

I’m sure many of you are familiar with the 1982 film *Annie*. *Annie* was a comic strip created by Harold Gray which later became a hit musical that spawned a couple of movies. The lead character, a little girl named Annie, was an orphan in the 1930’s. She was unappreciated and often mistreated in the orphanage.

But her life is completely turned around when she is adopted by a millionaire by the name of “Daddy Warbucks.” Overnight she goes from being an indigent orphan to being the adopted daughter of the richest man in the world. She goes from not having enough to eat to having tea with the likes of Eleanor Roosevelt. She goes from having to work in the orphanage to having servants at her beck and call.

At first glance that seems to be what Paul is talking about happening to us on a spiritual level. We were once orphans in this world. Because of sin we were separated from the one who gave us life. Our only prospects were death and eternal punishment. We were destined to dwell in sin.

But we have been adopted by God. God sent his Son to pay our debt and free us from sin. And through the Holy Spirit we have been adopted as children of God. We are kids of the King—the King of Kings. Overnight we have gone from being indigent orphans to being the adopted daughters and sons of the Creator of the universe!

Just in case anyone doubts this notion of adoption, God gave his Spirit as proof that we are his children. The spirit prompts our spirit to call God “Abba,” Father. This is important. “Abba” is not just a Swedish pop music group or an Aramaic word for a patriarch. It literally means “Da-da” or “Daddy.” Our son Christopher told us this week that our 18 month old granddaughter, Cecily, says “Hi Daddy!” when he opens the door to her bedroom first thing in the morning. It’s often one of the first words we hear a child speak. Our

relationship with God can be compared to that of a small child who runs to their father saying “Daddy, Daddy, Daddy.”

When my sons were small I would walk in the house and they would run to me saying what their children say to them nowadays, “Hi Daddy!” No one would doubt for a minute that they were my children when they called me Daddy. Their uninhibited spirit was witness to the fact that I was their father. In the same way the Spirit draws us to God to witness that we are children of God.

But there are certain results and consequences to being children of God. We are heirs. Romans 8:17 says, “*We are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.*” When we hear the word “heir” we almost automatically think of money or possessions that come through an inheritance. An heir receives the amassed wealth of the one leaving a will. But in this case we’re talking about much more than money. We are heirs to the Kingdom of God! We are not talking about gold and silver or stocks and bonds. We are talking about grace and peace and hope and love. We are talking about the power to do good and transform and change people as well as the world.

If we are heirs to such a fortune why are so many of us living in spiritual poverty? Why aren’t we living like we are the heirs to a fortune? Why aren’t we swimming in hope and peace and joy and love? Why aren’t we transforming the world and people’s lives with that hope and peace and joy and love? I think many of us simply don’t realize the wealth we have received. We say “yeah I’m a child of God. God is my Daddy,” but we never ask the estate attorney about our inheritance. We are heirs with Christ to infinite storehouses of spiritual riches. We should live like heirs.

But being heirs to the riches of heaven is not always easy. In the context of our being heirs, Paul says in Romans, “*We share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us*” (vv. 17 & 18). Like Annie we are heirs, but this is real life, not a cartoon. There are hardships

involved in being an heir to God our Father. We are heirs to a kingdom that is at war with the power that rules this world. We are princes and princesses of selfless love in a world that glorifies and serves conceitedness.

Jesus is the prime example of living like an heir. He did nothing but serve his Father and love his neighbor. Yet he was mistreated and maligned; slandered and humiliated. He healed others but he was beaten and nailed to a cross. He lifted others up yet he was mistreated and put on a cross for others to ridicule. Paul is also an example of this truth. He was a co-heir with Christ. And like Christ he suffered. He was hunted and imprisoned and beaten and stoned within an inch of death. Eventually he was beheaded for being a child of God!

And we will suffer in this world. Some today still lose their lives for being children of God. Some lose their jobs or accounts or friends. But Paul, who should know, said that all this is nothing compared to the glory to be revealed in us. This is nothing to compare to the glories of the Kingdom of our Daddy.

That brings us to the next consequence of being children of God. As children of God we live in expectation. Romans 8:19 says, *“For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.”* And we wait with it. If you pay any attention to the news we hear on a daily basis, the world we live in is a world without hope. It is a world in which injustice and evil hold sway. But our Daddy is going to fix that. Our Daddy is bigger than evil. The Devil is just a big bully terrorizing this world. But God has promised to put the Devil in his place. And all creation is groaning, awaiting the fulfillment of that promise.

Romans 8 likens it to a woman giving birth. She experiences pain during child birth. Sometimes that pain can be beyond any pain she has ever known. But she knows that in the end a child will be born. She is willing to go through it all so that she can bring a new life into this world. In the same way we await the coming of our inheritance knowing that the pains of this life will pale in comparison to the glories of God.

You are a child of God. If you have entrusted your life to our Savior Jesus Christ and professed him as your Lord, then you have been adopted by God. You are an heir to the glories of heaven and a co-heir with Christ. When your heart cries out “Abba Father” that is the Holy Spirit moving your spirit to turn to your heavenly Daddy. When you feel led to pray, to praise, to worship, to serve, or to give, that is proof that you have been adopted by God.

So live like children of the King. You owe this world nothing. But you owe all you are to God. Serve God and glorify God in everything you do. Share the joy and hope and peace and love that you as an heir of God have in endless supply.

Sure, there will be hardships in this life. That is guaranteed. But those hardships are far out measured by the glories of our Daddy’s kingdom.

Tell the world that you are a child of God and that they can be too.

Say it with me: “I am a child of God.” *“I am a child of God.”*

Then, say: “And you can be too!” *“And you can be too!”* Amen.

(Thanks to Alex Stevenson for numerous sermon ideas)