

TEXT: Romans 8:18 **I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.**

THEME: WE HAVE SPIRIT-SECURITY

Dear Christian Friends:

Most everyone scrimps and saves for retirement. This is done in different ways. Some people have money automatically taken from their paychecks. Others invest in the stock market. Then there are those who don't believe in long-term investments or the stock market, so they simply stash money away into a savings account.

No matter how much money a person saves away, there is no certainty it will always be there. This uncertainty can cause a great deal of anxiety and worry. As Christians we need not worry about the future. We have a security system far greater than any that this world can offer. WE HAVE SPIRIT-SECURITY. This security is ours all through life and eternity.

WE HAVE IDENTITY. The Holy Spirit leads us to know that we are God's children. Even though we are sinners who struggle against temptation, God loves us. We are his own. We have identity. God knows who we are. We're not just a number to him.

We are all registered with the social security system and have been issued a specific number, so that the government can identify us. That's all the government really wants to know about you and me. Somewhere in a drawer or file cabinet, you probably have information on your financial status. It may simply be a checking/savings account, or it could be a detailed stock portfolio. The information within those few documents is all that most people have concerning your life. Your life boiled down to a single piece of paper—that's all we are in the eyes of the world.

Not so with God. We have true identity in God's eyes. The apostle Paul reaffirms this for us: **"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."** We don't have to worry about the future. There's no need for uncertainty to plague us. Remember what Paul says, **"And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father'"**. By the Spirit, we are able to cry to our Father in heaven. Just consider the comfort that is. A lot of people think they have to somehow please God. They see God as some demanding taskmaster. And so they worry and fret, "Can I ever do enough? Do I have spiritual security?" WE HAVE SPIRIT-SECURITY. The Spirit of God leads us to know that we can come to him and call him "Abba, Father, Daddy."

I recall a fellow-pastor telling me a very personal story. He had gotten a late-night phone call. The voice on the other end quivered with emotion. A little girl, his granddaughter, was in an ambulance, rushing to the hospital, alone, without her parents. She was miles away from him and that phone call made this grandpa feel even farther away. He remembered how he felt so helpless, so powerless; so powerless to do anything except pray. And pray he did. Those words winged heavenward and never stopped. They appealed to our heavenly Father's grace and goodness. God heard those words as he always does. The

little child's life was spared. She recovered. A few days later that pastor knew it when he picked up the phone and heard a tiny, tender voice say, "Papa."

"Papa," she said, a term of endearment. How close that grandfather felt to her that night, his own flesh and blood. How much closer that grandpa is to his granddaughter in baptism. Through the water and the word they are forever linked to the grace and greatness of God. We, too, enjoy that same bond by the Spirit. We are members of God's family. We have identity and status. We are his children.

"Abba Father, my dearest Father," we pray and sometimes we are so overwhelmed to realize the powerful, privileged promise we are unleashing. God is our Father. His Son, Jesus, has taught us to trust him. Thanks to Jesus' death and resurrection, God promises forgiveness and eternal life—the ultimate benefits package. All this is ours through the Spirit who gives us faith to believe—the ultimate security. There's no need for us to worry about losing these benefits. We have complete access to his benefits package because we are his children. As God's children we can enjoy his protection in the present and well as in the future.

Recently, you may have looked at your savings account or your stock portfolio and had reason for alarm. Perhaps you feel uncertain about your future. You may be worried you won't have enough money to retire on. All those concerns grip us with fear. As far as we're concerned there's no sense of security and we feel hopeless. Again the words of Romans 8 help us: **"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."**

A rich uncle dies and distant relatives scurry to hear the reading of the will, hoping they will have a part in the inheritance. We may cringe as we picture such a scene, yet that is exactly what the apostle Paul is describing here—inheritance. He tells us that we are part of a divine will. Christ, our Brother, took on flesh and blood to secure an eternal inheritance for us. The will has been read. It was read and recorded when Jesus cried out from the cross, **"It is finished!"** Sins have been paid. Salvation is secure.

Some may mock or ridicule us. People may call you foolish for believing in Christ, as if to say, "You're invested in that stock?" That's part of sharing in Jesus' suffering. But we know more. We know what our text says: **I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.** We know the glory to come. That's our true inheritance, and it will never end. We can expect "big returns." Our Lord will return to take us home, and then creation will return to the full glory God intended—free from sin and death.

We have a spiritual security system that far out-performs any other. Social Security, 401ks, IRAs—all those investment plans are intended to provide for this life only. The Holy Spirit reassures us that we have complete protection and coverage now and forever. We have the perfect IRA—Individual Redemption Account purchased by Christ on the cross and given to us by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of the Church

O Lord God, almighty Creator, you spoke and the universe came into being. We are grateful that your power still exists among us.

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven at your command and nourish the earth, so you have promised that your mighty Word, sown as seed in the hearts of men, women, and children everywhere, will produce results. Send your Holy Spirit to prepare our hearts to receive your holy Word. Prevent us from hardening our hearts so that your Word cannot penetrate. Keep us from short-lived emotional reaction to your Word. Protect us from the thorns of coveting, which are able to choke out our faith. Make our hearts a fertile field so that your Word may produce the fruits of faith a hundredfold.

Lord of love, we rejoice with Ben and Melissa Borchardt who were married here at your altar last Friday. Bless their marriage with self-sacrificing love and steadfast commitment, and draw them closer to each other and to you day by day because TOGETHER IS BETTER.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the grace by which you have sustained your servants, Ned and Nancy Kleinke, throughout the 30 years of their married life. We ask that you continue to fill their hearts with the unselfish love that reflects your sacrificial love for them, so that their love for each other may never grow weary. With every joy and sorrow that they share, bring them closer to each other and to you, their God and Lord.

This we ask in the name of the Lord of the harvest, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who has taught us to pray:

THE LORD'S PRAYER.