

Who are the sons who are destined to set creation free (Rom. 8:14-26)?

It seems to me that vs. 14 of this context answers this question,
"For as many as are being continuously led by God's Spirit (are being habitually led in the spirit of God), these are God's sons."

Vs. 15 continues on,
"For you folks... received a spirit of being placed as a son (set in the position of a son; you received sonship's spirit), within which we are habitually crying out, 'Abba (Daddy), O Father!'"

Vs. 16 tells us that this same Spirit (spirit) co-witnesses to our spirit (or: in our spirit) that we are ones who have been born of God (God's bairns; God's children).

Paul continues on in vs. 17 that this means that we are God's heirs, and Christ's joint-heirs, "yet possessors and enjoyers together in an allotment pertaining to Christ if so be that we are continually affected by sensible experiences together (feeling together; receiving impressions, undergoing passion or suffering together), to the end that we may also be glorified together (may be given a joint-approval and a joint-reputation; may together receive a manifestation of that which calls forth praise)."

Vs. 18 says that this glory is "being about to be unveiled to us (revealed for us)." And this was for first century Christians. Creation's looking away and watching with the head stretched forward alertly (it's concentrated and undivided focus) was then constantly awaiting and anxiously expecting "the unveiling (uncovering; revealing) of God's sons." (vs. 19) Vs. 22 says that "all creation is continuously sighing, groaning and travailing together as in childbirth (suffering common birth-pangs) until the present moment."

And vs. 23-24 says,
"Yet not only [this], but further, even WE OURSELVES, constantly holding (having) the firstfruit (Firstfruit?) of the Spirit, we ourselves also continually sigh and groan within ourselves, continuously awaiting [yet] constantly with our hands taking and accepting away from out of sonship -- the ransom-paid redemption of our body -- for in the expectation we are made whole and healthy (or: for by the expectation we are delivered).
"Now expectation being continuously seen (observed) is not expectation, for who continues hoping in expectation for what he also constantly sees? Yet if we continue expecting what we are not seeing, we continue taking away and accepting from out of it through remaining under (or: we keep on eagerly awaiting [it] through patient endurance)."

Then vs. 26 continues,
"Now, similarly (or: in LIKE MANNER), the Spirit also habitually takes hold together on the opposite side of a situation so as to assist (joins in with a helping hand) IN OUR WEAKNESS, for we have not seen and do not know the thing which we should pray, to accord with what must be, but rather, the Spirit Himself constantly hits in above us (falls in on our behalf; instead of us hits within) with unexpressed (or: in expressible) groanings (or: with wordless and inarticulate groanings)."

So what is this telling us? We have weaknesses, but the Spirit jumps in to assist wherever He is needed, and even hits the mark above us with His own wordless groans -- whenever we don't know what must be prayed. Is this then "being led by God's Spirit"? Paul spoke as though some WERE then being continuously led by His Spirit, and so they thus must have been sons of God.

The issue, then, seems to be the "unveiling" of these mature sons who see what the Father is doing, and follow Him in His activities. I suggest that whenever something, or someone, of God's creation is purposed to be set free, that a son will be uncovered so that it (he) can behold His glory. The Christ within the son is the glory of God. When they behold Him within a son, then they will be changed into the same image, from one glory into another glory, until all come unto the measure of the stature of the image of Christ.

We have supposed, from "sonship traditions," that this would only be at the end of the age in a historic "rift in time" (to use Michael Phillips' term), a special parousia. Now I do not suggest that this will not happen, but I question that this would be the only application of this passage in Romans 8. I believe that creation has been being set free ever since this process was begun by Jesus.

Jesus said, "All authority within heaven and upon earth is given to me" (Mat.28:17) He also said, "According as the Father sent Me forth as an apostle, I also am sending you."

Now this leads us to the next question:

Must they become perfect as Jesus?

I suggest that our focus has been too much upon us instead of upon Christ. Christ is our perfection. The mature in Christ realize that "it is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me." It is the anointing that He has given to us which makes us Christ (the body of the Anointed One). It is the anointing that breaks the yoke, and sets creation free. It is Christ within me, the expectation of glory. If we have been made to sit-together with Him within the heavenlies (or: among the heavenly ones), I submit that we now have the authority to set creation free. But if many are not now ready to be snatched out of the fire (Jude 23), then we await God's time, for each one must be made alive in his own group (order).

Must this happen on this side of the grave, or does the Father continue the process after death? God is the Eternal Now, and His "timing" in regard to the earth realm, or the time of our life, transcends all. He decides whether it is in "this life," or the next.

Since I do not believe that we must be flawless to set creation free, I would put this question into another category.

**Mat. 5:48 makes a promise, not a command,
"You, then, shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Concordant Trans.)**

**If we consider Rom. 11:36 in regard to this question,
"Because, forth from out of the midst of Him, and through the midst of Him (or: through means of Him), and into the midst of Him, [is] the whole (everything; [are] all things)!"**

By Him (In Him; For Him) [is] the glory into the ages. Amen (Make it so)!"
then everyone enters into perfection, for they enter back into God from whence they came.

But there is another consideration, and that is the word "perfect," which can also be rendered "mature." Phil. 3:15 uses the same word as does Mat. 5:48, saying, "Let us, then, as many of us as are perfect (mature)...,"

As does Heb. 5:14,

"But solid food belongs to perfect ones (mature people), to those who through use have their sense organs trained toward distinguishing of beautiful and of worthless."

So does the Father continue the process after death? I suggest that the Father uses death, whether within this life, or within the next (the second death), to nourish maturity until the fruit of love is produced within each individual. Root out a plant before it bears its fruit, and there is no fruit, which is the goal (the τελος) for the plant. If physical death terminates the process, then for the promise of perfection to be fulfilled, the second death must take up the work.

In this life, both the death of the seed, and the corruption (manure; fertilizer) into which it is planted is of necessity to the life of the plant. Unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone... Death is central to the bearing of fruit. Why should we think that physical death would be different? Is it because we don't believe in the ultimate resurrection of all? That this resurrection is into a new life in which more grains are produced? It can happen in this life; it can happen in the next. Jesus Christ is the same throughout. If He begins a good work in us in this life, I maintain that He will bring it to perfection in the next -- for He will finish His good work.

If one has not been chosen into Life within his life in this earth now, I submit that the Son of man will continue planting the Word in the fields that had to be burned off (Heb. 6:7-8).

**Shalom,
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