

The Apostle Paul has put before us a very black and white challenge. We will either act according to our sinful nature and die or be led by the Spirit and live (8:6). We will set our minds on the things of the carnal nature and be controlled by that nature, or we will set our minds on the Spirit and be led by the Spirit (8:5). We are either fallen mankind or redeemed, Spirit led children of God. He really doesn't offer an in-between. We are adopted into the family of God and cry out to our Daddy for guidance and help each day, or we enslaved by the carnal nature that keeps us from acting on what we recognize as good (7:23).

Our culture today doesn't like these clear one way or the other statements. They would have us believe your truth is for you and each person should have their own truth. Really? Ravi addresses this by saying that some people would invite you to have dinner with them and others would prefer to have *you* for dinner. Which do you prefer? Is each of equal value? You have to be educated into imbecility to believe truth is subjective to every individual. In Sedona I have met people that say you can stand under your roof eave and see spaceships because the shadow cuts down on the glare. Either they have spots in their vision or there are UFOs flying around Sedona. I don't believe both are true (John 17:17).

Paul is making an all-encompassing claim. You must either reject it or accept it and the conclusions that follow. Either we are fallen and spiritually dead, living for self and enslaved by sin, or led by the Spirit and alive in Him, a child of God. It's true or it isn't. It is such an important claim that we should all carefully consider its validity.

He had said in the previous verses that we have not received a spirit of fear but of adoption as sons and we call out to God as our Daddy (8:15). We can tell we are God's children because we are led by His Spirit. ¹⁶ *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*, Some refer to this as the assurance of salvation. You just know in your heart that you are a child of God. But don't forget the preceding verses. You are can be sure because you are led by His Spirit. These are subjective things though they are quite real. You personally experience them.

How can you be sure you are not fooling yourself? Many people think they have some divine presence but their life contradicts that belief. We know by the fruit (Matthew 7:20). Are they putting to death the misdeeds of the body, as Paul said earlier (8:13)? Nevertheless, this inner confirmation of the Spirit in our spirit is quite comforting. Paul is declaring that every child of God should have that witness within their spirit.

¹⁷ *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.* If you are a child of God, then you have a glorious future awaiting you. You are an heir of God. We usually

Commented [notes1]: Romans 8:6 (ESV)

⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

Commented [notes2]: Romans 8:5 (ESV)

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

Commented [notes3]: Romans 7:23 (ESV)

²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Commented [notes4]: John 17:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

Commented [notes5]: Romans 8:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ 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!"

Commented [notes6]: Matthew 7:20 (ESV)

²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

Commented [notes7]: Romans 8:13 (ESV)

¹³ 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.

think of an heir as someone whose parent has died and left something to them. Well, God didn't die. In Hebrew culture the sons of a father were heirs while they were living. Remember the prodigal who received his portion while alive and the older son to whom the father said, "All I have is yours (Luke 15:31)." Of course the father still had the ultimate say because of respect due him.

What has Jesus inherited? After the resurrection, Jesus proclaimed that all authority on heaven and earth had been given to Him (Matthew 29:18). We are heirs with Jesus because He calls us brothers. We'll see that when we get to verse 29. Now, don't worry women. This includes you. In matters of salvation, there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus (Colossians 3:28). I'm using Biblical language and don't feel an obligation to be politically correct. You are smarter than that.

To be an heir of God is beyond my comprehension. God made everything. He can make anything from nothing. That makes any heir of earthly treasure look like a pauper. Elsewhere Paul said it hasn't even entered into the mind of man the things that God has prepared for those who love Him (1Corinthians 2:9).

I think being called to this beautiful place and enjoying the scenery and vacations diving in the ocean and fellowship with believers and a family that I love and from whom I receive love is pretty spectacular, but God says it is way beyond that! He describes it in two words, eternal life (Mark 10:30). He is life. He came to give us life to the full, not just now, but eternally as heirs of God (John 10:10).

This all follows from being His children. You want to give your children the best. We all hope to leave them with something that will bless their life. Those bumper stickers that say, "I'm spending my kids inheritance!" sounds so utterly selfish. Still, we don't want to spoil our kids so that they don't appreciate what they have been given. Can you see in this verse the perfect balance of the heavenly Father? "...provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." Just as our children have to learn to appreciate blessing through hardship, so we too learn through what we suffer. If we won't suffer reproach for His name, we can't say we are heirs or His children.

Then at the end of that verse He takes it up to another level. I love the way the truth of the Bible takes us to the end of our imagination and then challenges us to see that is just the beginning! Try to understand where Paul leads us in this verse. Children are heirs of God with Jesus if they suffer with Him. If we share in His death with our sins upon Jesus on the cross, and then in this life are scorned and hated because we declare His truth, we are sons and heirs of God. Wow! But then Paul adds the purpose behind it all. Being an heir isn't the final purpose. It is all in order that we might be glorified with Jesus (Acts 14:22)!

Commented [notes8]: Luke 15:31 (ESV)

³¹ And he said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours."

Commented [notes9]: Matthew 28:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Commented [notes10]: Romans 8:29 (ESV)

²⁹ 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.

Commented [notes11]: Galatians 3:28 (ESV)

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Commented [notes12]: 1 Corinthians 2:9 (ESV)

⁹ But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"

Commented [notes13]: Mark 10:30 (ESV)

³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

Commented [notes14]: John 10:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Commented [notes15]: Acts 14:22 (ESV)

²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

This will stretch our faith to the furthest limit. It should cause your love for Jesus to swell in your hearts. Jesus lived and died in complete obedience to the Father. That is why He has been given a name above every name. Every knee will bow to Him (Philippians 2:10). Now He has returned to the glory He had with the Father before He entered the womb of Mary (John 17:5). Now John describes Him in Revelation as ^{13b} *clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵ his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.* Revelation 1:13b-16 (ESV) And you, child of God, will share in His glory! Why? Because He has given you His righteousness and will finish the work He started in you (Philippians 1:6). We will be the glorious bride of Christ. Is that worth enduring a short time of ridicule and suffering in this life? The next verse answers the question.

¹⁸ *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* There is no comparison! What awaits us is so much greater than anything we must endure here.

I realize that some of you have endured much from this fallen world. Our brothers and sisters abroad face death each day. Family members are maimed, killed, and tortured for simply refusing to deny Christ (2Timothy 3:12). We are approaching the week when we remember the persecuted church. More people are dying today for their Christian faith than at any time in history. During the service this morning there will be those who become heirs and share in the glory of Christ as some brutal opponent of the Gospel cuts their life short. **According to Christianity Today publication, while I am sharing this message with you an average of 15 believers will go to their reward.** It is heartbreaking and glorious all at once (Psalms 116:15).

There is an American pastor in an Iranian prison that is being tortured on a regular basis simply because he is a follower of Jesus. His wife and children have been praying and seeking support for his release for over a year. Pray for Pastor Saeed. While in Evin prison, one of the world's worst, He has led over 30 souls to Jesus. If he simply denies Jesus, he will be released to join his family in the USA. When you think you have it tough, remember Pastor Saeed and say a prayer for him. He has suffered with Christ and he will share in His glory! Even he will be able to say his suffering couldn't be compared to the glory revealed in him.

In the letter to the Corinthians, Paul tells us ¹⁷ *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.* 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (ESV)

Commented [notes16]: Philippians 2:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

Commented [notes17]: John 17:5 (ESV)

⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Commented [notes18]: Philippians 1:6 (ESV)

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Commented [notes19]: 2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)

¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

Commented [notes20]: Psalm 116:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

We carry this little burden of suffering now for a short time, but it can't be compared to the eternal weight of glory for which it prepares us.

¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. Paul is moving us into a subject that will help us get an overview of God's whole plan. This transformation of God's children, of you and me, into beings that share Jesus' glory is something for which all of creation waits with eager longing. Scripture often attributes human characteristics to nature. For example, the trees of the field will clap their hands (Isaiah 55:12), even the rocks will cry out (Luke 19:40), heaven and earth are witnesses (Deuteronomy 4:26). The earth came under a curse in Genesis chapter three because of the fall of man. This is another concept that we ignore in modern times. Our sin affects the planet.

²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ 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. When Adam and Eve sinned, the creation was put in bondage to corruption. Scientifically we call this entropy. Things go from order to disorder. Decay and death entered the world. God created things to self-repair and continue on forever (Genesis 1:31). Sin brought death into the world. Imagine what the world would be like if there was no decay or death.

I love big trees. Imagine how huge they would get if no one ever cut them and bugs never attacked and disease never entered. We get a little taste of that in the few forests that are still untouched. My grandfather said the Ponderosa Forest on the rim here was like that when he was a little boy, just huge trees everywhere.

Imagine if your loved ones never died and everyone's motives were pure and loving. But now it is all subjected to futility. Creation waits to see us transformed for it inherently knows that when that happens, its liberation from decay will soon follow. Creation will have the freedom of our glory, which is no fear of death or decay. Order will no longer deteriorate, but will remain.

Paul goes on to describe the present condition of creation. *²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.* Creation is broken and it knows it. It is a dog eats cat eats mice eats insect eats plant world. Everything is devouring life. We call it the circle of life but it is a circle of death and pain. It can't wait until we are glorified.

The pains of childbirth come with increasing intensity (Matthew 24:8). As we continue to destroy nature on an increasing scale those pains are coming closer together. God made the planet in an amazingly resilient way. We are meant to use its resources to benefit mankind, but in a responsible way. For the most part, we aren't and thus creation waits to be delivered from sinful man as well as from decay and death.

Commented [notes21]: Isaiah 55:12 (ESV)

¹² "For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Commented [notes22]: Luke 19:40 (ESV)

⁴⁰ He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."

Commented [notes23]: Deuteronomy 4:26 (ESV)

²⁶ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess. You will not live long in it, but will be utterly destroyed.

Commented [notes24]: Genesis 3:17-18 (ESV)

¹⁷ And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' E cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

Commented [notes25]: Genesis 1:31 (ESV)

³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Commented [notes26]: Matthew 24:8 (ESV)

⁸ All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

23 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.

We, too, groan inwardly. We feel for the children in Africa who have lost their parents to AIDs. We grieve for the families of persecuted believers. I think it is easier to be the one receiving the persecution than to be a loved one who sees you suffering. We groan for those who are the victims of sin, for abuse in all its ugly forms and the emotional scars. We groan over the direction of our nation and its slide into secularism. And then there is pain of the deterioration of our physical beings. So many people live with constant physical pain. I often find myself just yelling out, "Come Lord Jesus (Revelation 22:20)!"

We are already adopted, but the day will come when we will be given the seal of our adoption, our redeemed bodies, which is what we will wear for all eternity. There will be no more pain and suffering. All its lessons will be learned. Every tear will be wiped from our eyes (Revelation 21:4). Sorrow and sighing shall flee away and gladness and joy will be ours forever (Isaiah 35:10). Redeemed bodies means redeemed from corruption and decay. There will be no more pain. Our bodies will be fashioned like His glorious body (Philippians 3:21). This is the future of those that are led by the Spirit, the children of God.

Can it be true? Is this declaration of Scripture the factual information of our future? Well, consider this; right from the first book of the Bible written by a prince who became a shepherd who then became the leader of nation, the message has been about one thing. There is no other work that was written over millenniums by so many authors from all walks of life and several different cultures that consistently speaks one message. Man has fallen away from his Creator. Sin is devastating our lives and the earth. A Redeemer has come. He has made a way to restore all that was lost and use all the evil of fallen men and angels to a greater end than we can fathom.

Are you a child of God? Have you trusted the One who conquered death, who has promised to come again for His own (Revelation 22:12)? Are you led by His Spirit? Does the Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you are God's child? Then this future is yours. If not, you will face God's justice. Everyone must choose while we have breath (Hebrews 9:27).

Questions

- 1 Is there objective truth?
- 2 What is the assurance of salvation?
- 3 How can we be heirs of God?
- 4 Why do we suffer?
- 5 What is the promise in verse 17?
- 6 What is the purpose of suffering?

Commented [notes27]: Revelation 22:20 (ESV)

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Commented [notes28]: Revelation 21:4 (ESV)

⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Commented [notes29]: Isaiah 35:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Commented [notes30]: Philippians 3:21 (ESV)

²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Commented [notes31]: Revelation 22:12 (ESV)

¹² "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done.

Commented [notes32]: Hebrews 9:27 (ESV)

²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,

- 7 What is the promise of suffering?
- 8 Why is creation groaning?
- 9 What is it waiting for?
- 10 Why are we groaning?
- 11 Why do you believe?