

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Heirs of God

Scripture: Romans 8:17-18

Code: 90-421

For this morning, we want to open our Bibles again to the 8th chapter of Romans as we continue to take a look at the ministry of the Holy Spirit. I've been so blessed and so encouraged to be looking at the Holy Spirit and His ministry in the life of the believer. I'm so grateful for the response that I am getting from you, many personal responses from people who have come out of churches in the past where the Holy Spirit is insulted, where the Holy Spirit is blasphemed, where the Holy Spirit's ministry and person is misrepresented, and it's just wonderful to hear the refreshing, comforting, and encouraging comments of folks who are starting to understand the truth about His ministry and be able to worship Him as He is to be worshiped, as He should be worshiped.

And so I've been delighting just in the privilege that I've had to pull books off my shelf that I have had through the years on the person of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and just go through those books. I've gone through a number of books just for my own reading, just to kind of enrich my own mind and my own heart and kind of reset in my own mind a sound, biblical understanding and theology of the Holy Spirit. Been very refreshing for me and it's helped me to give honor and worship to the Holy Spirit, which I find myself doing kind of on a regular basis even through the day, just thanking the Holy Spirit for all that He's doing in my life. On the other side of that is to find out how the Holy Spirit has been misrepresented in the contemporary Christian church today is equally discouraging as the truth is encouraging.

I did a little kind of a search the other day on the current things that are attributed to the Holy Spirit in the Charismatic movement and maybe even extending a little bit beyond that, and I pulled together a list of things that were ministries of the Holy Spirit that basically are attributed to the Holy Spirit and His work in the life of believers. The list goes like this: knocking people down to the floor, causing people to giggle and laugh without any control, causing people to feel like they're being electrically shocked or like their body heat is going up, causing people to fall into hypnotic spell and sometimes into trances that last for hours. Then there are Holy Ghost convulsions and Holy Ghost hiccups.

There are some who say that when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you act like you're drunk, you stumble, you stagger, you trip over things, you may even fall down in a state of semi-consciousness. The Holy Spirit also may cause you to shake and quiver and have temporary paralysis. The Holy Spirit, if He comes upon you, may cause you to speak nonsense, gibberish. He may even cause you to make animal sounds like a chicken or a duck or a dog. The Holy Spirit may cause you to thrash and rip and shred your clothes. The Holy Spirit may levitate you so that you go up in the air ten feet

and move across the room. And in one case, your shoes will go the other direction. The Holy Spirit may empower and motivate a healer to punch you with all his force in the midst of your stomach for the sake of healing or maybe that he punches you in the jaw or even punches you in the face, depending where your need is to be healed, and then there is Holy Ghost slapping which is a little less dramatic and painful. There's Holy Ghost jumping and Holy Ghost dancing.

And by the way, this Holy Ghost who does all this can be yours if you send your money to the evangelists. And I was reminded of the 8th chapter of the book of Acts where Simon the magician comes along and he offers the apostles money. When he saw that the Holy Spirit was present by the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give this authority to me as well so that everybody I lay hands on may receive the Holy Spirit." Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money." You don't buy anything from God, let alone the power of the Holy Spirit, even though that's what's so very often promised.

All of these kinds of things and many, many more things are attributed to the Holy Spirit. They are all insulting, grieving, and blaspheming. They have nothing to do with the Holy Spirit whatsoever in any way, shape, or form, and they are the polar opposite of the worship that He is due. This is not marginal, this is not to be tolerated, this is intolerable. This is the exact opposite of true worship. And I think people sometimes think that the Holy Spirit is sort of a notch above Casper the Friendly Ghost and it's kind of a plaything when we need to consider the Holy Spirit as absolutely fully and in every sense the eternal God, the third person of the Trinity to be loved and adored and honored and worshiped for who He is and what He actually has done and is doing. He is deity not to be ignored and not to be misrepresented but to be worshiped.

I guess the irony is that the Holy Spirit is in fact the deity most intimately involved in the life of a believer. It is the Holy Spirit, we have learned, that gives us new life. It is the Holy Spirit who regenerates us. It is the Holy Spirit who adopts us into the family of God. It is the Holy Spirit who then sanctifies us. It is the Holy Spirit who, from within us, empowers us by His filling. It is the Holy Spirit who places us by baptism, spiritual baptism, into the body of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who illuminates us and teaches us the Scripture which He Himself is the author of. It is the Holy Spirit who one day will glorify us, one day raise our bodies to eternal life. All of this ministry is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Through all of our lives as believers, He is in the process of conforming us to the standard of holiness that is the very image of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He does that regularly, moving us from one level of glory to the next, until that day when He perfects us in heaven. This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is not a ministry of silliness. It is a ministry of holiness— big difference.

Now, I want you to have something of the big picture of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, if you will, so look at Ephesians chapter 1. This will help us, I think, to identify in a somewhat singular fashion what this whole redemption plan of God is all about. What is God doing in the world? What is He attempting to achieve? What is His plan?

We have it in Ephesians 1:3-4 stated. This is a benediction; this is an offering of praise to God. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God who is not known in the New Testament as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but who is known as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” meaning they’re equal in nature, equal in essence, the God who is one with the Lord Jesus Christ. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, now and in the future, in the full and complete sense. For what purpose? What is God’s purpose? What is His reason? Why is He doing this? Here it comes in verse 4: “It is because He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we would be holy and blameless before Him.”

That is a sweeping statement that takes you from eternity past to eternity future. That starts before time begins and ends after time is done. That is a statement of election and glorification. He chose us before the foundation of the world for the purpose that we would be holy and blameless before Him. And that’s in heaven when we see Him face-to-face. The Father gives us all blessings for the purpose of producing in us holiness and blamelessness, righteousness, if you will, perfection by which we can stand before Him and not be consumed. “No man can see Me and live,” the Old Testament says.

No one could look at the glory of God. Moses could only see a veiled portion of the glory of God. When Ezekiel saw just a portion of the glory of God, he went into a semi-coma. The same thing happened to Isaiah. He pronounced a curse on himself. The same thing happened to the apostle Paul when the glorified Christ showed up on the road to Damascus— he went blind, fell into the dirt. Same thing happened to John in the first chapter of Revelation when he was traumatized near unto death because he had a vision of the glory of Christ. It is a glory upon which an unperfected person cannot look, but the promise of God is that He is gathering together a redeemed humanity who will be holy and blameless in such measure, in such perfection, that they can actually stand before Him in His presence. This is the plan.

In the meantime, between election and glorification, the Spirit of God is in the process of taking the justified people of God and sanctifying them; in other words, making them progressively more holy, progressively more righteous, progressively more like Christ who, you remember, is the exact, *exact* representation of a perfect man. He is the model. We are being conformed to His image.

So what is the goal of God? The goal of God is holiness. The goal of God is blamelessness. The goal of God is an absolute perfect righteousness which enables us to stand in His presence. This is the plan of redemption initiated by God, to produce such a people who will be with Him forever in glory, to serve Him and honor Him. This is initiated by God, demonstrated by Christ, then ratified by Christ on the cross, and it is all applied by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us life. It is the Holy Spirit who raises us to glory. And it is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us.

So the Spirit is at work in us, as we saw in 2 Corinthians 3:8, moving us from one level of glory to the next, to the next, as we gaze at the glory of Christ. He's the model, He's the image. The Holy Spirit, Jesus said, would come and show us the things concerning Christ, and as we look at Christ, the Spirit changes us into His image. And one day, as we see in Romans 8— and you can turn to it now— one day, those of us who have been predestined and called and justified— verse 30 says— will be glorified. What will glorification look like? Verse 29: "We have been predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.

That is the work of God in redemption, to create a redeemed humanity that resemble His Son, family resemblance. And last time we learned, didn't we, that God has adopted us into His family which gives us all the rights as heirs, but He's also regenerated us so that we're not only adopted sons, we are born sons. As adopted sons, we have the rights and as born sons, we have the nature. We have become partakers of the divine nature. And now the Holy Spirit is making us, reshaping us into the family resemblance, making us look like our Brother, Jesus Christ. This is the work of the Spirit. So the Holy Spirit isn't interested in silliness; He's interested in holiness. He's interested in Christlikeness.

Now, in Romans chapter 8, we've seen a number of elements of this. The Holy Spirit frees us from sin and death. We looked at that in verses 2 and 3. The Holy Spirit enables us to fulfill the law, verse 4. The Holy Spirit changes our nature, verses 5 to 11. The Holy Spirit empowers us for victory over sin, verses 12 and 13. And then last time, the Holy Spirit adopts us into God's family as sons, verses 14 through 16. All of this is the ministry of the Holy Spirit for which we give Him praise and thanks.

Now we come to the final point: The Holy Spirit secures our eternal glory. The Holy Spirit secures our eternal glory. And that's verses 17 to 30 that I read to you earlier. And then verses 31 to 39 is, in my judgment, the greatest climactic benedictory summation of the glories of salvation anywhere in the Scriptures. It is a response to the mighty work of the Holy Spirit. We'll see that starting in verse 31. But now, from verse 17 to 30, we're going to be looking over the next few weeks or so at how the Holy Spirit secures our eternal glory. You will see in the text that we read earlier— verse 23— that the Holy Spirit is designated as firstfruits, the firstfruits of the Spirit. That's a very important concept. A farmer always knew what the crop was going to be like when the first fruit showed up. The early fruit would be a sign of what the rest of the fruit would be like. And the Holy Spirit is given to us and all His glory and all the blessings that He brings is only a first fruit, only a pledge, only a taste, only a guarantee of the rest of the things that God has prepared for those that love Him.

The Holy Spirit is also called a pledge, *arrabn*. The word is the word for engagement ring, down payment, security. The Holy Spirit is the engagement ring that proves the wedding is going to come off. The Holy Spirit is the down payment. God's going to make the rest of the payments when we get to glory. He is the guarantee. The Holy Spirit is also called the seal. That is God's stamp of

authenticity, authority, ownership— that’s the seal of the Holy Spirit. We are sealed by the Spirit, we have the pledge of the Spirit, we have the first fruits of the Spirit.

In 2 Corinthians 1 verse 21, “He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God who has sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.” There you have seal and pledge in the same verse, 2 Corinthians 1:22. So the Holy Spirit is in us to seal us to be the down payment, the guarantee of our coming eternal glory. This is His ministry to us.

Now, just summing all that we have said up, the freedom we have from sin’s dominion in our lives, the power to do what is right, the desire to set our minds on the things of the Spirit, the strength to overcome the flesh, the joys and assured confidence of sonship, all these things are the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification, and they’re all a guarantee of the work of coming glorification. Philippians 1:6 says, “He that began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” The work is only begun and it will be completed. That’s why Paul begins the chapter by saying, “There is therefore no condemnation to them who are in Christ.” We are assured of no condemnation; we are secured against any future condemnation by the promise of God and the working of the Holy Spirit.

So the Holy Spirit is in us to secure us through this life to the end and then bring our spirits into the presence of God and one day raise our bodies to join those spirits so that forever we will stand in the full blazing glory of the presence of God in the heaven of heavens and serve Him and worship Him there. We’re on the road to glory and the Holy Spirit is our protector in the process.

And I’ve said this in the past: If there was any possible way to lose salvation, I would lose it. If it was possible to disqualify myself from salvation, I would get disqualified. I can’t save myself and I can’t keep myself saved. I can’t be righteous enough to save myself and neither can you, and I can’t be righteous enough to keep myself saved. God’s going to have to save me by grace; He’s going to have to keep by grace. He’s going to have to save me by His power, power of the Holy Spirit, regeneration; He’s going to have to keep me by His power, the Holy Spirit’s power of protection, to the end— and that’s the promise of God.

We are headed for glory, dear ones, and what that means is, we will be like the perfect man, Jesus Christ. First John 3:2: “We’ll be like Him when we see Him as He is.” “We’ll have a body like unto the body of His glory,” Philippians 3:20 and 21. We have been chosen before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him, and nobody gets lost in the process. John 6 says, “All the Father gives to Me will come to Me and I lose none of them. “I lose none of them but raise them all at the last day by the power of the Holy Spirit,” as Romans 8:11 says. It’s the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead who will also raise us from the dead.

So what is the point of salvation? It is that we might be brought into the presence of God to stand before Him and see the fullness of His glory, blazing from His throne in the new Jerusalem, in the center of the new heaven and the new earth and be with Him forever— be with Him forever. When man comes into the world, he has no glory. We come short of the glory of God, as Paul says in Romans. We fall way short of the glory of God. We can't attain to that. We have no glory. It is a very, very faded mark, that image of God, which we bear from our original creation. It has been terribly scarred and marred. But in Christ we can have glory. In Christ we can become glorious. In Christ we literally share the very glory of God. In the Old Testament, God said, "My glory will I not share with another." Not another idol. Not another false god. But He will share His glory with His people.

We live, Paul says, in the hope of glory. Christ in you, the hope of glory. We're not glorious yet in the full sense, although we have tasted of that glory. That glory has come into us, the Spirit lives in us, that glory is not yet manifest, that's why Romans 8, that I read earlier, says the whole world hasn't seen the glorious manifestation of the children of God. We're veiled right now. We're veiled, we're covered. They can look at us walking down the street and they don't see any glory. But one day, we will be fully glorified and we will be like Christ. That is the goal of salvation, as I pointed out at the end of verse 30. The ones that He predestined will be the ones that He will glorify.

So the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in us to keep us secure all the way through the sanctifying process to glory. He is the seal, the guarantee, the engagement ring, the down payment, the first fruits of our coming glory. And this is all based on the fact that we have been made sons so that the glory which will be ours one day is given to us as an inheritance from our Father. We have been adopted into the family of God, we have been born into the family of God. We're sons both ways and we are sons in order that we may receive glory. We are the children of God with full rights to share all that God possesses. It's a magnificent reality.

Now, let's look at verses 17 and 18. We're just going to look at those two verses today. We'll cover the rest after Christmas. And I just want to break it down a little bit. We're talking here about inheritance. Verse 17: "If children, then heirs"— or heirs also— "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him, for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." So verse 18 ends talking about incomparable glory, glory that has not no comparison. We also know that that glory, which we will have with Him, is our inheritance. We are heirs of God, fellow heirs with Christ, and what we inherit is glory. That's what we inherit.

Now let's go down and break that up a little bit in that simple little, text and let's talk about the fact of our inheritance— the fact of our inheritance. This is a promise to you. Verse 17: "And if children, heirs also"— a little particle here where the word "if" is. It's a construction in the Greek. When you have this particle, you have what is called a fulfilled condition. And a fulfilled condition is not an "if" condition; a fulfilled condition is a "since" condition. So this verse should read this way, "And since children"— that

is a fulfilled condition— how do we know that? Because we've just gone through it in verses 14, 15, and 16. We are children— verse 16 ends— we are children of God. Verse 14 ends, "That we are sons of God."

We have been adopted. We have every right to cry, "Abba, Father," and since we are children, and that is a reality, that is a fulfilled condition, we are then heirs— we are heirs. Galatian 3:26 says, "You are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus." You're not a son of God by being born into the world. You're a son of God and an heir by faith in Christ Jesus— Galatians 3:26— and if you are a son and a child of God, you are then an heir. You are then an heir also.

Now, remember Roman adoption laws. An adopted child was not inferior to a naturally born child, a born child into the family. In fact, adopted children were often adopted because the parents wanted a superior child to the ones they had. So when somebody chose to adopt a child, it was because they wanted to select that child purposely for the future benefit and welfare of the family, and that child would have all rights to inheritance equal to the naturally born children into that family. The fact was that adopted child was at least equal and in many cases viewed to be superior to the other children.

In Jewish tradition, the inheritance went double portion to the oldest child. If there were two sons, the oldest would get two-thirds and the youngest would get one-third. The oldest son got a double portion of the inheritance. That is not the case in Roman law. Nothing in Roman history indicates that to us. What we have in Roman law that we can still find is that all sons were given the same inheritance. There was an equal level of inheritance in the Roman system, and that was for adopted children as well. That was the law. Whether or not they followed it all the time obviously could be debated.

So Paul is using the Roman custom in his analogy here, and what he is saying is that under Roman law, all who are sons— under the analogy of Roman law, all who are sons of God are equal heirs— all equal heirs. If sons— or since children— sons, heirs also. And by the way, according to Roman law, something received by inheritance was more secure than what might be owned by purchase. If you received something by inheritance, that was the most secure possession you could ever possibly have. And that is what Paul is saying. We are as the children of God, equally given the inheritance, and it is more secure than anything we could gain for ourselves. In fact, anything we gain for ourselves, we'll leave here, right? Since sons, therefore heirs.

To help you with that a little bit, Galatians 4 is a good passage, and I'll just begin reading in verse 4— and you heard this earlier in the service. "When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son born of a woman, born under the law, so that He might redeem those who were under the law." And what's this redemption about? That we might receive the adoption as sons. In other words, that's what salvation is for, to bring us into the family. To adopt us as sons gives us all the rights, and then to regenerate us as sons gives us the nature, and then we can be conformed to the family resemblance for which Christ is the model. And as a result of the adoption of sons, God sent forth the

Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying “Abba, Father.” Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son— listen to this— and if a son, then an heir through God.”

This is the fact of our inheritance— this is the fact of our inheritance. That fact is further expressed in the magnificent words of 1 Peter 1, and these you don’t want to miss. First Peter 1— and this again is a benediction, praise to God: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”— again, God is the God who is the Father of Christ; that is, their essence is the same, they’re one in nature, the deity of Christ being emphasized— “who according to His great mercy”— all of this is mercy, all of this is grace— “has caused us to be born again” we’re adopted in Galatians, we’re born again— that talks about both our rights and our nature— “to a living hope.” We literally have been saved into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

What is our living hope? Here it comes: “To obtain an inheritance”— to obtain an inheritance. What about this inheritance? It is imperishable— imperishable, it cannot die, it cannot disappear, it cannot be deleted— and undefiled— it cannot be limited, it cannot be scarred, marred, it cannot fade away, disappear, dissipate— and it is reserved in heaven for you. That’s why you were saved. That’s why you were born again. That’s why you were adopted into the family, in order to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you— not for anybody else, but for you and you are— the next verse, verse 5— protected by the power of God. What power of God? The power of the Holy Spirit. You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon you. That’s power for witness but it’s also power for protection. It is the Holy Spirit in us who protects us through the means— this is wonderful— the power of God through faith.

How does the Holy Spirit keep you in Christ? How does the Holy Spirit protect you from failing, from falling, from abandoning, from denying Christ, from defecting? Through faith. In other words, it is the Holy Spirit who empowers your faith. Ephesians 2: “By grace are you saved through faith— even that faith is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” You say, “Well, I knew somebody that had faith and their faith died.” No. Anybody who had faith that died had a human faith. The faith that God gives is a faith that cannot die. You’re kept by that faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit. And he goes on to say, “Unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” The whole point of salvation is to get us blameless and holy before Him in eternity where we will receive an inheritance. That is the fact of our inheritance. It is imperishable, undefiled, will not fade away, reserved in heaven, and the Holy Spirit is the internal protector who sustains your faith all the way to the end.

Who’s the source of this inheritance? That’s the fact of it. The source of it— in verse 17— heirs of God. God’s the source. We’re heirs of God. We inherit what God has decided we should have. God is the one who gives us the inheritance. God is the one who laid it up. First Peter’s words, “Laid up for you.” It’s God who laid the treasure of our inheritance up in heaven for us. It’s just an amazing thing. “Blessed be the God and Father who has caused us to have this inheritance.” In Colossians 3:24— and there are many wonderful verses that speak to this issue— this is one of the ones that I think is so

wonderful. It talks about– “From the Lord”– Colossians 3:24– “you will receive the reward of the inheritance.” From the Lord, you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It’s going to come from the Lord. It’s His to give and His alone to give.

Now, let me dig a little down into that. You say, “What is it? What is it that the Lord has left for us?” In the purest and truest and most comprehensive sense, it is perfection, holiness, blamelessness, absolute righteousness, completeness. It is the perfection of glorified humanity. But it is even more than that. A better way to understand it is this: The Psalmist talks about the Lord being his portion. Jeremiah talks about the Lord being his portion. In Revelation 21:3, we read that when we enter into heaven in our final glory, God shows up and He says that “I will be their God and they will be My people and I will live among them, and I will wipe away their tears,” *et cetera, et cetera, et cetera*. The inheritances, folks, is God Himself. That’s the inheritance.

What is waiting for us? God– God. He is the shining one from the throne in the New Jerusalem, His glory extends to the infinite ends of the New Heaven and the New Earth, and we step right into the full blaze of that glory and are not incinerated because we are holy and blameless. And all that God is and all that God has becomes ours. It’s a stunning reality. We inherit God. We even share His glory in His heaven forever.

Pushing that a little bit, let me bring up a third issue that this text talks about: the extent of the inheritance. Just how extensive is this? It’s this extensive, that we are fellow heirs with Christ– we’re fellow heirs with Christ. And that again emphasizes the Roman custom of equal inheritance. What a thought– everything that will be Christ’s will be ours. Psalm 2, what did God say to Christ? “I’ll give you the nations for your inheritance.” And beyond that, He gives everything. Christ will be all in all, and all will be in Christ. First Corinthians 15: “Everything will be resolved in Christ”– everything.

Ephesians chapter 1 talks about the fact that He is the ruler over all things, all things are subjected to Him, everything is His, absolutely everything is His. And in the end, whatever is His will be ours. We will literally become fellow heirs with Christ. Hebrews 1:2 calls Christ the heir of all things– the heir of all things. In Him, we become the heir of all things. It’s an amazing reality. We will reign with Him, Revelation 20 says. We will sit on His throne, Revelation 3:21 says. We will bear His image, the image of the heavenly one, 1 Corinthians 15:49. These are realities that speak of the fact that whatever is Christ’s will be ours. We will not be deity, we will be glorified humanity, but as far as glorified humanity can share the glory of God and the inheritance of Christ, we will share it fully.

Somebody might say, “Well, Christ might be a little upset about that. He did a lot to gain that inheritance on the cross and why should it be handed to us? Is this a disappointment to Christ, that the Father would be so generous with unworthy folks like us?” Well, we have an answer to that question. This is not something the Lord is reluctant to give. Listen to His prayer in John 17: “The glory which You have given Me, I have given to them, that we may be one just as we are one,” John

17:22. He shares fully His glory with us without any reluctance.

The greatness of this inheritance is absolutely staggering. It is by grace, not works. It is by a sovereign work of God, not human effort. It is a covenant from God, who cannot lie and cannot change. This inheritance is not lessened because it has to be divided among many inheritors because the supply of God is infinite glory. It is glorious, it is comprehensive, it is secure. We will inherit God, His glory, share His glory, and all that is Christ's will be ours. Such is the incomparable gain of glory, vouchsafed— to borrow an old word— to us by the Holy Spirit, who guards and protects our faith to the end.

There's a fourth thing to consider in this verse: preparation for the inheritance— preparation for the— we all receive the same eternal life, we all receive the same glory, the one denarius in the parable Jesus told, no matter how many hours we serve. We all receive the same presence of God, we all receive the same inheritance with Christ. But there will be degrees of responsibility and degrees of service that are connected to this life's service— and the Lord made that clear in the parable— several parables. Faithful-over-little-make-you-Lord-over-much kind of thing.

But there's a principle that leads us to say that the most important determiner of the nature of our eternal inheritance on a personal level is not success, as we would measure it in the world, but suffering. Go back to verse 17. We've gone through if children, heirs; heirs of God; fellow heirs of with Christ, then we come to "if indeed we suffer with Him, so that we may also be glorified with Him." Back as far as the 12th century, the word "if"— again— was being translated by Bible scholars "since," and this is simply a statement of fact. Since we're children, we're heirs. And since we suffer with Him indeed, for sure, we will be glorified with Him.

In other words, there is an inevitability in the life of a believer that that believer is going to suffer. I'm not talking about martyrdom necessarily, although it could happen, "Take up your cross, follow Me." People have died for the cause of the gospel. But what it's saying is, since we suffer as a matter of fact, because we exalt Christ and live for Christ and proclaim Christ in a Christless, Christ-hating, Christ-rejecting world, there is a measure of suffering. We bear, as it were, the reproach of Christ. The suffering is related to that. We're not talking about the fact that you had a disease or you had some kind of a defect or some challenges in your marriage or some issues with your employment. All those kinds of things fall into the category of human suffering and the Lord is concerned about that and He's sympathetic and compassionate about that, but what measures out against that eternal glory and eternal reward is that suffering which believers receive for the name of Christ.

And I know we're not being persecuted, we're not being strung up, we're not being boiled in oil or having bamboo jammed up our fingernails. We're not being persecuted to that degree, but all of us understand the cruel mockings that come to those who are faithful to proclaim the name of Christ in a hostile environment. We've all suffered in some way. "In this world you will have tribulation," Jesus

said, "Be of good cheer, I've overcome the world." "In this world they're going to treat you the way they treated Me, they hated Me, they're going to hate you." That's the way it is.

We're going to enjoy what Paul called the fellowship of his sufferings. Paul even said in Colossians 1 that he was filling up in his own body the sufferings of Christ. He was taking the heat for his relationship to Christ. Peter talks about— 1 Peter chapter 4— suffering for Christ and at the same time rejoicing.

The path to glory is through suffering. You remember Jesus said that He went to the cross for the joy that was set before Him? Did we not remember that we had to preach, the apostle said, we had to preach that Christ must needs have suffered? Why? Because Jesus told them that, Luke 24: "Did you not know the Messiah must needs have suffered and then entered into His glory?" As we fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, as we bear the reproach of Christ, we will then follow the path to glory. This is a far cry from the idea that God wants you to be healthy, wealthy, happy, successful, popular, comfortable. No, the Holy Spirit is concerned about your eternal glory, and He understands that the path to that eternal glory is to bear the reproach of Jesus Christ.

So while we all receive God, we all are fellow heirs of all that Christ possesses, there is some way in which we will serve in the glory of heaven that can be determined by the measure of suffering we have borne for the cause of Christ. Christianity is not escapism. It's a lie to think that all the Holy Spirit wants you to do is have everything you want and be happy. The Holy Spirit wants you to be glorified, and He understands the path of glory is through suffering. This is the Word of God to us.

Well, just a final word, and then we'll take the Lord's Table. Paul says this in verse 18: "Now, having known that, I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." Take what comes, right? "Bear on My body the marks of Christ." Take the reproach of Christ. Suffer for Christ. It's not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. We have an incomparable glory, beloved, awaiting us in the presence of the Lord. That is His promise to us, and it is the work of the blessed Holy Spirit to secure us all the way to the end to receive that glory. The Holy Spirit— Ephesians 1— of promise is given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession to the praise of His glory. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we remember that Paul said, "Don't grieve the Holy Spirit by whom we are sealed to the day of redemption." May we be honoring the Spirit, may we be worshiping the Spirit in the way that He is deserving. Now, Lord, as we come to this table, we want to make sure we honor this Communion celebration by confessing any sin that we might know in our lives, anything we are holding onto, to repent, turn from it, and to worship at the foot of the cross, grateful that all of this has been provided because Christ made it possible through His death.

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