

**Romans**  
**Children of God (Part 2)**  
**Romans 8:14-17**  
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In his book on adoption, Russell Moore describes the strange sensation when he and his wife, Maria, went to adopt their two boys from Russia. He describes the complete silence of the orphanage when they arrived. Here's what he writes:

The creepiest sound I have ever heard was nothing at all. My wife, Maria, and I stood in the hallway of an orphanage somewhere in the former Soviet Union. These children did not cry because infants eventually learn to stop crying if no one ever responds to their calls for food, for comfort, for love. No one ever responded to these children, so they stopped.

The silence continued even as we entered the boys' room. Little Sergei (now Timothy) smiled at us, dancing up and down while holding the side of his crib. Little Maxim (now Benjamin) stood straight at attention, regal and Czar-like. But neither boy made a sound. We read them books filled with words they couldn't understand, about saying good night to the moon and cows jumping over the same. But there were no cries, no squeals, no groans. Every day we left at the appointed time in the same way that we had entered, in silence.

On the last day of the trip, Maria and I arrived at the moment we had dreaded since the minute we received our adoption referral. We had to tell the boys goodbye as by law, we had to return to the United States and wait for the legal paperwork to be completed before returning to pick them up for good. After hugging and kissing them, we walked out into

the quiet hallway as Maria shook with tears. And that's when we heard the scream. Little Maxim fell back in his crib and let out a guttural yell. It seemed he knew, maybe for the first time, that he would be heard. On some primal level, he knew he had a father and mother now.

That's exactly what the Holy Spirit of God has taught us to do. We now, knowing that we have a Father, cry out, "Abba! Father!" because we know that He has adopted us.

In Romans, chapter 8, we discover a number of reasons for our security as Christians. Last week, we began to consider the third reason that Paul gives us here that our salvation is absolutely secure, and that is that God has adopted us as His children. Let's read the paragraph again; Romans, chapter 8, verses 14 to 17, you follow along as I read:

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

This passage focuses on one of the greatest transactions that occurs at the very moment that we believed in Jesus Christ. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, at the moment in time in which God gave you life, gave you repentance and faith, and you cried out to God, at that very moment, you were adopted. Now we reminded ourselves last week that the process for our adoption didn't

begin at that moment, the process began in eternity past when God the Father, according to Ephesians 1:4 “chose us in (Christ) before the foundation of the world...unto the adoption of sons.” So our selection, the choice of us, as those He would adopt occurred in eternity past, we were actually adopted at the moment of our salvation because we’re reminded that, “to all who receive Christ even to those who believed in His name, to them was given the right to become the sons of God.”

But our adoption, while it is truly a reality today, while we are in fact the sons of God, it is not yet finalized. Our adoption will be completed, according to verse 23 of Romans 8, when we receive the redemption of our bodies. That's when everything will be done; all will be complete. At salvation then, God became, Christian, your Father by a gracious act of adoption. Now in this paragraph that we’re considering, Paul teaches us four details about that spiritual adoption that we really need to know in order to be assured of our security in Jesus Christ.

Last week, we learned first of all, the identity of God's adopted children, verse 14, “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.” These and only these are the children or sons of God. We learned that most people, in fact, are not God's children. In fact, Christ said, “People are born as children of the devil.” All you have to do to be a child of the devil is be born; and unless something else happens, unless you are regenerated by the Spirit of God, unless you are, in the words of Christ, “born again” by the work of God’s Spirit, that will continue throughout your life and into eternity. Most people are not God's children; however, all true Christians have been adopted as God's children. In adoption, God graciously grants us the full rights and privileges of son-ship in His family, a family to which we did not belong by birth

and by nature. So all true Christians have been adopted. But how can we know if that's true? Well, verse 14 tells us because the test of true son-ship is being led by the Spirit; "All who are being led by the Spirit, these are the sons of God."

So what does it mean to be led by the Spirit? Well, we saw last week in context, he's referring to what comes in before in verse 13. Being led by the Spirit here means that the Spirit is leading you to put the sins in your life to death. So that's the test. Are you putting the sins in your life to death? Are you pursuing holiness? Are you pursuing likeness to Jesus Christ? That's why He saved you. And if that's not a reality in your life, if you're not pursuing that, then that's all the evidence you need that you don't really belong to Him. That's the identity of God's adopted children.

A second detail that we learned last week about our adoption is the intimacy of God's adopted children. Look again at verse 15, "For you have not received the spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received (at salvation) a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'" When we became Christians, we no longer had the state of mind of a slave, living in constant fear of God's wrath and God's judgment and the punishment for our sins. Instead, the Holy Spirit, who bestows and confirms our adoption as sons, He gives to us a mindset of adoption. We now think like children and therefore, verse 15, the Spirit teaches us to "cry out, 'Abba! Father!'"

I love that word. We talked about it last time. "Abba" was the first word in an Aramaic home that a child used to speak of his father; kind of like our "dada," you know that little attempt to

say the English word. In the same way, “Abba” was that for an Aramaic child. It was a term of both intimacy and respect. It's how Jesus always referred to God; and amazingly, it's how Jesus taught us to think of and refer to God as well, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit teaches us to cry out to our Father in prayer just as a child cries out to his human father, both in recognition that that is his father as well as in confidence and trust and love for the father; and in times of danger and trouble and difficulty, as a plea for help to the father, Abba! Father! That's the intimacy that we enjoy.

Now, that brings us today to a third detail that we need to learn about our adoption, and it is the certainty of God's adopted children, the certainty of God's adopted children. We see this in verse 16, “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.” You see, it's the Father who adopts us, but we've also received the Spirit, the Spirit of adoption. He not only bestows our adoption, but here we learn in verse 16, He assures us of our adoption; He gives us assurance that we are God's children. Here's how the confessions put it, both the Westminster and the Baptist confession of faith says: “Being enabled by the Spirit, the Christian may without extraordinary revelation (In other words, God's not going to do something miraculous to teach you this, but rather in the right use of ordinary means, that is prayer, the Scripture, the things God has given to us.) may attain to this assurance.”

The Holy Spirit gives us this assurance, but He does so through the use of ordinary means. This is what Paul is teaching us here in Romans, chapter 8, verse 16. He says, notice what he says, “The Spirit Himself testifies (That is, gives confirming testimony.) with our spirit.” Now that last word ‘spirit,’ there's Paul's third use of the word ‘spirit’ and here he is talking not about the

Holy Spirit, not about a mindset, he's talking about the immaterial part of us. The Holy Spirit testifies with our spirit, or better, to our spirit. That's the meaning of this Greek word 'testifies' in the two other places it occurs in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit testifies to our spirit, the word 'testify,' by the way, means 'to provide supporting evidence by testifying, to confirm, to support by testimony.' The Spirit gives testimony to our spirit, and what is the Spirit's testimony to our spirit? Verse 16 says, "That we are children of God." He seeks to assure us that we are the children of God. And this is important because being legally adopted is entirely different from understanding that you're now truly a member of the family. Those are two different things, feeling like you belong. And God not only adopted us, but God wants us to know that we're adopted. He wants us to enjoy the reality of this new relationship, to grasp His love for us.

Listen, if you sit here this morning and you are a follower of Jesus Christ, if you've repented of your sins and believed in Him, the Father wants you to have assurance that He has adopted you into His family. And He gave you the Spirit in part for this very purpose.

And so, the Spirit testifies with our spirit or to our spirit, and what is this testimony of the Holy Spirit to us? How does this happen? How does the Spirit testify to my spirit? How does He grant us assurance of our adoption? This is a really important question. How does this happen? How does the Spirit testify to your spirit that you truly are a child of God? Well, historically there have been three answers given to that question. And I'm going to share all three with you; obviously I'm building the one I believe is true, but I want you to understand the three answers that have been given.

Answer number one to that question, “How does the Spirit testify with our spirit?” is He testifies through this sense of an internal confidence. In other words, it's just, “I know. I know I'm a Christian because I know I'm a Christian. I know I'm a Christian because I feel like I'm a Christian. I know I'm a Christian because I'm convinced I'm a Christian.”

I encountered this in one of the saddest episodes of my ministry at Grace Church. A wife came to me and had discovered an awful black book in her husband's briefcase; it contained explicit details of all of his sexual encounters, and I went to confront him in his office. And I then met with him on an ongoing basis for more than six months, and every time I would confront him about his faith. When I would confront him about what the Scripture said, here's a man who lived literally a double life, lived the life of the worst of sin, day in and day out, and yet what he always responded to me was, “I just know I'm a Christian.” That's not the Spirit testifying with your spirit. In fact, in Matthew, chapter 7, Jesus says there will be people who show up on the Day of Judgment who are convinced that they are truly Christians when they're not. So that's not the testimony of the Spirit; it's not just this sort of, “Well, I just know, I'm just confident.”

A second answer to this question of how does the Spirit testify to our spirits that we are the children of God, that we belong to Him; second answer: He testifies through a mystical inner voice in which the Spirit speaks directly to the heart. Maybe you've heard this, been taught this. Some believe this is the highest kind of assurance; it bypasses the mind and sort of goes directly to the emotions and the Spirit just, it's almost like, they wouldn't say it this way, but it's almost like the Spirit whispers in your ear, “You are a Christian; you're a Christian,” and you just have this sort of anti-intellectual, emotional confidence because the Spirit has revealed it directly to

you. This is somewhat like the first one, but slightly different. By the way, this is the approach of men I respect. Martin Lloyd Jones takes this approach; some of the Puritans take this approach. In fact, Lloyd-Jones spends twelve chapters in his commentary arguing that this is a very special type of assurance that some Christians receive after conversion. In fact he called it, “an absolute assurance.” Now, I respect the doctor; you know that. He’s one of my mentors. I love him, but I have to disagree with him here because there are serious problems with this approach that the testimony of the Spirit is this mystical inner voice in which the Spirit says, “You are a Christian.”

Here are the problems; four problems with this view. Problem number one is this approach is inconsistent with this passage because this passage isn't talking about a special kind of assurance that all Christians should seek but only a few enjoy. In fact, Paul is arguing here that whatever this testimony of the Spirit is; it's the experience of all of those God has adopted. If they have the Spirit, the Spirit's doing this.

A second problem with this view, that it's this mystical inner voice, is this approach, think about this with me, this approach makes that inner voice a higher authority in my life than the Scripture in determining my relationship with God. Now there's a greater authority than the Scripture; it's that inner voice.

A third problem with this view is that this approach makes assurance entirely subjective, that is, inside of me. I have to listen for the voice of the Spirit assuring me, and what that really does is



it makes all true confidence and assurance uncertain because I don't know, I don't know if that's me, or I don't know if that's the Spirit.

And a fourth problem with this view that it's a mystical inner voice by which the Spirit tells us we're God's children, is what is the Spirit's pattern? What does the Spirit always do? He works in and through the Word. That's His mission; that's His pattern.

And so that brings us to the third view and the one that I believe best meets the biblical data and I'll show you this. He testifies with our spirits through the Scripture alone. He testifies with our spirits that we are the children of God through the Scripture alone. And here's why I would say that, because Scripture itself teaches that we must seek our assurance in Scripture alone. Let me give you one definitive text, 1 John, chapter 5, verse 13. At the end of John's letter, talking about how you can know you're a Christian, he says this, 1 John 5:13, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life." That is a clear definitive statement. Assurance then comes from the Spirit of God working by and through the Word, through what's been written.

So that invites the next really important question. If in fact the Spirit testifies with our spirits by the Word, how does He do that? How does the Spirit use the Word to give us assurance that we're God's children? It's really a question of assurance, isn't it? How do you know you're saved? It's really what we're asking. The Spirit uses the Word to give us assurance in two ways. Number one, the Spirit enables us to believe the promises of the gospel. He enables us to believe the promises of the gospel.

Ian Murray writes this, “We gain assurance” listen to this, this is really helpful, “We gain assurance not by looking at ourselves or anything within ourselves, but by looking to Christ alone and to Christ as He is revealed to us in the promises of Scripture.” This is where you gain assurance. Sinclair Ferguson, in his little book that some of you have read along with us, talks about this issue of assurance, and he says this, “Lack of assurance is often caused by being too taken up with ourselves, but our assurance does not lie in what we are, be we great or small,” here it is, “our assurance lies in what God has done in His plan of salvation to secure us to Himself.”

I like what one of the Puritans wrote. Samuel Rutherford said this, “Believe God's Word and power more than you believe your own feelings and experiences.” Let me read that again, “Believe God's Word and power more than you believe your own feelings and experiences; your rock is Christ, and it is not the rock which ebbs and flows, but your sea.” I love that! The Rock never changes; it’s your sea, your emotions, your experiences that ebb and flow. That is in fact the clear testimony of the Word of God. The Holy Spirit calls us to believe the promises of the gospel, and this is the work of the Spirit to give us assurance.

Go with me, let me just show you how this works; go to John, John's gospel. Let’s start in chapter 1, very quickly let me just show you what the Spirit does. The Spirit gives us these promises in the gospel, and He enables us to believe them, to have confidence in them; and as we do that, we gain assurance. Look at John 1, verse 12. Here's a promise in the gospel, “as many as received (Christ), to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who

believe in His name.” Listen, if you have repented of your sins and believed in the name of Jesus Christ, in other words, if you have accepted Him for all that He is, if you’ve put your full and complete confidence in Him and in Him alone, if you are following Him as Lord, if you have received Him, then the Spirit says you have been given the right to be a child of God, and the Spirit enables us then to believe that promise; and in believing that promise, we gain that assurance.

Go over to chapter 3, verse 36, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” Here are two groups of people, those who believe in the Son, they have eternal life; those who have, to put it negatively or put it positively in light of the negative comments at the end of verse 36, those who have obeyed the Son, they will see life. They enjoy it now and they will see eternal life. That's a promise of the Spirit; and as we believe, as the Spirit enables us to see that, to sink our faith deep into that statement of the Scripture, our assurance grows.

Turn over to chapter 6; chapter 6, verse 35, “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger.’” Let me ask you, have you come to Christ? Have you approached Christ in your heart and fallen down before Him and pled for Him to save you and to be your Lord? Jesus says, “The one who comes to me will never hunger, and he who believes in me will never thirst.” Look down at verse 37, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me.” In other words, if you’ve come to Christ, it's because the Father gave you to Christ. And I love this, verse 37, “and the one who comes to Me,” have you come to Christ? Have you repented and put your faith in Him, “the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” That's a

promise of the gospel; that's a promise of Christ. The Holy Spirit gave us that promise, and He enables us to believe that promise as we believe it, our assurance grows.

He goes on:

For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me. (This is God's will for Christ.) that of all that He has given Me (All those who came to Me, remember, all who came are the ones He gave Me, so all the ones who came to Me, that) I lose nothing, (not one of them) but raise (them) up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.

That's the promise of the gospel. The Holy Spirit gives us these promises, and then He enables us to believe these promises; and as He does, our assurance grows.

Ian Murray writes, "The Christian will never get beyond the promises of Christ as the sure ground of His peace." In other words, this is first and foremost in peace in your soul, is understanding the promises of the gospel, believing them, putting your full and complete confidence in Christ and all that He is; and through that, the Spirit testifies with your spirit that you are a child of God.

But there's a second way that the Spirit uses the word to give us assurance. The first way is He enables us to believe the promises of the gospel. Secondly, He calls us to examine ourselves against the Scripture. This is the other side of this assurance issue; believe in the promises of the

gospel and examine yourself against the Scripture. 2 Corinthians 13:5 says, “Test yourself to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless you fail the test?” Check and see, is He in you?

How do you do that? Well, you examine yourself against the Scripture. Now, Scripture gives us many tests. In fact the entire book of 1 John, right, is tests of eternal life so we could just walk through 1 John. But there are other tests in other places as well.

This morning, in the interest of time, let me just give you three tests that Scripture gives us for examining ourselves. Take a test yourself. Are you a Christian? See if you pass the test. Test number one, do you love and obey Jesus Christ and His Word? Do you really love Jesus Christ and obey His Word? This is a test of whether or not you're truly a Christian.

Ephesians, chapter 6, verse 24, Paul ends his letter to the Ephesians. He says this, “Grace be with all those,” he’s talking about all Christians now, “Grace be with all those,” and listen to how he describes believers, “who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.” This is what marks a Christian. You can't be a Christian and not love Jesus Christ; that's a non sequitur; that doesn't fit; it's illogical. In fact, the negative side is put this way in 1 Corinthians 16:22, “If anyone does not love the Lord,” and in context “Lord” is Jesus Christ, “if anyone does not love (Jesus Christ), he is to be (damned).” There you go. Love for Christ is the mark of whether or not you're truly a believer. Examine yourself.

Here's another way that John puts it in John 14:20 and following. He says, this is Jesus speaking, when the Spirit comes "In that day you will know that...you (are) in me, and I in you." You say, "Well, how do I know that?" Here it is, "He who has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me...He who does not love Me does not keep My words." In other words, you say, "Well, how do I know if I love Jesus Christ?" How do you treat His Word? Jesus says, "If you're serious about keeping My Word, that is obeying me, following what I've said, if that's really serious in your life, then your Mine; you're in Me, and I'm in you. If you're not, then you're not in Me." So there's test number one. Let me ask you this morning, "How did you do? Do you love Jesus Christ and do you love His Word? Do you obey Him by obeying His Word?"

Number two, test number two. Is your life characterized by the fruit of the Spirit; is your life characterized by the fruit of the Spirit? Galatians 5:22, listen to this, "the fruit of the Spirit (In other words, the fruit the Spirit produces in every life where He exists.) is love, (How are you doing with love? Is your life marked, would the people that know you, the people in your family, the people who live in your home, would they say that your life is marked by obvious love for God and obvious love for others including them?) love, joy, (Are you a dour, complaining, whining kind of person? Listen, that's not what the Spirit produces. The Spirit produces joy.) peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." None of us see those things in our lives in perfection; we all long for more of those qualities. But a true believer sees the fruit of the Spirit in his life. In fact, nothing in Scripture, nothing in Scripture anywhere suggests that the fruit of the Spirit can be consistently faked by an

unbeliever. You want a real test? Ask if those things are being produced in your life in an increasing measure.

Third test, are you pursuing holiness? And that's back in our text in Roman, chapter 8, because in verse 16 it says, "The Spirit...testifies with our spirit that we are children of God." But in this context, how is the Spirit testifying? Well, He's bearing witness in verse 15 through our tender response to God as "Abba;" we now understand that God is our own loving Father, and we're drawn to Him. But if you go back to verse 13 and 14, it's through our mortification of sin. Are you putting to death the deeds of the body?

So how does the Spirit then testify with our spirits that we are sons of God? It's not by just some feeling of confidence, "Well, I just know that I'm a Christian." There will be people like that at the Judgment who Christ will say, "I never knew you; depart from me." It's not by some mystical voice where the Spirit sort of whispers in your ear, "You are a Christian." No! The Spirit uses the Word of God to give us assurance and how does He do that? He enables us to believe the promises of the gospel, and He calls us to examine our lives against the Scripture.

Now, let me just tell you, both of these are crucial for your assurance; because if you just focus on the first of these, it can lead to a superficial assurance, "Yup, I believe the promises of the gospel." On the other hand, if you focus only on the second of these and all you do is keep looking at your own life, the result can be one of two things--either self-righteousness or utter despair because we never measure up, and those who think they measure up become self-

righteous. That's why I love what the Puritans said. They said, "For one look at self, take ten looks at Christ; for one look at self, take ten looks at Christ."

Here's a way to summarize it; I love this quote. This is from Archibald Alexander, one of the Princeton theologians, and he wrote this, "In its essence, in its essence, the evidence that shows a real Christian is eminently simple." Here it is. You want the evidence for real a Christian? He says, "It's two things. Entire trust in Christ for justification and a sincere and universal love of holiness," that's it. "An entire trust in Christ for justification, and a universal and sincere love of holiness," and he adds this, "with a dependence on the Holy Spirit for holiness's existence, continuance, and increase." So we can know that we've passed from death unto life.

By the way, let me just say that we're not talking about an absolute infallible insurance. In fact, no Christian will ever be entirely exempt from doubt in this life. So the fact that you occasionally have moments of doubt, you doubt yourself, you doubt whether or not you are or you doubt whether or those things that have been promised to you are true; if there are momentary doubts, that doesn't mean you're not a Christian. In fact, John Owen, one of the great English Puritans wrote this.

If you look to have such an evidence and such absolute conviction in this matter and shall admit of no doubts, fears or questionings, you will be greatly deceived. Regeneration induces a new principle into the soul, but it does not utterly expel the old, (That is, your flesh. Now here's what he says.) "The constant conflicts that we have with sin will not allow us to have always as clear an evidence of our condition as we would want.



So understand we're talking about assurance; we're not talking about some absolutely never-wavering, never-having-a-struggle kind of assurance; that's not possible, Owen's said, as long as we struggle sin in this life. Instead, it is a growing confidence based on the testimony of Scripture that we are God's children.

So, so far, we have learned the identity, the intimacy, the certainty of God's adopted children; there's a fourth and final detail that we learn in Romans 8 about our spiritual adoption. Go back there with me again, Romans, chapter 8. And here we see in verse 17 the legacy of God's adopted children, the legacy of God's adopted children. There are immense privileges that come with our adoption into God's family. We're going to examine the privilege that Paul mentions in verse 17 in just a moment, but before we do that, I want to step away from Romans 8 for a moment and give you a list of some other privileges that come with our adoption that are listed elsewhere in the New Testament. They are here in part and elsewhere in part.

So let's look at our current privileges. Paul doesn't dwell on this in Romans 8, at least in our text, but let's look at our current privileges, the privileges that come with adoption. First of all, God is our Father! What higher privilege could there be than that? God, the Creator of the universe, is our Father.

Now let me just say that when I say that and when you hear that, I think if we're honest with ourselves, we all tend to think that statement should be followed by the caveats that follow those prescription commercials on television. It goes, you know, as soon as I say, "God is our Father," there should be a statement that goes quickly, "God has adopted us, but the adoptive Father

makes no guarantees explicit or implied, and said adoption may be rescinded at the discretion of the adopting parent for reasons including but not limited to . . .” You get the idea. Brothers and sisters, there are no caveats, there is no fine print. When God saved you, He legally adopted you in the very same sense and in a greater and more profound way than human parents adopt a child. Some of you here are adopted. Others of you have adopted children of your own. If you've experienced either of those, frankly you're in a better place sitting here this morning to understand this text than the rest of us.

But here's the bottom line; if you're a Christian, God truly thinks of you as one of His own children. Galatians 4:7 says, “Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son;” you’re a son; you’re a daughter. Matthew 6:9, Jesus says, “Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in heaven.” As a father, I wish I had time to develop this, but let me just remind you that if God is our Father, there are certain things that are true. First of all, He loves us. John 16:27, this is an astounding statement; I wish you had never heard this before and you could hear Jesus saying this to us. Jesus says to us, “The Father Himself loves you. The Father Himself loves you.” That's incredible! He loves us; He disciplines us. Hebrews 12, verses 6 and 7, “THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES.” God deals with us as sons, “for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?” And he goes on to say, “Look, you know, when you're disciplined as an earthly child, it's hard;” it’s not like something you look forward to. But then he says this, God “disciplines us...so that we may share, we may share his holiness.”

He has compassion on us in our weaknesses. You know, when my children were young, if you’ve had children, you've experienced this; and even if you haven't had children, you see those

little ones running around, and you see some of their weaknesses, some of their mistakes, and your heart just goes out to them. How much more this is true of God. Psalm 103, verse 13, “Just as (an earthly) father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.”

He provides all that we need. Luke, chapter 12, verses 29 and 30, “do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying.” There's a verse for you, “do not keep worrying...(for) your father knows that you need these things.” Matthew 7:11, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children,” you know, we give gifts to our kids because we love them; we want to bless them. He says, “If you're evil and you know how to do that, how much more.” It's one of those arguments from the lesser to the greater. If you're a sinner and you know to be generous and to do good to your children, “how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask him.” God is our Father!

There's a second current privilege of our adoption; Christ is our older brother. Have you ever thought about this? Christ is our older brother. Here in the text you see it, look at chapter 8, verse 29, Christ is “the firstborn (The preeminent one is the idea.) among many (brothers).” Or take Hebrews 2, verse 11, Christ “is not ashamed to call us (brothers).” Brothers and sisters, Christ is your older brother. God is your Father. Christ is your older brother.

Thirdly, we are members of God's family. Ephesians 2, verse 19, “you are no longer strangers and aliens, but...are...of God's household.” That is, you belong to God's family. Throughout

the New Testament, those who have believed in Christ are consistently called brothers and sisters. In other words, we are to relate to one another as members of a large family.

Now, let me just ask you pointedly, if you belong to this church, if you think of this as your church home, is that how you think about these people? If you think of this as just like a Christian supermarket where you can come in on Sunday and get what you need and leave and ignore the rest of the people, you have missed the whole picture. This is God's family; and if you don't love these people, what's wrong with you? We're members of God's family. Now, those are our current privileges, our privileges now.

But go back to Romans 8, because there is also our future inheritance, our future inheritance. Look at verse 17, "and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." It's so important to understand, believer, that we do not yet enjoy all the privileges that come with our adoption. As good as our salvation is, as wonderful as our time here can be, this is not all there is. Since we are God's children, we have His promise that we will receive an eternal inheritance. Galatians 4:7, "Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God." 1 Peter, chapter 1, verses 3 and 4:

God and (the) Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...according to His great mercy has caused us...to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

We are heirs of our Father! Our Father is not going to die; that's how we get our inheritance in this life. But He is going to give us from the riches of His own bounty.

And, Paul says, “We are fellow heirs (We’re co-heirs.) with Christ.” It makes sense, right? If He’s our older brother, and all the children share the inheritance, then we’re co-heirs with Him. But what exactly is it that we inherit, that we will inherit in the future? Several things the Scripture tells us! First of all, eternal life in God's kingdom, this is what you inherit. Titus 3:7, “being justified by His grace we (are) made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” You inherit eternal life. Luke 12:32, Jesus says, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.” You get the kingdom; you get to live in His eternal kingdom. He’s chosen gladly to give that to you.

Number two, you get everything in the universe. Hebrews, chapter 1, verse 2 says, “in these last days (God) has spoken to us in His Son, (Listen to this.) whom He appointed heir of all things.” Everything that exists, Jesus is heir of, and we are co-heirs with Him. That's why Paul says, “In Christ, all things are yours;” it's coming.

Number three, we inherit the glory of Jesus Christ. Look at verse 17; he says we’re “fellow heirs (of) Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.” This is part of our inheritance; we will share the glory of Jesus Christ, in what sense? We’ll share the glory of His moral character. Look down at verse 29, “He...predestined (us) to become conformed to the image of His Son.” He’s not talking about how you look; it’s not talking about your appearance. He’s talking about your character. You’re going share the glory of the moral character of Jesus Christ. You're going to be as pure as He is pure. You’re going to be as holy and as loving as He is. You’re going to share His glory in that way, and you're also going to

share the glory of Jesus's resurrected body. Down in verse 23 he says we're going to have "the redemption of our (body)." In Philippians 3:20-21 it says, "The Lord Jesus Christ...will transform the body of our humble state (I hate to tell you, but that's how God thinks of that body you're sitting in this morning. You may think it's glorious; it's the body of our humble state.) into conformity with the body of His glory," in other words, the glorified body of Jesus Christ. You're going to get a glorified body like His; you're going to share the glory of Jesus Christ.

Fourthly, you inherit the new heavens and earth; and more importantly, God Himself. Listen to Revelation 21:7, "He who overcomes (And in Revelation, that's every Christian.) he who overcomes will inherit these things, (meaning the new heavens and the new earth) and I will be his God and he will be My son." What an inheritance!

You know, I'm, as you know, the youngest of ten children, and so as I was growing up, I didn't know that you could go to the store and buy clothes. I thought everybody got them like I got them. You got them from your older siblings, and you got them from neighbors; that was the story of my life, as their kids outgrew them. I worked my own way through nine years of college and graduate school; of course there were people who were very gracious to me along the way, and the Lord used them to help me.

Before my mom's death, however, she decided to give us all an inheritance, all ten children. My dad died years ago, and she died a few years ago after I came here to pastor; and she decided before her death to divide the little appreciation that she and my dad had accumulated from the sale of my childhood home, which the only real value there was land, not the little houses that

were on it. She decided to divide that ten ways and she gave me my inheritance, and honestly I was shocked to get it, but it was \$2000; that was my inheritance.

I love my dad and I look forward to seeing him in heaven, but I have an adopted Father who is my real and permanent and eternal Father (That punctuated the point, didn't it? You'll not forget that point.) And He has promised that someday He will give me and every other son or daughter an inheritance, and it's absolutely staggering! Think about this, Christian, you get eternal life in His kingdom; you get a part in everything that exists; you share the glory of Jesus Christ, and you get God Himself and His presence forever! Thank God for our adoption.

How does God prepare us to receive this inheritance? Well, there's good news and there's bad news. The good news is you have an inheritance. Here's the difficult news, look at verse 17 again, "if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." Now Paul's next paragraph will develop this thought at length so we're going to wait for him to really develop it. But let me just give you the big picture. What is Paul saying here? He's saying, "Think about Christ." He endured all the suffering that came to Him in his human life here in order to receive the glory that the Father had promised Him and the same is true for us. Even though we are heirs of God, we must faithfully and patiently endure all that He has laid out for our lives here, accepting His providence in our lives, loving Him and staying faithful to Him through that, so that we too will receive the glory that the Father has promised us. In fact, as we close our time, I want you to look at 1 Peter; 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 6, here's what Paul is saying:

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

Listen, God has called you just like He called Christ; He calls me to go through the troubles of this life even as His children, waiting for our inheritance. But like Christ, we have to first suffer the troubles of this life. It may include persecution; it certainly includes all the troubles of living in a sin cursed world so that we may share His glory.

Let's pray together. Our Father, we are astounded by your grace, staggered by your mercy, shocked by your love. Father, forgive us, how often have we taken these great truths for granted. How often have we failed to believe you, doubted you, not expressed full and complete confidence in the promises of the gospel? Father, I pray that your Spirit would continue to testify through His Word with our spirit by helping us, enabling us, to believe the sheer promise of the gospel, and then to check ourselves, to examine ourselves against the Scripture to make sure there's evidence that the Spirit has indeed begun and is continuing His work in us.



Thank you for the many here this morning who passed the test, and Your Spirit has testified with their spirit in this way that they are yours. Lord, give them that assurance; give them that greater confidence, greater joy in knowing you. May that help them in their battle with sin?

And, Father, I pray for those who this morning who fail the test. They don't really love Your Son; they're not about obeying Him and living life to obey Him. Father, there's really no growing evidence of the Spirit's presence by the fruit He produces in their lives; there's no real desire for holiness. Oh, God, help them to see; remove the blinders now instead of at the Judgment. Help them to see today and to come to Christ because He's promised never to turn anyone away who truly, sincerely comes. May this be the day of their salvation. We pray in Jesus's name, Amen.