

ROMANS 8:14-39

There are a lot of parallels between the earthly and the heavenly found in scripture.

For instance, Christians call God their Father, and collectively they are referred to as the bride of Christ, relationships that we can readily understand.

So we shouldn't be surprised when we find Jesus cautioning Nicodemus, "**Except a man be born again** (or literally, born from above) **he cannot see the kingdom of God.**"

Yes, we must enter God's family in much the same way as we entered our parent's family.

Also, just like the human family we grew up in, there is a big difference between a babe in Christ and an adult son.

One of these differences is found in Romans 8:14 --- **"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."**

That's right. One of the signs of a mature Christian is his sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading, and his commitment to obedience.

And as we learned in our last lesson, obedience unlocks the door to victory.

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And the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence has another profound affect on our lives.

Once again, the physical is quite useful in understanding the spiritual.

You see, in Roman culture, it was possible to adopt another man's son, provided the father was willing.

For instance, a well-to-do Roman citizen could adopt a poor man's son.

After the father had been properly reimbursed, and after a ceremony of adoption had been performed, the young man became the rich man's legal son and heir.

And even a well beloved slave could be elevated to the status of a natural-born son.

Perhaps Paul was alluding to this Roman custom when he penned Romans 8:15 **"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."**

Yes, because of God's abundant grace, it is possible for a slave of sin to call the God of all the Universe **"Abba, Father."**

And both of these names have a special significance.

"Abba" is a term that would be used by an infant son, something like our English word, *Papa*.

It's the cry of a child as he jumps into his father's arms without the slightest thought of falling.

On the other hand, the word **"Father"** would be used by an adult son.

And behind that name would be a mental appreciation of all that the father is.

Yes, every Christian can call God **"Abba, Father."**

And it's a wonderful privilege that we share with the Son of God Himself.

Remember that night in the garden when Jesus cried, **"Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt."**

It was the cry of an anguished heart mingled with the obedience of a Son.

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But how does a Christian really know he is a child of God?

How can he be sure that heaven is his home?

Well, based on his own decision, he can stand upon the solid rock of God's Word.

Jesus has assured him --- **"He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."** John 5:24

And he also has the testimony of the
indwelling Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:16 **"The Spirit itself beareth
witness with our spirit, that we are
the children of God."**

And just like that young man who had been
adopted into a Roman family, the
Christian is assured of an inheritance.

V 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."**

Yes, we will be **"glorified together!"**

But, what's that part about --- **"if so be
that we suffer with him"**?

Is that an option?

Does that little word **"if"** give us a choice?

No, I don't think so.

You see, some authorities believe that this word **"if"** should be understood more in the sense of "inasmuch" or "since."

Consequently, the verse could read --- since **"we suffer with him."**

And church history has given us ample evidence to verify that point.

Here again, the physical is quite useful in explaining the spiritual.

You see, every Christian is a part of Christ's spiritual body of which He is the head.

And, as you would expect, that which affects the head also affects the body, or at least in a healthy body, that should be the case.

So then, Christ's concern for the lost should be our concern.

And whether we like it or not, the world's natural animosity for Christ will be felt by His church.

But it's not just the head that affects each member.

Interestingly enough, the only other place where this particular expression **"suffer with"** is used is found in 1 Corinthians 12:26 where it says, **"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."**

So the bottom line is this: We are called upon to suffer with Christ and with our fellow believers.

It's simply part of our heritage.

However, we haven't been called upon to suffer alone.

Romans 8:17 says, --- we "**suffer with him**".

And that makes all the difference.

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Have you ever met an elderly couple who seem to be one?

One of them will start a sentence and the other one will finish it.

And you might notice that certain look pass between them when a particular subject comes up in conversation.

Yes, they know what no one else knows, and sometimes those memories involve suffering.

The death of a child, a breakdown in health, and it draws them together.

Do you really want to know Christ?

You must suffer with Him.

And Paul says it's worth it!

Philippians 3:7-11 "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

⁸ Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

⁹ And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith (that would be imputed righteousness, wouldn't it?)

¹⁰ That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings (that's what we're talking about, isn't it?) **being made**

conformable unto his death;

**¹¹ If by any means I might attain
unto the resurrection of the dead."**

Having found his own righteousness
worthless, Paul had been given Christ's
own righteousness.

Having failed in his efforts to control the
old man, he found victory in the same
power that had raised Jesus from the
dead.

And having suffered the loss of all things,
he had gained Christ, and was
satisfied.

Yes, from his own experience, Paul could
confidently assures us that suffering
with Christ is a blessing.

And he also assures us that someday all of
this suffering will be swallowed up by
glory.

Romans 8:18 **"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."**

And you know what? Anticipation can go a long way in relieving our suffering. Even our Lord Jesus found that to be true. Do you think He enjoyed the prospect of His Heavenly Father turning His back on Him?

Do you think the cross held any joy for Him? No. He simply **"endured the cross"** as He anticipated **"the joy that was set before him."**

And we can **"run with patience the race that is set before us,**
2: Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the

cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:1-2

Yes, as the old hymn says:

♪ *Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.*

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And we're not the only ones who are anticipating "**the glory which shall be revealed in us.**"

Romans 8:19-20 "**For the earnest expectation of the creature (or *creation*) waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.**

²⁰ **For the *creation* was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope."**

We've often heard the saying, *Things aren't what they used to be.*

Well, that's certainly the case when it comes to the creation.

After Adam's sin, the creation that God had given him dominion over shared in his fall.

Vegetation began to grow thorns and thistles, and like its master, creation became subject to corruption.

And that was only the beginning.

As time went on, the wickedness of man became so great that God sent a universal flood, which almost annihilated creation.

And there was another change right after Noah came out of the ark.

Originally, in the Garden of Eden, and probably right up to the time of the

flood, men and animals were vegetarians.

Yes, in Genesis 1:30 God said, --- **"And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat (that is, for food): and it was so."**

And you will find a similar command given to man in Genesis 1:29.

However, after the flood, God extended man's diet to include meat.

Genesis 9:3 **"Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat (or food) for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things."**

No doubt that was also the time when the animals began to eat each other.

And from that day to this, the law of the
wild has prevailed.

And if that weren't enough, man himself has
wreaked havoc upon his surroundings.

Every year, more and more species become
extinct, and our environment is
becoming increasingly polluted.

No, man has not been a good custodian.

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But things are going to change.

Someday, God will restore everything to its
original condition.

Romans 8:21 "**Because the creation itself
also shall be delivered from the
bondage of corruption into the glorious
liberty of the children of God.**"

Yes, when Christ returns to rule over this
earth, creation will "**be delivered from**

the bondage of corruption," and the law of the wild will be no more.

Yes, in that wonderful millennial age, there will be no cries in the night.

Isaiah 11:6-9 **"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.**

⁷ **And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.**

⁸ **And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.**

⁹ **They shall not hurt nor destroy in**

all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

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In the meantime, creation is living in an unnatural state.

And as Romans 8:22 says, it **"--- groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."**

And believers are living in an unnatural condition.

V 23 **"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."**

Certainly our souls and spirits have been redeemed --- **"He that hath the Son hath life."**

However, our bodies are still subject to
Adam's corruption.

As a result, we "**groan within ourselves,
waiting for the adoption, to wit, the
redemption of our body.**"

Yes, we are living in an unnatural
condition.

Our bodies simply don't match are redeemed
souls.

The old nature can still get a handle on our
lives if we are not obedient to the
Holy Spirit.

And as we all know, fatigue and disease can
drag us down.

But the day is coming when Jesus will redeem
our bodies.

Philippians 3:20-21 "**For our conversation
(or citizenship) is in heaven; from
whence also we look for the Saviour,**

the Lord Jesus Christ:

**21: Who shall change our vile body,
that it may be fashioned like unto his
glorious body, according to the working
whereby he is able even to subdue all
things unto himself."**

Yes, Jesus is coming!

And when He does, our bodies are going to
catch up with the rest of us.

Titus calls that our **"blessed hope."**

And Romans 8:24-25 says, **"--- we are saved
by hope: but hope that is seen is not
hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he
yet hope for?**

**25 But if we hope for that we see
not, then do we with patience wait for
it."**

Oh, I thought we were saved by faith, not by
hope.

Well, yes we are.

But Paul is talking about the "**redemption of our body**" here, and that's our "**blessed hope.**"

In the meantime, we are living in an unnatural condition.

And sometimes the physical can weigh down the emotional to the point that our prayers are woefully inadequate, or even silent.

At times like that, does God give up on us? Are all communications between heaven and earth discontinued?

Oh no!

There's another ministry of the Holy Spirit that we haven't talked about yet.

V 26-27 "**Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the**

Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

²⁷ **And he that searcheth the hearts (that would be God) knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."**

Now, that's communication indeed!

God can see our hearts, even though our tongues have fallen silent.

And not only that, but **"he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit."**

No, heaven's communication has not been cut off.

But what about that awful silence on earth? Actually, there isn't any silence on earth.

The Holy Spirit **"maketh intercession for us
with groanings which cannot be
uttered."**

And He always intercedes **"according to the
will of God,"** which is something we
don't always do.

Aren't we blessed?

We have an Intercessor dwelling within, and
an Advocate seated at the right hand of
God!

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And now the spotlight shifts from the child
of God to the sovereign will of God, as
it applies to His children.

V 28 **"And we know that all things work
together for good to them that love
God, to them who are the called
according to his purpose."**

I still remember something the late Dr.

Howard Sugden said at a Bible conference I attended.

After he read this verse, he looked straight at us and said, "How would you like a big mouthfull of flour? or a couple of raw eggs? or perhaps a spoonful of shortening?"

And then he pointed out the fact that even though these ingredients are not particularly appetizing in themselves, they can be *worked together* to produce a beautiful cake.

And our Heavenly Father is *working* all things **"together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."**

And might I add, His purpose does not always include our plans or our comfort.

No, God's sovereign will has a higher and holier purpose than we might understand or even imagine.

Let me give you an example.

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Remember Jacob's cry of despair, when his sons came back from Egypt with the bad news?

The governor had taken them for spies, and had used them quite roughly.

In fact, at the present moment, Jacob's son Simeon was bound in prison, and would stay there until Benjamin was brought down to Egypt to verify their story.

Jacob's troubles had all started many years before when his favourite son Joseph had been killed by a wild animal--or at least that's what his sons had told him.

Since that time, the only light in his dreary life had been Benjamin, and now they wanted to take him away!

In agony he cried out --- **"Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me."**

But he was wrong.

As we all know, Joseph wasn't dead at all, but had been sent ahead to save Jacob's family.

And it wouldn't be long before this grieving father would be held in the arms of his beloved son Joseph.

No, **"all these things"** weren't against him.

They were being worked together according to God's purpose.

And what was God's purpose?

He was working everything together in order to bring about the promise He had made to Jacob's grandfather.

Do you remember the Abrahamic Covenant?

It can be found in Genesis 22:17-18 "--- **I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 18: And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ---.**"

That's right. Not only did God's purposes include Jacob's family---they encompassed the entire world --- **"in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ---."**

Yes, some day the Saviour of the world would come forth from that family.

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When we get to Chapter 9, we will learn a lot about God's sovereign will as it concerns His Chosen People.

However, for the rest of this chapter, the subject will be God's sovereign will as it applies to the bride of Christ.

And I think these next few verses will simply boggle your minds.

Here we go.

Romans 8:29-30 **"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he (that is Jesus) might be the firstborn among many brethren.**

³⁰ **Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."**

Foreknown, predestined, conformed, called,
and justified.

I like to call that *God's Golden Chain*.

And as you will notice, the first link in
that chain is foreknowledge.

You see, God lives in the eternal present.

As far as He was concerned, one day is "---
**as a thousand years, and a thousand
years as one day.**"

As a result, He can look down through the
ages with perfect clarity, and He knows
exactly who will accept His Son as
their Saviour, and who will not.

2 Timothy 2:19 **"Nevertheless the foundation
of God standeth sure, having this seal,
The Lord knoweth them that are his."**

Yes, He **"knoweth them that are his,"** and He
has always known.

However, we mustn't make the mistake of thinking that God's foreknowledge abolishes man's free will.

Both are taught in scripture, and there is no conflict between them.

So then, the "**Lord knoweth them that are his,**" and by His sovereign will, He has determined that every child of God will "**be conformed to the image of his Son.**"

Oh I know His children still have an old nature, and this process can only be completed in glory.

However, He has already started, and His sovereign will cannot be changed.

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I heard about a man who used to carve wooden Indians while the spellbound tourists watched.

Invariably, someone would exclaim, "How do you do that?"

He had a stock answer.

Smiling, he would say, "Oh it's not hard. I just take a block of wood and cut away everything that doesn't look like an Indian."

And that's what God is doing.

He's taking a block of wood and doing what is necessary to make us like Christ.

And in 1 John 3:2 we read, **"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."**

Yes, God has taken charge of His children's lives.

He **"called"** them when they were no more than wandering sheep.

His Son's own righteousness has **"justified"** them in His sight.

And **"whom he justified, them he also glorified."**

It's God's Golden Chain, and it has been forged by a God who would turn His back on His own Son rather than turn His wrath upon ruined sinners.

Romans 8:31-32 **What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?**

³² **He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"**

Yes, we serve a God whose ways cannot be altered.

V 33-34 **"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.**

³⁴ **Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."**

Yes, the accuser of the brethren must accuse in vain --- **"If God be for us, who can be against us?"**

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At this point, I feel duty bound to issue a warning.

Like the Israelites who trusted in their national heritage rather than their relationship to God, there are those who are living under a delusion.

Yes, there are those who think because they have made a profession of faith, they have a license to sin, and an iron-clad guarantee of a place in heaven.

Well, they need to ask themselves a couple of questions.

First of all, when they accepted Jesus as their Saviour, did they repent and forsake their sins?

And secondly, is Jesus the Lord of their life, as well as their Saviour?

If the answer to either of these questions is no, then I would question their salvation.

And I question it on the basis of Jesus' words, "**Ye shall know them by their fruits.**"

Certainly, we cannot hang onto our salvation by our good works.

However, disobedience and sin are not the fruits of a born again believer.

On the other hand, let us suppose you really are a child of God, even though you are pursuing a worldly course.

I can only say--there are rough waters ahead for you.

Like in any family, your Heavenly Father will discipline you until you come into line.

And might I say, extreme disobedience calls for extreme measures.

Did you know that some of the Corinthian believers became weak and sickly, and some of them even died?

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Galatians 6:7

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Having said all that, I must emphasize the fact that salvation is Christ's finished work.

And in the next few verses, Paul lists all the possible scenarios that one might think could nullify Christ's salvation.

Romans 8:35-39 **"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?**

³⁶ **As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.**

³⁷ **Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.**

³⁸ **For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things**

present, nor things to come,

³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, (or created thing) shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

No, absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

And in Matthew 28:20, Jesus has assured us "--- I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Now that's a guarantee you can depend upon! Certainly, David Livingstone did.

Again and again, at crisis points in his life, you would find Matthew 28:20 recorded in his diary, followed by this notation, "It is the word of a

Gentleman of the most strict and sacred
honour, so there's an end of it."