

Tonight we begin with verse fourteen. In 1 John, he wrote, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." What a wonderful thing it is to be a son of God! Now there are those who talk about the universal Fatherhood of God. That is, the creator of all things. But not all men are sons of God. You remember Jesus was talking with the Pharisees. And they were bragging about the fact that we have Abraham as our father. We're sons of Abraham. Thus, God's chosen, elect people. Jesus said if you were sons of Abraham, then you would have believed in Me. For Abraham rejoiced to see My day and he saw it. They said you're not even fifty years old. What do you mean, Abraham saw You? He said, before Abraham was, I AM! But then Jesus went on to say that you are the sons of the devil.

So beloved, now are we the sons of God. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God (Paul tells the Romans), these are sons of God.* Those that are led by the Spirit of God. So the question is, "Is my life being led by the Spirit of God?" Do I seek to know the will of God and to follow the will of God? Do I seek the leading of the Spirit? It is unfortunate that there are many people today who are resting their hope for salvation in something other than a relationship with Jesus Christ, being filled and led by the Spirit. A lot of people are not even worried about their salvation because they were baptized when they were infants. And they are trusting in that experience as an infant that they weren't even conscience of, to somehow secure their salvation. But as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

¹⁵*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."* In the early church as the Gentile believers began to multiply, there were certain of those in Jerusalem who were still following the law of Moses, yet they were in the church. They came to the Gentile believers. They said you can not be saved unless you keep the law of Moses and are circumcised. And so they called the church council to determine the relationship of the Gentile believers to the law. Peter testified before the council of how the Lord had sent him to the Gentiles. And how they had received the Holy Spirit. Peter said, I suggest that we not put them under a yoke of bondage that we ourselves were not able to bear.

So Paul here is declaring, for you did not receive the spirit of bondage, that is, you do not have a legal relationship with God. The Jews had a legal relationship with God. God had given to them the law. God had said if you will keep this law. Do these commandments. Then I will be a God unto you and you shall be my people. But it was a legal kind of a document, an arrangement, that God had with them. But God does not want a legal relationship with you. God wants a loving relationship with you. So the Lord said through Jeremiah the prophet, and in that day I will not write My law on tables of stone like the ten commandments. But I will write my law on the fleshly tablets of their heart. God wants you to serve Him from your heart! God wants you to yield to the Spirit. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. You don't have this legal relationship. You've not received the spirit of bondage again to fear. Remember when God gave the law to Moses, the people were so afraid of the presence of God. They said to Moses, you go up to the mountain. You talk to Him. And you come down and tell us what He said. But we are afraid to approach the mountain. The fear. You've not received the spirit of bondage again to fear. But you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." Now Abba, is the Hebrew word for father. And it is used again in Galatians, where Paul speaks about our saying, Abba, Father. So it is just the Hebrew. It is just saying Father in Hebrew and then the Father in Greek. So Abba, Father, Father. The Abba is sort of an endearing kind of personal. It would probably be translated into English as Daddy. Like a child, that recognition of his daddy. You know, my kids never did call me father. When they were little they called me daddy. And as they grew bigger, they called me, dad. Hey, dad. It was never, Father, may I speak to you? You know. No, it was never that way. It was closer, more intimate kind of a relationship. And the Spirit of adoption, whereby I have this close, intimate, relationship with God. Where I say, Oh, Daddy! Father! And it speaks of that intimacy of close relationship.

¹⁶*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,* Now the Spirit of adoption. That's a Greek word that speaks of adults, being placed as an adult son. Here *teknon*, children. And it literally

means “born one, a child”. We are born ones, or children of God. Notice where I relate to God or where I meet God. His Spirit bears witness with my spirit. God is a superior Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Man is an inferior trinity of spirit, mind and body. Now the natural man, his spirit is dead. And thus he has no relationship with God. Because God only relates to us spiritually. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria that God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit. Now when I am born again, my spirit comes alive. The natural man, by birth, is body and soul. The spirit is dead. Body uppermost. Like an animal, he is ruled by his body appetites. But when you are born again, there comes this new life. A new relationship with God because now the spirit is alive. Jesus said you've got to be born again! That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. You have to have a Spiritual birth. And when you have a Spiritual birth, then you now have a connection with God. The spirit uppermost, Father, Son, and Spirit; spirit, mind and body. So in this area of the Spirit when it rules, when you are led by the Spirit, when you are walking in the Spirit, then you have this oneness with God. Communion with God. We meet God in the realm of the Spirit. And thus now I'm joined to God. And His Spirit bears witness with my spirit. That I am a child of God. There is that beautiful recognition that I'm God's child. I've been born of God! I'm His child! And just that recognition that, you know, someone doesn't have to come along and tell you. You know, instinctively by the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Paul said, ¹⁷*and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ*, This is almost too wonderful to comprehend! To think that God has made me His child. And as His child I am now an heir. I'm an heir of God! That makes me a joint heir with Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Because God now calls me as His son.

It's interesting when our older daughter recently adopted the little girl she had been caring for. We went up to the judge's chambers for the legal procedure for her becoming their adopted child. Of course they had their three other children, their natural children, that were there. And it was interesting that as the judge talked to them. He said now you understand that when you adopt this little girl, she then has all of the rights of your natural children. She has the right of inheritance. She has everything that they have. She enters in and in a part of the family. She has every legal right as your child. They said yes, we understand that. But do we understand that? But God having made us His children, we have all of the rights of a child of God. We have the inheritance. This glorious inheritance. Heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Now the suffering that we experience with Christ is not always physical suffering. There are there those today who do suffer physically for Jesus Christ. Down in Colombia, some of our missionaries have been killed by the drug war lords down there. They've suffered for Christ. Over in China some of those involved in the house church have suffered physical tremendously, canings and beatings and imprisonment. But we suffer in a different way. Our suffering is more of a emotional type because as a Christian, we are hated by the world. We are an enigma to them. They don't know what to do with us. We make them feel guilty and they don't like that. Jesus said if you were of the world, the world would love its own, but you are not of the world. And He said if the world hated Me, it will also hate you. Thus, we suffer ridicule. We suffer, sometimes, scorn. The reproach of Christ, for people still hate Jesus Christ. And as you stand before them as a representative of Jesus Christ, then their hatred of Him falls on you. When they beat the apostles, because of their witness for Jesus Christ, they went their way rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for Jesus. They realized it's not us that they are angry with, they're angry with Jesus, who we represent. They didn't take it personally. But they recognized that this has come because of their hatred for our Lord. But, oh, aren't we blessed that we were able to suffer persecution for our Lord? And Jesus did say, blessed are ye when men shall persecute you and revile you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. So the reproaches of Him fell on us. We are reproached often for the cause of Jesus Christ. And that is the kind of suffering that we often endure. The scorning by the world, being looked down on, being considered perhaps, a little illiterate, because we dare to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and our Savior. So it shall be that we shall suffer with Him that we may be glorified together.

Paul will speak in the next verse and say, ¹⁸*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* Talk about suffering for Christ. Of course Paul did experience not only the reproaches for the Gospel's sake, but Paul did suffer physically. Five times he said, I was beaten with rods. A night and the day in the deep. Scourgings and the whole thing of suffering that

Paul endured for the cause of Christ, and yet he said, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Paul writing to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 4:17), said, "For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh an exceeding, eternal weight of glory." Now if we endured what Paul endured, we probably would not be calling it light affliction. We probably would say our heavy afflictions. But Paul was, as he said, we don't look at the things which are seen, for the things which are seen are temporal. The things that are not seen are eternal. Paul always had eternity in view. And that's a very healthy position to take. To see things in the eternal perspective. It makes all the difference in the world.

In Psalm 73, Asaph talked about how that he lost the perspective, the eternal perspective. And in losing the eternal perspective, he almost slipped. He was falling. He got his eyes off of the Lord and on the wicked. He wasn't well. He had heart problems. He was weakened, perhaps even dying. He said, I became envious of the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They don't seem to have problems like I have. They don't seem to be sick. Their strength remains firm. They're not in trouble like I am. They have everything that their hearts desire. And yet they are so blasphemous. They say horrible things. They ridicule God. They say, how does God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High? And he began to draw some wrong conclusions. He said, you know, it really doesn't pay to serve God. It doesn't pay to do the right thing. I cleanse my hands in innocency. It just doesn't pay. And he said, when I sought to know this, it was just too painful for me. I couldn't handle it. Until I went into the sanctuary of God and then I saw their end. It was a corrected perspective. He saw things now in light of eternity. That's our problem. We lose sight of the eternal. We begin to think of things only in this temporal realm. And we can't make sense of it. We can't rationalize it. It doesn't seem fair. It doesn't seem right. Good people suffering. Wicked people prospering. It doesn't seem right. But when you begin to see it in the light of the eternal. What a difference it makes! We look not at the things which are seen, the material world around us. That's temporal. We look at the things which are not seen. Those are the eternal things. The spiritual aspects. And what a difference the way you view things. When he began to look at things from the eternal perspective, rather than envying the wicked, he began to feel sorry for them. In a moment they are going to be wiped out. They'll be filled with utter terror! And then he began to see all that he had! Lord, you are constantly with me. You hold me by the right hand. You guide me with Your counsel. You will lead me into glory. Lord, who do I have beside Thee? There is none I desire beside Thee, Oh Lord. I mean it was a whole different thing when he got the eternal perspective. And that's so important for us to hold!

You remember Elisha the prophet. He had such a clear revelation of God. The Lord was always revealing things to him. Speaking to him. So much so, that he was surprised when God didn't tell him things. I mean God just shared everything. And when God didn't share something, he was actually shocked. Now every once in a while the Lord has shown me something. That always surprises me. I get so excited! Two or three times in my life God has shown me something. Oh, that's so exciting, God! Oooh, you know, God is so good! I'm surprised when God does. He was surprised when God didn't.

Benhadad, the king of Syria was planning several sorties against the king of Israel. Attacks. And Elisha would go to the king of Israel and reveal the plans of the Syrians. How many troops would be coming, what time of the day, where they would be coming, what valley and so forth. So that the king of Israel would be able to thwart every attack of the Syrians. And it got so bad that Benhadad the king called his generals together and he said we've got a severe security leak. One of you guys is a friend of the enemy. I mean it's impossible that they could know all of these things unless there was a leak here. Okay, which one of you guys is a friend of the king of Israel? And his generals answered him and said, sir we are all of us faithful to you. The security leak is not with us. But there is a prophet over in Israel. When you go to bed at night and you are talking to your wife in bed, he knows what you are saying. The king said, capture him!! And so they sent the Syrian army to the city of Dothan, where Elisha was saying. And in the morning when his servant went out to chop wood, he looked and there surrounding the city were the Syrian army and their chariots. He went running into the prophet. He said, alas, alas, we've had it! We're surrounded by the Syrians. The prophet didn't get disturbed. He didn't get upset or excited. He just rolled over in bed. He said, Lord, just open up the guy's eyes. Let him see what's happening. And the servant went out again. He saw the angels of the Lord encircling and surrounding the Syrian army. He got the eternal perspective. It's no longer alas, alas, we've had it. It's alas, alas, they've had it! They are surrounded! It's not we're surrounded. They are surrounded.

So catching that eternal perspective is so important because then we realize that the sufferings that we are going through now are nothing to be compared with the eternal glory that we are going to be having as the children of God and heirs, joint heirs with Jesus Christ! That's forever! How long do you plan to live on this planet Earth? A hundred years? God forbid! For me, I mean you can live that long if you want. But I don't want to live to be a hundred years old. If the Lord would take me home tonight, I would say thank you, Lord for the full, rich, wonderful life, complete and full, that You have given me. But we realize that our time here on this earth is limited. It is just a short span. It's just a breath. What is life? It's but a vapor that just appears and then vanishes. It like the grass that grows up and then dies and withers. We are here so short a time! But it's preparation time for eternity. So we go through sufferings, light afflictions for a moment. But they are working an exceeding eternal weight of glory. For the present suffering isn't worthy, there's no grounds. There's not comparative basis here, to be compared with the glory, the eternal glory, that is ours as children of God and sons of God! We need to get that eternal perspective! We need to hold that eternal perspective so that whenever we are reproached or made fun or whatever, it doesn't affect us. We don't go home and mope for a week. He called me a Jesus freak. Ooooooh, you know. But you don't worry about it. You think, oh, poor soul! Unless he finds Christ, he's going to spend an eternity apart from God's love. So keeping that eternal perspective has everything to do with my attitude towards the world in which I live.

¹⁹*For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.* All of creation is suffering as the result of sin. God said, cursed be the ground. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth. Weeds. Man shall have to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. The animal kingdom is cursed as a result of man's sin. And the expectation of creation as we wait for the manifestation or revealing of the sons of God.

Now, there have been those groups and that teaching that we are about to be manifested to the world as the sons of God. Some people take the Scripture and really run with it and get some very wild concepts and ideas. You know when we are manifested or revealed as the sons of God. Some fanciful stories that have been written sound a little bit like science fiction of you know, the powers that we are going to be manifesting before the world and all of this kind of stuff. But that is not what it is talking about as Paul will tell us in a moment.

²⁰*For the creation (the creatures) was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;* God created man for His own purpose. The purpose was that God might have a meaningful loving relationship with His creation. That was God's purpose in creating us. Thus He created us with a capacity of choice. We are not robots. We have a mind of our own. God has given us a will of our own. A capacity of choice. So that I can have a meaningful relationship with God. When we sing of our love for the Lord, we don't have to. Hopefully we are singing from our hearts. We're not just singing by rote, but from our heart we are expressing, I love you Lord. I lift my voice! And it's a true expression of my heart as I'm telling the Lord, Lord, I love you! That's why I was created, to come into this loving relationship with Him. And if a man does not have a relationship with God, there is deep, down within him, this drive, this thirst for God. The Psalmist said, my soul thirsts after Thee oh God, for the living God. Jesus, on the feast day of Tabernacles, standing on the Temple Mount, said, if any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink. Now He's not talking about physical thirst. He didn't have a Coca Cola stand. He wasn't even referring to the emotional thirst, the sociological drive. He was talking about the spiritual thirst which is universal. God created you with this emptiness within that He might fill it! That you might be drawn to God so that He could fill it. And thus when Jesus said if any man thirst, talking about the universal thirst in man for God, He is saying come unto Me and drink. And there He is declaring that He is God! And not only would He satisfy that thirst, but out of that person's innermost being, there would then begin to flow rivers of living water. As Jesus was making reference to the Spirit of God that would come and would dwell within man. So God made us subject unto this emptiness, that by reason by Him who created us that we might actually be subjected to hope. That hope of the future with Him, that eternal glory in His kingdom, that He has promised.

²¹*because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* This bondage of corruption. Talking now about our bodies. One day we are going to be delivered from these bodies. Bondage of corruption! There are three things working against us in concert. The world, the flesh and the devil. Now the devil works through our flesh by the allurements of the world. But the area of the problem is my flesh. If it weren't for this body of flesh, I would have no problem. I could sail along

through life in total victory. Not being touched or moved by the enticement of the world around me. But I'm in this body! And in this body, this body has these certain drives. And the body wants to control my mind. It wants to control my life. And there is a war that is going on between my spirit and my body. For my spirit is lusting against my flesh. And my flesh is lusting against my spirit. And these two are contrary. There is this war that is going on inside. As to what will rule over my mind. Will my mind be governed and ruled by the spirit and the things of the spirit? Or will my mind be governed and ruled by the things of the flesh? Will I be constantly be thinking of fleshly things? Or will my mind be stayed on the Lord? The Bible says, He will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on the Lord. But in this body of flesh, there are those things that arise and I realize many times, the weakness of my flesh. How that the flesh many times just sort of takes over. Assumes control. And it's miserable! I hate it when that happens. I want to be led by the spirit. I want to walk in the Spirit. I want to respond and react to every situation in the spirit. And many times I say, well, I'm going to. I'm determined. I'm going to. And then if it weren't for the world around me, I could be all right. So, we find that what's happened is that I'm redeemed but I still live in this body of flesh.

Now this body of flesh is so bad, that God has no intention of redeeming it. He said, we've got to by the Spirit, mortify, put to death the deeds of the flesh. God has only one sentence for the flesh. And that is crucifixion. Kill it. Crucify it. But, here I am. Still living in this body of flesh. And as long as I do, I'm going to be subject to the desires of my flesh, the lusts of my flesh, which are contrary to my heart, which is after the spirit. So we are waiting for that day when we will be changed. That we have then a redeemed body. No longer a body that is troubled or plagued by the fleshly desire, but a redeemed body because the creature itself will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of light.

²²*For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.* ²³*Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.* So, all of creation, we ourselves, groaning, waiting. Groaning and travailing. That is of course a phrase that deals with pregnancy and the child that is about to be born. The pain of travail. And as I look at the world. The travail, the pain of the world. I'll tell you what, the whole thing as you go into labor, you know, how that as you get to timing them and they get closer and closer and closer. The pain. And I look at the pain of the world and the tragedies of the world and it seems like they are getting closer and closer and closer. About ready to be delivered. So we and all of creation are groaning and travailing in this waiting for this moment. The manifestation or revealing of the sons of God. To wit, the redemption of our bodies.

Paul the apostle, writing to the Corinthians, said I will show you a mystery. We are not going to all of us die or sleep. But we will all be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye. For this corruption must put on incorruption. So we are waiting for that day when this corruption puts on incorruption and this mortal puts on immortality. I receive a new body. Paul said, we know that as long as we are living in these bodies, we are absent from the Lord. We would choose rather to be absent from these bodies that we might be present with the Lord. Paul said, we know that when this body is dissolved, that is when it goes back to dust. The place in the ground where it goes back to dust. We have a building of God. He calls this body a tent. He compares it with a building of God, not made with hands, that is eternal in the heavens. I believe when Jesus said, in My Father's house are many mansions, He was referring to the new bodies that we have. A building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. So then he said we who are in these bodies do groan. Here we have it again. Earnestly desiring to be free from this body. Not that I would be unembodied. I want to clothed upon with that body which is from heaven. So that groaning and travailing. Because of the body, there's where my problems lie. Oh, how I long for that new body. That redeemed body that we shall have when our Lord comes. We will be changed! In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye. For this corruption must put on incorruption, this mortal, immortality.

²⁴*For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?* In other words, we have this hope. We don't yet see it. I'm not yet in a redeemed body. I'm still in this old thing. I'm longing. I'm waiting. I am hoping for this change. Now one day I won't be hoping anymore. It will have taken place. And once you see it, it's no longer hope. It's now reality. So I am waiting for the reality. In the meantime, I'm sustained by the hope. I know that God's word is true. I know that God's promises are true.

And that I'm going to be changed. And I'm going to receive that new body which is from heaven. A building of God not made with hands. So that which is seen is not hope. For if you see it why do you still hope for it?

²⁵*But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.* So writing concerning the coming again of Jesus Christ and this change of body. The metamorphoses that we will be going through. James said, have patience brethren, for the coming of the Lord. Establish your soul. For the husbandman is waiting for the complete fruit of harvest. We with patience wait for it. God has great patience! Peter said in the last days there will scoffers who will come saying, where is the promise of His coming? Since our fathers have fallen asleep, everything continues as it was from the beginning. But this, Peter said (2 Peter 3:9), they are willingly ignorant of, that God has intervened in man's history in the past and brought judgment upon the world through the flood. And this same world, he is keeping in store for the last days of judgment. For the Lord is not slack concerning His promises. That is, His promise to come and to change us and to bring us into glory. He's not slack concerning His promises as some men count slackness, but He is faithful to us. But He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. So know that this delay is the salvation of the law.

I was hoping for the Lord to come in 1978. Aren't you glad He didn't? Many of you? And so the Lord is faithful. He has great patience. He is waiting for the perfect fruit of harvest, James said, and has great patience for it. More patience than I have. Great patience for it. So if hope for that which we do not see, then we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. So we wait for this day that God has promised. Now the Lord Himself shall come. That is His promise. He shall come! In the meantime, we patiently wait for that day when Jesus will come. We will be changed into His own glorious likeness. Jesus said, beloved, we are now the sons of God. Here we have the children of God. The Spirit in our hearts. Giving us that innate awareness where we just say, oh, Daddy! Father! We are now the sons of God. It doesn't yet appear what we are going to be, but we do know that when He appears, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

Paul speaks about our citizenship which is in heaven, from whence we look for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who when He comes will change our vile bodies that they might be fashioned like unto His Own glorious image. One day you are going to see a gorgeous creature with a lot of curly hair. And someone will ask, who in the world is that? Oh, that's Chuck Smith. Oh you are kidding me. No. Glorified body. We who are in these bodies do groan, earnestly desiring to be delivered. That we might be clothed upon with the body which is from heaven. So we are told to encourage one another with this hope. For he who has this hope in Him, John said, purifies himself even as he is pure. It's a purifying hope. It's important that we keep the eternal perspective. We don't go under at the sufferings or the ridicule or the reproach. That we don't let that take us under. We keep the eternal perspective. That we are constantly looking for that new day to dawn. The day of the Lord! And the glory of His eternal kingdom of which we are all heirs! Joint heirs through Jesus because we are children of God, through faith.

Thank You, Father, for this glorious hope that we have of eternal life with You, in Your kingdom. Of the new body, changes, that we might be fashioned, Lord, like Your own glorious image. Thank You Lord, for that hope that sustains us in the dark days of this world that is going through the birth pangs, the travails. And Lord, we pray that You will keep our eyes ever fastened upon You. And may we walk, Lord in a way that is pleasing. Lead by Your Spirit, thus proving that we are the Sons of God. In Jesus' name. Amen.