

**ARE YOU IN THE FAMILY WILL?
ROMANS 8:14-27**

By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn

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ARE YOU IN THE FAMILY WILL? ROMANS 8:14-27

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Last time we met, we said that in this section of Romans, namely chapters 5-8, Paul is giving us some insight into what we should expect out of life after we have received Christ. Paul said that we find ourselves in a struggle to stop bad behavior and to implement good behavior. This battle is between our flesh, that worldly side of us that we inherited from Adam and Eve, that side of us that has a natural bent towards evil, and our spirit, that side of us that we inherited from Jesus, that side of us that has a natural bent towards God. Further, we said that in this world, in our bodily existence, the flesh seems to have the upper hand.

Last time, we came to understand that we can give the spirit the upper hand by denying the flesh and feeding the spirit. This is what the spiritual disciplines are all about. There is nothing holy about the disciplines in themselves; in fact, other religions practice them as well. The purpose of Christian disciplines is to feed the spirit while at the same time choking out the flesh. We feed the spirit by filling our thoughts with Godly input. If however, we choose to fill our minds with the things of this world, we will again feed the fleshly side of us, and thereby strengthen the flesh's hold on us.

This morning, we are going to examine another way in which we can strengthen our spirit. Knowing who we are in Christ, knowing what He has done for us, knowing what He is doing in us, and knowing what is waiting for us in the future, will strengthen our spirit and weaken the flesh.

As you can see from the sermon title and the outline, this morning's text deals with wills, heirs, and inheritances. The nice thing about God's will is it is not as fragile as human wills.

Let me give you an example: This could have happened at our church, so I won't mention any names to protect the guilty, an old guy that I know had problems hearing, but he refused to get a hearing aid. One day I got irritated with him so I drove him to the doctor's office personally to get him checked out. The doctor fitted him with one of these hearing aids that drop inside the ear. I brought him back a month later for a follow up visit. The doctor asked him, "How do you like your new hearing Aid?" "Fine," he said. "Well how does your family like it?" the doctor inquired. "Oh," said the old man, "I haven't told them yet. They don't know. ... But I've changed my will three times already."

That may happen at the human level, but God's promises never change. This passage, like the others in this section of Romans is meant to give us an assurance of salvation.

Paul desperately wants us to win this battle over sin in our lives. He took the pressure off us by reminding us that our salvation is secure; we are saved by grace through faith. Our struggle is not to hold on to our salvation, but for holiness.

Next, he said that we win this battle by filling our minds with things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy. When our behavior conforms to this kind of Godly thinking, we will find peace.

This morning, we will find strength to go on, even when we get weary from our struggle with sin and worldliness: **REMEMBERING WHO WE ARE AND WHAT IS WAITING FOR US IN THE FUTURE WILL STRENGTHEN OUR SPIRIT IN ITS FIGHT AGAINST OUR FLESH.** You see, even though we have been given tools and techniques to win, sometimes we find ourselves battle fatigued. There are days and seasons where we just don't feel like fighting any more. We want to give up. It is in those times that we must turn to God's Holy Spirit for help. He will remind us who we are, who we belong to, and the kind of blessings that are waiting for us in the future. This will give us the incentive we need to make it through those dry periods.

I. CHOOSING AN HEIR (Vs. 14-18)
WE ARE INTIMATELY CONNECTED TO JESUS AS CHILDREN OF GOD.

In verses 14-18 we can gain some insight into how God is choosing an heir. The fact is: **WE ARE INTIMATELY CONNECTED TO JESUS AS CHILDREN OF GOD.** Now please don't miss the language Paul uses here, this is extremely radical.

A. GOD'S CHILDREN (V. 14)

In verse 14 we are identified as God's children. The verse starts out with "because" or "for" depending on what translation you are reading from which connects this passage with what has come just before it. Paul said, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." He further said that if we have received Jesus as Lord and Savior, then the Holy Spirit lives in us. He left off last time by saying that those who live by the spirit will live and those who live by the flesh will die, they will be separated from God.

Now he returns to those who are led by the Spirit. In other passages, Paul refers to this as being filled with the Spirit, or submitting to the Spirit, if we are truly believers,

then we should be humble enough to listen to the Holy Spirit, submit to Him, and obey Him. He will make us more like Jesus every day. Paul describes this process as being conformed to the image of Christ, this is the sanctification process.

This theme is going to resurface during this passage, so let me state it up front. We have used these words before so we can repeat them in order to become familiar with them. When we confessed Jesus as Lord and received Him into our lives as Lord, we were justified; that is a legal term that means in God's eyes and in His court, He has declared us to be legally not guilty. He changed our eternal destinies from death to life, and that has already happened. So in one sense, we can say that we are saved. On the other hand, there will come a time in the future, after we have died and Christ has resurrected all His people; that we will receive new resurrection bodies to go along with our redeemed spirits. We will then be glorified. I will define this in more depth later, but suffice it to say that glorification will take place in heaven, so in a sense we will be saved.

But now, we find ourselves in a state of already... but not yet. This stage is the sanctification stage. God the Holy Spirit is continuing to perfect us and prepare us to live eternally in heaven together with God. So we are in the process of being saved.

Paul starts to describe that tension here in verse 14. I usually use gender neutral language, but in this passage, it is important to keep the translation as literal as possible since this passage uses both sons and children. This language is meant to freak us out. If you are a believer, then this passage identifies you as a son of God. Jesus is The Son of God. When I hear Paul identify me as a son of God, it gives me the willies. It sounds wrong to me. It sounds almost blasphemous. When I hear it, my mind wants to reject it. Yet the truth is if we have received Christ ... if we are Christians, then we are sons of

God. This is meant to be a legal and rational designation. Can you fathom being identified together with Jesus? When Paul says to us, “Hey, if you guys are filled with the Holy Spirit, then you are the sons of God.” It should cause us to gasp.

B. THE CHILDREN’S FATHER (Vs. 15-16)

But he’s not through with this identification with Jesus. In verses 15-16 he designates God as the children’s Father. If verse 14 was characterized by the legal and rational side of being God’s children, verses 15-16 characterize the relational and emotional side of being God’s children. Remember, the characteristic of life without Christ is one where we stand condemned before God. Being in bondage to Satan, this world, and death results in bondage to fear. Obsessive fear is what evil spirits bring; demonized people are often paralyzed by fear.

However, we have received the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of life and reconciliation with God. In fact here He is described as the Spirit of sonship. Sonship is the literal translation of the word, it actually means adoption. Since mostly men were adopted in the Greek and Roman world, the word is masculine. If well-to-do families didn’t have any boys, or if the boys in their bloodline didn’t show any promise, families would adopt slaves or men from poor families, and pass their wealth, position, and influence on to them. They adopted them and bestowed upon them sonship.

Now in God’s family, this is not just some rational, logical, legal deal. This is emotional. Not only have we been adopted into the family, we are invited to address God the Father exactly like Jesus did. Jesus addressed God as Abba. Abba was the Aramaic word, Pater, Father is the Greek word. It is an intimate way of addressing a loving

Father; it is tender, intimate, and relational. Depending on your household and culture, it is God inviting His children to address Him as Daddy, Papa, or Father.

Listen, and ponder the statement I am about to make to you. I am God's son. He is my Daddy. Say that to yourself about yourself. I am God's son. He is my Daddy. Even you women, use the word son here. It's important. I am God's son. He is my Daddy. Jesus got crucified for saying that. Jesus said I am God's Son. He is my Daddy. If Jesus really wasn't the Son of God, those statements would be blasphemous. If Jesus did not die for our sins and rise from the dead, then when we say it, we are simply deluding ourselves.

But it is true. Look at verse 16. The Holy Spirit witnesses together with our spirits and convinces us that we indeed are God's children. Did you catch that? Now Paul uses children instead of sons. It is important for us to hear that we are sons of God because it is meant to freak us out a little in that it identifies us with Christ.

C. THE CHILDREN'S INHERITANCE (Vs. 17-18)

Verses 17-18 go on to inform us of the children's inheritance. If we are legitimate, authentic, legal and emotional children of God, then we are His heirs. Let's think about this for a moment because it is a little confusing to me. What is our inheritance? God owns everything and everyone in the entire universe. But if this is like human inheritance, God would have to die in order for me to inherit His estate. However, since God is eternal, He is never going to die, but there is a clue here.

We are now referred to as co-heirs with Christ. First of all, Jesus had to die in order to inherit. That is the way we will inherit. When we die and are resurrected, then we also will receive our inheritance. So God's kingdom is the opposite of the worlds. In

the world, our benefactor must die in order for us to inherit. In God's kingdom, we ourselves must die in order to inherit. Which now brings us to the nature of our inheritance; first, we will inherit eternal life. Jesus is eternal. We will never die. We will never be separated from God. Do you remember what Jesus inherited? In the book of Philippians, Paul said that God elevated Jesus to the highest position in the universe, and at the very mention of Jesus' name, every knee would bow, and every tongue would confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus was given dominion and power. God the Father gives Himself as an inheritance to us. We will share in His glory. Glory in reference to God means His presence, His power, His reputation, His holiness and His being. A manifestation of His glory was in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that accompanied Israel through the wilderness. It was the dense cloud that settled over the tabernacle when God spoke to Moses. It was when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain. It was the glowing of Moses' face when He came out from the presence of God.

Even though we don't deserve a thing, God will share His glory with us. We will be co-rulers with Jesus in eternity.

But I'm afraid I have a bit of bad news here: Yes we are called sons of God together with Jesus; we call God Daddy together with Jesus. We will receive glory with Jesus, but the way to all this is by identifying with Jesus through suffering. Some people become Christians to avoid suffering. Some people are religious because they think if they follow God, then there will be no suffering. Have we forgotten? That is the way Jesus came into His inheritance. Jesus inherited glory through the cross. I probably shouldn't say this as a pastor because we may lose people in attendance at church. But if

you come to church, give money, serve in the church and try to be good so that you can avoid suffering for you or your families, then you're in the wrong church, and in the wrong religion. You're wasting your time here. I think if there is one doctrine that's pretty clear; it's that suffering is a part of life ... especially the Christian life.

Now let me say that there is no benefit to suffering because we are stupid. If I lose my job because I'm not a good worker, there is nothing noble about that suffering. If I alienate people because I am nasty or judgmental, there's no benefit to that, well actually there may be. The desired result of suffering for Christians is that it makes us more like Jesus. Suffering is redemptive only if it is used in the hands of the Holy Spirit to mold us into the image of Jesus. The sufferings here probably refer to the consequences we will suffer in our desire to obey God. Jesus obeyed God perfectly and He was persecuted for it. I think for us, our suffering comes as we try to obey God and battle against the flesh. When we fail, we suffer emotionally because we really do have a desire to obey Him.

So let's recap this: We are already children of God because we have been justified, we have been saved and we are in the process of being sanctified. Through suffering and the leading of the Holy Spirit, we are becoming more and more like Jesus, day by day. We are in the process of being saved. One day, when we are raised from the dead and our new resurrection bodies are joined with our redeemed spirits, we will be glorified; we will be saved. We as Christians are not to shy away from suffering because God uses the suffering to prepare us to inherit His glory. I can imagine suffering and I know that all suffering has an end. However, I can't even begin to imagine the beauty, the joy, and the perfection that awaits me in heaven where there is no end to time. The

thought that I am already ... but not yet ... is the thought that compels me to go on. This is what life looks like as we are united with Christ: **WE ARE INTIMATELY CONNECTED TO JESUS AS CHILDREN OF GOD.**

II. DOCUMENTING THE INHERITANCE (Vs. 19-22)
WE ARE INTIMATELY CONNECTED TO JESUS THROUGH DOMINION AND REDEMPTION.

We know that we will receive an inheritance; in versus 19-22 Paul documents some of our inheritance: **WE ARE INTIMATELY CONNECTED TO JESUS IN DOMINION AND REDEMPTION.** Through Jesus' obedience; His incarnation, His death, and His resurrection, He redeemed us from the curse of Adam. Creation's entire destiny is tied up in ours.

A. CREATION'S HOPE (V. 19)

Verse 19 describes creation's hope. As we read through this section, we must read through Hebrew eyes. Nobody catches the essence of these truths like C. S. Lewis in his series, "The Chronicles of Narnia." In his books, nature's fate is tied up with human fate and, like the Hebrews, Lewis animates nature; trees and animals think, talk, and act. For the Hebrew, the trees of the field clap their hands; they raise their limbs in prayer. Rocks hear and witness, streams, animals, and plants all give glory to God. Verse 19 says that creation waits in eager expectation. That is much too blah, much too Western; it really says that creation stretches its head in anticipation. Did you ever see someone stand on their tiptoes, and stretch their neck, and turn their head to see something? That's what nature is doing. They are waiting for God to reveal His glory in us. We don't look like much now but look out when we are glorified. It seems as if

creation has been straining and looking, but this revelation seems as if it will burst on the scene all of a sudden.

B. CREATION'S DESTINY (Vs. 20-21)

Verses 20-21 lay out for us creation's destiny. When God created the universe, He pronounced everything good; everything was created to live in eternity where there is no such thing as death, fear or animosity. Since God created us in His own image, He put us in charge of the earth, He gave us dominion. Our job as rulers was to care for the earth and everything in it. As far as a hierarchy, a chain of command, God was supreme ruler over everything and we were to be His rulers on earth, every plant, animal, earth and water was under our authority. When Adam sinned and fell, so did all of creation. With Adam's sin, death and alienation entered the world. God cursed all that was under Adam along with Adam. Human beings were alienated from one another and humans were alienated from animals, all were vegetarians before the fall. After the fall, humans ate animals and animals hunted and ate humans and other animals. Hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, draught, and all kinds of natural disasters entered creation. As human beings ran amuck, so did creation. Since sin has entered the world, creation has been frustrated from fulfilling its original purpose and design, the way God created.

However, on the day He reveals Himself in us; having given our spirits new birth and some day reuniting our spirits with new, redeemed, resurrection bodies, we will once again be given dominion of a perfect world. When we are restored, everything under our rule will be restored. When we are finally redeemed, nature also will be redeemed. The lion will lie down with the lamb, the child will play by deadly snakes, but the snakes won't bite them. Humans will live in peace with humans and they will live in peace with

animals and all the rest of nature. Harmony will be restored. Creation will no longer experience decay and humans will no longer experience tragedy. We will fulfill our destinies as we inherit God's glory. We will rule together with Christ.

C. CREATION'S EAGERNESS (V. 22)

Verse 22 paints a picture of creation's eagerness. It says that creation groans as if in childbirth. It is a picture of the intensity of the pain and the suffering, combined with the anticipation of all the joy that is about to burst on the scene. When we suffer, we are to eagerly anticipate the unbelievable joy that awaits us on the other side. As we suffer and wait, creation groans. As we anticipate the joy we will experience on the other side, so does creation stretch her neck and look for that day. When we are finally redeemed, so will nature experience her fullness and fulfill her destiny. Since we have been given dominion over nature, creation's destiny is tied up in ours: **WE REALLY ARE INTIMATELY CONNECTED TO JESUS THROUGH DOMINION AND REDEMPTION.**

III. EXECUTING THE WILL (Vs. 23-27)

WE WILL BE INTIMATELY CONNECTED TO JESUS WHEN HE WILL SHARE HIS GLORY WITH US.

The heirs have been chosen. The will has been written. Since the will is in force, we will see the execution of the will in verses 23-27: **WE WILL BE INTIMATELY CONNECTED TO JESUS WHEN HE WILL SHARE HIS GLORY WITH US.** I hope that we are catching this cycle by now. In one sense we are, already... in another sense we are, not yet, and still in another sense we are, in the process of. Each reality guarantees the certainty of the other. We are justified. We are in the process of being sanctified. We will be glorified.

A. THE DOWN-PAYMENT (V. 23)

The down payment is in verse 23, in the last section, we saw the creation groan. Here we are described as groaning, in the last section creation eagerly waited. Here we are described as eagerly waiting. What is it that causes us to groan and what is it that we are eagerly awaiting? Here we confront some more of that, already but, not yet language. Look at the last phrase in verse 23 we eagerly wait for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. But in verse 15 we are described as already having been adopted. Now look at the second phrase in verse 23; we have received the first fruits of the Spirit. We have received the Holy Spirit when we were converted. The Holy Spirit came into our hearts and gave our spirits life and we became children of God spiritually. There will come a day when our bodies are resurrected and transformed. We will be completely redeemed. Our bodies will be adopted as well. We groan now because only part of us is redeemed and now eternal. Our spirits will not die nor will they decay they are now eternal, ready to live in heaven. However, our flesh, our bodies, where sin resides has to go through death and decay so sin can be put to death once and for all. Then God will give us new resurrection bodies. We groan because our spirit still needs to contend with our flesh. This process of putting the flesh to death, this process of becoming more holy and this process of sanctification is a long, painful process. We live with one foot in heaven and one foot on earth. It is painful because our spirits are drawn to heaven while our flesh is drawn to earth. But the fact that we have been justified and have the Holy Spirit sanctifying us is an assurance that glorification will come. The Holy Spirit is our down payment on the finished product.

B. THE GUARANTEE (Vs. 24-25)

Verses 24-25 describe the guarantee. Hope is the mode in which we are to live in this world. Hope in the Bible is not wishful thinking. Hope is tied up with faith in the Bible. Hope is the certainty that we will receive the things God has promised us in the future. We can see that He has saved us by grace through faith. We can see that He continues to shape us and mold us; He continues to form, transform and conform us. We can see that He is using suffering to move us out of places we would never think to move from. He is using suffering to get us to let go of things we think are so valuable to us but are in reality worthless. We can see the Holy Spirit changing our thinking and behavior. Based on all of this, we hope ... we are certain that God will finish the good work He started in each one of us. We wait patiently because we know the job is a life-long process that will not be complete until after we die. If we approach life with this kind of hope, hope in the finished product, then we will not get too excited over things that seem to go our way, and we won't become too despondent over people and events that let us down. Like Paul, we will continue to look forward to that day when we will be perfect in spirit and in body.

C. THE COSIGNER (Vs. 26-27)

Verses 26-27 sum it up by reminding us that we have a cosigner. We have seen creation groan in this passage and we have seen us groan in this passage. In these verses we see that the Holy Spirit groans as well. In the same way that the hope of glorification helps sustain us through suffering and so does the Holy Spirit's prayers on our behalf sustain us in our journeys through life. Since the Holy Spirit is God, He knows the mind of God and He knows the will of God. Since He lives in us, He is intimately connected to our spirits. We are weak because we sin, we are weak because we ignore God, and we

are weak because we often feed the flesh instead of the spirit. We are weak when we suffer, physically, emotionally, and spiritually and we are weak from fighting the battle. Sometimes we don't even know what to pray. But think about how gracious God is, the Holy Spirit inspired the Bible and when we read the Bible, the Holy Spirit applies it to our hearts. God searches our hearts and has a will for our lives. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us, interprets our prayers into heavenly language, and speaks our desires to God and God's will to us. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would lead us into all truth. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit loves us passionately and plays a part in our journey home. Jesus died in order to justify us. The Holy Spirit lives in us in order to sanctify us. The Father will one day glorify us: **AND SO WE REALLY WILL BE INTIMATELY CONNECTED TO JESUS WHEN HE WILL SHARE HIS GLORY WITH US.**

Again, Paul's intent here is to give us assurance that we are saved by grace through faith. We continue to be saved by grace through faith. We will be saved by grace through faith. Our salvation is a process that is overseen by God. The fact that we have been justified guarantees that God will sanctify us and glorify us. The fact that one day God will glorify us guarantees that we have been justified and are in the process of being sanctified. The fact that we are being sanctified guarantees that we have been justified and someday will be glorified. We always live in the already, but not yet: **THAT'S WHY REMEMBERING WHO WE ARE AND WHAT IS WAITING FOR US IN THE FUTURE WILL STRENGTHEN OUR SPIRIT IN ITS FIGHT AGAINST OUR FLESH.**

God is in this with us all the way. We are His children. He is our Father. He has a glorious destiny planned for us.

Listen to how knowing our identity and destiny can change our present circumstances.

When Cyrus the Great was a baby, his grandfather, out of jealousy and fear that Cyrus would one day take the Persian throne from him, called a servant and charged him to take the baby away and destroy him. Instead of killing the baby, the servant gave him to a childless shepherd living in a distant province. Cyrus grew up supposing he was only a shepherd's son. One day he learned that he was a prince of the royal blood and an heir to the throne of Persia. After that there was no minding the sheep for him, for he immediately began to fit himself to rule the kingdom, and eventually became King of Persia. The turning point in his life was when he realize whose child he was, and that was the first great step toward the fulfillment of God's purposes for him.

Have we who have been born by regeneration into God's kingdom and are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ realized that God has a purpose for us to fulfil in His kingdom?

(Celebrate Communion on this day)