

Adoption Suffering Glorification

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 September 2015

Preacher: Chris Trousdale

[0 : 00] If you have a copy of the scriptures with you, then I would like you to open up your Bibles to Romans chapter 8.

If you don't have a Bible with you, then you can just take one of the Bibles that we have scattered around in the chairs and turn to page 944 in those Bibles. Very easy to find Romans 8 in those Bibles.

Page 944 is where you'll need to be. Otherwise, in your Bibles, find the New Testament in the second half of your Bible and turn past Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the Gospels, past the book of Acts, and you'll land in the book of Romans chapter 8.

Well, we're going to pick up in the same passage that we spent some time in last week and try to finish some things that I did not finish last week. And so we're going to read verses 14 again down through verse 17.

And I'd like you guys to stand in honor of God's word as we read. Paul writes, For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

[1 : 12] 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.

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. We want to be glorified with Jesus someday.

And so, Father, encourage us to that end as we think about what it means to be adopted into your family and to be heirs with Christ.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys take a seat. You will often hear people say things like, If you want to be successful in life, then you need to know who you are.

[2 : 12] You need to know what kind of person you are. It's difficult to experience very much success in life if you don't really know who you are. So that you can, your understanding of your own self can fail you in at least a couple of different ways if you don't really know who you are.

You can have too low a view of your abilities and what you're capable of, and so therefore never achieve anything and never experience any success if your view is too low. So that if you don't think that you're smart enough to pass a particular test, then you may not prepare very well for that test because you've already given up.

You may not think that you're skilled enough for a certain job, so you may never even apply for that job. When perhaps all along you were capable of doing those kinds of things. Or on the other hand, you might think too much of yourself.

There are certain things. You have limits. There are certain things that we are just not capable of doing. I mean, I'm never going to be an NFL quarterback. It doesn't matter whether or not I believe with all my heart that I could be a great quarterback.

I'm 5'9", 170 pounds, and I occasionally trip on air. Just air. Nothing else around me to trip on. It's never going to happen even if I believe it with all of my heart.

[3 : 29] So in terms of being successful or achieving things in life, it's helpful if we know who we are. But of course, even talking about success feels kind of odd to me a little bit this morning because it feels like a very sort of American type of thing to talk about.

I think maybe in other places in the world we might say that you need to know who you are, not if you want to be successful, but if you want to survive. If you just want to make it through life, you need to know who you are.

You need to know what you're capable of and not capable of because we're going to face suffering and we're going to face trials and things are going to happen to us throughout the course of life. So that perhaps what we ought to say is not if you want to succeed, you need to know who you are, but if you're going to survive, if you're going to endure through suffering, then you need to know who you are, which is exactly the connection that the Apostle Paul makes at the end of this passage between who he has described us as being in verses 14 and 15 and 16 as those who have been adopted into God's family and have now become sons, children, and heirs along with Christ.

He makes a connection between our identity and the suffering that we will endure in the world. Notice what he says in verse 17. If we are children, then we're heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

[5 : 04] So that there is a connection here between our identity as fellow heirs with Christ and children of God and the suffering that we will most certainly endure in this world so that if you want to endure that suffering, you need to know who you are.

And on the flip side, the suffering itself will at times reveal who you are. You are heirs with Christ, provided, that is if, we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

And last week we spent the entire time together in the Word talking about what Paul means when he uses this language of sonship and adoption. And one of the things that we noticed from last week is that Paul conceives of the reality that some people can be sons and heirs of God and the rest are not sons of God.

The rest are not heirs of God. The rest are not children of God. That's why we see in verse 14, for instance, where he says that all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God, which implies, as we said last week, that there are those who are not led by the Spirit of God, therefore not sons of God.

He says that those of us who have received the Spirit have received a spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry, Abba, Father. So that there are those who have not received the Spirit and therefore cannot in all reality cry out to God, Abba, Father.

[6 : 38] Not everybody that we encounter in the world around us, not everybody in your life can call themselves a child of God. Only those who have trusted in Christ and therefore become a spiritual brother with Christ and therefore share with Him in an inheritance and in a Father can call Him Father.

Not everyone is a child of God. Only those who have trusted in Jesus. But if we've trusted in Him, we saw also last week that the Holy Spirit does such a work in us that there is a sense and a feeling and a resting in the fatherhood of God over us.

Resting in the fact that we have indeed been adopted into His family. That we were once strangers. We were once far off. Indeed, Paul says in Romans 5, that we were once enemies of God.

But now through Christ, we have been adopted by God into His family and we are in fact children. And the Holy Spirit does such a work that He helps us to feel that and know that, not just as an objective truth, but as a reality in our own hearts.

He says that the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And yet, despite the fact that we have the Scriptures telling us that through faith we're adopted into God's family, and we have the Holy Spirit at work in our hearts so that we sense and feel that we are now children of God and adopted into His family, I believe that still many of us still struggle with understanding exactly what that means for us.

[8 : 12] Many of us still have difficulty relating to the concept of God as our Father now and relating to the idea of having been adopted into His family. And there are a lot of reasons for that.

For one, many people have difficulty relating to the image of a Heavenly Father at all. Because so many people have not experienced with their earthly fathers a relationship that they would want to pattern their relationship with God after in any sort of way.

Maybe you could say, well, I didn't really even know my father growing up. I didn't even have a dad who was around. Or you might say, my dad was not the kind of person that I actually want to think about the relationship that I had.

Maybe you had a mean father, or an absentee father, or an abusive father. There are all sorts of reasons that we oftentimes struggle to identify with this language about God as our Father.

And yet when we do that, I think that we're kind of getting things backwards. In other words, I don't think that when the Bible calls God our Father, I don't think that the Bible simply means that we

should make an analogy from what our fathers are like to what God is like.

[9 : 26] In fact, I think most of the time it needs to be turned around the other way. I think that when we become fathers and parents, we need to mirror our own parenting and our own fatherhood upon God's fatherhood.

So if we can't get a picture of God as Father, or an accurate picture of God as Father from our human fathers, from where can we get it? How can we overcome that difficulty with relating to this kind of imagery?

Well, the answer is found in this passage itself because we are told that we are heirs with Christ. And if you look further down in Romans 8, verse 29, we are told that God, those whom God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

We need to remember that. We have a spiritual brother in Christ. So we can turn to Christ to see an accurate picture of what it means to have God as Father.

We can relate to the imagery of God as our Father if we will look at the relationship that Jesus himself shared with God the Father. So I want you to hold your place in Romans 8, and I'd like you to turn all the way back to the Gospel of John.

[10 : 36] It's really not too far. I'd like you to turn back to John 17, where we encounter something that is often labeled the high priestly prayer of Jesus, which makes it sound sort of distant and far off and difficult to relate to.

But this is an intimate prayer that Jesus offers up to his Father before he's going to the cross. And so we get a really clear glimpse through this prayer and many other prayers of Jesus.

We get a very clear glimpse of the relationship that Jesus shared with his Father. But in this particular prayer, not only the relationship that Jesus shares with his Father, but how Jesus expects his followers to participate in the relationship that he has with his Father.

In fact, six times in this one prayer, Jesus refers to God as Father. He begins the prayer in verse 1 saying, Father, the hour has come.

Glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you. All throughout the passage, he addresses God as his Father. But then as we come down to verse 20, I want you to notice that Jesus makes a connection between the intimacy that he shares with his Heavenly Father and the intimacy that he expects us to share with both him and his Heavenly Father.

[11 : 58] Verse 20, I do not ask for these only. That is, he's been praying for his disciples, the 11, that's the 12 minus Judas. He's been praying for them. But now he's saying, I'm not just praying for them.

I'm not just praying for Peter and John and the other guys. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their words. So that's all Christians. That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you.

That they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. So Jesus has a kind of unity with the Father. He says, I'm in you, you're in me, and now I want them who are going to believe in my name through the apostles, I want them to be in us.

I want them to share in. I want them to participate in the kind of relationship that I have with you.

Verse 22, The glory that you have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.

I in them, and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

[13 : 08] That's remarkable that Jesus would say that you, Father, have loved them even as you loved me. Jesus shared the most intimate of relationships with His Father.

A relationship that was not merely limited to the 30 some odd years that Jesus spent upon the earth, but a relationship that extends back throughout all eternity into the past.

Jesus shared glory with the Father, He says in this very prayer, all the way back into eternity. There never was a time when Jesus and His Father did not share an intimate relationship with one another.

And now, what's remarkable is Jesus says, I want my people to experience that love that the Father has for me. And you, Father, have loved them with the same love with which you have loved me throughout all of eternity.

Our model for what it looks like and feels like and how to experience the love of God as our Father is not to be found in any human being, even the most perfect of human fathers, because they will be sorely lacking.

[14:15] Our model is found throughout the Gospels as we see Jesus interact with His Father and then says, the same kind of relationship that I share with Him, I desire that my people would share with Him.

The same love with which He's loved me, He now loves my people that He has given to me. so that no matter how good or how bad your earthly fathers have been, there is a window through which you can see and sense and feel what a relationship with God as Father is supposed to be like.

And that window is Jesus Himself. So I'd encourage you to spend time reading the Gospels, read Matthew, read Mark and Luke and John and highlight every place where Jesus speaks to His Father or speaks about His Father and begin to notice the intimacy that's there, begin to notice the kind of relationship that they have and then begin to expect that relationship to draw you into itself that you might become a participant in that relationship.

The failure of your father should not be a hindrance to your enjoyment of a better father. look through the window of Jesus so that you might see and savor the sweetness of what it means to be adopted into God's family.

That should be no barrier at all for us. There's of course another barrier I think that at times we run into and that is the distance between the world in which Paul was writing this letter and the world in which we live now.

[15:57] Of course there are some respects in which our present culture mirrors the culture of first century Rome more than in any other point in history since then.

There are ways in which we align very closely with the world that Paul was in but there are still some ways in which we don't quite make the connections and we don't quite relate to.

And I think that may be the case with the language of being an heir and having an inheritance here in Romans 8. I think that we often times we don't really put a lot of emphasis upon what it means to be an heir.

We don't often think about what it means to inherit something from our parents or for something to be passed down because it doesn't play as large a role in our lives as it did in the lives of people living in the ancient world.

Because in the ancient world for you to be an heir of your father didn't just mean that you were going to get a few things when he died. It meant that your whole vocation and your whole identity was determined by your father's identity so that most of the time not all the time but most of the time if your father was a blacksmith you inherited his craft and his trade and you became a blacksmith.

[17:11] And when he passed away you became the head of the family business and it was expected that you would pass that down to your sons. If your father was a carpenter you became a carpenter.

It wasn't merely about the things that you got. That was not merely what inheritance and heirship was about. It was about who you would be what you would do how you would survive in the world and that was obtained through inheritance.

It was possible to some degree or another in the ancient world to sort of climb the social ladder and end up in a better social position than your father or your grandfather but that wasn't usually the case.

Most of the time if your parents were poor if your father was poor you were poor if your father was wealthy then you would be wealthy because your identity was determined by their identity. Not so in our world.

I mean in our world and particularly the American mindset is that you can be whatever you want to be. If you work hard enough and if you just happen to meet the right people and make some good decisions you can do whatever you want.

[18:13] You can climb the career ladder. You can climb the economic ladder. That's not always true. We don't see that always panning out but that's the mentality that we have but that wasn't the mentality of the ancient world.

The mentality of the ancient world was not I'm going to climb the ladder. The mentality of the ancient world was I'm going to receive an inheritance. I'm an heir of my father and I see in my father who I am going to be.

And so because of the cultural distance we sometimes fail to grasp the significance of the imagery that Paul is using here in Romans chapter 8.

But I want you to think with that sort of first century mindset of I'm going to receive from him not just a few things I'm going to receive from him my identity my vocation my livelihood everything that is so precious to sustain me.

Now I want you to have that image in your mind and I want us to read these verses again real quickly. Verse 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 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.

[19 : 42] Your identity determined by your relationship with your heavenly father by means of your trust in his son Jesus.

Your whole goal in life determined by who you are in Christ in relation to God the father.

This is not about receiving some things from somebody who dies before you. This is about your identity and your destiny being determined by who your father actually is.

And this is good news when we can sense that and we can feel that and we remember that because we we will be tempted at times to despair.

We will be tempted at times to think that the things that are happening to me in the world are too much for me to bear and we will be tempted at times to forget who we are and we need to be reminded in those moments you are a child and an heir of God the father.

[20 : 55] You have a spiritual brother in Jesus who has gone before you and he has done all that is necessary for you to enjoy the benefits of sonship.

But Paul ends this passage not by simply saying remember who you are so that you can endure. Paul ends this passage transitioning to the next section of Romans 8 that's going to talk about suffering.

He ends this passage by making a different connection and the connection that he makes is is that if you suffer with Christ you will know with a certainty that you didn't have before you will know that you really are genuinely and truly an heir and a child.

Look at verse 17 again. We are heirs of God we are fellow heirs with Christ provided or you might translate this as if we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

You see the connection? There is a connection between our present suffering and our future enjoyment of the benefits of being a child of God. There is a connection between the pain that we experience now in this life and the freedom from pain that we will experience in God's presence forevermore.

[22 : 14] If we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him because our being adopted into God's family now is pointing to something that will be more complete in the future.

Scan, move your eyes down, just a handful of verses down to verse 21. In verse 21 we're told that the creation itself someday will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

There is a freedom related to the glory that we will experience as children of God. But when will we fully experience that freedom and that glory?

Verse 23, the end of verse 23. We wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. In other words, the full enjoyments of the blessing of being adopted into his family will not be realized or experienced by us until the day when we are raised from the dead.

When even our bodies themselves are redeemed. Something Paul spoke about 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.

[23 : 36] It'll happen if you belong to him. If you've trusted in Jesus, then the resurrection life that he experienced, you will experience someday. If, if we suffer with him, in order that we may also be glorified with him.

We all too often have a tendency to view suffering as evidence that something is wrong in our spiritual lives. We are tempted all too often to view our own suffering as a sign that we are not right with God at the moment.

That's what Job's friends thought about him. When Job suffered, if you haven't read the book of Job, it's been a part of my daily Bible reading the last couple of weeks. If you haven't read Job in a

while, I encourage you to go back and read through the book of Job.

Because Job is a righteous man, he stands in a right place with God, he's rightly related to God, and yet God sovereignly allows great suffering to come into Job's life, and Job's friends come in to offer Job counsel, and primarily their counsel consisted of, Job, what have you done in your life? What are you doing? Who are you defrauding or cheating? Who have you treated wrongly so that God would turn around and voice this kind of suffering upon you? And sometimes we think like that in our own lives.

[25 : 00] We get sick and we start confessing all kinds of sins if God will just lift the sickness, or someone we know becomes ill or something terrible happens and we begin to suspect that maybe it's because of some sin that I've committed in my life.

Maybe my suffering is a sign that something's not quite right in my relationship with God. Paul says no, more than likely, your suffering is not a sign that something is wrong in your relationship with God.

Your suffering is there to prove the validity of your relationship with God. You suffer not merely as just a person in a fallen world, once you're in Christ, when you're in Christ you suffer with Christ as a fellow heir.

When all of your suffering becomes not a suffering just in general in the world, but when all of your suffering in your heart and in the way that you think becomes a suffering with Christ, a suffering for Christ, then all of your suffering aims at the assurance of future glory for you.

You do not have to think of your suffering as a sign that something is wrong between you and God. It may be occasionally that is the case, but you do not necessarily or immediately have to conclude when suffering comes into your life that something is wrong.

[26 : 25] Rather you can rejoice that you have now received another opportunity to prove your intimate connection to Jesus, to suffer alongside with Him, and therefore bolster your confidence that you are really an heir with Jesus.

Suffering is not something to be run from and avoided. Suffering is a blessing that He sends into our lives to confirm our identity in Christ and to confirm that we are indeed His children.

And if children, heirs, and if heirs, then unbounded glory awaits you. And an intimate relationship with the Father can be yours now that parallels even the relationship that Jesus has with His Father. God, it's good news. It's good news that we ought to trumpet. It's good news that we ought to rejoice in as the church. We ought to. But one final point that I want to make that I didn't get to last week, and I intended to, but I just ran out of time.

One final thing I want to say is that if these great, grand realities about our identity in Christ, if they're going to be really appreciated by us and put on display for the world as something that the world needs, then we need to find ways to trumpet these realities to the world.

[27 : 52] And one of, I think, one of the best ways that we can trumpet the reality of spiritual adoption into the family of God because of what Christ has done for us is for us as individual believers and us as a church to become more involved in earthly adoptions in this life, in this world.

Because Paul chose the language of adoption because it was something that people could relate to. Because adoption was a common thing in the Roman world. You needed an heir, you needed someone to pass on your livelihood to, your identity to, and so when a man didn't have a son, oftentimes, especially if he were wealthy, he would adopt someone to be his heir.

It was significant, it was meaningful, and Paul takes that language because the culture connects to it. We can do the opposite today. We can connect the spiritually reality, and we can give a picture of this reality to our culture if we become more engaged in the issue of adoption today.

That doesn't necessarily mean that every family has to adopt a child, although, even in saying that, I fear that I may let some of you off the hook who may should consider it.

Because on any given week, there are somewhere between 4,000 and 5,000 children in foster care in Harris County alone. It's staggering, the number of children.

[29 : 27] Many of those will be returned to their homes, but many of them will not. It is staggering when you begin to expand out beyond just the county we live in to the state or the nation as a whole or even the world.

It is staggering the number of children that do not have families. And as those who have been adopted into a family that was not our own by any rights, we should be willing to consider and pray about whether or not we can reflect that reality in our own homes and in our own families.

We should be willing to consider it and pray about it. But it's not just that. We can be more engaged in this. We can be more intentional about modeling what God has done for us if we will simply become more supportive in the entire process of adoption.

We can financially support those who are trying to adopt because it's a very expensive process. No matter how you do it, there are a lot of expenses incurred and we can support them.

We can help as individuals. You can give somebody money. You as a church, we can do that. We can raise money for people or you can become a constant support of prayer for someone who's going through the process or considering going through the process.

[30 : 40] You can babysit for them while they're going through the process. There are so many ways that we can either be in the process of adopting ourselves or we can be a support system for those who are.

If we will embrace this as a church, not only will we have a means by which we can say, look world, we're doing this because we want you to see what God has done for us and we want you to participate in a great grand reality.

You see how good this is? You see how good this child has it now that they've been adopted into this family? You can have it even better. You can have it even better.

Not only that, but we can become more consistent in our other convictions as well. because I would venture to guess that probably everybody in this room would label themselves as pro-life, anti-abortion, whatever you want to call it.

And yet for all of our stances and convictions, what do we do? What do we do about it? Because the reality is babies need homes.

[31 : 51] Babies need homes. And when no home can be found, mothers become distraught and do the unthinkable. We can become more balanced and more faithful to our convictions if we will embrace as a church the idea of really engaging with adoption.

And we can become a clear picture to the world of what God has done in Christ for us. I want us as a church, and I want you as an individual follower of Christ, I want us not merely to say, hey, that's a good idea, somebody should do that.

I want us as a church, and I want you as an individual believer to say, what would you have me do? Not would you have me do anything, but what would you have me do? Would you have us adopt and begin the process this week?

Because it can take a long time. Would you have us find somebody who's thinking about adopting and support them and help them? What would you have us do right now? What would you have me do to further this cause?

Because at the end of the day, we have a mission to complete. It's not a difficult mission to comprehend. Jesus said, go and make disciples.

[33 : 06] And we try in everything we do as a church, we try to remain focused upon that mission. We have a mission. And it helps to accomplish the mission if, A, you're finding ways to connect people around you to what the mission is and saying, here's a picture of what we're trying to do.

We want more lost people without a true spiritual home to have a heavenly father. And here's a picture of what that looks like in our own lives or in the lives of our friends. Here's what that looks like.

We want to do that. But we also want to say, we want to take the kids. We'll take them, not because we believe that we're the most fit people to raise children, not because we believe that we're the greatest parents in the world.

We'll take them in though, because if they will come to us, if they will come here, they will hear the gospel. And perhaps, by God's grace, they might become a child of God and an heir with Christ. Let's pray.