



## Looking Out My Window, November 18, 2022

Last week we discussed the revision of *The New Revised Standard Version*, known as *NRSVue*. The Society of Biblical Literature, the international guild of biblical scholarship, in cooperation with The National Council of Churches released this new version. You can find it on Amazon. You can refer to last week's article for the editors' explanation of the reasons for a new revision.

I've been checking the translation of a few passages in the New Testament where the *NRSV* rendering was less than satisfactory to me. I wanted to share one of those with you to highlight the challenges of translation, especially from a language more vivid and concise than our own.

The latter portion of Romans 8 has an underlying image. In 8:22, Paul writes, "We know that the entire creation groans together and suffers birth pangs together until now." (My rendering.) Paul reframes the pain and travail we share in as God's labor pains in the birthing of a new creation. Our travail is God's, framed with the image of a woman in labor. In the next verse he writes, "we groan within ourselves, eagerly awaiting our adoption as God's children."

Three verses farther down, in 8:26, he acknowledges that we often cannot express our sufferings, hopes, and expectations adequately in prayer. Then he adds, "But the Spirit itself makes intercession with groanings inexpressible in words." The word I am rendering "groanings" is the noun form of the verb rendered "groaning" in the earlier passages.

My complaint. In the *NRSV* the translators inexplicably translated "groanings" in verse 26 as "sighs," and thus became inconsistent with their own rendering of the verb earlier and with the translation of the verb (groan, sigh, complaint) in 2 Corinthians 5:2, 4, used by Paul in a similar context. However, the *NRSVue* corrected that inconsistency by rendering the Spirit's activity within us in Romans 8:26 as groanings, not sighs.

If God's Spirit groans in labor pains to birth new creation, then we could well understand that that same Spirit might well express our unutterable prayers as groanings within us. The rendering "sighs" ignores the context and weakens the image of the Spirit's activity within us.

My appeal to you would be to read more than one translation when you study the Bible and in that way minimize the impact of the translators' theology on their translation.

God's peace,

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