

Romans 8:22-27^v

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

^v About the Second Reading: Romans 8:22-27

Paul looks to the future of humanity and of the entire material universe, to the destiny that awaits them in Christ. The fate of humanity and the cosmos are inextricably linked. Paul, like many in the Hellenistic culture, saw the world about him as enslaved by spiritual forces of evil, yet he saw the God's will was supreme.

At the second coming, the creation itself will be liberated. The end-times images of the Old Testament point to the hope that Paul here develops. Not only humankind, but all the material universe will be redeemed, sharing in the glory of God. Until that time, nature and Christians are "in labor pains" (v. 22), which mingle pain, hope and expectation. Salvation is not merely for individual human beings. It is cosmic in dimension.