

REMNANT CHURCH SERMON NOTES – ROMANS 8: 16 - 17
PREACHED ON MAY 10, 2026, BY REV. B.B. ANUM-HIGHER

¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

➤ **INTRODUCTION**

- Paul's Letter repeatedly explores what sets believers apart from non-believers. Last week, in verse 15, Paul stated that Christians are adopted as God's children, chosen by Him as His sons and daughters. The Bible offers examples of people who were initially not recognized as part of God's family, becoming His children only later. Saul of Tarsus—who became the apostle Paul—spent years outside God's family, opposing His people, until he publicly joined God's children.
- Lydia, a woman mentioned in the Bible, lived in Philippi and met Paul during his second missionary journey. Though outside the family of God, she heard the gospel of Jesus Christ; according to the Bible, God opened her heart to pay attention to Paul (Acts 16:14). After believing, Lydia was baptized, along with her household. In this way, Paul, Lydia, and others, such as the Ethiopian Eunuch and the disciples of Jesus Christ, except Judas Iscariot, were adopted into the family of God.
- Paul tells us in verse 16 that the Spirit who dwells in every believer testifies or witnesses with our inner being that we are adopted sons and daughters of God. Also in verse 17, the apostle tells us that being God's adopted children comes with many blessings in the next life. The adopted sons and daughters of God may share in Christ's glory, but they must first share in Christ's suffering for this to happen. We will study these two verses under 3 points. We will first look at the foundations of our adoption. When did God adopt Christians as His sons and daughters? Secondly, how does the Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we are indeed sons and daughters of God? Thirdly, how do the children of God share in the suffering of Christ?

➤ **FOUNDATIONS OF OUR ADOPTION AS CHILDREN OF GOD**

- There are three foundations for our adoption. All these work together to confirm our adoption as sons and daughters of God.
- ❖ **FIRSTLY. CHRISTIANS WERE PREDESTINED BY GOD THE FATHER TO BE ADOPTED INTO HIS FAMILY.**
- In Ephesians 1:5, Paul wrote: "He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. Our adoption was decided by God before the world began. There was a time in eternity when God decided

to adopt some people into His own family. God, out of love and love only, determined before the foundation of the world that Christians would become part of His family. The adoption of God is a gift He prepared in eternity for Christians. Nothing about you made Him set His affection on you; nothing about me made Him adopt me, but He made the decision to love us and then adopt us, even before He created the world.

❖ **SECONDLY. CHRISTIANS BECAME MEMBERS OF GOD’S FAMILY BY THE EFFECTUAL CALLING OF THE GOSPEL.**

- The gospel of Jesus Christ is the means by which God draws His adopted children into His family. God had already predetermined to adopt us, but He uses the gospel to draw us to Himself. The gospel has been preached over the years to many people, but only those predestined to be adopted into God’s family will respond positively to it. Only the predestined will see their need for Christ, want to know who Christ is, and what He has done to save fallen humanity from God’s condemnation and to become members of God’s family. Only the predestined will entrust their lives to Christ.
- Saul of Tarsus is an example of one of the predestined people, but he lived his life for many years persecuting the children of God, killing, and sending some into prison. On the road to Damascus, he had an encounter with Christ; he believed the gospel and entrusted himself to Christ. John 1: 12 tells us, “Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” Some of you heard this gospel at school, from your co-workers, from an evangelist, from a family member, and the moment you received Christ and believed in Him, your adoption was confirmed.

❖ **THIRDLY. CHRISTIANS BECAME MEMBERS OF GOD’S FAMILY THROUGH THE INCARNATION AND ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST.**

- It is also true that for God’s adopted family to join His family, He set a time when Christ would come down from heaven, take on human flesh, live like us, yet obey God’s Laws perfectly. He must die a cursed death on the cross in order that Christians might become the children of God. It took the incarnation and atonement of Christ to seal our adoption.
- He hung on the Cross until all the barriers against your adoption into God’s family were defeated. Paul wrote in Galatians 4:4-5 saying: “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.” These are the three foundations of our adoption. We will now consider the second point. How do you know if you are one of God’s children? How are you assured of your membership in God’s family?

➤ **THE ASSURANCE BY THE SPIRIT ABOUT OUR ADOPTION**

- God has not hidden the assurance of our relationship with Him from us. He has not kept it a mystery from us, and Paul is delighted to show us how we could have assurance about who we are in God. He tells us that the Holy Spirit does that in verse 16. “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” We will look at four ways the Spirit gives assurance.

❖ **FIRSTLY. THE SPIRIT MAKES US BELIEVE THE TRUTH.**

- Jesus, Paul, and other apostles warn us about false teachers in the church. Even among professing Christians, every preacher who speaks well, even though he is a heretic, is surely believed. My family had to leave a church because I faced persecution for doubting the actions of the well-loved pastor, even though his actions and teachings, as I got to know him better, were unbiblical but full of flattery. Why are other people okay with heresies, and others are not? It is because the Spirit makes it clear to the adopted children what they are to believe and what they must reject.
- God, through the Old Testament Prophets and the New Testament Apostles, has given us in Holy Scripture what we must believe. We know what to believe about how the world came to be, about the Fall of mankind, about who we are, about Christ and His work for our salvation. The Scripture tells us about Christ’s birth, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, present ministry, and His second coming for the Final Judgment. The Holy Spirit makes God’s children believe these truths. These same truths are rejected by unbelievers as foolishness, but it is sweet to the ears of God’s adopted children because they are inspired Words of God.
- Someone might say, almost all Christians say they believe the teachings of the Bible, so does that make everyone who is in the church sons and daughters of God? Jesus says no, the apostles say no, and church history shows that this is not the case. True Christianity is not merely spoken with the lips; it is revealed by a transformed life. The most accurate test for true Christianity is a changed life, a pattern of life characterized by a daily battle with personal sins. The true sons and daughters of God will daily pursue holiness by dealing with sin, the enemy of our faith.
- Mere profession of faith has dominated the church, and it is common to find many Reformed and Evangelical Christians who speak of Christ and pursue Christian Education for their children, yet few reflect Him in their daily lives. If our lives do not preach the same Truth we believe and profess, then we are deceiving ourselves and others about our status as sons and daughters of God. The gospel is not only to be heard—it is to be seen in the lives of Christians daily by their devotion to God and their ruthless battle with their personal sins.

❖ **SECONDLY. THE SPIRIT MAKES US LIVE ACCORDING TO GOD'S STANDARD.**

- God has given us His standard of living in the Ten Commandments, His Moral Law. He has written them on the hearts of His adopted children, and we delight to keep them. We know that we cannot keep them perfectly, but we persevere to keep each of them. When we stumble, we confess our sins, repent of them, and get back to keeping each of them. Our desire and pattern of life is to please God by our obedience to Him.
- We know that the Spirit has imposed on us the obligation to wage a radical battle against sin in our bodies, because our bodies are His temple. We mourn over our sins and the sins of other believers, we try to be meek, hunger and thirst for righteousness, show mercy, and desire that others might hear the gospel. The Spirit creates a desire and energy in God's adopted children to be like Christ. Firstly, the Spirit makes us believe the truth and secondly makes us live according to God's standard.

❖ **THIRDLY. THE SPIRIT DETERMINES OUR AFFECTIONS AND FEELINGS.**

- There was a time as a professing Christian, I felt ashamed to speak about Christ, and the same with Maricel, but it is not true of us anymore. It is not because we have any special reasons to use every opportunity to tell others about Christ, but it is the work of the Spirit in us. We are at peace with how the Lord leads our lives, the Spirit has directed our attention and interest towards Christ, and we want to make Him known. I have cut ties with friends and family because certain conversations and behaviors don't seem right to me now.
- The child of God knows that God is his or her father and not just father, but Abba, a daddy who hears him or her. The child of God grieves when God's name is held in contempt, blasphemed, and taught falsely. The believer cannot remain in a church, school, or organization where sin is promoted and the Scripture is not accurately preached. The child of God places truth over denominational affiliation because the Spirit determines his affections and feelings about these things.

❖ **FOURTHLY. THE SPIRIT LEADS THE TRUE CHRISTIAN TO THE TRUE CHURCH.**

- God has not saved us to practice our faith in isolation, and it is God's will that His adopted children fellowship with other God's adopted children. The sons and daughters of God desire to meet with other true believers to hear God's word preached, pray together, share the gospel with others, contribute to the ministry in advancing the Kingdom of God, break bread together, sing together, love, and encourage each other. Jesus says: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:35.

- The author of Hebrews wrote: “not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” The children of God would make it a priority to meet with others on the Lord’s Day. To be absent from the meeting of God’s people is to say that I believe in education, but I don’t want to go to school. There is no solitary Christianity. The Spirit has baptized us into the body of Christ. “For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” 1 Corinthians 12:13.
- The Spirit assures us that we are God’s adopted children if these four truths are true of you. Do you believe the Old and New Testaments and do not doubt God’s Word? Do you persevere to live a holy life, radically try to fight your personal sins, actively try to live a changed life, and obey God? Do you not feel ashamed of Christ, your faith, and try to be different regardless of what others think or say about you? Do you genuinely seek to fellowship with true believers and not just join a denomination or a church? Paul says: “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” These four truths must be true of you.

➤ **CHRISTIAN SUFFERING**

- In verse 17, Paul writes: “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” We have two conditional statements in this verse. First, Paul is suggesting that not everyone in the world is a child of God when he wrote, “Now if we are children.” Secondly, the second “if” gives the qualification to share in the glory of Christ. He wrote: “If indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”
- The Christian cannot escape suffering. God has an order to receiving glory, and it starts with suffering before the glory. Jesus Christ suffered first, and the glory came afterward. Every adopted child of God would also suffer first, and the glory will follow. There are many blessings and privileges to becoming a member of God’s family, but it is misleading to create the impression to new converts that when you come to Christ, you will enjoy a life full of happiness with no pain, plenty of wealth, good health, and all your life will be characterized by prosperity. Jesus tells us to tell new converts and every Christian to count the cost when becoming a disciple. He said: “Deny yourself, take up your cross, there will be tribulations, follow the narrow way, etc.”
- During their missionary journeys, Paul and Barnabas encouraged the disciples. This is how they encouraged them in one of their trips: “They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said. Acts 14:21-22. It takes great suffering to get to

heaven, but what hardships or suffering do Jesus, Paul, and the Bible tell us about? What should we know about suffering as God's adopted children?

❖ **FIRSTLY. PAUL IS TALKING ABOUT CHRIST-RELATED SUFFERING.**

- Because of the Fall, all humanity goes through some form of pain, sorrow, and hardship. Everyone suffers from diseases, betrayals, disappointments, and believers are no exception. Sometimes, true believers bring suffering upon themselves through their folly and disobedience to God. These are not the suffering Paul is talking about in this verse. The suffering Paul is writing about here comes only to you when you belong to Jesus Christ and in your devoted service to Him. If you didn't belong to Christ, these sufferings would not come your way. These sufferings come when you follow, obey, and entrust yourself to Christ.
- Paul was one of the great leaders of the Pharisees, a very respected man, but He tells us about the sufferings he endured only because of His association with Christ. He wouldn't have faced these types of hardships if he were outside of Christ. He wrote: "I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?" 2 Corinthians 11: 23-29.

❖ **SECONDLY. NOT ALL SUFFERINGS SANCTIFY.**

- Suffering does not automatically bring us any spiritual benefits. We have examples of drunkards who have suffered serious illnesses due to their abuse of alcohol, and after they have recovered in several months or years, they went back to the very thing that brought the hardship upon them previously and even did worse things. Their suffering didn't automatically bring any positive results in their lives. They didn't benefit from their suffering because they despised God's chastening, they treated their suffering with contempt, felt bitter about it, and even the pain hardened some of them in their sin.
- Suffering is only beneficial when you learn from it and know its purpose in your life. We have an illustration in the Bible. There were three crosses on Calvary. Two rebels were crucified with Christ, one on His right and one on His left. All three of them were suffering, but for different reasons. Jesus was suffering

because He believed in God and for our atonement. One of the thieves was suffering for his rebellious life; he even despised Christ as he hung on the cross. He was hardened in his sin, and he never benefited from the hardship he endured on the cross. The second thief was also suffering for his sins, but when he saw His need of Christ and believed in Him, he was justified, sanctified, and shared in the suffering of Christ during the few minutes he spent on earth.

- Paul, even after his conversion, still faced the temptation to be proud. Anyone who had encountered Jesus and was commissioned personally by Him (Acts 9:2-8) would, in his natural state, become haughty. Paul was also moved by the Holy Spirit to write much of the New Testament, and it is easy to see how Paul could become exalted above measure or too proud. Paul says the thorn's purpose is: "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations." So, God's goal in allowing the thorn in the flesh was to keep Paul humble. What was Paul's reaction to the thorn in his flesh? Did he faint about it, get bitter about it, and curse God? Paul was anxious about it, knew of its presence, and knew it came from God, so he reasoned that it had a purpose in his life and prayed that he might discover what that purpose was.
- As a Christian, what has been your reaction to suffering? Have you been matured by them? Did the damaging of your reputation, false accusations, illness, loss of property, and the loss of a loved one make you a better Christian? Did you find out from God, the Wonderful Counselor, their mission and purpose, or why He decreed these sufferings in your life? Did you ask yourself how this suffering might serve a useful purpose for your salvation?

❖ **THIRDLY. OUR SUFFERING WITH CHRIST CONFIRMS OUR ADOPTION.**

- Suffering is common to mankind, but a Christian who does not suffer for righteousness' sake is an illegitimate child of God. True children of God suffer for righteousness' sake, they suffer for their obedience to God, they suffer for their faith, and they suffer for their priorities. Not every suffering is proof that you are a child of God. All sons are beaten, but not all who are beaten are sons. Peter tells the Christian slaves that: "For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 1 Peter 2:19-21.
- Suffering for righteousness' sake is a condition for being a child of God. How do you know if the suffering you are going through is for righteousness' sake? You will know if it produces righteous fruit in you. Does it produce peace, righteousness, and a change of behavior to be more and more holy? Have your trials made you more humble, more zealous for God, more and more like Jesus Christ?

➤ CONCLUSION

- Christ decreed these sufferings in our lives, so we must look up to Him during the trials, during our sufferings. We look up to Him for two main reasons. First, because He suffered Himself. He came into this world as a man, and He suffered intensely, unjustly, and not for anything He did wrong. He suffered Hell. God's wrath was poured out on Him. He endured the Cross; the temptation to give up His mission was real, yet He continued to suffer to accomplish His mission to save us and bring us into God's family. No one can compare his or her sufferings to those of Christ.
- Secondly, He suffered as a believer, leaving us with an example of how a believer suffers. He is described in Hebrews 12:2 as the author and finisher of our faith. "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." Our faith finds its quality in His example. He ministered to other people in His suffering. He came to earth as a man, so He went through everything we go through as humans: He felt all our pain, yet He never sinned. He trusted in God as a believer, and He suffered accordingly.
- Jesus was encouraged by the glory set before Him and therefore endured suffering to attain that glory, according to Hebrews 12:2. We, too, must go through suffering to share in the glory of Christ. He has been in our position before, so He understands our pain, sorrow, frustration, illness, and agony, and He will never leave us alone.
- Some supervisors will ask you to do tasks they have never done before. They have no idea how you feel because they were never in your position. That is not the same as Christ. Christ has gone through everything God requires of us. He came to this world as a man like us. He kept the Ten Commandments perfectly, He suffered for His beliefs, and has promised never to leave us nor forsake us because He was once in our position.
- Christ is also united with us, the believers, so He feels every pain we go through now. He shares in the pains from your illness, rejection by others for your faith, damage to your reputation, slander, etc. There was a time when Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the believers, and he knew he was only attacking the followers of Christ, but after his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, Paul clearly understood the doctrine of the believer's union with Christ. Jesus did not say to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting the Christians?" Instead, He said, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Christ is united to every one of God's sons and daughters, and our pains, sorrows, agonies are His as well. Bishop J.C. Ryle once said: "There's a beauty in being rejected, misunderstood, unseen and unsupported by people. It teaches you to rely on God for everything." What a privilege to be a member of God's family!