

Romans

#18: Living Between the Cross and the Crown

Romans 8:12-27

Dr. Matt Cassidy ---- January 18, 2026

If you don't have a notebook, go by the welcome desk and get one. We're studying the Book of Romans together this entire school year. We're on page 36, Romans 8:12-27 today.

Romans 8 has been called by many scholars over the centuries the single greatest chapter in the Bible. And therefore, it would be the single greatest chapter in human experience, because it's God's revelation. And this is it.

I want us to try and grasp and understand the truth that we're going to look at today and the power of those truths to change our lives, that we might enjoy the fullness of what it says. I'm going to tell you what it says, and then we're going to explore the details of that.

Here are three major points in these paragraphs we're going to enjoy together. The first one is that you are loved by God and should enjoy all the benefits of sonship; so, rest. The second is that because of our adoption we will endure suffering; brace. And the third is that God has given us the Spirit to confirm our adoption and to give us strength in our suffering; thrive. Rest, brace, thrive. That's what this passage has for us today. It's a barnburner.

A Believer Is Led by the Spirit

Romans 8:12-14

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

It starts in verse 12. Verse 12 and 13 are a bit of a review from last week, so I won't spend much time on those verses. **"So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the**

flesh, to live according to the flesh. 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. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”

Verses 12 and 13 review and summarize what we looked at in verse 11 of chapter 8. That is, this is a parent talking to his child, saying, *If you live being directed by your flesh, your ego, your passions, you're going to die. It's a parent saying, If you run down the street without looking both ways, you're going to get hurt. That's just how it works. It's just a matter of time.*

And not only is Paul saying, *Don't be living in subjection to your ego, your passions, because you're no longer in debt to that. You're not debtors to that anymore. But rather (here's the part I want us to spend time with) we are led by the Spirit of God. That's where we are now. And you need to be guided and directed by the Spirit.*

The Spirit is mentioned in chapter 8 more than in any other chapter in the Bible. And this is one way to live by it. It's a summary statement for the rest of our time together. What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? Very quickly ... no time ... one is a heart attitude where your posture is absolute surrender to God. Your palms are up and open. It is not your life. It's just a complete surrender to the will of God to do whatever He wants you to do.

Your mind is to be focused on the Word of God. If you're going to be led by the Spirit, the Spirit's heart language, His native tongue, is the Bible. More likely than not, if He's going to bring words to your spirit, it's going to be in a Bible verse. So, you start there. A great summary of the power of the Bible is in **2 Timothy 3: “All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that every man and woman of God would be adequate and equipped to do every good deed.”** It's right there. It's why we spend so much time studying the Bible.

And then the third thing along with our heart and our mind is tuning. Dallas Willard is a famous Bible scholar. He says that we are fine-tuning our souls to hear the Spirit's voice. He likened it to a distant AM radio station with a lot of static. We try to hear and live in a certain way so that we can hear it more clearly. And that's where the spiritual practices come in. That's why we're doing that series on spiritual practices. We get good at hearing through Bible study and prayer and fasting and those other disciplines—caring and generosity. We can hear God's voice. We're to live being led by His Spirit.

A Believer Is a Child of God

Romans 8:15-16

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

The next truth that Paul wants us to grasp and understand deeply is that we’re children of God. Every believer is a child of God. He says, **“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, and now you cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”**

There are thirteen references in these paragraphs that we’re looking at—thirteen different references—to us being a child of God in some way. He uses the word “sons” or “child” or “adoption”—over and over again. He’s trying to get it into our head.

And this word “adoption” is the key. That’s a word that you can put some time in studying. It’s probably the single most beautiful word picture to help us grasp what it means to be saved and the joy that we have by being that. And he’s saying here that it’s not the spirit of slavery that leads to fear; but rather, it’s a Spirit of adoption that leads us crying out, “Abba! Father!”

Adoption is a word that’s only used five times in the New Testament, believe it or not. And three of those times are right here in Romans. And the reason he says that we have received adoption as sons is important is because in the Greek world, which was not too different from ours, the sons inherited everything. They got the last name and all the family wealth. The daughters were married off into that other part. So, he intentionally does this. So, some of your translations sometimes say, “sons and daughters”. This will be left translated as “sons” so that you have the full rights of all that inheritance.

And again, a Roman audience of that day would look at this word “adoption” and understand the power of it. It is life-altering. When you were adopted, you took on everything in

the family. It's so vital to our understanding that a scholar wrote a book specifically on this. It's called *Slaves, Citizens, Sons*. It helps us grasp what the original readers heard and understood when they saw that word "adoption."

The profound truth of Roman adoption was that the adoptee was taken out of his previous state and placed in a new relationship of son to his new father ... All his old debts were [instantly] canceled, and in effect the adoptee started a new life as part of his new family. The father was liable for the actions of the adoptee, and each owed the other reciprocal duties of support and maintenance.

---Francis Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons*

Here's what he says: "The profound truth of Roman adoption was that the adoptee was taken completely out of his previous state and placed in a new relationship as a son of a new father ... All the old debts were [instantly] canceled, and in effect the adoptee started a new life as part of a new family. The father was liable for the actions of the adoptee."

If you were adopted, you were given a new birth certificate. You start all over again. This is the picture that Paul wants us to have of our relationship with God—that we are His sons.

Look what it says: "**And we have His Spirit within us, by whom we are crying out, 'Abba! Father!'**" Listen, that means "Daddy! Father!" This is an evolution of the depth of our relationship with God because of Jesus Christ—His death and resurrection and our faith in that. No God-fearing Jew would use even "father" as a means of addressing God Almighty. Their view of God is transcendent and distant and utterly holy—so much so that James Boice says that you couldn't even say the names of God in prayers.

As a matter of fact, when a scribe was copying the Holy Bible, when he came not only the name of God itself, but even the names of God, he would put the quill down, then go and wash his hands, come back, pick up a special quill just for the name or names of God, write that part, put it back down, and then pick up the original quill. That's how separate God is in His name.

And then Jesus comes along and keeps talking about God Almighty as "Father." He's teaching that He's "Father" and He's teaching us to pray "Our Father, who are in heaven ..."

And then on that night of the most torturous experience on this planet that Jesus had, when He negotiates with the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, He will cry blood. And He'll pray, "Abba! Abba!"—Daddy, Father. "Can I just let this pass?"

And now we, because of our faith alone in all the works of Jesus Christ, get to say "Abba! Father!" And if that weren't enough, we have the Spirit of adoption as sons, and it's crying out, "Abba! Father!" Look at verse 16: **"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."**

One person wrote that verse 15 is like looking up at God and saying, "I mean, I love you!" And verse 16 is the Spirit is saying, "I love you too!"

The Spirit is within us to confirm our adoption so that we know that we can say these words: "Abba! Daddy! Father!" The Father sends the Son so that we can be sons. And then the Son sends the Spirit so that we can know and have confidence and enjoy and fully grasp what sonship means. This is beautiful. We need to pause here and thank God for all these blessings that flow.

Here's the point of this application in this first part. We did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back in fear. What happened when you sinned? What happens when you shame yourself, when you regret the way you've treated someone whom you love deeply? When you injure someone else, do you run towards God or away from God? If you run away, you're still in slavery. You think you're a slave. Look and feel what the passage is saying, the deeper meaning. This is talking about a relationship where in your worst moments you run to the Father—Daddy, Father. In your times of sorrow and grief, you run towards Him. If you don't envision a father like that—and listen—no one had a perfect father—all of us have as a lifetime homework assignment to redefine the powerful title of "father." And we have to understand that a father is defined by the Bible, not by our experience of growing up. And we have unconditional, unrelenting love from God the Father.

So, just think, when you read passages, when you have experiences, what is your nature? Are you a slave to an employer that wants to get out of town and not get caught? Or are you one that runs there first so that he finds out from you what you've done?

Romans 8:17

... and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

Let's take a look at the inheritance in verse 17: **“And since”**—the first class conditional last week—**“we're children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.”**

We're heirs. We get to inherit in God and in Christ. What does that mean? Well, quickly, it's chapters 1 through 6 of Romans. We inherit the very righteousness of God. So, we enjoy that bank account of righteousness before the holiness of God.

But also, we will reign. Jesus will reign later over a new creation, and we're going to be there to help. We're going to be part of that.

More importantly, this is a sentence that kind of pivots to the rest of the section, because he's going to introduce this. It's part of being part of the family. He's managing expectations. He's saying, *Listen, now that you're sons and daughters of God, you're going to enjoy suffering with Him.*

Jesus said it a lot, but in **John 16** He says, **“Don't be surprised. There will be many tribulations in this world, but take courage, because I have overcome the world.”**

And we need to learn how to live between the cross and the crown—in between the death and resurrection and His second coming when He rules. That's where we have to live. And how are we to live? This is the greatest gift—this verse. How do we live between the cross and the crown?

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” That’s the verse, friends. You memorize that and make it your life verse. That’s how you live. That’s the reason you live.

The big point here is that the sufferings (that’s the theme that was introduced) are not worthy of comparing. Don’t get out a ledger sheet and say, *Is this worth it?* Whatever it costs you to live completely sold out for Jesus Christ is going to be rewarded in eternity.

Let me say it another way. It’s not worth comparing. Any expense is not even an expense. It’s an investment, and that’s different. An expense is lost. With an investment there’s a future return. And God Himself will bring you that reward.

Let me say it a different way. You will never ever regret living your life surrendered to God Almighty. You’ll never regret that.

I mean, there are too many examples to think about. The first martyr, the first person to die because of his love for Jesus Christ was Stephen. It’s found in Acts 7. Ask him about this verse. He gives this rip-roaring sermon which is a survey of the Bible. He shows how every epic is pointing to Jesus being the promised one, the Messiah, who we crucified. He rose again. And upon hearing that Jesus was Lord, the crowd, which became a mob, burst into this frenzy. They’re yelling and screaming and they grab him and take him out of town so that they can kill him. And in the midst of all that, he starts having a vision, and he sees Jesus standing. It says that Jesus was standing at the right hand, to the right of the throne. But Jesus doesn’t stand—He sits. Because He’s finished. But He stands. And Stephen repeats, “The Son of Man is now standing at the right side of the throne of God.” That means the judgment seat, the right-hand seat. And he’s standing there, and that’s when the mob becomes animalistic. And if you can imagine directing this as a film, there’s this roar of animals screeching. They had so much hatred towards him. And that is deafening. And then you just turn that down. And as they pick up stones and start hurling them at Stephen, another sound comes up on the other side into his next life. And he hears this.

[Sound of slow claps.] There's a single person applauding him. Jesus the King is standing. And Jesus says, *Oh, that was a good sermon. That will get you killed, but well done. Well done.*

“I consider the sufferings of this present age are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us.” The glory that will be revealed—have you read Revelation? You're going to love how this ends. You won't regret it.

Why the suffering? Why is there suffering? Paul is going to go on and he's going to show that the reason you're suffering for the Lord is natural, actually. I mean, all creation is not the way it was meant to be. This is a broken and bent world. And it can't get fixed until Jesus returns. It's broken so badly that only God can fix it.

Romans 8:19-22

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

So, he appeals to creation as a reason for suffering. He says, **“For the creation waits with eager longing”**—this is a great phrase—“eager longing.” We're going to see that “eager longing” throughout. And the literal translation for that is a person standing on their toes with their head out, looking, waiting, eagerly longing. All creation is eagerly longing **“for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”** We'll have that someday. **“For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.”**

Why the suffering? Because the world is broken. And what is it longing for? Listen for it right here: **“the revealing of the sons of God.”** The Greek word for “revealing” is “apocalypse.” It means that the drapes are removed. It's like some car show where they have this super sexy car

underneath the blanket, and they pull it off, and everyone gasps. The curtains pull back—that's the revealing. And so, the Book of Revelation is the revealing of the coming King, when Christ is going to put things the way they were supposed to be. All things will be made new. And the bride, the Church, will come. And this grand wedding scene will take place in this revealing. That's what all of creation is longing for.

And why is that? Because it is subject to futility. That's the word for "vanity." "Vanity of vanities"—Ecclesiastes. All creation doesn't know what its purpose is anymore; it doesn't know its meaning.

And then the passage goes over here and says that creation is in bondage. It's in bondage to corruption, and it's longing for the freedom that we're going to get some day as children of God. This bondage to corruption and subjection to vanity is called the fall of creation. And that's why there's groaning.

In Genesis 3 is the introduction of thorns and thistles and cockroaches and all things bad. When you read about earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, and floods, that's planet Earth groaning, longing for the day of redemption.

In physics we have a law dedicated to this verse. It's called the law of entropy. All created things, if left alone, are dedicated to decay and disharmony. That's physics. Groaning ... longing...

In the animal kingdom ... some of you older people remember the Saturday morning show our parents inflicted on us—*Wild Kingdom*. Back then they let the lions eat the gazelles, and we watched it. Waaah! Every one of the postcards and pictures you take from some of the most beautiful places on planet Earth are crime scenes of the animal kingdom. Something died there. Animals live in fear and in violence.

And all creation is set against man, the pinnacle of creation who is made in the image of God. How hard is it to kill all of mankind? Do you know the number one killer of humans? Mosquitos. It doesn't take much. It takes a flea on the back of a mouse entering Europe to destroy forty percent of the population. It didn't matter if you were a king or a pope. It was called the Black Plague. That's creation longing, on its tiptoes, looking, looking east, waiting for Jesus and His bride to return and make things right.

Isaiah 11:6

And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the goat, and the calf and the young lion ... together; and a little boy will lead them.

All of Isaiah 11—read it—but here’s one sentence: **“And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the goat, and the calf and the young lion ... together; and a little boy will lead them.”**

There’s no threat of violence. This is what creation longs for. This is what they were made to do. And they can’t have it. And now in the life we live, that creation lives, it’s always winter. It’s never Christmas. This is the life we live between the cross and the crown.

Romans 8:23

And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

He goes on. Not only does creation groan; we groan. **“And not only creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”**

We groan with creation. The word “groan” is used six times in the Bible. Three of those times are right here. It means “inward grief.” We had to invent words to complement “groaning.” We would say “existential angst” or “dread.” Something within the deepest part of our souls is sunk.

One time it’s used is when Jesus is coming to the tomb of Lazarus. And as He approaches, He groans. One writer says that He was grinding His teeth with anger. Because this man Lazarus, whom He loved, was not made to die. And Jesus hates this. He’s groaning.

And the reason we groan is because we have the firstfruits of the Spirit. Hmmm... “firstfruits” is an agricultural term that means the first round of harvest. And that’s usually an

indication of how the rest of the harvest is going to be. As a farmer, you're happy to see those firstfruits. It's the pick of the harvest; it's the best sample. Look at it as a downpayment.

And because of the righteousness that we inherited from Jesus, now the Spirit lives within us. That's the firstfruits, the deposit, that's already within us. And that makes us long for the glory of God. We have eternal longings because we have eternity in our spirit now. In other words, before I was a believer I was happy here. I loved it. You know, Hugh Hefner was part of the fall. He was mixing it up nicely. When you received the Spirit of God, you're looking east and you're longing for His return. You can grow tired of that.

What are we waiting for? The adoption of sons and the redemption of our bodies. *I thought you said we were adopted.* It's an already/not yet situation. Our spirit is entirely adopted. But this is as though our souls and our bodies are adopted—the paperwork is done, the judge ratified it. We're kind of sitting on the curb waiting for our father to pick us up. That's part of our existence. And so, our souls, our personalities, our temperaments, our bents keep leading us into sin of some kind. And we're longing for that to be left and forgotten. And we don't need to talk too much about the redemption of our bodies, right? I can't wait for that trade-in, from the mortal to the immortal! And that's why we're groaning inwardly. We're looking forward to that.

Romans 8:24-25

For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Our groaning is hope-filled. That's what Paul wants us to understand. It's not just pie in the sky. He says, **“For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope.”** I mean, if you can see it, you don't need to hope for it. **“For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”**

When you see the word “hope” in the New Testament, you need to understand what the word means. It's not like what our English “hope” means where you're looking forward to something that may or may not happen. *I hope it rains tomorrow.* Well, okay, you don't and can't know for sure.

This hope is something that is certain. And really, the word is more like “anticipating and waiting on something that is certain.”

Let’s keep that marriage theme going here. Picture it as when the groom is standing at the head of the aisle, and the doors are closed, and the music is changed for the bridal entrance. But the doors are still closed. Does he hope for his bride? Oh, yeah. Does he know that she’s going to be there? Of course he does. But how is he waiting? Well, you want him to wait patiently.

And that’s how we’re supposed to live our lives. I cannot wait ... but I need to wait.

I talked to a woman a number of years ago, and we met in the lobby. She said, “Hey, I need to talk. I can’t fight the blues. And maybe I’m even depressed, and I don’t know if I’m thinking right and biblically.”

And so, we met. And she said she was just getting tired of living. She was in her early seventies but very healthy. But she was just kind of done. And a lot of had to do with this (she went on for a while): “I’m just being worn down by the injustice. Everywhere I look, the good guys go to jail and bad guys mock them. And then, I’m becoming worn out by watching my friends, my peers. Their bodies are falling apart. And I’ve been to how many funerals this year? And the grief is tiresome.”

Anyway, she talked for thirty minutes of just being worn out. And then she said, “What can you say to help me here?”

I turned to this passage that we’re looking at. And I said, “Do you know what? I think you’re right where you need to be. What you’ve done is that you’ve joined the choir of all creation. And now you’re singing in harmony with nature. And nature is groaning. And now you’re groaning with nature.”

She said, “So, it’s normal?”

And I said, “Oh, it’s normal.”

“Is it good?”

“Yes. It’s good. Because that’s the Spirit, the firstfruit that’s living within you. And it’s telling you that you want to go home, and you should wait patiently.” And then I said, “Let’s keep reading. Because you don’t groan alone. Creation groans; you groan; the Spirit of God groans.

Romans 8:26-27

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.²⁷ And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Let's look at this verse together. **“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know how to pray as we ought to, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And He who searches hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”** You do not groan alone, and you do not groan helplessly.”

Again, this is a chapter on the Spirit. It says that He helps us. The word for “helps” there is graphic in the Bible, in that it's when somebody else is carrying the other end of a heavy log. Kent Hughes says that's it's not as though the Holy Spirit is giving you wise advice from a lounge chair. But rather, He's rolling up His sleeves and getting in it with you.”

Bring your supplications to the Spirit. Let Him in on your life with the things that are causing you to groan. He'll be there to help.

Not only are we not alone in the work part, but He prays for us. The Spirit taps in on our groaning and says, *I can translate that*. Here we are with the Trinity all over again. Jesus is interceding for our sins. And then the Spirit is interceding for our groaning. In these darkest moments of your life, when you're grieving the depth of someone you loved whom you have lost, or maybe they've run away, and you can't find words, and you're just moaning—that's awfully saintly of you. And the Spirit says, *Hey, let me harmonize that, huh?*

Do you know what would be a great thing to do in your notes? For this word “us” isn't actually in the Greek. It's just added to make sense. Why don't you put your name there?

“For the Spirit Himself intercedes for Matt when Matt is groaning and it's too deep for words. And He searches my heart”---see, put your name there. The Spirit of God has been given to you so you can fully appreciate what it means to be a son and not alone. He'll pray for you.

I've been studying this passage of Scripture all week. I just couldn't get out of my mind that we built an entire camp around this passage when I was the youth pastor in 1995. We would look at different epics at the camps. And this was the apocalypse, the Book of Revelation, the revealing. And it's referred to as the Apocalypse Now camp. In fact, we hand-painted the bus with the scene from the movie poster. It was dark. It was scary.

As a matter of fact—true story—I was filling up the tank on the bus and I was surrounded by police cars because some woman called and said, “That bus scares me. Can you go check on it?” So, here I am: “Yes, officer.”

You have to understand the context. Our student ministry is not helping students graduate when they're nineteen so that maybe they can go to a Christian college with Christian roommates and live happily ever after. That's not what our youth group is preparing students for, but to be at age nineteen in Biloxi, Mississippi, at boot camp when everyone is making a town run and they stand up to their friends. Or even worse—potluck at UT in a dorm and having to deal with those faculty members and students.

So, this camp was crazy. Everything was optional. You could choose casino night or a night of worship and communion. You could choose sleeping in or you could choose morning devotions with anyone who shows up that early in the morning. We had these optional seminars and tried to make them really hard to want to go to. One of them was called “A Comparison and Contrast of the Eschatology of Covenant and Dispensational Systems of Theology.” Okay? I was going to teach that. I went into that thinking no one was going to be in the room. And there were sixty-five kids. I thought, “Well, I don't even know what these words mean myself.” So, I kind of had to make stuff up.

There was one rule, and that was that you can't help anyone else. You can't wake other people up and say, “Let's go to morning devotions.” You can't help other people make the right choices. You had to stay to yourself. And if you helped others, there was persecution. I mean, it's a camp about end times.

Anyway, I set three upperclassmen down before it started. I had a great relationship with them, and I said, “Listen, I need you guys to play a special part. And I can tell you how it all ends and you play your part, or I can not tell you how it ends and you can just watch it happen. But it's going to cost you guys. Do you guys want to do it?”

And they all said, “Yes.”

I said, "Do you want to know how it ends?"

They said, "No."

So, I said, "Okay, so you have to know these two things. One, that I'm the youth pastor and I am sovereign over this camp. I pick the speaker, I pick the topic. I pick the meals. I'm going to be the one that says when you guys wake up and when you go to bed. I chose the games, I chose the rules of the games. I'm going to choose who wins the games. I'm in charge of this camp, right? I'm sovereign."

And they said, "Yes, you're sovereign."

I said, "The second thing you need to know is I love you. You guys are very special to me, and you know that. Right?"

And they said, "Yeah, we know that."

I said, "Now you're on your own. Let's see what happens."

The week played out. We took attendance on all these optional events and tried to see who came and who didn't. And these three students and some of their friends starting helping other people: waking them up for devotional, helping them make right choices. And so, the rules were the rules, and they were persecuted. They had to get in the back of the line for the meals sometimes. And then we took these three students down to the riverfront and pided them with whip cream and threw them in the water.

One morning it was escalating; it was getting harder for them to do the right thing and help other people. And so, we had pancakes one morning. And the bad guy at camp said, "Okay, pancakes it is." He took these three down to the waterfront and made pancakes out of them. They had flour and eggs and milk on them, and don't forget the syrup. Yep. Then he threw them in the water.

Anyway, the last night of camp we'd been taking attendance, and some of the kids who had been doing the right things somehow snuck off. They were raptured. There was a bus waiting down the road. We got on the bus, and we drove to San Antonio for a night of celebration. I'm driving the bus and the kids break out into worship. They'd had a hard week, and they were on the right side of their choices. Our first stop we rented an entire ice rink to ourselves where we played broomball and had a great dinner together. And then later we ended up at a giant castle in San Antonio that had video games and go-carts and bumper boats. It was fun! It was heaven, right?

Anyway, when we were at the ice rink and having dinner together, while they were playing broomball. And on every TV set and a big projection screen we played the video of them being persecuted all week at camp. What do you think of it now? And I pulled those three special students over and we had a special meal together. And I gave each one of them a leather-bound Bible. And on the inside it said this: **“For I consider the sufferings of the present time not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed to us.”** Their cheeks hurt from smiling.

And then I’ll never forget—we were just reminiscing about how being a pancake is not so bad when you’re eating at an ice rink, and you own the whole place. Anyway, towards the end of our meal Jason said, “You know, I wish I had done more. I wish I had suffered more and maybe gotten a couple of more people on the bus with us.”

And I thought, “You know, it’s true.” Life holds only one regret: not having been a saint. And that’s why Romans 8 is called the greatest piece of literature in all human history.

Let’s pray.

Let me review. Paul wants you to read these words from God Himself so that you would know that you are loved and you are to enjoy the benefits of the full adoption as sons. So, you should rest. Be informed that you will suffer, because it is adoption. So, just brace yourself. And the Holy Spirit has been given to you as a downpayment. And He’s in your very spirit to confirm your adoption and to give you strength while suffering in sorrow. So, thrive.

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.
Perfect submission, perfect delight, visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.

Thank You, Jesus, for following the will of the Father, and for sending Your Spirit, that we might have confidence that we belong to You; that we might suffer well to please You and make You proud. I can’t wait to see You again. Come, Lord Jesus—soon. And all God’s people said, Amen.