

## ***Is THIS WORTH IT?, ROMANS 8:14-27***

Pax Romana #19

◆**Intro:** As you may recall, we have been calling our study of the book of Romans our Pax Romana series, or the “Peace of Romans”. The historical era by that name, Pax Romana, actually started with the reign of Caesar Augustus the first Roman Emperor. Here’s something you maybe didn’t know. Caesar Augustus was adopted! That’s right. He was the adopted by his great-uncle Julius Caesar, the last leader of the failing Roman Republic. Surprised? Adoption was a popular practice among the Romans. Almost every politically famous family used it as a way to hand pick someone to carry on their family name and also for solidifying relationships with other families. Augustus was born Gaius Octavius, in relative obscurity, but his adoption put him at the helm of what would become an empire. And interestingly enough adopting a son to groom as the next emperor became a generally followed practice during the first 200 years of the Empire. Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, Trajan, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus all ascended the throne of Rome through adoption. Wow! And did you know that God adopts people too?

◆**Quick review:** In Romans 7 Paul described the war with sin that the follower of Jesus faces. In chapter 8 he reminds us of the weapon of the Holy Spirit such followers have for defeating sin and living out holiness.

◆Understand that Christ’s sufferings (v17) were in his absorbing of, and eventual destruction of sin. Paul’s reference to sufferings here does not have in mind skinned knees, houses torn by fallen trees -except to the extent that these result from the sinfulness of mankind on the earth, and the believers attempt to live for God. The “present sufferings” of verse 18 are those wounds received in fighting our

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inner (and outer) battle with sin, and opting to defend holy living in an evil world. (cf chapter 7!)

◆ At this point one might ask, *“IS THE FIGHTING ALL WORTH IT? IS THE INHERITANCE CHRISTIANS ARE GIVEN WORTH THE PAIN, HARDSHIP AND STRUGGLE OF LIVING AS GOD’S KID IN THIS LIFE?”* Is it worth it to call on the Holy Spirit and fight my lust? Is it to any advantage to do battle with telling lies, hoarding wealth, or putting others in their place? Why should I bother “turning the other cheek” in the face of neighbors who abuse me, or returning good for evil? Why not just go with the flow and live like they do in Hollywood? In short, is it worth it to work at being holy, like God? In our text for today, Paul gives a resounding YES (v18). The war against sin leads to real living (v13) The war with sin is worth it because as a believer God has adopted me and that makes me heir to the throne, so to speak. Good is on the way! Scripture is very clear on this truth. Lets begin by establishing this truth.

◆ **1. As a believer in Jesus, I am an adopted child of the God of heaven!**

◆ In our passage believers are called “sons of God” twice, “children of God” twice. We are called “heirs of God”. And we are told twice that we have “sonship” which literally is “son-placement. (translated “adoption” in v23.)” Paul says the same thing in Ephesians.

◆ *For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will -(Eph 1:4-5).*

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◆[Now some of you may be getting hung up on the term “son”. But understand this. Paul was writing to the ancient world, where sons had status, received most of the family possessions, and girls were discarded or discounted as second class citizens, and rarely adopted. In that culture, Paul speaks the radical Christian view: we are all “sons”, men & women alike are “sons”, people with status in the eyes of God! When you receive Christ into your life, you receive the status of a son, in other words, the place of highest privilege. You are given the highest place of honor! Men, women, boys or girls, obedient and disobedient -you are loved. You are given a new kind of life.

◆So, believer, God has adopted you! And do you know what your adoption means? Let’s follow as Paul spells it out.

◆**2. Because I’m adopted by God, I have eternal security -so...** (I’ll tell you the “so” in a minute.)

◆In most cases I think it’s safe to say adoption is quite different from employment. The child is not screened, or analyzed, investigated or interviewed. Prospective parents do not shuffle through pages of applicants. No. Rather, the parents are interviewed. They fill out pages of forms, and answer personal questions, and send out their profiles through the adoptive agency, carefully constructed to present a fair understanding of the almost mystical, and invisible canister of their love attached to the folder. I suspect that the vast majority of prospective parents have discovered within themselves a certain capacity of love, a bank of affection, just waiting to be bestowed on whatever child might be available to them.

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Rarely do you hear, “Arms? Check. Blue eyes? Check.” More often it is, “Yes, we could love this child.”

◆ Adoptive friends have assured me that they love the adopted child in the same manner as any birthed children they might have. Maybe you know of the **miracle** that occurs in a newly born child. Up till birth, it has never breathed air! But at that moment, a switch is thrown, a valve in the tiny heart closes, blood begins circulating a different direction, and the baby begins getting it’s oxygen from the lungs instead of the mother’s blood! It’s nothing short of a miracle! Well, something like that happens in adoptive parents too. A switch is thrown, and their heart is in love with a child. Even if, by some fluke of law the state would take away the child, they could not help themselves. They would love him/her anyway. That’s because *love is an internal decision founded in the lover*. So then, it is not something in the child, not even that it came from my own body, that cements a parent and a little one... For it is equally true that some birth-parents do not love the children they bear. Sadly, for whatever reason, the switch is never thrown.

◆ **A.** Adoption is all about love waiting to be given. It is unconditional, and unrelated to the merit of the child. This is why we have security. Unlike a slave, a son does not earn his keep. He can’t be fired or sold. Unlike a slave he doesn’t obey because he lives in fear (v15) of not performing well enough. Adoption does not start in the baby or adolescent. It starts in the parent who comes looking and that’s what happens with all who come to Christ. God comes for you, and chooses you. That’s security.

◆ There is no real hope if our adoption into God’s family depends on our merit, or at least our conjuring up saving faith on our own. Not at all. We

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are fallen sinners, unable to even chose right (v7-8). We are at the bottom of a pit with both legs and both arms broken. Such a one does not say, “I’m coming Lord. I get it now.” No the Lord is the one doing the coming. Our part is only the grateful heart as he picks us up. Even our faith is his gift!

◆**B.** Now for the second part of the point: Eternal security makes fighting for holiness worth it. You and I are promised life, eternal life. Jesus came to kill sin to give us that. The promise is that whenever you and I kill sin in this world, we are co-producing life. We are cooperating with God’s eventual and inevitable victory. Everything you do that is holy will last into eternity. Every time you choose to counter evil in yourself or another, you are doing so as part of the winning team. God’s aim is to create goodness and holiness. Everything touched by sin eventually leads to dying (13). But everything that kills sin leads to living in some way or another (13b).

◆Pay attention: we don’t do good, love holiness or reject sin to get adopted! We are adopted out of God’s love in Christ. We chase holiness out of the joy of being in the family that can’t die!

◆**3. Because I’m adopted by God, I have intimacy, so...**

◆This intimacy is seen in the Spirit’s intercession for us. Creation groans (22), we groan (23), and the Holy Spirit brings those groans to God, even when we can’t put them into words(26).

◆[Side note: there is some question as to whether the Spirit groans, or intercedes with our groans. We are told twice that the Spirit “intercedes” (both v26 and 27). He is our helper in our weakness, but it is not his weakness. Verse 27 tells us God is searching through our hearts, so it seems clear that any groans the Spirit conveys are of our longings and needs.]

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◆**A.** So what does this mean? God comes to his children, and by his Spirit pays attentions to our deepest longings, longings we can't even figure out or tell him. That's how much God is into his children! That's how intimate God is with humans who follow him. That's how present he is in your life. God is our Abba (16). That the diminutive term for "Ab", father. It's like saying papa, or mimi. It's what kids say. It means that we have God's full attention. He knows us better than we do! That's intimacy.

◇John Elefante sings:

◇*And even when we fall, he loves us through it all*

◇*His gentle guiding hand keeps understanding*

◇*he knows the tears we cry, he knows our hearts may lie,*

◇*for us again he'd die, that's what love is.*

◆**B.** Intimacy with God makes fighting for holiness worth it. How does that work? In my experience of other Christian kids growing up, the ones with the strictest, most rigid, unflinching, no-discussion rules were the most rule-breaking. The ones with the distant parents, too busy to care, too harsh to listen much were the ones looking for love in all the wrong places. The ones whose parents were around, came to their games, were at dinner together, and enjoyed each other's company (ie. were *intimate*) –these kids didn't want to break the rules.

◆The more we feel loved by another, the less we want to wrong and thereby hurt the one we love.

◆This principle applies to raising children.

◆This principle applies to being faithful to a spouse.

◆This principle applies to inspiring good employees.

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◆ This principle applies to following God into real living.

◆ The more we feel loved by another, the less we want to wrong and thereby hurt the one we love. The truth is, only intimate, unconditional love leads to real love in return. Yes adopted children can sin, as many of us in the room know. But it is only those who have been unconditionally adopted, and come to know it as the Spirit takes up residence inside them –only these now really have the fuel to not sin. Intimacy actually leads to security, our first benefit of adoption! The secure daughter is the one who discovers that within she believes her father loves her, and loves him back, and that the warmth in her heart for him was in fact, his gift to her in the first place. That daughter rests secure and wants to do right by her father. For her, holiness is not work. It is worth it.

### **◆ 4. Because I'm adopted by God, I have hope and inheritance, so...**

◆ It's plenty clear in our passage that Paul is telling us that the fight that is the Christian life is worth it. We are hoping (24) for something far better than what we have here. Adoption means we have been given, and are also going to get something we did not own, could not purchase, would never merit. So what exactly will we be getting? Lets scan the chapter again, shall we?

◆ “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.” Romans 8:11, NIV.

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◆“Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” Romans 8:23, NIV. (Here we see a future element of our “adoption”.)

◆“The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.” Romans 8:19, NIV.

◆**A.** Our adoption is a promise of physical restoration! This restoration is for us, our bodies (v23), and also for our world, the physical universe (v22). The physical planet is awaiting the return of Christ just as we are! We are going to inherit a new world! You and I are going to have a higher form of life, like the resurrected Jesus! In all of creation, men and women hold the highest honor. They are the whole point of it all!

◆Paul is bringing us back to Genesis 3 and the fall of man and the source of the problem. Did you catch that?

◆v20: “creation was subjected to frustration”. That happened when Adam and Eve sinned. God said, (my paraphrase) “Adam now the ground is cursed because of you. Your work, growing food, is going to take effort and pain. And Eve, your work unique to you as a woman, bearing children, is going to be hard and painful too.” In fact, we call it “labor”! Everything gets harder when God’s way is disobeyed.

◆v22: “creation has been groaning as in pains of childbirth”. As in labor. But what does the labor pain lead to? Life! Why did Paul bring us back to Genesis 3? Because in Genesis 3 God **also** promised a son would come to restore life in all the damage sin

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brought. That son we know is Jesus and our inheritance has been secured, but we are still waiting for it. Paul is saying, “This life is hard. The spiritual battle with sin is hard. But do it. Power through it because this is all just “labor pains” and the result will be a baby, life!

◆**B.** Again, the “so”. My inheritance makes fighting for holiness worth it.

Our present suffering as we oppose evil and promote holiness -are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us(18). Choose to fight the good fight of faith. It alone holds promise. For greater things have yet to come. And greater things are still to be done.

◆Every time I fight back my sin, I am promoting holiness and defeating a little bit of death. Maybe I’m even hastening my hope!

◆The command *Be ye perfect* is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command. He said (in the Bible) that we were ‘gods’ and He is going to make good His words...—He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful, but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what He said. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952; Harper Collins: 2001) 205-206.

◆**Conclusion:** In his book *Hidden in Plain Sight*, author and pastor Mark Buchanan writes about a woman named Regine. Originally from Rwanda, Regine came to Christ while reading her sister's Bible during the genocide that ravaged her country. When she fled to Canada for refuge, she met her husband, Gordon. They decided to return to Rwanda to show the love of

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Christ to the people who had once been her enemies. Regine told Mark Buchanan this story of love:

- ◇A woman's only son was killed. She was consumed with grief and hate and bitterness. "God," she prayed, "reveal my son's killer."
- ◇One night she dreamed she was going to heaven. But there was a complication: in order to get to heaven she had to pass through a certain house. She had to walk down the street, enter the house through the front door, go through its rooms, up the stairs, and exit through the back door. She asked God whose house this was.
- ◇"It's the house," he told her, "of your son's killer."
- ◇The road to heaven passed through the house of her enemy. Two nights later, there was a knock at her door. She opened it, and there stood a young man. He was about her son's age.
- ◇"Yes?"
- ◇He hesitated. Then he said, "I am the one who killed your son. Since that day, I have had no life. No peace. So here I am. I am placing my life in your hands. Kill me. I am dead already. Throw me in jail. I am in prison already. Torture me. I am in torment already. Do with me as you wish."
- ◇The woman had prayed for this day. Now it had arrived, and she didn't know what to do. She found, to her own surprise, that she did not want to kill him. Or throw him in jail. Or torture him. In that moment of reckoning, she found she only wanted one thing: a son.
- ◇"I ask this of you. Come into my home and live with me. Eat the food I would have prepared for my son. Wear the clothes I would have made for my son. Become the son I lost."
- ◇And so he did.

◆You and I were the bitter enemies of God. We (through our sins) have killed his son! But he has invited us to become his sons and daughters, to be adopted. And now we know what that means! What an incredible turn of events is the love of God!