

**Romans 8:11-19** *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. <sup>12</sup>Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. <sup>13</sup>For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup>For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup>The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. <sup>19</sup>For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.*

Dear friends in Christ our Savior,

A famous song from the 80’s had the tag line: “The future’s so bright, I’ve got to wear shades.” Remember that? Do you feel that way at the moment? It’s hard to look optimistically at the future right now. There is so much uncertainty around us every day. Things are changing day by day, sometimes hour by hour. I don’t know what the rest of today is going to bring, much less tomorrow or next week or 6 months from now. The cases of coronavirus are going up and the economy is going down. Restrictions on our freedom are growing bigger by the day. All of the uncertainty around us coupled with all the changes taking place to our normal daily lives is leaving us with a lack of security. Not many of us feel very secure physically or economically right now. Questions surround us: Will I unknowingly contract this unseen virus? Will it just present mild symptoms in me or will I be the one struggling mightily with respiratory issues? Will this quarantine be lifted by Easter or will it go into June or even July? Will my business make it? Will I have a job in the next few weeks? My retirement savings I’m living off of just took a major hit, what are we going to do? How are we going to make it? What will this mean for my family’s future? There’s a lot of uncertainty right now. Uncertainty leads to insecurity. Insecurity leads to fear. And so you ask, “Pastor, how can you say, “The future’s so bright, I’ve got to wear shades?”

Oh my friends, this is why it is good for us to gather together and let God speak to us in his word today. The Apostle Paul encourages us with these words reminding us that our future is bright regardless of what is happening around us because we have the security only God can give. We not only have God’s promise to watch over us as our Father in heaven but we have an eternity waiting for us that far surpasses the suffering we face here. In fact, the eternal glory that awaits us is far beyond what we could possibly imagine. Our security comes from being the children of God and knowing that our heavenly Father is watching over us. Think about it this way: Our kids aren’t all that worried right now. In fact, they are rather enjoying not having the formal setting of a classroom but getting to work out of their rooms. They aren’t worried because they trust their parents. They have complete confidence that mom and dad will take care of them through this and so they don’t worry. Of course, that’s the exact reason why mom and dad are concerned right now. They have the responsibility of taking care of the children but don’t have all the answers right now. Yet we can have the same confidence as these children because we have a Father in heaven who cares for us as much if not more than you care for your children who is watching over you and promised to provide for you and protect you. This entire portion of God’s Word Paul uses to assure us of this fact and give us the security we need to live by faith and not by fear. With our confidence in our heavenly Father, the future’s so bright, we’ve got to wear shades. Let’s go to the text to find this assurance.

In this section in the English texts, Paul uses a lot of “ifs”. The word if to us can be a word that lends itself to uncertainty. If this happens—which it may or may not, in fact, it’s pretty unlikely that it would, but if it did, then this will happen. A sentence like that doesn’t produce a lot of confidence in someone. It’s more like a wish that something would happen but a recognition that it probably won’t. That’s not the way Paul is talking here. The construction Paul uses makes it plain that these sentences aren’t at all hypothetical or iffy. They are certain and sure. They are so sure, that you could substitute since or because in place of “if” to get Paul’s intended meaning. Paul starts by saying, “*And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.*” Paul isn’t questioning whether the Spirit is living inside of you or not. You could really translate this: Since the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you or Because the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you. Paul is confident the Spirit is living in you already and because of his confidence, he’s also certain that he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies. He’s talking here both about spiritual life and the resurrection of the dead at the last day. Our confidence is that the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead not only is living in us and given us spiritual life, but will one day raise our bodies and glorify them to live with Jesus forever in heaven.

How can Paul be so confident of this? At times, our human spirit, weakened by sin and plagued by Satan, has doubts. Even the strongest of Christians at times wonder about and may even have a difficult time expressing certainty in God’s care. How do we really know the Holy Spirit is living in us? How do we really know that we are God’s children? How can we really know that God is watching over us and protecting us? How can we really know that there is a future glory waiting us that far surpasses what we have here? Maybe these are questions you have been asking. Maybe you are asking them because all of the uncertainty we are facing right now along with the insecurity that comes with it are leading you to not feel very close to God. All of these issues we are facing right now cause us to wonder if God is really in control and if God really cares. All of the pain and suffering that will come either from the virus or the slowdown in the economy leads you to wonder that if God really cares, how could he let this happen?

Paul reminds us that our security isn't based on how close we feel to God. Our security is based on the promises that God has made to us in Jesus and that faith is testified to by the Holy Spirit. To believe in Jesus as your Savior from sin is to be a child of God. It's also a sign that the Holy Spirit has been working in your heart because no one can believe this about Jesus without the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn't make us slaves to God so that we live in fear. He brought about our adoption into God's family who made us his children. Without the Holy Spirit, we are slaves to sin. In other words, without the Holy Spirit, sin runs rampant in our lives and controls us. The only answer to this problem without the Holy Spirit is to feel obligated to try and earn favor from a harsh and demanding God by bringing the right offerings and living the right lives. Failing even a little in any of this causes fear that we are going to fall under the wrath of an offended deity. Imagine if this is the way that we lived. If we lived as slaves to sin under the fear that any wrong we did would bring down harshly upon us the wrath of God, what fear would rule our hearts right now. If this were the way we lived, then the only explanation for this hardship we are suffering right now is that we must have done something terrible to offend God and bring his wrath. Imagine the fear we would have if we thought that all of this were our fault and came as a result of judgment God was bringing on us because of what we had done! That would be a reason to live in fear.

But we have the Holy Spirit. And he has revealed to us a gracious God who has done everything for us and given everything to us as a gift of his grace. We did not become children of God by nature, nor by descent, nor because of our merits or good works. We became children of God because he graciously adopted us as his children through the waters of Holy Baptism. He did this because of the sacrifice Jesus made on your behalf when he gave his life on the cross. The same God who powerfully raised Jesus from the dead to conquer death has raised you to spiritual life and now calls you his child. And so instead of filling us with fear, God fills us with comfort and peace. You are the children of God. And since you are the children of God, you have some wonderful blessings. You are heirs of God's everlasting glory. You are co-heirs with Christ. Everything God has given to Jesus he has given to you. Everything that God has is yours. It's already yours, you are simply waiting to take full possession of it in heaven.

Not only are you heirs, but you can call God, Father. What father purposefully does anything to hurt his children? A good father does all that he can to help his children. Being a member of God's family gives us security for this life and for the next. Christ died to take away our sins which had separated us from our Father. The Holy Spirit worked faith in our hearts to bring us back into a right relationship with our heavenly Father. Our Father loves us, supports us, and will be there for us whenever we need him. We can always be certain he will be faithful to his promises to never leave us or abandon us but will watch over us as human father does his children. That's why the inevitability of suffering doesn't concern us as God's children. We can expect to suffer ridicule and shame because of our family ties to Christ. But to share in his suffering also means to share in his glory.

Perhaps one of the things all people can count on as we look to the future is trouble and suffering. And for us Christians, we can count on an additional dose of sufferings just because we are the children of God. For the Christians in first-century Rome, outwardly things went from bad to worse. They not only suffered physical ailments like the rest, but endured the harsh persecution led by the emperor himself against them. Yet Paul reminded them then and us today, that no matter how tough things may get in life, the sorrows we face now are nothing in comparison with the far greater glory, peace and joy that lie in our future. We are secure in knowing that our Lord and Savior will always be there to help us and bless us in the midst of suffering. But we are even more secure in knowing the eternity that awaits where he has a room waiting for us in the mansion of heaven.

This is why for you and me, despite what we see around us, the future is so bright, we have to wear shades. In spite of the personal problems and troubles we face, a glory awaits us that far outweighs all earthly problems and troubles. There, we will be eternally secure with our God for the rest of eternity. All systems of security invented by humans will always be uncertain. God gives us the security that we can retire from life in this world and be safe for all eternity. We can retire from life in this world with the glorious security that we are co-heirs with Christ and will be with him forever. This certainty of what is to come and security we have because of it is what helps us to stand firm in the problems of today. Think about it this way: When you have a vacation scheduled at the end of the week, it's a lot easier to make it through the challenges that will come your way that week because you know an end is in sight and you have something awesome to look forward to. We have something awesome to look forward to when life here is over—eternal life with Jesus. We are eagerly awaiting that day when all believers will be revealed and we will be with God forever. Joy for that day keeps us going day to day confident that when the end will come, what is waiting for us far surpasses anything we could have here.

If you saw a ragged person eating bean soup in a tar paper shack and someone told you, "That's the son of a millionaire," you might say, "If it is, then he shouldn't be living there and should be eating steak once in a while." He may not look like an heir now, but his inheritance is sure and he enjoy the blessings of that inheritance one day. This is you and I spiritually. We may not look like heirs now. But we are. And our inheritance with Jesus is guaranteed. All creation waits for the day when God's children will look like God's children. My, the glory we will know then. My friends, that Spirit is already living in you. Sin and death no longer rule our hearts and lives because of Christ. He died to overcome the rule of sin and death and we have been given a new life to life by the Holy Spirit. We are God's children. We live in the peace of God's love now and the hope of a glorious life to come. No matter what we see with our own eyes—The future's so bright, we've got to wear shades. Amen.