

WHERE IS THE SAFEST PLACE IN THE WORLD?

Romans 8:14-17

This is absolutely one of my favorite family pictures. We were attending the birthday party of Anna's little friend Brett. Anna was 3. Even at 3 Anna had a strong sense of how the world and everyone in it should go. She needed a little time out from life coaching her peers and while I was consulting with my little girl, someone snapped this picture.

I thought of this incident in light of Romans 8:14-17, our text for this study. Even though I needed to correct Anna, whether she felt it or not, she was, in that moment, in the safest, most loving place in the world. I can only describe the intensity of my love for this little girl as an ache deep within my heart. I would die for her. It would break my heart if she doubted my love or was afraid of me or was afraid I would ever reject her.

I believe God wants us to know and feel this same truth; that particularly in the midst of our failures in the struggle of sanctification, we are in the safest, most loving place in the world. We are in His arms. We are His beloved children and nothing in all the universe will change that. I would die for my children; God the Son did. How God's heart must break when we doubt His love or fear His rejection.

KEEPING IT IN CONTEXT

In chapters 1-4 Paul deals with *justification*. *Justification* is the first aspect of salvation. Through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ we are delivered from the *penalty* of sin. We are declared righteous by God. We are restored to a living relationship with God for all eternity. That is our new *position* before God.

In chapters 5-8 Paul deals with *sanctification*. *Sanctification* is the second aspect of salvation. It is the lifelong process of being delivered from the *power* of sin. The goal of *sanctification* is that we increasingly become like Jesus (8:29). *Sanctification* is the lifelong process of healing our brains and being set free from fear and self-centeredness.

But as we all know, the process of *sanctification* is a struggle as the Apostle Paul himself expressed in Romans 7:21-25:

Romans 7:21-25 (ESV)

21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. **22** For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, **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. **24** Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? **25** Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

Romans 8 is God's answer to Paul's question: "Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

Have you noticed there are few commands in Romans 8, but many assurances?

When you fail, the last thing you need is a critic. Good hearted people, people who want to do right, are their own worst critics. We beat ourselves up. We know we sinned. We hate it. We love God. We want to please Him. We want to serve Him. In addition to guilt, fear creeps in. The purpose of sanctification is to set us free from fear and self-centeredness. Fear is built on the lies that God doesn't love us; God doesn't care about us and, if we don't get our acts together, God will reject us.

God goes to great lengths in Romans 8 to dispel these lies. He wants us to move through the process of sanctification with the deep assurance that He loves us and He is for us!

Romans 8:1 assures us there's no condemnation coming at us from God in the midst of sanctification:

Romans 8:1 (ESV)

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1-13 assures us the Holy Spirit is with us giving life to our spirits in the here and now and giving life to our bodies in the future.

Romans 8:2

For in Christ Jesus I am under a new arrangement for living, in which the Holy Spirit imparts life to me. This new order sets me free from the old arrangement for living, confined to sin and death.¹

Romans 8:9–11 (ESV)

9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. **10** But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. **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.

In Romans 8:14-17, our text for today, God gives us yet another assurance.

Romans 8:14–17 (ESV)

14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. **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!” **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 fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

What is the assurance?

YOU ARE A CHERISHED CHILD OF GOD

Bible teacher Ray Ortlund translated verses 15-17 in this way:

Romans 8:15-17

The Spirit has not made you slaves, so that you must forever cringe in dread of God every time you fail. No, not anymore! The Spirit has now made us God’s children, so that we cry out to him, “Father! Father!” It is God’s own Spirit prompting us in this way, assuring us with deep affections that we really are children of God. And since we are God’s children, we stand to inherit all of God’s promises in the gospel. We are heirs of God, then, and fellow-heirs with Christ—as long as we share his sufferings now so that we may also share his glory then.²

When Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God. The Spirit frees us from fear so we can draw near. Now, when we sin, we come to our loving heavenly Father for consolation and help. We cry “Abba, Father”. The cry of a distraught child. He will not condemn. If we confess He assures we’re forgiven. He gives grace to help in our time of need. The Spirit assures us in our spirit that we are His child. We need never hide again.

He loves us more than we love our own children.

As God’s children we are heirs and co-heirs with Jesus. We have a future inheritance. In the midst of our struggle to be healed from our self-centeredness and fear we have something fantastic to look forward to. Paul reveals our inheritance in verses 18-25. But before he does, he explains that as co-heirs with Christ, we must walk the same road that lead to Christ’s glory.

Romans 8:17 (ESV)

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.

Jesus Himself had to suffer and overcome in order to be our Savior and High Priest. He suffered in the Wilderness when Satan tempted Him to satisfy His physical desires apart from God the Father’s will and timing. Jesus suffered insults, lies, and rejection by the spiritual leaders of Israel. Jesus suffered terribly in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus suffered the scourging and the Cross. By persevering through all these forms of suffering, He became perfect and complete in His humanity. As the perfect God/Man He, and He alone, met the necessary qualifications to be our Passover Lamb and our Great High Priest.

¹ Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *A Passion for God: Prayers and Meditations on the Book of Romans* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 107.

² Ibid., 114.

The Preacher of Hebrews wrote:

Hebrews 5:7-10 (ESV)

7 *In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. 9 And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, 10 being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.*

Having suffered, Jesus entered into His glory.

If suffering was the path to glory for Jesus, the Son of God, then suffering will likewise be the path to glory for us who are adopted son's and coheirs. The ESV's "provided" is not a condition in the Greek text, but rather a fact. If the Son of God learned obedience through suffering, so will we, God's adopted sons and daughters. We are called to share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

The glory, when revealed, will eclipse the suffering and make it seem as nothing.

As God's children we need never fear Him. That is, we need never be afraid of harm or rejection. Instead, because of the Holy Spirit and through the Holy Spirit we come to God in our failures for comfort and help.

And as God's children we have an inheritance that will more than redeem the sufferings of this life.

APPLICATION

Memorize verses 14-17 for the renewing of your mind. You are a cherished child of God. Even when you blow it you can come to God for comfort and help.

Accept suffering as part of the Christian life. The term used by Paul is a general term. It can refer to all types of suffering. Sanctification involves suffering as we take steps to die to ourselves and live to the Spirit. The internal conflict described in Romans 7:21-25 is a form of spiritual suffering experienced by every believer. But the suffering will also include rejection by the world and various forms of persecution. As sons and daughters of God and coheirs with Christ, we are called to suffer as Christ suffered. The Health, Wealth and Prosperity message of preachers like Joel Osteen is not biblical. Do not be deceived.

Some of us have critical personalities. For whatever reasons, we heap criticism on our spouses, children, co-workers and fellow Christians. Such criticism is wholly self-centered; it brings some twisted form of satisfaction to the criticizer, but it does nothing helpful for the one being criticized. In fact, it most often incites bitterness and discouragement that can last a lifetime. If this is you, repent. Learn from God your Heavenly Father and how He relates to us from Romans 8. He does not criticize us in our failures and weaknesses – He goes to great lengths to assure us of His love and commitment. Does He correct? Absolutely, but with gentleness and patience as a loving father corrects his beloved child. It His unconditional love that is healing our injured brains and restoring us to the fullness of who He created us to be. Be an agent of healing in your relationships like your Heavenly Father.