

**Your Inheritance**  
**Romans 8:17**  
**#32 in a Series on Paul's Letter to the Romans**  
**Faith Community Church – June 11, 2006**

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Objective: *to explain the inheritance that Christians have to look forward to and why Paul says we must suffer in order to obtain it.*

**Introduction** – Please turn to Romans 8.

One of the great themes of the Christian faith is that there is life beyond this life. This is not all there is.

That immediately creates some struggles for us, if we think about it long enough. The hippie generation of the 1960's was urged to "live for today." What was a slogan a generation ago has become the operating system of our culture. Most of us have too much on our plates to think very far beyond what lies ahead yet today, let alone in a life to come.

But here is one of those areas where Christians are called to be counter-culture. While fulfilling our responsibilities here, we are also challenged with the need to keep our minds on what lies ahead. The problem, though, is that what lies ahead is mostly unknown. In the passage we'll look at today, Paul begins talking about the life that is to come. Our challenge is to increase our awareness of eternity – because a life that is lived in submission to God and his word recognizes that eternity has bearing on today. In a real sense, I want to leave you with a small glimpse of what is coming next for you.

In Romans 8:17, Paul makes two points:

- God's children are awaiting an inheritance.
- We're not going to get our inheritance unless we suffer.

I want to talk about these two ideas today, starting with the last first.

**What's Ahead: Your Inheritance**

1. We will not get our inheritance unless we suffer.
  - a. This kind of statement makes us uncomfortable.
    - i. Clear teaching of Scripture is that we are saved by grace through faith alone. Paul has argued this clearly in Romans and he certainly is not going to contradict himself.
    - ii. This passage is representative of a number of other places in his writings (and in the rest of the NT) where there seem to be conditions placed on our salvation.
      1. 1 Corinthians 15:1-2
      2. Colossians 1:21-23

3. Hebrews 3:14
  - iii. How do we reconcile these kinds of passages that seem to conflict?
    1. Understand the real response to the Gospel is faith, not a decision.
    2. Recognize that – like the faith/works discussion in James – the point is that real faith shows itself to be real by staying firm.
  - iv. Isn't that encouraging? There's no fancy footwork to explain away the meaning of the text. You really won't get your inheritance unless you suffer!
  - b. What does this mean?
    - i. It is interesting that Paul says suffer *with* and not suffer *for*. That is not splitting hairs – words are important.
    - ii. Identification with Christ will ultimately lead to some suffering. See John 16:33; Acts 14:22; 1 Thes 3:3; 2 Tim 3:12.
    - iii. When do we suffer? Anytime that, because of your identification with Christ, you are mocked, ridiculed, excluded, passed by, limited in opportunity, physically accosted or even martyred – you participate in suffering with Christ. Unless of course you live a life in denial of what you think you believe, and that speaks for itself.
  - c. Should we seek to suffer?
    - i. In terms of seeking out opportunities to suffer, there is nowhere in the Bible where that is encouraged.
    - ii. What we are encouraged to do, though is to (1) live in a distinctive way so that we are identified with Christ, (2) expect that there will be times when we may be the targets of mistreatment, and when that happens we (3) honor Christ in the way we talk to those who oppose us. (1 Peter 2:11-12; 4:12-19; 3:13-17)
    - iii. I'm tempted to go on a bunny trail here. I have strong misgivings about people who are quick to protest and petition when someone does something that attacks our values and beliefs for this reason: Making America more Christian-friendly is not why we're here. We are not entitled to anything positive from our culture.
  - d. Summary: Suffering is a way of identifying with Christ and bearing up under it is an evidence of the reality of our faith.
2. God's children are awaiting an inheritance. I want to talk more about this next week, but let's look at a few things about this inheritance before we finish this morning.
    - a. The Bible clearly teaches that a future inheritance in heaven awaits those who trust in Christ. (Ephesians 1:11-14; 1 Peter 1:3-5.)
    - b. What is the nature of our inheritance?
      - i. Part of our inheritance is that we will live forever in heaven.
        1. To some this is boring. But it will not be.
        2. Others of us have constructed our understanding of heaven around things like seeing loved ones who have died before

us, not having to deal with sin, sickness, trouble. Our understanding of heaven is often betrayed by our questions: will pets be there? Will we be able to \_\_\_\_\_? These are not bad questions, but they betray how tied to this world we can be.

3. It is on that basis that pastor and author John Piper wrote this: *“If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauty you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you be satisfied with heaven, if Christ was not there?”*<sup>1</sup>
- ii. That is an important question, because another aspect of our inheritance is that we are heirs of *God*. What does that mean?
  1. The centerpiece of eternity is not a nicer life than we had on earth – as great as that will be. The centerpiece is God: Look at Revelation 22:1-5.
  2. That’s your inheritance. To live in fellowship with God for all eternity. And that’s why Paul says in verse 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.”*

### **Responding to What God Is Saying to Us**

We will talk more about this next week, but let me remind you that the only way to enjoy God forever is to be his child, and the only way to be his child is to repent of your sins and trust in the forgiveness that Jesus Christ provides in his death and resurrection. I hope you will do that.

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<sup>1</sup> Piper, John. *God Is the Gospel*, page 15