

Adopted Into God's Family
Romans 8:14--17
Pastor John Miller

Follow with me as I begin reading the text in verse 14. Paul says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God..." there's our theme through the whole eighth chapter, the Spirit of God and what it means to live in the Spirit, "...they are the sons of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." In 2 Corinthians 5:17, a verse that you are all familiar with, Paul says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." You know the verse. That's all about what we learn in chapter 8, the new creation in Christ. We discovered in verses 1-4 that we have a new position in Christ, and there is therefore now no condemnation because we are in Christ Jesus. Then, last Wednesday in verses 5-13, we saw that we have a new life in the Spirit. I want you to look at verse 13, where we ended last Wednesday. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die..." that's the unregenerated, unsaved life that leads to death, "...but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." It's all about being born again in Christ and the new life that we have in Jesus.

We move to a third new aspect of the Christian life, now we have a new relationship; so we have a new position, a new life, and a new relationship, verses 14-17. The new relationship he mentions in verse 15 is that we have the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Bible teaches very clearly, and we're going to break it down in just a moment, that we have been adopted by God. We are not only born sons and daughters, but we are adopted into the family of God. You don't hear a lot of teaching about adoption, but it is clearly taught in the New Testament, and we're going to talk about that aspect of our relationship to God tonight. So, we have a new relationship in that we have been adopted into the family of God. You say, "Well, Pastor John, I thought we were born into God's family?" That's true, we are born into God's family but we are also adopted. Both are taught in the Bible. A true Christian has both been born into the family of God through regeneration and they have also been adopted into the family of God—given a new position.

Paul clearly teaches for the first time in Romans that we as Christians are adopted into God's family. I say that because so far, in the first 17 verses, Paul has not said anything new. (By the way, although I said tonight's some of the greatest verses in the Bible, next Wednesday night are some of my most favorite verses in the Bible. So do a little sneak peek and read ahead. I can't wait until next Wednesday night. The marvelous, marvelous verses on how we have a new hope in Jesus Christ.) For the first time, Paul introduces the topic of adopted into God's family, which means a new status. As Christians, we are members of the family of God. I want to point this out before we go back and go through it systematically. In verse 14, we are son's of God; in verse 15, we cry Abba, Father; in verse 16, we are the children of God; and in verse

17, if children then heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. The whole passage revolves around this idea that we are the children of God. We are adopted by God. We are sons and daughters of God.

I want to take this passage and point out five benefits or blessings of being a member of God's family, but what Paul is intending to do, I want you to listen very carefully, Paul is intending to take this passage and give us reasons for assurance. I believe that as a Christian, you can know that you are saved. You can know that you are going to heaven. You can know that right now, before you die and go to heaven, that you are a child of God. Now, don't raise your hand, but do you, right now, right here, know for sure, no doubt, that you are God's child and that you are going to heaven when you die, heaven has come to you right now, and you have eternal life? These are going to be five things to check out in your life to see whether you are a true child of God, adopted into His family.

The first is freedom (write that down), verse 14. The Spirit of God leads us. If you are a Christian, you are categorized as being led by the Spirit. I want you to notice it, verse 14. "For as many..." the fact that he starts with a "For" as verse 13 does, indicates that there is a logical outflow from verse 13. He says, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die but if ye through the Spirit..." notice the mention of the Holy Spirit, "...do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." So, between verses 13 and 14, you don't skip a beat there. For those that are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Now, when Paul refers to those being led by the Spirit of God, he's not talking about some super saints that are part of a "deeper life" club, the super saints that are Spirit filled.

I do believe that there are Christians that are not walking in the Spirit in the sense of being filled by the Spirit because Paul commands Christians in Ephesians 5:18 to be filled. He would not command us to be filled if we were automatically filled, nor in Acts where they say, "Choose out seven men full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom." It wouldn't be a qualification for leadership if every Christian was Spirit filled. The term is not used that way here. The term is used to designate Christians. It's talking about Christians because Christians live in the realm of the Spirit, and as a Christian, when you get saved and you're born again, all of the sudden you become conscious of the fact that God is working in your life. The Word takes on a new kind of relationship to you, your eyes are opened, your heart burns with a love for God, you want to pray, you want to go to church on Wednesday night. You know you're saved when you go to church on Wednesday night, right? This is the "deeper life" club. It's talking about all Christians that are living in the spiritual realm. That's what he means by, "those who are being led by the Spirit." "Being led" is in the present tense, so it means that we are now living in the Spirit and being constantly led by the Holy Spirit. It doesn't mean that as a Christian you might not have lapses of carnality or that you might not stumble and fall, but you're now in a spiritual realm.

What does he mean, in verse 14, where he says, "...they are the sons of God." I'm not yet going to go into depth on this point. I'm going to save it for the next verse, but the words "sons of God" is the Greek word *huios*. It designates a child that is mature enough to take on adult

family privileges and responsibilities. It would be used of an adult child, not an infant, not a little baby, but a huio, an adult child, a son or a daughter. It is used for Christians in that sense because it is conveying, as he is going to say, that when we're adopted we enter into a relationship with God as His sons and daughters where we can enjoy the benefits of being a child of God. When the Scripture uses the phrase, "sons of God," don't you ladies lose heart there, okay? Don't get the idea that, "Oh, he's only talking about the men or the boys." No. It's a term used for God's children, and it doesn't convey any idea of gender. It's son's and daughters of God, the people of God. The idea of huio means that we're adult or that we're mature and we've reached the age where we can take on responsibility and, most importantly, enjoy the benefits and the blessings of being God's children.

After a baby is birthed in the natural realm, it does not enjoy much freedom. Have you ever noticed that? When a baby is born, we wrap them up like a little mummy, and then we put them in a crib, which is really just a baby jail. Then, they go to a playpen, and some of you put a net over the top to keep them in there. We raised four kids, and I know about how kids climb out of cribs, playpens and all that stuff. And, if they climb out of everything you've got, then you tie a rope to them. I see parents today with little harnesses on their kids, I don't blame them. I used to think that was pretty cruel and harsh punishment, but man it's hard to keep up with those little guys. And so, they're really restrictive, but as they grow they find more freedom. As they grow, they launch out on their own. As they grow, they can have the keys to the car. I'll never forget the day I got my driver's license. I got my driver's license the day I turned 16. I'll never forget...I was pulling out of the parking lot at the DMV, and I ran into a post. I just got my license! My dad was riding shotgun and said, "Back up! Get outta here! They'll take away your license!" I backed up screech and pulled out of there! I smashed up the side of my dad's car, but I remember the first time I ever drove a car. I freaked out! I'm like, "We're in a car, driving, and there's no adults! This is awesome!" We can go wherever we want. We can do whatever we want. We're free! It was just such an awesome freedom to be able to get your license and later on get a car and be able to do what you wanted. Well, a huio is a mature child that has that freedom and blessing and responsibility to also draw from the blessings that are ours in Christ. As adult sons, the point is being led by the Spirit of God, so there's freedom.

The question is, what does he mean by that phrase that we're being "led by the Spirit of God?" I don't think that Paul is talking about a mystical sense of having God's Spirit leading us, that we hear His voice or it's necessarily just impressions. Again, I believe that in a general sense, (and I believe that God can lead people individually, personally and powerfully,) that God's Spirit leads us through God's Word, that the Spirit of God uses the Word of God. I want to point out three things He uses to lead us. First, He renews our minds in the Word of God. Romans 12 says, "...present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Then it says, "Be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." I do believe that the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to lead the child of God. If you want God's Spirit to lead you, you need to immerse your mind in the scriptures. You need to have a mind that is being renewed in the Word of God.

Secondly, the Spirit stirs our hearts, and I would write down to pray. He stirs us to read the

Word, He stirs us to pray, but He's just working in our hearts. Again, when I got saved, I began to read the Bible, and as I read the Bible, the Spirit of God just began to speak to me like never before. I would find myself just crying and calling out to God, hearing God speak in such a powerful way. It was all brand new. It was because children of God are being led by the Spirit of God, so now I'm reading the Bible, which was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit's stirring my heart and is speaking through His Word, and God started transforming my life. Galatians 4:6 says, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." So, He stirs our hearts and He renews our minds as He leads us by His Spirit.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit directs our wills. What Paul is trying to communicate here is that a Christian is led by the Spirit. He has mortified the deeds of the flesh, and he is controlled by his mind being renewed and his heart being stirred. If you're a Christian, you know that if you go a few days without praying, all of the sudden you're yearning and aching and crying and desiring to find a place to get alone with and to talk to God. I remember I was just saved and I got a job on a construction site. I was working around a lot of foul-mouthed construction guys. It was difficult, and it was keeping me from some of the Bible studies and fellowship things I wanted, and I had a couple of real hard days, long days, and I just needed to pray so bad. I looked around and no one was watching me, so I went and hid behind a big pile of lumber. I just knelt down and cried out to God, "God, I need You! Lord, help me. Lord, strengthen me. Lord, I need Your peace." That experience is what Paul is meaning by "led of the Spirit." That would've never happened to me before I was converted, but now I have this longing in my heart and I want to cry, as we're going to see, "Abba, Father," because the Spirit of God is working in my heart. Those are a couple of tests. You need to ask yourself, am I being led by the Spirit? Do I hunger for the Word of God? Do I delight in God's Word? Am I experiencing illumination and transformation in God's Word by the Spirit working through His Word in my life? Do I find that I have a yearning and a desire and a thirst to pray and to call out to God? I want to be near Him. I want to be like Him. I want to be holy. I want to be free from sin. The Holy Spirit leads us by redirecting and strengthening our wills. Philippians 2:12-13 says, "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Those are all indications that you are living a life in the Spirit, that you are a child of God. Has your mind been renewed? Has your heart been stirred? Has your will been redirected by the power of the Holy Spirit? If so, it's an indication that you are a son or daughter of God.

Let me give you the second blessing, verse 15. It's confidence. It says in verse 15, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Not only are we being led by the Spirit, we're being loved by the Father. I like that. A Christian is one who is being led by the Spirit and loved by the Father. This is a new relationship. The Holy Spirit leads me to His Word, renews my mind, and my heart is stirred, and my will is focusing on obedience. Then, I now have confidence that I belong to Him. I begin to pray. Another awareness that came over me when I was saved was that, "I'm a child of God! I'm actually a child of God! I was a child of the devil, and now I'm a child of God!" By the way, these verses, especially kicking off verse 14 there, implies that you

are either a child of God or you're a child of the devil. You're either walking in the Spirit or you're walking in the flesh. You're either God's son or daughter, or you are a child of the devil and not a child of God. There are only those two classes, two fathers and two families, implied in verse 14.

Now he says we've received the Spirit of adoption. The word adoption is only used by Paul in the New Testament five times, and they're found in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. It's not mentioned in the Old Testament because the Jews did not practice adoption. They would have the Levirate rule where if you were married and your wife couldn't produce children, you'd take another wife to raise up seed in your name. You wouldn't adopt children. What Paul is saying is Roman and Greek in its background and culture, but he's writing to the Romans. They would understand this concept of what it meant to be adopted, for in the Roman culture it was a very important thing. If a Roman father had children that didn't meet his standards, he could actually adopt other children. The minute those children were adopted, and it would have to be confirmed by seven witnesses, those children were legally just as much his children as his biological children, and they would get just as equal share in the father's inheritance. Paul is telling us here that we've been adopted by God. Paul took the idea from the Roman world. The idea of adoption signifies being granted full rights and privileges of sonship in the family to which one does not belong by nature.

Here's a simple way to differentiate between being born into God's family and being adopted into God's family. I've shared it with you before, but here it is. When you're born into God's family you get God's nature, and you're born into God's family by rebirth. When you are adopted into God's family, you get your status or your standing as a full-grown adult, mature son or daughter. Why do we need to be adopted if we're born into God's family? For this reason, when you are born into a family, it takes time for you to grow up to reach the legal age to begin to enjoy your rights, privileges, and benefits. In our culture today it's legally 18 years of age. So, when you reach 18, you're legally an adult. You can leave home, you can do what you want. You can go here or there. You're legally an adult. When you are an adolescent or youngster, you can't do certain things. You can't go out to live on your own. You can't join the military. You can't drive a car. If you get an inheritance, you can't begin to enjoy it. It has to be put into the bank, wait until you're 18, and then you can draw from your inheritance. Here's the cool thought. As I'm born into God's family, I receive a new nature. I am adopted into God's family, I have a new status. I don't have to wait to enjoy being a child of God. I don't have to wait until I'm spiritually 18 or grown up. Clap The minute I'm born again, I'm also adopted with the status to where I can begin to draw from my blessings and my inheritance and begin to enjoy the privileges and the rights of an adult son or daughter. That's what he is conveying there. That's exactly what happens to you the moment you are saved, you are both regenerated and adopted. All Christians, no matter how long they've been saved or what their experience, have the same standing as adult sons and daughters. As adopted sons, our new standing or status means that we have a new relationship, and this is why he says, verse 15, then we cry out Abba.

The word Abba is Aramaic. It speaks of intimacy. It speaks of relationship. The first time it was

used, it was used by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. He cried, "Abba," in His moment of agony. Then when we studied the Lord's prayer on Sunday mornings, Jesus taught us how to pray, and what did He start with? Our Father, which is the word "Abba." Our Abba. In the English equivalent today we would say, "Papa." It's music to my ears when I hear my grandkids say, "Papa." I just love hearing them say that. It just gets me all stoked. You don't think God doesn't get excited when He hears us say, "Papa," when He hears us say, "Daddy." That's the natural reflective response. It's not the intellectual response, it's a reflective response. I've got the Spirit of God in my life, I've been adopted, I've been born, and I reach up to God who is now my Father. Someone said, "God, who is infinitely high, is also intimately nigh." I like that! God's not only high and exalted, but He's also nigh and close to our hearts. I don't know about you, but the idea that God, the infinite creator, the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God would come down to the level of being my Abba, my Papa, my Dad, and you can talk to Him and you have access to Him...that's why the idea is confidence here. I am a child of God.

I told you about my kidnapping that happened years ago. I was on my way to Australia, and we were kidnapped before we got on the airplane in Los Angeles. We stopped outside the airport to get something to eat. We came out of the restaurant and were abducted at gunpoint. One of the greatest thoughts that was going through my mind, being held at gunpoint in a car like that, was "I'm God's child. I'm God's child. I'm God's child. Nothing can happen to me but what God is in control of." Amen? I belong to Him. Whatever happens to me, God knows all about it. I felt like saying, "You're messing with God's kids here right now. You know who our Papa is?" What a wonderful thing to know that whatever goes on in my life, He's my Abba. He's my Father in heaven and I have that confidence.

The third mark of a true child of God and blessing is assurance. This comes to us, again, by the Holy Spirit. All of these are the work of the Holy Spirit, verse 16. "The Spirit itself..." my King James Bible has "itself" and I change it to "Himself" only because the Holy Spirit is not an "it." You say, "Well, why does it say 'itself?'" Because the word Spirit is neuter, thus, grammatically translated "it," but all through the gospel of John, Jesus over and over again said "he," referring to the Holy Spirit, when "he." He used a Greek preposition, *ekeinos*, which is a personal pronoun, he. "When he...is come, he will guide you into all truth." The Holy Spirit is a person. He's not an "it." He's not a force. He's a person. He's the third person of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit Himself does something in our lives. What does He do? He bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Again, that theme runs through this passage, we belong to God. We are His children.

The question is, in what way does the Holy Spirit bear witness with our hearts? Well, you might say, verse 14, He leads us. You might say, verse 15, He cries out from us. Now, in verse 16, the Spirit speaks to us. Again, in what way does He speak to us? I believe that it comes in two different ways. I believe it comes subjectively. I believe that we need to be careful when it comes to subjective experience. I can eat chocolate and have an experience. It's not spiritual, it's just physical. The older I get and the more I eat, I have experiences. That's not a spiritual experience. People come to me all the time with their dreams, with their visions, with their experiences and they want me to interpret them for them. I'm not an interpreter of dreams,

okay? I have dreams, but I don't think they're the work of the Holy Spirit. I think it's chocolate cake after 11 p.m. I don't know what it means. Some people say, "John, I had this really weird dream! What does it mean?" It means stop eating late before you go to bed and that might be the solution. I don't know what it means. If God has given you a dream, He'll have to make it known to you. People come to me with dreams and want me to tell them what their dream is. I don't know. I don't know what my dreams mean! How do I know what your dreams mean? I do believe that we can have an experience that in our heart, God bears witness that we're His children. In other words, that you know, that you know, that you know.

Here's the danger that can be dangerous. That is, a Buddhist can say, "I've experienced God," or a Muslim can say, "I've experienced God," or someone can say, "I do kundalini yoga and I experienced God." What makes their experience invalid and yours valid? Experience is subjective and needs to be interpreted by the objective truth of God's Word. Yes, we can have a subjective experience, God's Spirit bears witness with mine, but it's a very unwise...I started to say foolish, but I say unwise...thing to live your Christian life by feelings, emotions or by tingles. The Bible doesn't say that we'll know we're His disciples by our tingles or by our goosebumps or by our visions or by our dreams.

Here's another way that, I believe, the Holy Spirit witnesses to us that we are His children. That is, He produces His fruit in our lives. Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, temperance, faithfulness. If the Holy Spirit is producing fruit in your life, guess what? That's a good indication that you are a child of God. Amen? The things that weren't there before are now there, not the works of the flesh but the works of the Spirit. You read Galatians 5 where Paul talks about the works of the flesh and the works of the Spirit. The greatest evidence of the Spirit-filled life in context here (you might say the Spirit-led life), is fruit, not gifts either, by the way. It's not gifts. Do I believe in the gifts of the Spirit? Yes, but they are no indication of spirituality. You can have a gift, and you can exercise the gift in a carnal way. You must exercise your gifts in love, which is the fruit of the Spirit. The greatest evidence of a Spirit-filled life is not how high you jump when the Spirit touches you, it's how straight you walk when you hit the ground. That's the evidence of the Spirit-filled life. It's not getting all excited and clapping, yelling or screaming in a Holy Ghost meeting, it's Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, all day, all week long, living in true holiness. The Holy Spirit has come to produce holy living in us. That's what Paul is trying to say here. If you are a son or a daughter of God, you're going to be led by the Spirit. You're going to have the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

I do love John R.W. Stott's statement about assurance when he says, "We can know three ways that we're children of God; by the Word of God the Father, by the work of God the Son, and by the witness (our verse, Romans 8:16) of God the Holy Spirit." How do I know I'm a Christian? The Word of God the Father. God said it, I believe it, that settles it. It's as easy as John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have..." what? "...everlasting life." Do you believe that? That settles it. If you've trusted in Jesus Christ, you have everlasting life. So you take the Word of God the Father, and then you rely upon the work of God the Son. "This is the record," 1John 5:11, "...that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life;

and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” How do I know I’m saved? Because Jesus died for me on the cross. He was buried and He rose from the dead. The third is the witness of the Holy Spirit. His Spirit bears witness with my Spirit that I am a child of God.

Let me give you the fourth indication that you’re saved. It’s in the first half of verse 17, inheritance. I won’t tarry on these, but I want you to see them. Inheritance. The Holy Spirit is the downpayment of what we’re going to inherit when we get to heaven. “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;” stop right there. The first half of verse 17 says that you have not only been adopted into the family of God, but guess what you have waiting for you? An inheritance. That’s good news, right? You may not have an inheritance in this life, but you’re going to have an inheritance when you get to heaven. God gives you the blessings right now, and when you die you’re going to inherit eternal life in heaven with God. So, we are adopted into God’s family, it brings privileges. It would boggle our minds if we understood them all. We are heirs of God. An heir inherits his father’s estate; all the Father has becomes ours. In Ephesians 1:3, Paul says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Not only spiritual blessings, but we will go to heaven when we die—all this and heaven too! Notice it says we’re joint-heirs with Christ.

Did you know that when Jesus Christ comes back in His second coming, did you know He’s bringing us with Him? Isn’t that cool? He doesn’t say, “I’m just going to leave you here because I’m kind of embarrassed by you guys. I’m going to make my second-coming appearance, and I don’t want ‘em to see me with a bunch of geeks, so can you just stay right here?” We’re going to actually be what’s called the manifested sons of God. That’s why I get so excited about the next few verses because our suffering, which is introduced at the end of verse 17 is the next section of topic, leads to glory. It leads to heaven. So, now I become an heir, a joint-heir with Christ, and I’m going to inherit all things. He’s going to say, “Come ye blessed of the Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world.”

Here’s my last, but not least, fifth point on what it means to be a child of God and the mark of a true Christian. This one you’re not going to initially be too excited about. It’s suffering. Notice at the end of verse 17, “...if so be that we suffer with him.” It’s like, “What’s that doing there? There’s all these awesome blessings, and then he takes this awesome passage and messes it up. Pastor John, you had a good thing going here, not to mention you’ve been going too long. You could’ve wrapped it up on the fourth point, and you went to the fifth point, and the fifth point is suffering?! Really?” Really. Do you know what your privilege is as a Christian, as a child of God? (And, underline the word “privilege.”) You get to suffer with Jesus Christ. You get to be identified with your Lord, He who died and suffered for you on the cross. You get to suffer by identification with Him. I believe it’s talking about the persecution, the opposition, the rejection, the put-downs, the come-against attacks that we get as Christians by the Christ-rejecting world around us. You can’t be a true child of God and not encounter opposition in a hostile world to God. All that live godly, and in the Greek it’s all that desire to live godly, shall suffer persecution.

That statement in the New Testament convicts me perhaps more than any other verse because

I know that if I'm not suffering, I'm not living a godly life. If I'm standing for godliness and truth and righteousness, then I'm going to be living counter to the culture. I'm living a counter-culture life, and I'm going to face opposition on the job, in the home, or maybe you're unequally yoked in a marriage and there's opposition there, or from other unsaved family members. So many of you, I'm sure, have unsaved family members. You know how difficult it is on the holidays, Thanksgiving, Christmas, where you want to worship the Lord and you're there with a bunch of pagan heathens dancing around the Christmas tree, and you want to go to church. There's opposition, and they feel sorry for you because you're one of those "Christians," and you're not intellectual, and you don't know anything, and they look down on you and put you down and ostracize you. You don't get invited to the parties that they have because you don't drink, and you don't cuss, and you don't listen to their filthy jokes and laugh at 'em anymore, so you're ostracized and you're persecuted. We're going to go into this more next week, and we're going to study this as well in our study of 1 Peter on Sunday mornings, but that's basically what he says at the end of verse 17. If we suffer with Him, we will be glorified together with Him!

The focus isn't on the suffering. The focus is on the glory that it brings! If you are so much like Jesus that you're persecuted, then you are sharing in His sufferings. John 16:33, Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation..." you know, you never find that in a promise verse box. You know those little loaves of bread with the little promise cards you pull out? "Oh, today's promise. I'm going to pull it out. John 16:33. In this world you shall have tribulation, just throw that one away. Let's find something a little nicer." "...but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world," Jesus says. Right? When Paul the apostle was converted and called to follow Jesus Christ, God said, "For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Not only do we share that inheritance as His sons and daughters, but we get to share in His sufferings. Now, that doesn't merit salvation. It doesn't earn us credit with God. We don't get any brownie points for suffering, but we get the joy of experiencing God's presence, the Spirit of God and glory rest upon us. We get the blessing of being able to say, "So persecuted they the prophets which were before me. I'm in good company." It's a test of the reality of our faith. Is your faith real? It'll be tested by persecution. Suffering strengthens our faith. It makes us stronger. When God puts us in the furnace of affliction, He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat. Suffering also prepares us to be a part of the glory that is yet to be revealed. In verse 18 he says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." In verse 19 he says, "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." There you have it.

Tribulation, suffering, sorrow, heartache, cancer, heart disease, stroke, sickness, death, but guess what's waiting for you? Glory! Amen? That's because we are God's people. We're free, the Spirit leads us. We're confident, we're not afraid. We can cry, "Abba, Father." We have assurance, the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. We have an inheritance, we're heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. We get to suffer with Him, and that means that we will share in His glory. Let's pray.