

Romans 8:16-17 (NKJV)

**¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,
¹⁷ and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.**

Remember that we are in a chapter all about the assurance of a believer. Let's start this morning with a summary of what we have seen so far of the Holy Spirit's ministry to the believer. John Stott has an excellent summary. He says, "Looking back now over the first half of Romans 8 we have seen something of the multiple ministries of the Holy Spirit. He has liberated us from the bondage of the law (2), while at the same time he empowers us to fulfill its just requirements (4). We now live each day according to the Spirit and set our minds on his desires (5). He lives in us (9), gives life to our spirits (10), and will one day give life to our bodies too (11). His indwelling obliges us to live his way (12) and his power enables us to put to death our body's misdeeds (13). He leads us as God's children (14) and bears witness to our spirit that this is what we are (15-16). He himself is also the foretaste of our inheritance in glory (17, 23). It is his indwelling which makes the fundamental difference between Romans 7 and Romans 8." End quote

Now we will begin looking at verse 17.

¹⁷ and if children, then heirs--heirs of God

We begin by looking at the logical implications of what it means to be a child of God. If we are children of God now in the present, we are heirs of God and will receive a reward in the future. This son-ship is not just a status now. It has implications for the future that are certain.

1 Peter 1:3-5 (NKJV)

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again (we are born again and adopted) to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

We see that these born again ones have an incorruptible inheritance. It is rock solid. It is better than any retirement plan. It is fool proof. And it is reserved in heaven. No one can steal it from us. God has reserved it and he is saving our seat. No one will strong arm us out of it.

Now who are the people who will get this inheritance? Who are God's children?

John 1:10-13 (NKJV)

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Who are the children of God? Those who have received Christ the way a country receives a King. They have recognized Christ's authoritative place in their lives and they believe that He truly came to accomplish the atonement for sins. They trust in Christ and trust what He did about sin to count in their stead. And these are the born again ones.

There are those who say that **all** are children of God. But clearly scripture is very specific and very exclusive about who **it** declares children of God. It is only those who believe and are born again.

Notice here too, these people are not just **forgiven**. They are not just **adopted**. True children share in a **new nature**. It is like, at our spiritual adoption, we take on the genetics of the children born in the family. Every believer experiences a supernatural change as well as a legal change. There is a change in **WHAT** they are as well as a change in **WHOSE** they are.

Now look where it says **Heirs of God-**

There are two possible interpretations here. And the good thing is both are scriptural. It could mean, first, that **what** the children **inherit** IS God Himself.

Deuteronomy 18:2 (NKJV) Speaking of the priest it says

² Therefore they shall have no inheritance among their brethren; the LORD is their inheritance, as He said to them.

Psalm 73:24-26 (NKJV)

24 You will guide me with Your counsel, And afterward receive me to glory.

25 Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.

26 My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Lamentations 3:22-24 (NKJV)

22 Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.

23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

24 "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!"

Revelation 21:2-7 (NKJV)

2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. (Christ IS the fountain)

7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

We see in these verses how the ideas of living with God and Christ, and of **our inheritance**, are so tightly woven together. If we received nothing but living in a peaceful relationship with our God for eternity, that would surely be enough. If God is our portion, we have enough.

So the statement "**Heirs of God**" could at least partially be speaking of the fact that we will receive **God** as our inheritance.

But there is also much evidence from scripture that it is God who **initiated** our son-ship and **grants** the inheritance that follows that position. So it could also mean that we are heirs of God in that it is God who **will freely give us** of that which is his because we are heirs.

Now remember that no one receives an inheritance without a death. In this case Christ died so we could inherit that which was His. And then He rose again to be executor of his own will.

Let's look at some other scriptures about our inheritance.

Galatians 3:26-29 (NKJV)

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

We see here that the sons of God through faith in Christ are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise that was made to Abraham's seed. This is something that God promised to happen.

Galatians 4:7 (NKJV)

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Here we see the same reasoning as in Romans. If a person is a son of God, then that person is an heir of God.

Matthew 25:34 (NKJV)

34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Let this sink in a little. The inheritance that we are going to receive isn't hastily arranged at the last moment by God counting the number of people that this inheritance is for. This inheritance has been planned for you and me and everyone who believes in Christ from the beginning of creation. You talk about careful planning.... This is really incredible and should be a source of great confidence for us.

Titus 3:4-7 (NKJV)

4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,

5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Here we see that, having been justified by His grace, we become heirs. It is all about grace. Grace is unmerited favor. How could we possibly ever merit an inheritance from God? How could that **be**? We know what we are like. We know our failures. We know our sins of commission and sins of omission. We could never merit anything but judgment from God. But it is God's grace that allows us to receive this rich inheritance prepared for us before the world was ever made. Wow.

Now think about our status as heirs just a little. There are some truths that are just logical implications of the truth of us being heirs.

First- I have a small retirement account. Right now it has a little value. But all that it would take for the value to disappear is a simple collapse of the stock market. Then that which I have prepared to retire on will immediately disappear. But think about our **inheritance**. Think about who is **in charge** of it. Think about **where** it is... where moths and rust are not factors. There are no degrading and deteriorating influences there. There is no groaning of creation or its inhabitants. So our inheritance is safe. God is looking after it.

Second- it is safe because it is God who promises it. A promise made by an omnipotent God who cannot lie cannot possibly be beat by any other deal. We can rest in confidence.

Third- the inheritance cannot be stolen or tampered with by any enemies. It is completely protected by God.

Fourth- Since we are God's heirs, we can have confidence that God will be preparing us for this future condition. Any father who is preparing a son to take over his inheritance will give careful consideration to prepare the son for what is to come.

Fifth- since we are heirs we will be experiencing the family privileges now. If we are going to be the ones inheriting the family estate, we won't be estranged from that family. We will be given the inside story of what is going on in God's family. We will be treated now as insider, not an outsider.

Sixth- An heir is given a foretaste of what is to come. Carla and I were doing our annual viewing of Little Lord Fontleroy a couple of evenings ago. There is one scene where his grandfather takes the boy to a high place where he can view the whole estate. And he tells him, "this will all be yours one day." Well that is what is happening as we are reading scripture and come upon promises like we are reading this morning. God is grabbing our attention and telling us- this will all be yours one day. And we are to live by faith, patiently waiting for the fulfillment of those promises. It honors God when we do so. And it transforms

our whining and complaining, our gloom and cynicism, our impatience and just... well, childish selfishness into praise and worship of the One who has prepared all of this for us. Really- how do we **do** it? How can we spend hours completely wasted in self absorbed pity or malaise or resentment toward God or His people when God has **told us** and **told us** and **told us**- THIS WILL ALL BE YOURS SOME DAY!. Do we **not** believe him? Are we calling Him a liar? Is it not good enough for us that He desires that we wait for this amazing blessing? Do we think we should have it now without a struggle, like some little brat, wanting what he wants at the Walmart checkout counter?

Remember this week when you are tempted to sin, when you are tempted to complain, when you are tempted to pity yourself, when you are tempted to focus on what you DO NOT HAVE..... Remember- YOU WILL HAVE ALL THIS ONE DAY. And it is a shared inheritance with Christ that you will have!

Joint heirs with Christ-

Now, what does this mean? Joint heirs? Well, if Carla and I were to die today, all that we own would be divided evenly among our four children. I thought about giving Jonathan a little extra as a joke, but I decided that might not be the best place for a joke. Anyway, it would be divided evenly to all the children.

Now the reason for dividing the ownership is that in our world it is very difficult for us to share and share alike. So it is just simpler to divide it.

That is NOT an example of joint heirs.

A joint heir is where two people are given equal ownership of the same estate. Equal ownership. Do you see the significance? It is astounding. I guess you could truly say it is awesome.

To illustrate just how amazing this is let, me ask you a question.

What is the likelihood that God will not give Christ his inheritance?
(Repeat the question)

If you are anything like me you would say it is **impossible** that God will not honor his perfect Son by giving Christ his inheritance. Christ is worthy of all glory and honor. He will **surely** receive it. It is **impossible** that He would not.

OK- now let me ask you another question.

What is the likelihood that you as a child of God will not get this inheritance? (Repeat the question)

Do you realize that, because we are joint heirs, if our inheritance would be withheld from us, so would Christ's be withheld from Him. His inheritance and

our inheritance are the same. They are linked together. So it is just as impossible that **our** inheritance would be withheld from us as it is that **Christ's** inheritance would be withheld from Him. That is what joint ownership means. That is what is so amazing. He has hooked **His** reward into **our** reward. They are inseparable. Can you see why Paul would use this description in his chapter on assurance? Our inheritance is certain.

It is also comforting that Paul mentions the fact that we are joint heirs with **Christ**. One might wonder what the Father is like. We have never seen Him. Our earthly fathers may not have been good fathers. But we all know for certain what the Son is like. And we know from scripture- like father like son. So we can be confident from what we know of our Savior, what God **the Father** is like and that our inheritance is glorious.

We are given some insight into some of the things this inheritance will entail, some of the things we will share with Christ.

In the interest of time I would like to quote John McArthur who says it so well.

“Believers one day will enter into the eternal joy of their Master, who, for the sake of that joy, “endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”. Believers will sit on the heavenly throne with Christ and rule there with Him, bearing forever the very image of their Savior and Lord. In the infinite grace of our Lord Jesus Christ... though He was rich, yet for our sake He became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich. In His great high priestly prayer, Jesus spoke to His Father of the incredible and staggering truth that everyone who believes in Him will be one with Him and will share His full glory. He said “The glory which Thou hast given me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one. We will not intrude on Christ’s prerogatives, because, in His gracious will, He Himself bestows His glory on us and asks His Father to confirm that endowment.”

if indeed we suffer with *Him*

The word IF is used other places in scripture like this and it is very clear that this is not intended to mean that somehow we earn any of this by suffering. It might be better translated “because”. It is clear that a true believer will suffer, just as a true believer will put to death the deeds of the body. It is just something that is part of the Christian life.

It is good that Paul mentions suffering here. Our Bible doesn't offer a fix for this life. It never gives us the idea that coming to Christ will make our lives a utopia on planet earth. Any attempt at evangelism with this focus is in error. This kind of gospel is based on what man **wants** for his **flesh**, rather than what man **needs** when **standing before God**. Man's greatest problem is God's wrath. Salvation offers a solution. It will not remove suffering. In fact, in some ways it will increase suffering. But it will make any suffering worth the price.

Suffering is not an **option**. It is a promise of God. We usually focus on the promises that please us. But suffering is just as much promised as blessing is. There are lots and lots of verses on suffering but we will just pick a few.

1 Corinthians 12:12 (NKJV)

¹² **For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.**

²⁶ **And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.**

These verses actually use the same Greek word as our Romans text for “suffering with” someone or something. In Corinthians we see that the suffering referred to is a natural part of body life. It cannot be avoided if you are truly part of the body of Christ any more than your ear will feel fine if you are having a heart attack. When the body of Christ operates like the body of Christ, we can't be carefree when our brothers and sisters are suffering. If one suffers we all suffer. If one experiences joy we all experience joy. That is how Christ's body is supposed to function.

This might be the primary suffering referred to in Romans, since it uses the same word.

Let's look at some more. Watch this next text to see the relationship between suffering and glory.

1 Peter 4:12-19 (NKJV)

¹² **Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;**

¹³ **but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.**

¹⁴ **If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.**

¹⁵ **But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody**

in other people's matters.

¹⁶ Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

¹⁷ For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

¹⁸ Now "*If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?*"

¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls *to Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

Do you see how even present suffering in the name of Christ, simply because we are Christians, serves to glorify God in this world and we know we will share in His glory when Christ returns.

John 15:18-20 (NKJV)

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you.

¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

You can't hardly miss that if the world hates Christ, they will make us pay for it. There is suffering that comes with the name of Christ. The only way to avoid this kind of suffering is to deny Christ.

Genesis 3:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ And I will put enmity **Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.**"

We see here that this suffering was started in the garden of Eden. As long as we have an adversary like the devil we will be made to suffer by his children.

Matthew 5:10-12 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil

against you falsely for My sake.

¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Here we are told what our response should be. We don't need to whine. We don't need to wonder if we are really Christians and if we are why would we be hated. No. When we suffer for Christ it shows that all is working according to plan and that we are His children. We can rejoice. Because being a child of Christ's is the most important thing on this earth. And we are blessed to share in identifying with Christ. And suffering is just one part of it.

if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.

Suffering is part of walking in this world for Christ and it has a place in preparing us for glory.

Great privilege requires great preparation.

I have a very imperfect illustration but I hope it will aid our understanding this morning. The place that I work was purchased by an outside firm last week. The new owner met with the employees to figure out how to structure the business. I told the new owner that I wanted to be the person that handles the technical area and any projects that need done. But it was the years of handling these sort of issues that prepared me for the new responsibility of being trusted to oversee that area. In a very small way that is what suffering does for us. It is used by God to prepare us for glory and the life we will lead after death. Let's look at the last passage this morning.

2 Corinthians 4:7-17 (NKJV)

⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

⁸ *We are* hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair;

⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed--

¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

Do you see here how it works. We feel the pain. We find ourselves in tough spots. They are spots where Christ MUST work through us because we are too weak in our own strength to make it. They are spots that we MUST depend on Christ for

the strength to get through. And we learn to live dependent upon Christ's power in us.

¹¹ For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

¹² So then death is working in us, but life in you.

¹³ And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "*I believed and therefore I spoke,*" we also believe and therefore speak,

¹⁴ knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present *us* with you.

¹⁵ For all things *are* for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day.

¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory,

Our light affliction- that is what we are facing compared to what is to come. Now, what was PAUL's light affliction? Getting stoned, shipwrecked, beaten, whipped, chased by the law, chased by the Jews, daily confrontation by his enemies, long hours teaching in the heat of the day, rejection from the people he had fathered in Christ... and it goes on and on. Some day when you feel like you are suffering consider what Paul regarded as light and momentary suffering....

Now remember- God is saying- this will all be yours some day. So what we put up with, what we must endure through is small compared to this great inheritance. And even this affliction is not without purpose. God is using it to prepare us. He is using it to get us ready for the next stage when we share the inheritance, when we rule with Him, when we share His presence forever. The real **us** is being renewed. And the suffering, it is **short** and it is **useful**.

I know that some of you are facing hard times. You have trouble seeing how what you are going through means anything. But I can assure you based on God's word that if you are His child, there is no meaningless suffering. It is all being used to make you ready for glory. And while you may not be able to see an end in sight, there is one. And 1000 years from now it will seem like a flash in the pan. You will wonder why you doubted God. You will wonder why you were so impatient. You will be so very glad that you went through it and that God used it to make you the person He wanted you to be. So hang in there. Believe God. Trust him

like **THAT** day is **THIS** day. Trust God like David trusted God, praising Him for the answer before he could even see it. And welcome the changes that he will do in you through the situations he has arranged for you. And remember- God is saying to you- Some day this will all be yours. You will inherit it all with Christ your Savior.