

## No Longer a Slave, But a Child of God

### Romans 8: 13 - 17

- For the past several weeks, we have been talking about sanctification, that is how a believer lives out the righteousness that God has already declared them to have through faith in Christ.
- But sanctification is not the main theme of Romans 8. Sanctification is important, but one of the problems we have as Christians is that there is a tendency for us to overemphasize sanctification. Now I know that sounds strange. Why would a pastor tell his people not to work toward holiness?
  - Well, first I am not saying to not to work toward holiness. What I am really saying is that we work toward holiness in the wrong way. How?
    - By doing just that. Putting all the emphasis on us working toward holiness. I tell you this over and over again, but I tell you again because it is true. If all your emphasis is on you working toward holiness, you are either going to be puffed up and proud or disillusioned and depressed.
  - The way to holiness is not by putting the emphasis on what we do, but rather on what God has done for us. Nowhere is that more evident than here in Romans 8. The main emphasis in chapter 8 is not to be better people. It is to teach us to place all of the emphasis on who we are and what we will be in Christ. Again, look how chapter 8 ends:

**Romans 8: 37 - 39** No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Nothing can separate a Christian from the love of God. This is the main point that Paul is driving toward in chapter 8—the believer’s full and complete assurance of their salvation.
- Why does a believer have that complete assurance that nothing can separate them from the love of God?

**Romans 8: 1** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

- And why is there no condemnation?

**Romans 3: 21 – 25** But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

- In spite of the fact that we are sinners, deserving nothing but God’s wrath, God has made a way for us to be justified, declared right in his sight. How?

- When Christ went to the cross for us, the wrath of God that was rightfully aimed at us was instead turned upon Jesus. That is what that word propitiation means. It is a sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God.
- If Christ's sacrifice has propitiated the wrath of God, then there is no more wrath for us because it was all poured out on Jesus who stood in our place as our substitute. Because there is no more wrath there is no more condemnation.
- But those verses, in Romans 3, also tell us that as a result of the cross something else amazing happened. Jesus didn't just take the curse of sin for us. He also gave us the blessing of his righteousness.
- Look at verse 21 again. "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested (that is made known) apart from the law." Christ's death doesn't just take the punishment for our sin, it gives us the righteousness of God as our own. Paul puts it this way in:

**2 Corinthians 5: 21** For our sake (God) made (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in (Jesus) we might become the righteousness of God.

- So, think what Paul says happened as a result of the cross. At the cross, God the Father looked at the Son and saw you, and all the wrath stored up for you was poured out on the Son, so that now, when God the Father looks at you all He sees is the Son, and because of that all the blessings of Sonship are poured out on you.
- Now, if what I said doesn't set at least your heart to dancing, if not also your feet, then something is wrong. We need to talk because you're missing something. At a minimum you are missing the joy of your salvation and worst case you are missing Jesus.
- I don't want you to miss out on either so I am overjoyed that we are at the point in our study of Romans, that brings us to the subject of our adoption as sons and what it means for our lives, because understanding our adoption will not only set at least your heart to dancing, it will also change how you live.

**Romans 8: 13 – 17** For 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. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> 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!" <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

- So, a theme that had not turned up anywhere before in Romans is now Paul's main point of emphasis here in Romans 8. It's the theme of our adoption into the family of God.
  - In these verses Paul is telling us who we are in Christ, and who God is in relation to us. And he is telling us how we can know this about ourselves and

what it means for our lives. Who are we in Christ? God's beloved children. Who is God in relation to us? Our Father. How do we know this in our lives? The work and testimony of the Holy Spirit.

- I think one of the reasons that our adoption as sons has so little meaning for us and brings so little joy to our lives is because we have been influenced by and have even bought into, a completely unbiblical notion regarding God the Father and our being children of God.
  - What is that unbiblical notion? Well, you will hear it expressed like this, "We are all God's children." Now if you buy into that lie, then what Paul is saying to us here in Romans 8 about our adoption as sons will mean little to nothing to you. After all, if we are all children of God, who needs to be adopted? What's the big deal?
    - So, let's start by destroying that lie that comes straight from Hell.
- 1. **Everybody is a child of somebody, but not everyone is a child of God.**
- There is no question that the Bible clearly teaches that God is the creator and sustainer of all life. He gives us life.
  - But the Bible is equally clear that not every human is a child of God. Since we are in Romans 8, let's start with what Paul says there.

**Romans 8: 14** For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

- The implication of what Paul is saying is very clear isn't it? Not everyone is a child of God, a son of God. It is only those who are led by the Spirit of God. Those who are not led by the Spirit are not children.
- Jesus spoke even more clearly about this distinction in one of the many confrontations that he had with the Pharisees in:

**John 8: 42 – 44** Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. <sup>43</sup> Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. <sup>44</sup> You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.

- Jesus was clear on this. Just like everybody has a biological father, everybody has a spiritual father. A person is either a child of God or a child of Satan.
  - But it is easy for us to accept that truth and yet still water it down to the point where it is meaningless to our lives. How? By thinking like this: Sure, there are some people who are children of Satan, you know people that worship Satan or maybe are the part of the Sons of Satan Motorcycle Club, but most people are children of God. But that is not what Paul is saying.

**Romans 8: 14** For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

- Now, let's use Scripture to interpret and reinforce Scripture. Think what John wrote at the beginning of this Gospel.

**John 1: 12 – 13** But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

- There is a condition for being a Son or child of God, and that condition is faith in the Son of God. Faith in the Son of God results in a new birth.

**John 3: 3 – 7** Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” <sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’

- The way God becomes a Father to a person is not through creation but through re-creation being born again—born of the Spirit. Why is that necessary? Because a person who is a true child of God is a person who is led by the Spirit of God, and Jesus makes it crystal clear that a person can't be led by the Spirit of God until they are born again.
- So, the very first question is simply this: Are you truly born again? If you are, then you are truly a child of God, but if you are not born again, you are still dead in your sins and a child of Satan. God is your creator, but he is not your father.
  - There is no in between. No limbo. You are either born again or you are not. You are either being led by the Spirit, or you are not. You are either a child of God or a child of Satan. Which is it? You need to know because eternity hangs in the balance.

**Romans 8: 9 – 11** Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

## **2. How do we know we are a son of God and not a slave to fear?**

**Romans 8: 14** For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

- If I'm being led by the Spirit, I'm a son or a child of God. That's what it says.
  - So, what does it mean to be led by the Spirit? Does it mean being led to marry the right person? Being led to go to the right school? Being led to have the right job? Being led to witness to somebody this afternoon? No, it doesn't mean any of those things.
  - How do I know that? Because of the for that is there at the beginning of verse 14 that connects it to verse 13.
    - Last week, we talked about verse 13 and what it means. It means not living in peaceful co-existence with your sin. It means declaring all out war on sin.
    - It's not about who you marry, or what job you do. That's nowhere near the context here. The context is, if you are led by the Spirit, you make war on your sin. You put to death the deeds of the flesh.

The unmistakable evidence that a person is a child of God is that the Holy Spirit is leading them in such a way that they are making war against their sin.

- Now a war is a series of battles. You win some and you lose some, but a person who is a true child of God, led by the Spirit, never stops fighting.
  - To convey the idea that this is a never-ending war, Paul wrote this in the present tense in the Greek, which means that the fight is an ongoing continuous action.
    - Now think what that means. It means you are not always winning in the battle. If you were, the flesh would be forced to surrender. But your flesh isn't going to surrender until you take your last breath.
    - Sometimes you will win the battle, sometimes the flesh wins, but you are never at peace with the flesh, and never give up the fight.
- If you stay in sin, just settle in there, make peace with your flesh, live according to the devil, you're going to go to hell. But if by the Spirit you are continually putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live forever because those who are led to do that are the children of God and have the Spirit of God.

**Romans 8: 11** If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

- This is Paul's whole argument here. The proof that you have the Spirit of eternal life, the proof that you have the Spirit of adoption, is that you hate your sin and are going to war against it through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- And please notice here that Paul is not saying we go to war against other people's sin. There are far too many people today who call themselves Christians, and they get all worked up about the state of our culture, about things like same sex marriage, and they think that they are Christians because they are worked up over these things, but meanwhile they are ignoring their own life and their own sin.
  - What about our marriages and how we treat our spouse? What about our failure to be the parent ought to be? Shouldn't we be worked up about those things? Shouldn't we be worked up our own greed, lust, envy, and lying? Shouldn't we first be focused on the log in our own eye? Shouldn't we first be putting to death our own sin?
  - Now I am not suggesting that we should never speak up about the moral corruption in our society.
    - I am just, along with Jesus, saying that before we rail against same sex marriage or divorce, we should first make sure our marriages are what they ought to be. That husbands are loving their wife as Christ loved the church and wives are submitting to their husbands out of reverence for Christ.



- I am just suggesting that before we rail against how other people are raising their children, we look at ourselves and ask ourselves, am I living up to my vows to raise my children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?
- I'm just saying that before we rail against the corruption of politicians, or the greed of corporations are we living as becomes a follower of Christ? Are we loving others as Christ has loved us?
- The mark of the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life, showing you're a child of God is: Do you hate your sin more than you hate other people's sin?
  - To know you're a Christian, you have to know how bad you are, and hate it, and turn, and by the Spirit, make war on your sin. That is why the best assurance of our faith is that we are working on killing our own sin.
  - On the other hand, if you love your sin, have no intention of making war on it, you shouldn't have any assurance.
- Now the question is how does the Spirit lead a person to make war on their own sin? Before I tell you what it is, let me tell you what it is not. The Holy Spirit may convict you of sin, but it will never simply tell you to try harder not to sin. So, it is not the Spirit of trying harder that leads you to put to death the deeds of the flesh.
  - It is the Spirit of adoption that leads you into war against sin. How? By showing the superior worth of the Father's love for you.
- The Spirit leads us to make war on our sin by leading us deeper and deeper into the Father's love. The more we love the Father, the more we will hate our sin. Because the Father hates our sin. This is what Paul is teaching us here.
  - Notice the interconnection of the Spirit leading us to kill sin in verse 14 and also leading us to cry "Abba! Father!" in verse 15.
- Think what God's adoption of you means for your life. You are forever His, and no one and nothing can ever snatch you from His hand or separate you from His love. Why? Because adoption is final.

**2 Corinthians 1:21-22** Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

- The word sealed refers to the way a king would mark his correspondence as being official. If something bore the king's seal, then it belonged to the king. As a child of God, you belong to God and the proof of that is the Holy Spirit. He is the seal of your adoption as a child of God. The Holy Spirit is a pledge that proves you belong to the Father and that one day the Father will bring you to His house to dwell forever.
- In one sense, it is the judge's decree make the adoption happen, but what sets the adoption into motion is a far more powerful force than even a judge's decree. It is the sacrificial giving love of willing parents that makes the adoption happen.
  - No one forces the parents to love the child, they just decide to set their affection upon her. In fact, the child is not always loveable. Orphaned

children often don't know what love is until they come into their new parent's home.

- Don't you see the same is true with us and God? When we were dead in our sins, God made us alive.
- He didn't make us alive because we were so loveable. He made us alive because He loved us.

**1 John 1: 9 – 10** In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

- Sometimes when you have a biological child the decision to love that child isn't made until after the fact. In other words, you don't say to one another, "Let's have a child we can love." It just kind of happens. It is only after it happens that you decide to love the child. The child is just so cute and cuddly, and the hormones kick in and you love.
- But with adoption the decision to love is made before you have the child, before you adopt. That's how we become children of God. Before the foundation of the world, before we had done a thing, God loved us, and chose us to be His children.

**Ephesians 1: 3 – 5** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

- In love he predestined us for adoption. I know people don't like the doctrine of predestination or election, but here it is, and just think how loved these verses tell you that you are. Before the foundation of the world, before you had done a thing, God chose you, to be adopted into His family and be his forever, and then He moved heaven and earth to make it happen.

"Adoption is one of the most profound realities in the universe. I say 'universe' and not 'world' because adoption goes beyond the world. It is greater than the world and before the world in the plan of God, and it will outlast the world as we know it. Indeed, it is greater than the universe and is rooted in God's own nature." John Piper

- This reality of adoption is a massive, firm, legal reality, but it is also a deep, strong, full-hearted emotional reality that is sealed and confirmed by the Spirit of adoption that God places in our hearts.
  - And what does the Spirit of adoption do in our hearts? First, it reminds us of God's fatherly love for us—leading us ever deeper into that love.

**Romans 5: 5** God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.



- And second, in response to the Father's love for us, the Spirit awakens child-like affections in our hearts. So, we no longer live as slaves to sin and fear but as beloved children.
- The work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to change our slavish fears toward God into confident, happy, peaceful affection for God as our father.
  - You can see this child like affection in the language Paul uses in verse 15.

**Romans 8: 15** you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

- The reason Paul uses the word "cry", and the Aramaic word "Abba" is because both of them point to deep, affectionate, personal, authentic experience of God's fatherly love.
  - He didn't say that the testimony of the Spirit was that we affirm doctrinally that God is father. The devil knows that doctrine. Doctrine as important as it is, doesn't make children. The testimony of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, that we are God's beloved children, doesn't cause us to make a mere statement of faith. It causes us to cry out: "Abba! Father!"
- We need to know the original language here. "Abba" was an Aramaic term which is best translated "Daddy." It is a term of the greatest intimacy.
  - And here Paul doesn't just say that we say the name. No, we cry it out. In fact, the Greek word that Paul used implies a loud cry. So, in other words, a cry of deep emotion. Why did Paul say it that way?
- The Spirit reminds us of who God is to us. He is our loving Father. The Spirit reminds us of who we are to God. His beloved children. So loved that God chose us for adoption before the foundation of the world, and then gave his son to make us His own.
- The more we realize how great God's love is for us, and how much He delights in us, the more we will love Him and delight in Him, and the more we love and delight in God, the more we will hate our sin, and the more we hate our sin, the more sin will be killed in our life, and the more we see sin being killed in our lives, the more convinced we will be that we truly, eternally, belong to God. But it all starts with the Spirit leading us deeper and deeper into God's love causing us to cry out Abba, Father!
  - The Spirit does not lead by stirring up slavish fear. He leads by stirring up family affection. He does not get you to kill sin by making you a slave who acts out of fear. But by making you a son who acts out of faith and affection, and a desire to please their father.
  - If you want to know that you are a child of God, you don't wait for the Holy Spirit to whisper in your ear to tell you what to do or not to do. Put your ear to the gospel and your eye to the cross of Christ and you pray that the Holy Spirit would enable you to see it and savor it for what it really is.

**Romans 5:8** God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.