

1. We Have Received the Spirit of Adoption as Sons (8:12-17)

2. But We Wait for the Adoption as Sons (8:18-25)

3. Therefore the Spirit Helps Us (8:26-30)

1. We Have Received the Spirit of Adoption as Sons (8:12-17)

We saw last week that there are two paths that you can walk:

you can either walk according to the flesh,

or according to the Spirit.

There are also two mindsets – two ways of thinking:

the mindset of the flesh and the mindset of the Spirit.

But Paul told us that you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit,
if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.

If you are in Christ, then you are no longer defined by the flesh.

That is why Paul says in verses 12-13:

So then, brothers we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

For if you live according to the flesh you will die,

but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

If you live according to the flesh you will die.

If you return to the pattern of life of the old man,

living simply to please yourself,

then you will die.

But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

As Paul had said in verse 11

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,

he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies

through his Spirit who dwells in you.

The life that is at work in you is nothing less than resurrection life.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is already at work in you.

Notice how confident Paul is:

he says that if you live according to the flesh you will die,

but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

After all, if the Spirit is in you then you *will* put to death the deeds of the body.

You *will* become more and more like Jesus.

How can Paul be so confident?

Because the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you.

*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,
but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons,
by whom we cry, “Abba, Father.” (v14-15)*

You have received the Spirit of adoption.
What does that mean?

Jesus is the natural Son of God – he is the Son of God by nature.
After all, Paul says in 8:3 that God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.
And if you think about that, Paul is saying that the Son was the Son
before the Father sent him.
In other words, Jesus was not adopted by God.

But we have received the Spirit of adoption.
In other words, the same Spirit who came upon the natural Son
has now been given to us.
The Holy Spirit unites us to Christ – thereby bringing the sonship of Christ to us.

How? (verses 16-17)

*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,
and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ,
provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (v16-17)*

Let me give you a literal reading of verse 17,
“and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ,
provided we co-suffer in order that we may also be co-glorified.”

There is a little prefix “sum-” (meaning “with”)
that Paul uses regularly throughout this passage.

The prefix “co-” means the same thing in English.

By the work of the Holy Spirit in uniting us to Christ,
we are now children of God.
And by virtue of our adoption, we are now heirs of God,
which means that we are “co-heirs” of Christ.

He is the Son by nature – the natural Son.
We are sons by adoption.
But God has been so gracious as to include us in the inheritance that he has given Jesus.

As we saw back in chapter 5, there are only two men in all of history:
Adam and Christ.

Either you share in the inheritance of Adam: sin, misery and death,
Or you share in the inheritance of Christ: righteousness, peace and life.

Provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

That's what you wanted to hear, right?

Come on, Paul, you said that the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace –
and now you say that we have to suffer?

Yes!

There is no other path to glory except the path of suffering.

That's what Jesus taught us.

There is no easy street to glory.

What does it mean to “suffer with him”?

or to “co-suffer”?

Provided we co-suffer in order that we may also be co-glorified.

If we are co-heirs – if we are to *conformed* to the likeness of Christ (v29)

(it's the same prefix!)

then we must be made like him.

Paul started down this path back in 6:5

“For if we have been united with him in a death like his,

we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”

Sometimes you hear people talk about our union with Christ

as though Jesus' got all the bad stuff so that we get all the good stuff.

And then people wonder why they are suffering!

Paul never says that Jesus got all the bad stuff so that we get all the good stuff.

Rather, Paul says that Jesus became like us so that we might become like him.

And if you are to be like Jesus, then you must suffer with him.

How?

Well, let's start where Paul starts here in chapter 8.

You are called to put to death the deeds of the body (v13).

That will involve suffering,

because your flesh will resist!

You may face opposition.

The world – those around you who are not in Christ –
will not understand why you will not join them
in their headlong plunge into misery and death.
Because they *think* that they are having fun!
The flesh – your old drives and desires –
will continually pull you back to the old patterns of life.
And the Devil (or as Paul calls it here in Romans 8, “Sin”),
your old master, will constantly seek to lure you away from Christ.

But you must put to death the deeds of the body by the power of the Holy Spirit--
the power of the resurrection life of Jesus Christ which now resides in you.

And that means you *will* suffer with Christ.

And there may be more suffering.

You will face the grief of the death of loved ones.

You will endure disease, hardship, depression, uncertainty and fear.

These “natural” sufferings are not necessarily “suffering with Christ.”

If your suffering is the result of your own foolishness,
then that is not suffering with Christ.

Or if you respond to suffering with anger and resentment,
then that is not suffering with Christ.

But if, in the midst of any suffering (deserved or undeserved)
you entrust yourself to him who judges justly,
and put to death the deeds of the body,
then *any* suffering can become a sharing in the sufferings of Christ.

After all, as we have seen many times throughout Romans,
when God forgives your sins, he removes not only the guilt of sin,
but also the power of sin.
He not only justifies he also sanctifies.

So, suffering is a necessary part of the Christian life.

The only way that you can be a co-heir with Jesus
is if you co-suffer as well.

But suffering is not an end in itself!

There is a reason *why* we endure suffering.

In order that we may also be glorified with him.

And this is what Paul goes on to explain in verses 18-25.

2. But We Wait for the Adoption as Sons (8:18-25)

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time
are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

The sufferings of the “now” are not worthy of comparison with the glory of the “not yet.”
Yes, you must suffer now.
But when suffering comes,
remember the glory that will be revealed in us.

You are too preoccupied with the “now time.”
You are letting your hearts and minds be controlled by the present.

At the beginning of Romans Paul said that humanity’s fundamental problem
is that we have exchanged the glory of the immortal God
for images of created things.
We have exchanged the truth of God for a lie.
We have exchanged the natural order for the unnatural.

Now he returns to that theme and he says that the creation itself
waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. (v19)

The creation itself is looking forward!
There is an eschatological hope within the very created order!

*For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly,
but because of him who subjected it,
in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption
and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.* (v20-21)

In Genesis 3 God cursed the ground itself.
Through Adam’s sin, all creation came under God’s curse.
But the curse of God was not designed for the eternal destruction of his creation.

No, creation was subjected to futility – by God –
in hope.
Even as God’s curse upon the creation came as a result of a man,
so also the eschatological hope of creation rests upon a man.
Because the eschatological hope of creation is the revelation of the sons of God.

And the sons of God – the co-heirs with Christ –
are found only in union with the unique Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember chapter 5 –
in Adam all of humanity sinned, became corrupt and died.

Now Paul tells us that in Adam all of creation became corrupt – enslaved to corruption.

And only through the revelation of the sons of God –
only through the glory of the children of God –
will the creation be set free from its bondage to corruption.

*For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together
in the pains of childbirth until now. (v22)*

I'm sorry.

I really don't want to overdo the Greek lessons here.

But the word "now" in v22 is the same word used in verse 18.

"The sufferings of the *now* time" (v18)

"the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth
until now" (or better, until "the now").

The whole of creation has been groaning together (or co-groaning and co-travailing)
until "the now."

In other words, until the coming of Jesus – until the coming of the Holy Spirit –
that is what Paul means by "the now" –
the creation was laboring in the pains of childbirth.

But *now*, things have changed:

*And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,
groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons,
the redemption of our bodies.*

Now that Christ has come, it is no longer the creation alone –
now we also join in the groaning!

This is good news!

There is more groaning than there used to be!

Let me make one thing clear:

There is a big difference between grumbling and groaning!

To grumble is to complain or murmur or whine.

To groan is to lament that things are not as they should be.

As Paul Tripp puts it,

"We are supposed to groan" in this age, because

"we recognize how we give in to the temptation to seek in [created things]
what we can only find in the Lord."

We groan because things are not as they should be.

We groan because *we* are not as we should be.

Now, some of you may be looking back at verse 15 and wondering what Paul is saying here.

In verse 15 Paul says that “you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons,
by whom you cry, ‘Abba, Father!’”

Here in verse 23 Paul says that “wait eagerly for adoption as sons.”

Which is it?

Have we been adopted or not?

The key is found in the concept of the “firstfruits of the Spirit.”

You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons.

You have not received the adoption as sons.

After all, what does Paul say is the adoption as sons:

“the redemption of our bodies.”

Has your body been redeemed yet?

There’s a simple test:

pinch the person next to you:

does it hurt?

Okay, then your body has not yet been redeemed!

We have received the Spirit of adoption as sons –
we have received the firstfruits of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of adoption

because the Holy Spirit is presence of the resurrected Christ with his people.

In the OT the firstfruits referred to the first part of the harvest.

The first part of the harvest was to brought to God
as a sign that all of the harvest belongs to God,
and as a pledge of Israel’s fidelity to God.

The concept of the firstfruits was rooted in the Passover,
where God had struck down the firstborn of Egypt
and redeemed Israel, “my firstborn son.”

Therefore God required all Israel to devote their firstborn to him:
the firstborn of all clean animals had to be sacrificed;
the firstborn of all humans had to be redeemed.

So the bringing of the firstfruits to God was intimately connected with the idea of redemption.

And so Paul says that *we ourselves who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,
groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons,
the redemption of our bodies.*

Because you have received the firstfruits of the Spirit –
you *know* that you will receive the redemption of your bodies.
Because firstfruits is all about redemption!

But of course, you can't see this yet.
Our salvation is not yet visible.
Our bodies have not yet been redeemed.
We have not yet been glorified.

For in this hope we were saved.

Now hope that is seen is not hope.

For who hopes for what he sees?

But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

I know this can be hard.
You can't see your salvation.
Salvation is by faith.
The redemption of your body is something that you hope for.

I know that right now there is a big push in the church throughout America
to emphasize the impact of salvation on the “here and now.”

How can the church make a difference in society?

How can we help the poor?

How can we become better parents, better citizens...?

For twenty years I have devoted myself to the study of the church and her history.

My observation is that *every time* the church sets her focus on those questions,
the church becomes increasingly irrelevant –
because she forgets the transforming power of the gospel.

The transforming power of the gospel is, as Paul said back in chapter 1,
the message of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead –
the gospel of God,

*which he promised beforehand through the prophets in the holy Scriptures,
concerning his Son,*

who was descended from David according to the flesh

and was declared to be the Son of God in power

according to the Spirit of holiness

by his resurrection from the dead.

Until you are driven, impelled, motivated by the power of that resurrection,
until the redemption of your bodies – the resurrection from the dead –
is the hope that you awake to every morning –

you will flounder in every calling.

And when the church remembers that her mission is to proclaim this glorious gospel –
this remarkable good news –
then she winds up making a difference in society.

Any religion can produce “good works.”

Only the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of life
produces resurrection life – the life of the kingdom –
that results in the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

But how do you do this?

I love preaching through Romans because every time you start asking,
“how am I supposed to do this?”
Paul answers that very question!

3. Therefore the Spirit Helps Us (8:26-30)

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness.

*For we do not know what to pray for as we ought,
but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.
And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit,
because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

Have you ever been there?

Maybe you are there right now.
You don't know how to pray.
You know that things are not as they should be.
You know that *you* are not as you should be.
But you don't know what to say.
You don't know what to do.
You don't even know how to pray.

“but the Spirit helps us in our weakness.”

Because the Spirit himself groans!

How can this be?

How can the Holy Spirit groan?
The Spirit is the Spirit of God – he is God!

And yet he groans – he intercedes for us.

Your problem is that you are too easily satisfied by created things.

You seek satisfaction in what you can see, touch, taste, or hear.
You look for pleasure in created things –
you seek power over others.

These weaknesses should cause you groan!
It certainly prompts the groanings of the Holy Spirit.

And Paul reminds us that God is sovereignly at work in you by his Spirit.
Because even in the midst of your weakness – in the midst of your impotence –
the power of God, by his Spirit, is revealed in you.

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,
for those who are called according to his purpose.
For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son,
in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
And those whom he predestined he also called,
and those whom he called he also justified,
and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

We'll come back to this next week,
but suffice it to say that in everything you encounter throughout this week,
God's purposes are being worked out in you.

The sufferings of the “now time” must be held up to the glory that is going to be revealed in us.
And that glory – the glory of our big brother, Jesus –
is what we *must* keep before our eyes.

If you are driven by selfish ambition,
then you will not patiently endure suffering.
Oh, you may endure suffering –
because you know that in the end you're going to get your way!

If you are driven by love for your family,
then your endurance will also prove temporary and fleeting,
because your family will let you down.

You must be driven by the glory of Jesus –
the glory of the resurrected Son of God –
because only then do you see everything in proper perspective.

Only then do you groan inwardly as you wait eagerly for adoption as sons,
the redemption of your bodies –
as you long for the day when all will be made right.