

Romans 8:11-19

¹¹And if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive through his Spirit, who is dwelling in you.

¹²So then, brothers, we do not owe it to the sinful flesh to live in harmony with it. ¹³For if you live in harmony with the sinful flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live.

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.

¹⁸For I conclude that our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. ¹⁹In fact, creation is waiting with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed.

Secure

I.

How secure do you feel these days? According to a US News report last December, the average 401(k) lost about 20% in the calendar year 2022. That doesn’t make the average investor feel secure with their investment strategy.

Some decided that pulling some money and putting the cash in the bank might currently be a safer bet. Recently upsetting that more “secure” apple cart, several banks failed. The banks were taking investors’ money that was put into the bank to be “safe” and investing it in risky ventures. Secure didn’t turn out to be so secure.

Then the Fed and the FDIC declared they would make investors whole, even those above the FDIC insured amount of \$250,000. That makes still others wonder if their “secure” deposits are really secure for future bank failures, when the FDIC may or may not decide *their* deposits are important enough to receive the bailout.

Many people don’t feel so secure. Not financially, at least.

As for world stability, there are plenty of signs that things don’t look very secure there, either. Wars and rumors of wars abound. People worry about food security and energy security and government security. Many are concerned about what their children are being taught in the public school systems. Some are concerned about what their views of life will mean to the long-term security of their jobs; will their social media posts or their words spoken in the workplace cost their jobs?

II.

Sometimes Christians glibly talk about God providing. It certainly is true. God *does* provide. He *does* promise to be with us, no matter what circumstances we face. But Christians often talk about God providing when they already feel secure; when the financial situation is in order, when they might have some *slight* concern about the stock market, or their retirement funds, or their stockpile of cash.

But what happens when that lack of security or loss of security hits a little closer to home? Sometimes a lack of security is much, much more intense than a loss of financial stability. Sometimes it’s more intense than threats in the workplace if you mention your biblical world-view, or your questions about gender transitioning, or a desire *not* to be forced into some training that tells you it is necessary to confess your biases and your privilege.

Sometimes the lack of security is much, much more intense than any of those things. Paul mentions “Our sufferings at the present time” (Romans 8:18, EHV).

When serious illness impacts your life, you feel an immediate challenge to your security. Just days before the diagnosis your plans were all pointing to a cheery future, but from the body posture and expressions on the doctor’s face, you can tell before a word is ever spoken that everything is about to change. Your former sense of security is lost. You have to learn to redirect it.

Consider the woman from Shunem in the First Reading. For many years she had been unable to have children. The concept of motherhood had not crossed her mind in some time before the prophet Elisha told her she would have a son.

When the boy was born, she was overjoyed. He brought a sense of security for her as she would grow older. Children, especially strong sons, were the only social safety net of the time. But when the boy had grown older he became very sick. The woman from Shunem had the unenviably difficult task of holding him in her lap while his life slipped away. In one day all her security—and her joy—was taken from her.

For so many of us, security means growing old with your spouse. Then, one day, that spouse gets sick, and you’re told that death is imminent. Sometimes the spouse you had grown so confident in turns out to be unfaithful, and divorce robs you of the security of the companionship of marriage.

After the death of her son, the woman from Shunem went to Elisha and said: “Did I ask my lord for a son? Didn’t I say, ‘Don’t give me false hope?’” (2 Kings 4:28, EHV). Martha confronted Jesus when he came too late to save her brother, Lazarus, from death, and said: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died” (John 11:21, EHV).

Security isn’t always so secure, is it? Sometimes when security is ripped away from us we begin to question God. We begin to wonder whether God really wants what is best for us.

III.

For several weeks the themes of the day have been starting with the phrase: Our Greatest Needs. This week’s greatest need is “Life for the Dead.” When considering life for the dead as one of our greatest needs, the theme continued: “The world’s solution to death is that it is the end of everything.”

When the woman from Shunem held the body of her lifeless son, the world’s solution seemed the only possibility. God, however, allowed Elisha to pay an advance on the inheritance waiting for the heirs of Christ: the boy was raised back to life. Mary and Martha experienced the joy of watching and listening as Jesus raised their brother Lazarus back to life.

Today’s theme ended by saying: “Jesus provides a better solution—he promises life.” Jesus can only promise life because he dealt with death. He didn’t just deal with death by empowering Elisha in the Old Testament to raise a boy back to life. He didn’t just deal with death for one man, Lazarus, who had been dead and in the grave for four days.

Bible history has taught us that death is one of the consequences for sin. Paul said earlier in this Letter to the Romans: “Sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, so also death spread to all people because all sinned” (Romans 5:12, EHV). Jesus took all the sins of the “all people” Paul spoke of to the cross and paid their consequences in full.

Now Paul reminds us at the beginning of today’s reading: “And if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive through his Spirit, who is dwelling in you.” (Romans 8:11, EHV). Christ Jesus didn’t stay in his tomb after his death on Good Friday. We’re not to Easter yet, but you know what’s coming: Jesus rose from the dead.

That’s what gives you real security. You know that your sins have been paid for. Every sin

of being so concerned about your financial picture that you forget God has promised that he cares for you and *will* care for you. Every sin of questioning God when the earthly security you find in loved ones is ripped away. Jesus paid for every one. And Jesus rose from the dead.

Paul says: “Indeed, 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” (Romans 8:14-16, EHV).

It’s important to look at these three verses as a unit. Paul starts by calling those “led by the Spirit of God” “sons of God.” He chooses his words carefully. Both men and women are among those led by the Holy Spirit. In the culture of the day, only sons could inherit property from their fathers. Paul calls both men and women led by the Spirit people who could inherit. He finishes the three verses by changing to the word “children.”

All children, even in that generation, would feel comfortable around a loving father. A loving father invites his children to come to him with their problems. In baptism, we have been adopted as God’s sons and daughters. We can go to our loving Heavenly Father with the term of endearment: Abba, Father!

Both men and women led by the Spirit of God are children of God. That means something special. “Now if we are children, we are also heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17, EHV). Real security means that we have an inheritance coming, an inheritance that the Bible reminds us will never perish, spoil, or fade.

IV.

Sometimes we say things glibly from a position of presumed security. We say glibly, God will provide. We say that God is in control and we trust in him.

That isn’t really a glib statement. It isn’t trite at all. God really *is* in control. God really *does* care about us. God really *is* our real security.

Paul reminds us that because we really are the children of God, “We do not owe it to the sinful flesh to live in harmony with it. ¹³For if you live in harmony with the sinful flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:12-13, EHV). When things threaten your security or completely yank your perceived security from you, don’t immediately turn away from God and back to the sinful flesh. You owe the sinful flesh nothing. Jesus has redeemed you from that flesh.

The Spirit is already dwelling in you. He gave you faith in Jesus as your Savior. Live in harmony with the Spirit, who is in you.

Earlier we noted that Paul mentioned our sufferings. But we left it at that. The whole context of what he says is important. Paul writes: “For I conclude that our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. ¹⁹In fact, creation is waiting with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed” (Romans 8:18-19, EHV).

Paul does *not* say that whatever suffering you experience is to be dismissed. He doesn’t say it is to be minimized. If you experience suffering, it can bring intense pain—pain that might last the rest of your life.

Rather than minimize your suffering, Paul maximizes your joy. However intense the sufferings of this life get, the joys of heaven will be even more intense. Even creation itself, Paul says, is waiting to see the intense glory you will experience.

Your eternal future is secure. Your intense eternal joy is secure. Live in the security of knowing that what is yet to come is beyond your wildest imagination. Amen.