

New Life: The Hope of Glory

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[0 : 00] Let's pray together.

Father, I ask that your Holy Spirit will be present among us. Lord, we know that your Spirit is here. We ask that your Spirit would be very active among us. And we ask that your Spirit would witness with our spirits that we are indeed children of God.

Because I can think of no greater gift than that. I can think of no gift more important than that. And so, Lord, will you come and will you give that gift?

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Hi, everybody. Please turn in your Bibles to the first reading, which is on page 944, Romans chapter 8.

You may have heard of a guy called A.W. Tozer. He was a pastor in Chicago, somewhere in the middle of the 20th century.

[1 : 19] I think like the 30s, 40s, 50s, something like that. And he wrote a whole bunch of books. And they're all really, really good. And you should read all of them. And one of the books that he wrote is a book called Knowledge of the Holy.

Now, it's a classic book. I don't really remember much that's in the book. But I do remember the very first line. And the very first line in the book, Knowledge of the Holy, is this.

What comes to your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you. What comes to your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you.

Now, I want you to think about that for just a minute. And I want to turn it around and turn it into a question. Think about yourself for a moment. What is it that comes to your mind when you think about God?

When you think about God, when you think about who he is and all of those things, what are the images that come to your mind? What are the thoughts that come to your mind? Those sorts of things.

[2 : 26] And when you ask a question like that, if you've been a Christian for a little while, it's very easy just to, you know, in our minds, we go initially to a kind of prearranged, set, rehearsed, correct answers, right?

Well, I think of God as, you know, Trinity. And love and all of these sorts of things. And that's good. That's really important. But it's important from time to time to ask ourselves at a practical level, at a visceral level, at an everyday on the ground level, at the core of who we are, what comes to our mind when we think about God?

Not just what are the correct ideas that we know about God, but what is it at the core of who we are in our hearts, in the deeper places?

What comes to our mind when we think about God? And the reason I belabor that for a little bit is that it determines everything, absolutely everything about your Christian life. It determines what level of anxiety and fear you live with on a day-to-day basis.

It will determine the level of guilt that you live with on a day-to-day basis. What comes to your mind when you think about God and how you relate to it in the deepest part of who you are, that will determine how you deal with sin in your life.

[3 : 49] It will deal with how you relate to obedience. It will determine whether or not you persevere in the Christian life or whether or not you burn out and give up.

What comes to your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you because it will determine absolutely everything about your Christian life. Okay, now we're looking at Romans chapter 8.

And in our passage tonight, our passage tells us that one of the distinguishing marks of being a Christian, it's not the only distinguishing mark, but one of the distinguishing marks of being a

Christian is that Christians relate to God as Father.

Now, this passage does not say that we relate to God in exactly the same way that we relate to our earthly kind of physical Father. And I'll talk more about that in just a minute.

But according to this passage, in a remarkable way, the Christian life is animated, according to this passage, by an inward sense of God's fatherly affection.

[4 : 55] And what I want to show you is that that inward sense of God's fatherly affection is just absolutely essential equipment for being a Christian.

It's essential equipment for being a Christian because it will, on the one hand, it will give you power in obedience, and on the other hand, it will give you hope in the midst of suffering.

Okay, that's what I want to show you. Let's get into it. We've been walking through the book of Romans. If you've been with us for a while, you know we've been in Romans for months, and incidentally, we will be in Romans for months.

And particularly over the last few weeks, in Romans chapter 7 and 8, what we've been looking at, what Paul has been convincing us of, is that the Christian life is not motivated primarily by fear.

It's not motivated by condemnation. It's not motivated by guilt. Kind of intuitively, you expect that the Christian life is motivated by condemnation and guilt and fear, but according to Romans, it's not.

[6 : 01] Look at Romans chapter 8, verse 1. We didn't read it, but look up at the beginning of the chapter, verse 1. Paul says, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

No condemnation. And then skip down to verse 14, where our reading started. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God, for you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear.

Okay, stop there. Do you see what he's telling us? Christians, according to Paul, are not to be motivated primarily by fear, condemnation, or guilt.

Okay, what are we to be motivated by? Look back at verse 15 and keep going. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but instead you have received the spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba, Father.

Okay. Every pastor wants to convince you that the passage they're preaching on is just the most important passage in the Bible. Okay.

[7 : 13] I'm not going to tell you that. But I am sore tempted to tell you that right now. This verse, friends, if we would just get a little taste of what this verse promises, we would all of us never be the same.

Let me show you what I mean. Let me show you a couple things about this verse. First of all, look at the word adoption, the spirit of adoption as sons. Now, adoption in this context, it comes out of Roman society at the time.

Okay. And in Roman society at the time, you usually did not adopt a little baby. Usually, adoption happened when you were a pretty rich person and you either didn't have any children or you didn't like the children you had.

What you would do is you would go out and you would adopt an adult, usually a young adult man. And you'd find somebody that you liked and you would adopt them. And the minute you adopted them, they took on all the rights of being a natural son.

So for instance, and oftentimes the adopted child would end up having a higher status in society than the natural children. So Julius Caesar adopted Octavian and Octavian became Augustus Caesar.

[8 : 40] Okay. When adoption happened, the full rights of sonship were bestowed upon the adopted person. Okay. But then the second word that's really striking in this passage is the word Abba.

The word Abba doesn't come from Roman background. It comes from the Jewish context. We've talked about this a little bit before. It's an Aramaic word and it's a word for father that implies just the absolute closest and most intimate relationship that you can possibly have between a child and a father.

Okay. It's the word that, it was usually the first word that a Jewish child would learn. Just like we, when we're little kids, we say dada or mama. Abba is a similar kind of word.

You can say it without having any teeth, which is helpful for a little kid. Um, and so quite often it was the first word that they would say, but it's not a childish word because an adult Jewish man would turn to his father and would regularly call him Abba.

So the important thing in this passage is not that it's a childish word. The important bit in this passage is that it's a name for God that connotes a relationship that is absolutely close, filled with joy and trust and security and affection.

[10:06] Now, can you see why it's so absolutely striking that Paul would use this word at this moment? Because Old Testament Israel, if you read through the Old Testament, you'll see that from time to time, Israel calls God father, but they never dared call him Abba.

It was way too informal, way too intimate, way too close to be appropriate. And as far as we can see, the only person or the first person that comes using the word Abba as he relates to God is Jesus.

And there's a really good reason for that. Jesus was the only one who had a close enough relationship with God for it to be appropriate to use that word. Just Abba's too close, too intimate a word for anybody else to use it when referring to the God of the universe.

I mean, it would have been offensive to a lot of people. Now, keep that in mind and now you're ready to see why it is that the Holy Spirit's work is so absolutely extraordinary.

The Spirit's job in these verses, friends, is to communicate to us, to pass on to us, first of all, the full rights of sonship.

[11:23] The full rights that Jesus has. The Spirit, Jesus is the Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father. And the Spirit's job is to give to us the full rights as being God's child.

And when the Spirit gives us full rights as a child of God, the natural thing to do and the thing that the Spirit provokes within our hearts is within our hearts, it wells up inside us and we naturally cry out, Abba, Father.

So that for a Christian, what comes to their mind when they think about God is not so much a far-off distant deity, not so, you know, not a cosmic lawgiver or somebody who's far off and looking at us with a stern face.

What comes to our mind when we think about God is we think about a loving, affectionate, trustworthy Father. And let me ask you this, what is it that comes to your mind when you think about God?

Is it that or is it something else? But that's not all. Oh, look at verse 16. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

[12:43] Okay, what does that mean? It means that when the Spirit moves within us and draws us to cry out, Abba, Father, at the very same moment the Spirit is doing something else.

At that very same moment that the Spirit is welling up, drawing us to call on God as our close, intimate Father. At the same moment the Spirit is whispering into our ear. It's like the Spirit is a witness.

It's like in court the Spirit is a witness whispering into our ears assuring us yes indeed you are a child of God. You see how it works both ways.

On the one hand the Spirit helps us to adore God as our beloved Father. And at the very same moment the Spirit helps us to receive God's affection as His beloved children.

The Spirit is brokering this relationship and He's making He's drawing us together with the Father in this closest kind of bond. And it's a kind of bond that only would have been appropriate for Jesus Himself but by God's grace and mercy He brings you and I who could never deserve it He brings us in.

[13:56] Now I need to pause here for a minute because I realize that there are some of us here who when you think about using the word Father in relationship to God that's just like scratching on chalkboard there's a lot of us here that would really struggle with the way we talk about God as Father.

and for some of us here particularly if you've had a difficult relationship with your literal physical Father you may have difficulty with this.

You know if you've had a difficult relationship with your Father if you've had an abusive relationship with your Father the very last thing you want is for that relationship to take on cosmic all-powerful significance.

Right? And if that's you let me just say this let me say that that is a very legitimate concern very legitimate but let me say this too and I hope you'll be able to receive this gently I wonder if you'll consider that the answer to the difficulty and the struggle that you have with respect to relating to God as Father the answer to it is not to get rid of the idea of Father and the answer is that you need

a better Father.

I mean all of us all of us this is true of all of us all of us when we were children we reached out to our earthly fathers trusting them completely.

[15:40] All children naturally trust their fathers we trusted our fathers completely implicitly and for every one of us to a greater or lesser extent our fathers have failed us.

That's true of all of us. I intend to do everything I can to serve my son well but I know I'm going to fail him. And when we experience that failure of our father to be trustworthy or whatever that wounds us and that wound friend that wound can only be healed when we receive a new father when we receive a father who's totally trustworthy totally loving totally secure.

And I hope you'll consider that that's exactly what the Holy Spirit wants to give you. Okay. This passage I want to apply this passage in two ways.

first of all a clear sense of God's fatherly affection gives us power for obedience. And the second is a clear sense of God's fatherly affection gives us hope in the midst of suffering.

First of all gives us power for obedience. Look back at verse 13. We didn't read verse 13 but it's kind of part of the section so we're going to look at it. Paul writes for if you live according to the flesh you will die but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.

[17:14] And then verse 14 all who are led by the spirit of God are sons of God. Now look at verse 13 I want to ask you a question. How do you put to death the deeds of the flesh according to verse 13?

And more importantly how do you do it by the spirit? Okay. In the wider context think of it this way. As the spirit causes you to love God more and as the spirit causes you to receive God's fatherly affection in greater and greater measure that is naturally going to cause you to love God more and it's going to cause you to hate sin.

It's going to cause you to love God more love sin less and it's going to cause you to want to choose God and reject sin. That's part of how the spirit leads us.

Leads us into holiness. And the important thing here is that the sense of God's fatherly affection is crucial to motivating the life of holiness. holiness.

[18:29] Let me read to you from John Calvin. John Calvin wrote this. Indeed no one gives himself freely and willingly to God's service unless having tasted God's fatherly love he is drawn to love and worship him in return.

Isn't that wonderful? You're never going to be you're never going to find motivation to pursue obedience and holiness and Christian discipleship until you taste the sweetness of God's fatherly affection for you.

So what comes what is it that comes to your mind when you think about God? And does God's fatherly affection motivate your Christian life?

Okay. Second thing is this a clear sense of God's fatherly affection will give you hope in the midst of suffering. Look at verse 17. And if we are children then we are heirs heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Okay. Now why is it that Paul starts talking about suffering in that verse? Does that seem a little abrupt to you?

[19:51] I mean verse 16 he's talking about the spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God and that is a very warm and fuzzy moment. And then all of a sudden he starts talking about suffering and it kind of seems like it almost seems like he ruins the moment.

He starts talking about suffering and then he goes on and continues. Why? I think there's two things to point out. The first is pretty straightforward but it's important to remember.

Paul understands that suffering is an absolutely essential part of the Christian life. There's no getting around it. one of the things to keep in mind is that the Bible is typically more realistic than we are about the world.

We are always surprised by suffering as if it is a strange thing. The New Testament is never surprised by suffering. The New Testament is always expecting suffering.

And the reason the New Testament is always expecting suffering is that the New Testament understands that we live in a fundamentally deeply flawed and fallen world. Verse 20.

[20:58] Glance up verse 20. Verse 20 says that all of creation is subjected to futility. And that means at least that as beautiful as the world is, as wonderful as the snow was, as beautiful as the mountains are, as beautiful as our lives are in so many different ways, there is a deep and profound

flaw in the world so that we experience, all of us in life, experience a kind of futile tragedy.

in a very deep way, don't we? I mean, it means that as we live our lives, relationships around us inevitably break down.

People around us die. Eventually, we ourselves will die. It means that in Libya, people are shooting each other and it means in Christ's church, there is an absolutely tragic earthquake.

And there is something in us that we look at the world and we say, it is a wonderful world and yet at the same moment there is something wrong with the world. There is a deep flaw and that means that we are inevitably going to deal with suffering in our lives.

But there is another reason and there is a deeper reason that Paul talks about suffering right here. The reason is the Spirit's work gives us hope and precisely the kind of hope we need to deal with the suffering of life.

[22 : 23] And here is why. Because when the Spirit gives us a sense of God's fatherly affection, the Spirit is giving us a taste of future glory.

Let me try to explain this. Think about Jesus for a minute. We read from the Gospel of Mark. There is our second reading. And the Bible implies that Jesus suffered more profoundly, more deeply than anybody else in history.

and I wonder if you have ever thought about the question, what is it that gave Jesus hope to go through all the suffering that he experienced?

Where did he get his hope from? Because he persevered through just unimaginable suffering.

Where did his hope come from that enabled him to walk through such terrible suffering?

Well, if you read through the Gospels, it seems to be pretty clear that Jesus gained hope because he knew that he was God's child. And because he was God's child, because he was the Son of God, he knew that he could trust his Father.

[23 : 32] He knew that he could trust his Father to walk with him through suffering. He knew that he could trust his Father up right to the point and through death. And he knew that he could trust his Father that three days later he would be resurrected and he knew this is the critical bit, that he could trust his Father that he would be glorified after the resurrection.

And that the glory that Jesus received after the resurrection, Jesus knew that that glory would be so wonderful that it would in a sense heal all the suffering that he experienced.

Now friends, look at verse 17. 17. Because in this passage, it tells us that much the same thing is happening with us.

If indeed we suffer with him in order that we may be glorified with him. In order that we may be glorified with Jesus. You see, we gain hope the same place Jesus did.

Here's a little bit of how it works. the Holy Spirit assures us that we are God's children, gives us a sense of God's fatherly affection. And that means that just like Jesus, we can trust our Father.

[24 : 51] It means that we can trust him, that he will walk with us through suffering, and that after death, he will resurrect us just like he resurrected Jesus, and he will glorify us just like he glorified Jesus.

Now what does that mean? What does it mean to be glorified with Jesus? Jesus, it means at least this. After we die, and God gives us new bodies and brings us back to life, the little taste of God's fatherly affection that we have now, on that day, will increase in infinite measure to an infinite degree for infinite duration of time.

God's fatherly affection, it means that God, the little taste of God's fatherly affection, that God would say that we are his child, and that he loves us with the same love that he loves Jesus, we taste that now in just in part, but there will be a day when God's glory rains down on us in infinite measure, and we will live under the white, hot intensity of God's fatherly affection, and that glory that we taste in that day, will be so beautiful, and will be so glorious, that it will undo, and it will mend, and it will heal all the brokenness of our lives that we have experienced, and in fact, that glory of that day will be so profound, and so remarkable, that it will not only heal our lives, it will not only undo the pain and the suffering that we have experienced here, it will not only make it in a sense all, you know, remarkable way worth it, it will also heal the brokenness of this world, that's what verse 21 says, verse 21 says that the entire created universe will be restored with us, when God resurrects us and pours out his affection and his glory upon us without measure, on that day, the universe itself will be restored, and everything that is broken in this world will be remade, will be restored, will be set right.

One of my favorite books by C.S. Lewis is *The Great Divorce*, and in *The Great Divorce*, he talks about how heaven will one day begin to work backward so that it will work backward in such a way that all the suffering of our life in a remarkable and mysterious way will be turned to glory. And even as I say that right now, that could just sound like a fairy tale, and it would be a fairy tale, it would be something you should never believe unless, except for the fact that it happened to Jesus, that Jesus himself suffered more than any of us, that Jesus himself died, that Jesus himself was resurrected on that first Easter morning, and that the glory he knows now before the Father is such that when he looks back, he says, yep, the cross was worth it.

[28 : 07] It gives us hope, hope in the midst of our suffering. Okay, what comes to your mind when you think about God? Think about it because it's the most important thing about you.

And one of the distinguishing marks of a Christian is that a Christian is someone who calls God Abba, Father. Father. And that sense of God's fatherly affection is the thing that motivates our discipleship and it's the thing that gives us hope in the midst of suffering because it gives us a foretaste of future glory.

Now, I don't know where you're at. If you're not a Christian tonight, if you're not a Christian here tonight, then I wonder if you'll hear this.

This is not very insightful. This is true of all of us. All of us have a deep desire to be loved and to love, right? That's all of us. But all of us also have a deep desire that the future will somehow become certain.

If you're not a Christian tonight, I hope you'll consider the fact that Jesus offers to satisfy both those desires, both those deep desires within you, to be loved by a father who is absolutely loving, totally trustworthy, absolutely secure, and to know that your future is secure, that glory awaits you.

[29 : 28] Jesus wants to offer that to you. And I wonder if you'll investigate what it means to follow Jesus, what it means to be his disciple. I'd love to talk to you about that.

Aaron would love to talk to you about that. The prayers over here in the South Chapel would love to pray with you about that. And if you are a Christian, some of you undoubtedly are struggling with temptation, all of us are.

Some of us are struggling with profound suffering. And I want to invite you to ask God to renew within you a sense of God's fatherly affection, that he would fill you again with his Holy Spirit, because you can never have enough.

It's never enough. You always want more. Ask for more, because as you grow in that sense of God's fatherly affection, that's what's going to propel your discipleship. That's what's going to propel you to renounce sin and run away from it and choose God, and that's what's going to give you hope in the midst of your suffering.

Amen. Amen.