the world.

An Interlude: Sons by Adoption

The concept of son-ship is worthy of deeper analysis. If Jesus is God (Philippians 2:5-6), yet also "the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:13), and followers of God are also "sons of God" (Galatians 3:26), then how on earth are we to make sense of all of this? Does this mean that people really can become "gods"? Shall we pursue a radical interpretation of Ephesians 4:24, perhaps? I think that this dilemma can easily be solved by analogy to human families. As soon as we talk of "sons" in the way we have been, we must admit that we are drawing an anthropomorphic analogy, so let us look to families and find resolution.

To begin with, I affirm and attest that Jesus, the Son of the Father, is God, who came to earth to reveal God and to die in our place, in atonement for our sins. But how can something eternal and uncreated be a "Son"? Jesus is the Father's Son in form and authority, but not in terms of Him being created, or ever having "issued forth" from the Father. If I were to get married and have a son, it is true that I would have authority over my son. But does that make him any *less human* than me? To say that he is "less human" than me simply because he's my son is ridiculous! Jesus is "the Son of God", meaning that He is just as Divine as the Father! Jesus and the Father share in divinity just as much and my son and I would share in humanity – that is, completely.

So in what way are *we* sons? Well, we were created by God, so in that sense every human being is God's child. The idea that God's followers are "sons" must go a bit deeper than that. Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2), which is like a child disowning his parent. We are estranged from God; we have rejected our Divine Father, and that has eternal consequences, because the wages of sin is death.

So, we're all estranged children! God, in His mercy, wanted us back in His household. In fact, He wants it so bad that he wants to adopt us back into His loving care (Ephesians 1:5). So,

Jesus is God's Son by nature; we are God's sons by adoption.

How incredible is that? We know that this is exactly what Paul had in mind in Romans 8:19, because he just wrote about God adopting us in verse 15. When God gave us His Spirit, it was a Spirit of adoption. Hence, we are adopted into God's family when we are baptised (1 Corinthians 12:13).

It is worth reflecting a little on this before moving on. No one would ever adopt a child because of what the child can do for them. It's unthinkable! We adopt a child because we want to love them and give them a family that they may never have otherwise had, and that is all. It doesn't matter what skills they have – we probably wouldn't even know. The question is: why do we think God would be any different? In truth, God is a thousand times more unconditional in His love than any person! He adopted us because He wanted us in His family – not because of what we could do – what can we do for God anyway? We can run away from God, but no matter what we did, God would never send us back to the orphanage – the world. God will never give up on you, because He has adopted you.

Some people think that when they are baptized, God just clears their name. That's not true! He not only clears our name, He gives us His name (Acts 15:17), because we become His children. He is the Judge who not only takes the punishment that we deserve onto Himself, but He takes us home with Him as well! There are many families of murder victims who have found it in their heart to forgive the culprit. What an amazing thing – to be freed from all that bitterness and pain! But how many of them would then take the murderer home to be their son? That is more than any person is willing to give – but that's exactly what God did with us!

The Third Fold: ...*to be revealed*

This third revelation is the most subtle of all, but it can be easily stated:

The glory of God's sons is hidden.

They will not be recognised for who they are until the final day. It is this aspect of the message which calls for the most vigilance of all. The reason for it is simple: The world is separated from God, and therefore does not recognise God's sons. They are hidden from view, not due to any inherent deficiency in themselves or God, but due to a deficiency in the viewers themselves. That deficiency is a *lack of spiritual discernment*, and therefore an inability to recognise God's spiritual progeny.

God's sons may be physically dejected, they may be lowly and poor, yet what is amazing is that they are *glorious* – God's glory shines through them (John 17:22). This raises an unsettling question: How is it that God's very own glory, the glory which not only originated the cosmos, but sustains the entire created order, how could that ever be hidden from view? Surely this is the very same glory which brings death to those who look on it (Exodus 33:20), whether they "lack spiritual discernment" or not!

It is my belief that when the Transcendent Glory of God's presence is transposed through his children (in their material aspect), it becomes a different kind of glory

(1 Corinthians 15:38-41). It is a lesser kind – this is what transposition always amounts to! It is up to the skill of the artist to make his pencilling of a Golden Mosque convincing, even though it is nothing more than a two-dimensional sketch made up of graphite on paper. Will the whole magnificence of the structure be captured? Unfortunately, no. But, enough of its form, an idea of its size, an inkling of its colour, an appreciation of its contrasts, an understanding of its outward structure – indeed, all of this will be communicated elegantly by a skilled and artistic hand.

Such a transposition of a mosque is like the transposition of God's glory through us. We are nothing more than a rough page compared to the unapproachable majesty of God! It is enough, it is sufficient, for others to see God through us, but I'll admit that it's not like the real thing – for that, we will all have to wait until That Day (see Isaiah 2 – especially verse 11)! Instead, the glory of God's sons illustrates God's own character and power to the world. Does this cheapen God? No more than sketching a mosque deflates the magnificence of it. This is the key way that God has chosen to reveal Himself to man – who are we to judge it? In my view, it is a powerful, inspiring and uplifting way that God works! To call out His sons as ministers of His glory! What priceless majesty; what infinite wisdom!

I would even draw an analogy with the Incarnate Messiah. No one died upon seeing Jesus. Why not? Doesn't that bother you? No one can look upon God and live! But the Messiah emptied Himself of spiritual glory before gliding into the womb of Mary (Philippians 2:7). He did the reverse of the uplifting process which will pneuma-substantiate us one day (1 Corinthians 15).

[The way that the glory of the Father shone through Christ is much the same as the way that God's glory shines through God's sons today.](#)

Does that make you uncomfortable? I hope that it inspires you! Not many people fell to worship at the sight of Jesus. Some did, but that same thing is promised to us! (1 Corinthians 14:25) Most people never saw God's glory in Jesus – not even Judas, who lived with Him for years. That's because it takes some discernment, it takes some openness, it takes some seeking, to see God's transposed glory. As then, so it still is today!

And so, it is due to the blindness caused by the deception of sin that people fail to recognise that the transposed glory of God's children points to the glory of God Himself. This is why the glory is hidden. I hope not to offend anyone by referring to this glory as "the glory of God's children." God shines it through His sons, and then, in His grace, allows us to claim ownership of it (Romans 8:19). It is a humbling thing! But I have more to say about the particular manifestation of this revelation in today's world.

As I alluded to earlier, man's main ambition is self-sufficiency, the most logically unattainable of any characteristic for anything that has been created. Man seeks to exist in a broad shell of *self*, and will quite savagely lash out at anything or anyone who interferes with this despotically tyrannised province of selfishness. Man has developed defence mechanisms to protect this feigned zone of control. I speculate that it is the undoing of these mechanisms, the piercing of this shell, which constitutes the process of becoming more like Christ. As we peel away our selfishness, our emotionalism, our unopenness, our insecurity, our pride... with every step, we are clearing away our

defence mechanisms; becoming more vulnerable, more embracing. Is this not what living a godly life is all about?

I believe that in the 20th Century, more than ever before, man is building and maintaining this selfish zone, this independent mindset, this fallacy of fallacies. Ancient man understood that he was dependent – hence his heightened understanding of interdependence (the need to serve the community which provides for you) and, most basically, most essentially, the fundamental recognition that we are *not* self-supporting. We cannot provide for ourselves as individuals. We need others. We need provisions for our journey; all that we have is what has been provided to us: by our community and by God.

Ancient man naturally extended this even to society – no society is self-sufficient, it cannot exist unto itself. It needs the divine. Every ancient had to have a path to salvation, but religion itself was also communal – it was primarily *society* that had to be on a path to salvation, it could not lift its own feet; it needed divine support. This was both recognised and institutionalised – the pattern is always the same, even though the form is different. Man was living in dependence on the gods. The gods were intimately involved with their means of support. Families tilled the land for grain, and slaughtered their stock for food; but modern man has distanced himself from all of this. He's more dependent than ever, due to the degradation of basic skills in modern society, but he refuses to accept this, demanding to see himself as independent. This is the paradox of modern times.

Over time, I would speculate that there have been a host of demonic forces which have continually blinded man to the glory of God – ancient times included! Today, I believe that

[Man's self-sufficiency is primarily responsible for his blindness to God's glory.](#)

And so, I restate my initial conviction: The glory is hidden because of a deficiency in man, not due to any deficiency in God. God's foolishness is wiser than man's wisdom.

Another Interlude: The Attainment of Glory

There is a question which may be looming large in your head right now: "Why would God desire glory?" The world can see God's glory through His sons. Why is that a good thing? Why is God so arrogant that He wants people to see His glory? A friend of mine once said that she could never believe in a God who simply desired glory for Himself – such a being would, in her opinion, be only a small step away from Satan.

I do not approach this mindset as an accusation against which God must be defended. He will never go into the witness box; it is us who must give an account (Job 40:2). However, but I do see this issue as an opportunity – an opportunity to understand God better.

God is all about setting things right. He hates injustice, because it is wrong (Isaiah 1:16-17). He hates people living in ignorance; He wants them to come to understanding

(Hosea 4:6). When we start to learn even the slightest trace of what God's word reveals about the divine, there is one swift realisation that we cannot fail to make:

The world does not see God for who He is.

The world is blind to God's glory – it neither recognises nor understands God; it is blind (Romans 3:11). God hates that – the Spirit is passionate to redress this imbalance, and bring people to the knowledge of God – that's what Romans 8:18-27 is all about! My argument here is simple, and based on a renewed understanding of glory. Consider the following affirmations:

- ✚ God does not desire glory; all the glory is already His.
- ✚ God cannot be lifted up; He is enthroned in the highest place.
- ✚ God does not want people to exalt Him; He wants people to know Him.
- ✚ To know God is to be in awe of His majesty.
- ✚ To glorify God is not to lift Him up; it is to *make Him known*.

God, then, is not trying to attain glory. He is trying to *reverse the imbalance* – to get people to see Him for who He is. It is a shocking outrage that people neither see nor look to God. God wants to reverse this and so, through His sons, God makes Himself known. The Bible, aware of God's majesty, often speaks of this process a little metaphorically – it speaks of it in terms of the attainment of glory.

An Insight – The Sons of God

The folds are complete, and I am quite happy that I have communicated them in accordance with my own feelings toward the verse in question. But I cannot but think that they are little more than an account of what the verse says, which is far from a true revelation of what the verse means, or how it applies. But it is an essential beginning. I take heart that I have started strongly, but I fear that my work has only just begun.

What does this mean for our world, for our lives, for every passing breath? It is so common, but so transitory, to reflect on the state of the world, and conclude nothing. This is a meaningless activity! I have called this a "Reflection", but I know that I must deliver more, because an analysis of the verse yields so much! And so I will continue; I am bound to – I must.

If we've not found God, the imperative not so much to "seek" God, but to recognise that that's what you've always been doing anyway. All you need to do is be awakened to your own inner yearnings, which God has planted in your heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

But Paul is writing to Christians. And if you've found God, then this verse comes sharply into focus, like a laser beam. The world needs to see the sons of God. Let's face it, the world is desperate to see God's sons – and this is the height of the verse's application; it brings all three of the revelations into unity. The world does not need more churches – the ones that already exist are emptying, decaying and silent. It does not need more Bibles – they are in every room, dusty and unused. It does not need more preachers – they drone incessantly, talking and talking and talking. It doesn't need more

posters, slogans and campaigns – they all come to nothing, and merely monumentalise what once may have been a movement.

[The world needs sons of God, and that is all.](#)

Sons of God form the church within their own bodies, and take God's spiritual Kingdom with them wherever they go. Sons of God are living bibles, who speak God's word through their actions, and proclaim God's love to others through their hearts. They are simultaneously prophetic and priestly in their role of a Son – one who represents and conduits God's salvation and His word. You see, to represent (and mediate) God's salvation is a priestly role. To be a conduit of God's word (and proclaim it) is a prophetic role. God's sons, by embodying Jesus' mission, do both! But they are also kings, because God's inheritance and authority are bequeathed to them (Galatians 4:7).

In general, God will pursue no plan that does not involve His sons. Even Abram, whom God called so directly, was blessed by God's son, Melchizedek, who received a tenth of everything after coming out with bread and wine to minister to Abram (Genesis 14:18-20). Even Paul, whom God personally led to Himself, was preached to and baptised by Ananias, God's son. The only hope for the world is God, and God works through His sons.

I believe that this is the heart of the verse: More than anything else, the world desperately needs God's sons. The Day of Reckoning itself is, according to the verse, little more than a revelation of the true, cosmic nature of the sons of God. If I had to summarise my insight on this verse, then that would be it!

Another Insight – The Hope of Mankind

As my reflection takes shape, I fear that I am failing to grasp that full implications of this verse. I mean, I have no doubt that I will always be lacking in a full appreciation of the verse, because it deals with concepts that are eternal and universal, and therefore far beyond my comprehension. But I'm sure that I can go deeper. The world needs sons of God. That has a certain implication:

[Apostasy is the greatest nightmare of the creation.](#)

This is a bit of an inversion of Clarence Jordan's rendition. The sons of God can disown their Father. They can run away, and return to the orphanage. That would break God's heart, but it's possible. And even then, it can happen on two levels: Individually or Collectively. Individuals can become wandering sheep, lost coins or prodigal sons (Luke 15). Although the circumstances are very different, they all end up separated from God – but they do have hope of restoration. The sheep wandered off, it didn't know any better. The coin was lost through negligence. The prodigal son wandered off through his own sin. Some people don't know any better, and need to be cared for. Some people have been neglected – we need to go after them as well. Some leave due to their own clear decision to live in sin. For such people, we can only wait in hope for their return – and only in *that* parable does God simply wait!

The Spirit remains within all who wander off, albeit in a permanently grieved state (Ephesians 4:30). Hence, for them to be restored, they need only to repent, not be rebaptised (Acts 8:21-23).

But there are other ways that individuals can fall. Some are proved never to have been saved in the first place (1 John 2:19). Such people must actually be converted in order to come into God's grace, not technically "restored". Finally, some fall and irrevocably harden their heart (Hebrews 6:4-6). Such people commit the blasphemy; they have truly "fallen away".

So much for individuals wandering off or falling away. When I say "Collective" falling away, I don't mean a group of people who fall away at once – that is simply an extension of an individual falling away. I am referring to a whole new scale: The entire people of God abandoning His path – in other words, apostasy. Anyone familiar with Biblical history or New Testament teaching knows that this is possible! From the Old Testament, passages such as Amos 5:4-7, Isaiah 1:4, Judges 21:25 and 2 Kings 17 report on Apostasy, as prophesied in Joshua 24:19-22 and Deuteronomy 28:15. In the New Testament, passages such as Acts 20:29-30, 1 Timothy 4:1ff and 2 Timothy 3:1-5 all prophesy Apostasy in the Christian era.

Apostasy is when God's household abandons the Head – that is, Christ – by going their own way. By the end of the Fourth Century, AD, this had occurred within Christendom. The church was married to the world, and therefore divorced from Christ. God's heart on this is clear – His union with us is like a marriage (Ephesians 5:23-32), and God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16).

The result of Apostasy, coming back to Romans 8:19, is that there are no sons of God left on earth.¹ But all creation waits for the sons of God to be revealed! And although this will only reach its fullness on the Final Day, it ought to be happening in sparks all the time, as people come to know Christ and be inspired by His people. Apostasy, then, is not just a tragedy; it's an outrage, for it takes away the hope of mankind to find God – at least at that time – until, of course, God raises up a new man to begin a new movement of God!

Logically, of course, the fact that there may be no sons of God does not mean that the creation desires them any less! All it means is that there is an increase in frustration, because there is no hope of finding them. How terrible! But even that is an overstatement, because the way is always open for anyone to find God through His word, which contains countless stories of the sons of God active on earth. Just because there is no one following it does not make it any more justifiable to ignore it yourself! It is no wonder that the Bible is simply full of stories of God's sons in action – it gives us the best chance possible of attaining son-status, even with no living image to imitate.

¹ Some speculate that, at any time, there are always faithful people on this earth. I see no historical validation of this, and no theological basis except perhaps Matthew 16:18 – but I take this as a promise of the *ultimate* victory of the church. I do not think that it necessitates an unbroken line of fellowship. Jesus was picking up the imagery of the dynasty of David. On one hand, David had an everlasting dynasty, but on the other hand, each individual descendent had to follow God and be faithful to the Covenant (see 1 Kings 2:4). By the first century, the dynasty of David was "broken" (Acts 15:16-18), and that was evident to all. However, God rebuilt it through Christ and the church, and so the cycle now continues.

This insight, then, is clear. Apostasy is an outrage, and the continuance of God's Kingdom – the vitality of His sons – is the ultimate goal. It needs to be our focus; at every moment, and with every passing breath, zeal for God's house must consume you.

Summary

I would now like to quickly run through all the main points that this reflection has made, in order to jog your memory and focus your thinking:

- Opening the Door: There is an intense longing in the heart of everything that God has made; and that desire is to see the glory of God's sons revealed.
- ✚ **First fold:** [God is in search of us, and yet we also are in search of Him.](#)
 - The creation is that which is not God; all that has been made.
 - Transposition is when something is imperfectly represented by something else.
- ✚ **Second fold:** [The search for God is mediated through God's children.](#)
 - Jesus is God's Son by nature; we are God's sons by adoption.
- ✚ **Third fold:** [The glory of God's sons is hidden due to man's spiritual blindness.](#)
 - Also: The way that the glory of the Father shone through Christ is much the same as the way that God's glory shines through God's sons today.
 - To glorify God is not to lift Him up; it is to make Him known.
- ✚ **Insight:** [The world needs sons of God, and that is all.](#)
- ✚ **Insight:** [Apostasy is the greatest nightmare of the creation.](#)

Conclusion

Of all the discoveries that I made as I was studying out this verse, none startled me more than 1 John 3:1-3. Focus yourself intensely on all that I have said about Romans 8:19, and then read John's words:

[How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure.](#)

How can I compete with this as a conclusion for everything that I have been, in a stumbling way, trying to say here? God has called us to be His children, and although that places upon us greater responsibilities than we can imagine, it is also a cause for our endless, eternal worship of our Father, who has adopted us (Ephesians 1:5). Know that you are God's son; know that the world is intensely longing. Live God's love, and attain to the fullness of His glory (Colossians 2:10).