**Romans 8:14–17** 14Indeed, those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15For you did not receive a spirit of slavery so that you are afraid again, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we call out, “*Abba*, Father!” 16The Spirit himself joins our spirit in testifying that we are God’s children.

17Now if we are children, we are also heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, since we suffer with him, so that we may also be glorified with him.

It is hard as a Pastor to do things and then not think about the Lord and the truths of his holy Word. For instance, I was out in the garden doing what needs to be done when you have a garden: weeding. As I was there pulling weeds I thought, “Man, weeds in the garden is just like sin in a person’s life.” From that point on my mind was preoccupied by contemplating this rather simple truth.

How are weeds in a garden like sin to a child of God? Well, I can tell you this, if you don’t pull the weed it can overcome the plant. That’s the reason you have to weed, because weeds will quickly and rather efficiently overcome the plant. And it is subtle. That little weed, quickly becomes the big weed, bigger than the plant, taking the moisture and nutrients of the soil from the plant and the plant suffers. Ask any farmer, they will tell you that truth.

And I am fascinated by how it seems that the weeds that invade the plant’s space so often tend to look similar to the plant, at least at the young stage. I don’t know the names of the weeds, but there is one, a grass I am sure, that looks a lot like sprouting corn. It is so easy to be fooled if you aren’t watching and before you know it there are more of those weeds than corn. One thing I can tell you, you have got to know your garden plants and what they look like at all stages because weeds can be tricky. Just like sin. You have got to know God’s Word or it is easy to be overwhelmed by sin.

I even marveled at how there was such a difference in weeds. Now, as I prepare my garden, I can tell you that it gets rototilled a couple of times before anything is planted. The rows are clear when I plant, the garden is clear. But just wait about 7 days or so. The weeds start coming. Did you ever notice that even among weeds of the same species, there are always one or two that really take off? So as I am weeding, there are a whole bunch of the same weed, but some are four inches high and some three and some only two or one. And yet all really began to grow at the same time. Like sins. Some seem minor and small and some seem big and deadly but in truth all are sins that can destroy.

The thought that really struck me was when I began to think about the fact that weeds and garden plants are all a part of this earth, this world of God. In the beginning there were no weeds. Every plant was good and useful for food. There were no pickers or poisonous plants, just all good and beneficial plants. But then sin became a part of the world and things got changed. Now there are plants that are hurtful, deadly, poisonous, well, an absolute nuisance. Yet all were created by God. God didn’t cause the sin that changed them to weeds or deadly plants but you could argue that all were created by God. So I got to wondering, are there people in the world, gardeners, who would argue that since everything was created by God we should let it go and just enjoy what God has given? I don’t know of a single gardener that would argue that way, but doesn’t it strike you as odd that there are so called “pastors” and religious leaders who argue that way for various sins? “It’s a part of God’s world so it must be okay!” That thought alone is well worth time in the garden or even working in God’s Word.

And in a way, that is our job in this life, to work in God’s word and to make sure that the wonder and joy that we have in the Savior is kept whole and strong. To work in God’s Word is much like that work in the garden, work we do because we would like a harvest for our lives. Let’s then look at our text for today and contemplate it under the theme: **WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CHILDREN OF GOD.**

I hope you caught the excitement of that very first paragraph of this section of God’s Word. It said to us, **“Indeed, those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”** Just contemplate those words. In these words we are basically being told how we became the children of God. That happened when God sent his Holy Spirit into our lives. The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son to do the work of sanctification. That means the Holy Spirit not only calls us out of unbelief to faith but it also means that the Holy Spirit leads us to hate sin and desire to live lives to the glory of God. Yep, faith is not what we do, but rather faith is the gift that God has given us. It is the call to be children of God. That’s where the Holy Spirit leads us. That fact is clearly revealed in the words, **“those led by the Spirit of God ARE sons of God.”** The wonder is that the rest of this section pretty much tells us the vast benefits of that fact.

The next verse says, **“For you did not receive a spirit of slavery so that you are afraid again, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we call out, ‘Abba, Father!’”** Now to fully grasp this verse you have to contemplate the first part about being afraid. Here is the best way I can bring you to see the force of what is said here. Do you find God to be burdensome? Do you find faith to be a chore and filled with difficulty and problems? Do you find that being a Christian does not bring you peace and hope but rather causes fear? Fear like: “Am I obeying enough? Am I doing all that God tells me I am to do? Do I love Jesus enough? Have I brought Him enough glory and honor in my life? Am I worthy of Jesus? Is my life free enough from sin and problems?” Daunting section of questions, isn’t it? If you find that your “faith” brings more fear into your life because you do grasp that you are a sinner in thought, word and deed, then I would suggest that perhaps you don’t really have the Holy Spirit and true faith. The Holy Spirit is not about fear. The Holy Spirit is about peace and love. The Holy Spirit leads you to the joy and gift of the Father.

That’s that line about **“you received the spirit of adoption.”** The Holy Spirit leads you to understand that God has adopted you. God has made you his child and his heir. Fact is, there is nothing you did to deserve this. That’s the point of the word “adoption.” It is a word that says you are not by nature God’s but that God nonetheless, called you, took you, choose you to be his child and his heir. Make no mistake, this is God’s way of saying that that He regards you as if you were and are his very own! Adopted. Full rights of the natural born child. Fully loved and cherished in every way so that you, filled with God’s wonder, will cry out, **“Abba, Father!”** That is a term of endearment. God’s love has so filled us that we in turn love God. He is dear to us, near to us, important to us. For those of you who have parents you dearly love, that same wonder is to fill you when it comes to God the Father. To be filled with awe and love.

That’s why this section next says, **“The Spirit himself joins our spirit in testifying that we are God’s children.”** I am a firm fan of this verse. It reminds me that the Spirit of God, working in my heart and mind through the means of grace, leads me to the wonder and awe of God. Leads me to grasp the depth of God’s love and grace. It doesn’t matter if we are speaking of the Father’s grace in promising and then fulfilling the promises of the Savior or if we are speaking of Jesus and the sacrifice of himself given that we might have eternal life and salvation. It doesn’t matter if we are speaking of the Holy Spirit and his call to believe in and trust in the redemptive work of Jesus. It is all the same. It all leads us to grasp the Triune God’s grace and love for us. That He has carried out his salvation for our sakes that we might be his children and heirs of eternal life. Always, the proper understanding of God’s Word, the proper testifying of the Spirit of God is that we are children of God by grace through faith.

The next verse is the hard one. Listen up. **“Now if we are children, we are also heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, since we suffer with him, so that we may also be glorified with him.”** Those are powerful words. Powerful because they do indeed speak to our struggles as the children of God. Note that we are clearly called **“Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.”** All the blessings and benefits, all the love and compassion, all the strength and comforts of God are ours. That’s what an heir is. An heir is the one who receives all that is in the possession and ownership of the testator. The testator is the one who makes the will. The testator determines who, what and how the inheritors get his stuff. God is absolutely unique in this because he is not only the testator, the one who made the will but God is also the executor, the one who carries out the will. Are you ready for this? God, namely Jesus, is the one who died to put the will into effect. God has done it all. There is absolutely no doubt that we are heirs.

But being an heir of God is not easy. Again note that little phrase found there, little but it tells us so much: **“since we suffer with him.”** In this world you can expect trials, difficulties and other problems simply because you are a child of God. And the suffering spoken of here can be of all kinds and sorts.

There have been those who physically suffered and died because Jesus was their Savior. There have been those who have had to struggle and wrestle against the sins of this world, personal sins, just because they are the children of God. There are people who because of faith had to give up this or that of the world because faith and Jesus were much more important to them. There are those people who because of faith took up this or that because faith and Jesus were so important to them. I know people whose life has been fairly easy in Christ and I know people whose life has been one struggle after another because of Christ Jesus. You have to understand that just as Jesus suffered temptation, endured hatred, and suffered all, even death on a cross, so that same may be true for you and me as his children. Your suffering may be as simple as working hard to get to church or as difficult as dying a slow death of persecution.

Yet we do not view that suffering as a sign that God does not love us, rather we view it as a sign that God does love us and that we truly are children of God and heirs of eternal life. God is acting and moving in our lives for our eternal good and salvation. God allows this or that hardship that we might be closer to Him and know his strength in time of need. God might bring distress so that we stop thinking so highly of ourselves or stop thinking we got it rather than God’s got us. In other words, as the Scripture proclaims, God will act and move in our lives for our eternal good and salvation because that is what God always does for his children. He cares for and loves them. He leads them in paths of righteousness for his name sake. He might provide the greenest of pastures or the sweetest of waters. He will walk them through the valley of the shadow of death so that they learn not to fear evil because God is with them and yes, protects them. Pay attention to those words: **“since we suffer with him.”**

I am going to chuckle because I don’t know if I was influenced by the study we did in our circuit Pastor’s meeting on Monday or if it is just coincidence that I preached on this text and have these interesting words before us. Pastor Arnold of Vassar presented a Bible study of his choice, a text study on Monday and he did it on a section coming up. Please note, you will hear this as our Epistle reading in a few Sundays. That reading says this and note I share this because in essence the text I am going to read to you has direct bearing on the verse we just spoke of. **“For we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and bring us (together with you) into his presence. In fact, all this is for your benefit, so that as grace increases, if will overflow to the glory of God, as more and more people give thanks. Therefore, we are not discouraged. But even if our outer self is wasting away, yet our inner self is being renewed day by day. Yes, our momentary, light trouble produces for us an eternal weight of glory that is far beyond any comparison. We are not focusing on what is seen, but on what is not seen. For that things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal.”**

Do you get it? In Jesus we just have a different viewpoint. We face struggle and we rejoice because we know it is because we are God’s children. We know those struggles are momentary, light and will bring for us the wonder and glory of God’s eternal kingdom. Yep, we are heirs of God, his children of eternal life because God so loved us that He has made us His. When you know that truth, what is there to fear? To God be the glory! Amen.