Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Many things in life are temporary. For example, I am sure you all remember eating a yummy meal and feeling full to the brim. But it doesn’t last, does it. Soon enough you are hungry again. And you boys and girls might have been given a trophy or a really fun task at school, but when your day or month was over, it was someone else’s turn or you had to hand the trophy back. And sometimes you read about countries that have been at war for a long time signing a peace treaty, only for the peace treaty to be broken some time later, and for hostilities to resume. So, lots of things in life are temporary; not permanent.

Well, when it comes to salvation, we see the language of blessings and privilege and peace in the Bible. But because of the many temporary experiences that we have and see in life, we can wonder if salvation and all of its blessings might just be temporary; could we lose them tomorrow? Could God change His mind and return to a state of war with us?

Well, we are going to see today how **the doctrine of adoption encourages believers to know that their salvation is permanent**. And we need this encouragement because the Christian life is not easy. We can struggle with guilt and different hardships, all of which can lead us to doubt our salvation. There may be some of us here right now who are struggling with exactly these doubts. So let’s explore the doctrine of adoption that is laid out in Romans 8 by considering the **precious** **blessing** of our Adoption and then the **practical responsibilities** of our adoption**.**

1. So firstly then, the **precious** **Blessing** of Our adoption.
   1. Romans 8 is about the Christian life. It **begins** with that magnificent verse, “*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*.” And that has to be one of my favourite verses in the whole Bible! Is it one of yours? These words speak of a permanent peace-treaty between God and believers. And they are true because our sin and our guilt has been fully dealt with on the cross by the Lord Jesus. And we know this because of those three words that Jesus spoke on the cross that you have heard me refer to from his pulpit, again and again, which are: “*It is finished*.” And there was no ‘almost’ or ‘for now’ in that phrase; “*It is finished*!” What Jesus needed to do to secure our salvation was done. So if you believe that Jesus died on the cross for you, there is now no condemnation for you. It’s a wonderful verse to memorize and repeat! But Romans 8 **ends** with what surely is another of the believer’s favourite Bible verses: “*For I am sure that [nothing] … in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*.” So, no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus at the beginning of the chapter and nothing can separate us from Christ Jesus at the end of the chapter. And I think that deserves a Hallelujah! Yes? Well, **our text is a very important part of the connection between** the opening encouragement of Romans 8 and the closing encouragement of Romans 8. And this is because as the chapter unfolds, we learn that because there is now no condemnation, this will have effect how we live. Paul explains that there are **two ways to live** – life in the flesh or life in the Spirit; unholy living or holy living; a life *hostile* to God or a life that *pleases* God. And **verse 13** puts it very starkly, “*If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live*.”
   2. And then we get **verse 14**, which is massively important for what is being said about the Christian life: “*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God*.” And it is massively important because this is another example of the context of all of the Bible’s commandments about Christian living: And that context is that **What we are to DO always comes after who we ARE**. (repeat) So, in terms of vv13&14, we are by the Spirit to put to death the deeds of the body not so that we can *become* adopted children of God but because we are *adopted* children of God! Do you see it? “*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God*.” The *you are sons of God* comes before this is how you should live.
      1. And this, Brothers and Sisters, Young people, and Boys and Girls, is **the great blessing of our adoption**. God is not waiting for us to cross the finish line of the Christian life having done more good than bad, before He signs the adoption papers and makes us His children forever. No no no! We become God’s adopted children at the beginning of the Christian life. **John 1:12** is plain about this: “*But to all who did receive [Jesus], who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God*.” So, “*all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God*.”
      2. And **verse 15** continues this thought, “*For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons; by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!*” God *will not one day be* our Father if we keep putting to death the deeds of the flesh; He *is* our Father in heaven.
      3. And then **verse 16** keeps piling this wonderful truth on, “*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*.”
         1. Do you remember how many **witnesses** you need to prove something according to God’s law? At least two or three. And if you have ever been told something by a person and then had someone else come and tell you the exact same thing, you will know the power of two witnesses.
         2. So what we are being told here is that we read in the Bible that we are sons of God. That’s witness number one. And then the Holy Spirit who lives within us convinces us that what we have read is true. That’s witness number two. So God wants you to be sure and certain about your adoption. If you have believed in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you regularly confess your sins and trust in Christ, you may be certain that you are a child of God.
   3. And just in case there is still any doubt about the **permanence** of our adoption, look back to the **verse 1** again. Who are those for whom there is therefore now no condemnation? It is “*those who are in Christ Jesus*.” So as we come to verse 17, the first thing to note is that it too connects us with Christ: “*Fellow heirs with Christ … suffer with Him … glorified with Him*.” And this is another important point because it connects our adoption with the doctrine known as **union with Christ**.
      1. And boys and girls, union means ‘joined to’ or ‘connected with.’ Have you have done a **three-legged race**? That’s when you and another person both have one of your legs tied together. And now you are in union – joined to someone else – and you have to walk together. Well, with a three legged race, it is just legs and you can eventually untie the rope and separate, but the Bible explains that our union with Christ is complete and permanent. We have been joined to Christ.
      2. It is one of the main themes of **Ephesians**. Around 27 times you will read something like ‘in Christ’ or ‘with Christ.’ And listen to **1:5**: *“[God] predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ*.” So our adoption is *because of* and *through* and *for* Christ. And what Ephesians 1 explains is that before the creation of the world, the Father loved the Son so much that He decided to create human beings who could enter into and enjoy this love. And His plan was to present these people to the Son, at the end of time, as a love gift, if you like. So His choice of you and me has His love for Jesus at its core. And the Father’s love for Christ is permanent! Nothing will get in the way of Him presenting to the Son all those He has chosen to adopt.
      3. And so, because the Father’s love for Christ is unbreakable, and because He has united us with Christ, our adoption as His children is permanent!
   4. But wait, there’s more! **Verse** says, “*And if children, then* ***heirs****—[H E I R S] heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ*.” Heirs (h e i r s) are those who inherit property or money from their parents. And this typically happens when their parents die. But God will not die. And we begin receiving gifts from our Father the moment our salvation begins and He doesn’t just give us some things; He gives us everything that we need.
      1. **Ephesians 1:3** says, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing*.” And then that chapter starts listings all of the spiritual blessings that belong to God’s adopted children in Christ – holy and blameless, adoption, forgiveness, grace, wisdom…
      2. And **Matthew 25:34** says that on Judgment Day, Jesus will say to every adopted child of God, “*Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world*.” You are going to be welcomed into heaven where you will rule with Christ.
      3. I hope you are hearing this and thinking, I can’t wait! Do you long to hear Jesus say this to you?
2. So the doctrine of adoption reveals the **permanence** of our salvation. We have been brought into the family of God. There is no condemnation for us. Nothing can separate us from Christ. And in Christ we have every spiritual blessing now and the guarantee of a heavenly inheritance. And as we have seen, the command to put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit is given not so that we can *become* adopted children of God but because we *are* adopted children of God. So let’s turn our attention, in the second place, to the **practical responsibility** of our adoption as it is explained the last part of verse 17: “*For we are fellow heirs with Christ provided we suffer for Him* (or, share in His sufferings) *in order that we may also be glorified with Him*.”
   1. Now, we have already seen that God does not wait at the finish line of life to give us a certificate of adoption *if we have done enough to be worthy of it*. That is not what these words mean. What Paul is doing here is repeating the unbreakable law of the kingdom which is that **glory only comes at the end of the pathway of suffering**. Think of Jesus’ words in Matthew 7: “*Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few*.” Anyone who has the idea that they can be a child of God without the need for striving for holiness, and without persecution and suffering is deluded. Jesus suffered and died so that we could be adopted by God. So if we are not willing to suffer for Jesus, then we just don’t get it!
      1. Jesus said,“*In the world you will have tribulation*.” To His disciples, He said, “*Take up your cross and follow me*.”
      2. But even if we understand and believe these things, our natural inclination when trouble or suffering comes along is **the three A’s – Anger, Avoidance, or Apathy:**
         1. **Anger**: Why is this happening to me? How can a good God allow suffering?
         2. **Avoidance**: People will do anything to avoid whatever is hard or uncomfortable. They only want to only do what feels good and easy and fun. And when it all gets too much, people get drunk or high to escape the pain or the reality.
         3. **Apathy**: People ignore trouble or suffering and do not seek to learn anything from it. There is no self-examination or wrestling with sin and guilt.
      3. In recent Lord’s days we have confessed that God provides whatever we need for body and soul and will turn to our good whatever adversity He sends us in this sad world. Hebrews 12:6 tells us that “the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives,” and that this is “for our good, that we may share His holiness.” So let’s pray that instead of anger or avoidance or apathy, we **accept** suffering as a part of how God prepares His adopted sons and daughters for glory.
   2. We have already mentioned **the closing verses of chapter 8**: “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?*” In other words, can suffering separate us from Christ? And **verse 37** gives us the answer, “*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that … [nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*.”
      1. In the 1980s, a 14 year old girl was a part of a mission team that went from one part of China to another. The whole team was arrested and forced to remain kneeling in one place day and night. On the third day, the 14 year old girl fainted and was released. 6 days later, the rest of the team was released. When they were reunited with the girl, she cried. They asked her why she was crying. And she said it was because they had been called on to suffer for nine days while she only suffered for three. She knew that she was an adopted child of God and she welcomed the responsibilities of living as a child of God. She was glad to suffer for Jesus.
      2. So, will you continue to praise God when you are in a hospital bed?
      3. Do you tell others about Jesus even though some will laugh at you?
      4. Are you happy to miss out on a promotion because you refuse to work on Sundays?
      5. Are we ready to face the wrath of the LGBT community and hate-speech officials because we say that what God calls sin we must call sin?

In **2 Corinthians 4**, the Apostle Paul lists some of the many ways He had suffered for Christ – imprisonment, beating, shipwreck, etc. The he said, “*This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison*.”

This is the attitude of an adopted child of God through Christ. May it be the attitude of each one of us. Amen.