

Sons And Heirs

Romans 8:14-17

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Follow with me as I read Romans 8:14-17.

Paul say, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul makes the statement that “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” In Romans 8, we’re learning about the new creation and the fact that we are “in Christ Jesus.” In Romans 8:1-4, we have a new position. Verse 1 says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” So in Christ, we have no condemnation. In verse 5-13, we saw that we have a new life. And this new life is the life of the Spirit. Over and over Paul mentions the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Verse 13 says, “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.” So we have a new position, and we have a new life.

Today we move to a third new thing, and that is a new relationship, verses 14-17. This is our text today. We are now sons and heirs, adopted into God’s family. As a believer, you were born again into the family of God. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3 that “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” We’re pretty familiar with the concept of being born again into God’s family, and through that, we get new life.

But another description for our salvation is “adoption.” We are adopted into God’s family, which gives us a new standing. Now don’t get confused; we’re not only born again into God’s family—regenerated, so we’re given new life, so we get God’s new nature—but we’re also adopted. These are descriptive terms, and they’re not the only terms that the Bible uses to describe what it means to be a Christian or to be saved.

So if someone asks you, “Are you a Christian?” say, “I’m born again, I’ve been adopted, my name is written down, I’m a child of the King, I belong to Jesus Christ.” So these are descriptive terms to help us understand what it means to be “in Christ” and to have a standing in Him as a son or daughter.

Now the key theme in verses 14-17 is sonship and heirship. By “sonship,” we don’t mean only the men. “Sonship” means “adult children.” The word “son” there is translated “huios” or “adult children of legal age.” Thus, they are able to enjoy the blessings and benefits of being a true child of God. So we’ve been born into God’s family—given new life—we’ve been adopted into God’s family—we have new rights and privileges and a new standing. We’re sons and

daughters and “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.” This relation to God as sons and heirs implies a trust and intimacy. God becomes our Father.

In this passage, Paul gives us three blessings from the Holy Spirit that bring the true believer blessed assurance. This is so important. There is a lot of doctrine in these verses, but I’ve tried to condense it into these three statements of the work of the Holy Spirit bringing assurance to the life of the believer.

The first blessing is in verse 14: The Holy Spirit leads us. Paul say, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God...” In the Greek, “led by” is in the present tense. So literally it would be translated “being led by.” So those who are “being led by the Spirit of God...are...”—not “maybe” nor “might be” nor “hope to be”; there’s the assurance—“...sons...”—or huioi or sons and daughters—“...of God.” They have a standing of full, adult children. Legally, they are to inherit all the blessings that come to us from God. So all Christians are being led by the Spirit.

It’s important that you understand in verse 14 that if you are being led by the Spirit, you’re a son of God. If you are a son of God, you are being led by the Spirit. They’re both the same; they’re in one package. If you’re being led by the Spirit, you’re God’s child. If you’re God’s child, you are being led by the Spirit.

He is not talking about super saints or a deeper life or some elite group that are “led by the Spirit.” We’ve got the led by the Spirit and the not led by the Spirit. I can’t tell you how important this is to understand. When you read verse 14, you might dismiss yourself and say, “Oh well, I’m not one of those ‘led by the Spirit’ Christians.” If you are a Christian, you are led by the Spirit. Every Christian is being led by the Spirit. So don’t feel inferior. Don’t feel second class. “I’m not in the deeper-life club. I don’t know these things.” God’s Spirit is in your life, and He is providentially, lovingly, mercifully leading you.

Now let me explain that by breaking it down. What does it mean to be “led by the Spirit”? Number one, it means the Spirit renews our minds. I’ll never forget when I first got saved and became a Christian, I began to read the Bible with new eyes. You begin to say, “This is awesome! God speaks!” It becomes new and fresh. Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The best way for your mind to be renewed, for the Spirit to lead you, is to have the mind of the Word of God. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to transform our minds.

The second way the Spirit leads us is by stirring our hearts. So He renews our minds and stirs our hearts. To do what? To pray, praise and proclaim. So you get saved and all of a sudden you say, “Wow! The Bible’s amazing! God speaks to me through His Word.” If you aren’t getting anything from the Bible, you question whether or not you have the Holy Spirit. Then when you get saved, it’s “Wow! Isn’t God amazing!” You start praying and talking to God. We’re going to see in verse 15 that we cry, “Abba, Father” as we call to our Father in heaven.

Then you start singing and praising the Lord. I grew up in church my whole life. It wasn’t until I

was born again that I really started to praise the Lord. I just kind of sat there in church checking it out. But the minute the Spirit comes into your heart, He starts to pluck the strings of your heart. You start singing to the Lord. I didn't say you sing well. Maybe you bark to the Lord or groan to the Lord; I don't know. But you sing to the Lord.

Then you're proclaiming. I started telling other people about Jesus.

I'm praying, I'm praising the Lord, I'm singing songs, because the Spirit of God is now in my heart. So He renews my mind, He stirs my heart.

And thirdly, the Spirit directs our wills. That's how the Spirit leads us. How does He direct our wills? To live in holiness. The Holy Spirit comes into your heart, and if you're doing things that are unholy, He is grieved and He is quenched. He convicts you. If you are a Christian and you step out of line, the Holy Spirit convicts you and shows you your sin. So the Holy Spirit is renewing our hearts, our minds and our wills are now yielded to Him.

In Philippians 2:12, Paul says we are to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God Who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." So the Holy Spirit leads us for God's glory.

Now if God's Spirit is leading you, it is an assurance that you are a son or daughter of God, verse 14. What does Paul mean by "sons of God"? I want to explain more about that. The word "sons" there is the Greek word "huios." It means a child mature enough to take on family privileges and responsibilities. In verse 16, we have the word "children." This is a different Greek word. It's the word "technē," which means "born ones." So Paul is teaching that we are the adult sons and daughters and are also the children of God; we've been born by His Spirit.

When a baby is born, it doesn't talk yet. Could you imagine being in the delivery room, the baby is born and maybe one minute after he says, "Hey, Dad and Mom. What's up? Good to see you. What's happening? Let's go home." You'd freak out. It takes time for that baby to develop. My wife and I were in the kitchen yesterday with our youngest grandson, Hans, on the phone. Hans is just starting to talk, and on the phone he said, "Papa." Awesome! Kristy grabbed the phone and said, "Say Nana." No; he said "Papa." I love it when the grandkids come running into my study and say, "Papa! Papa!" So when we become children of God, our heart's cry is "Abba." We're going to study that in verse 15.

So we become children, but we don't learn to communicate, to grow right away. We can't drive a car right away. Once we get legal age, we can. I remember that the day I turned 16, I got my driver's license. Scary. I'm pulling out of the DMV, and I ran into a post. I tore up the side of my dad's car. He said, "Just keep going, or they'll take your license away." I'll never forget that. "I haven't even gotten out of the parking lot at the DMV and I smash my dad's car!"

But I remember later being in the car (when my dad gave me the keys), I'm driving and there are no adults with me. Wow! Remember that feeling? Freedom! My friends and I are actually driving in a car with no adults, and we can actually yell and scream and get crazy and do

whatever we want. This is amazing. So you have to get older to do this. And sometimes you may get an inheritance, but you have to be 18 years old or legal age to get your inheritance.

So the principle is that when you're born into God's family, you don't have to grow and mature to enjoy the benefits of being God's child. You're immediately adopted, as well. Your place as an adult child is to enjoy the benefits and the blessings of talking to God, of being led by God, of being taught by God and of being used by God. The benefits and blessings are yours as a child of God. So we are sons being led by the Spirit.

The second blessing of the Holy Spirit is that the Holy Spirit frees us. He leads us and now He frees us. Verse 15 says, "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption..."—or "the Holy Spirit"—"...by whom we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" We're not only being led by the Spirit, but we're being loved by the Father. I love that.

There are three facts about the Spirit freeing us. Notice in verse 15 that we have not received "the spirit of bondage again to fear." What does that mean? It means that we are no longer slaves but sons. We're no longer under the bondage of the old law with its condemnation and sin and death. We have a new liberty; we're freed. We've been given a new nature. We are the children of God, and we walk in the liberty whereby Christ has made us free. There is no longer any bondage or fear.

Notice secondly in verse 15 that we have received the Spirit of adoption. This is in the passage where Paul clearly teaches the doctrine of adoption. Almost every verse—actually verses 14-17, make reference to "son," "children" or "heirs," something that has to do with our relationship of being a child of God. He says we've been adopted. So we haven't received "the spirit of bondage again to fear—and we lived in fear before we were saved—but now we're sons and daughters; we've "received the Spirit of adoption." Notice what happens when we're adopted: we cry "Abba, Father."

The word "adoption" is only used by Paul in the New Testament. Adoption wasn't known in the Old Testament. It wasn't Jewish in its origin. It was Roman in its origin. The Roman culture put a high priority on adoption. If you were a wealthy landowner and didn't have any children, you would adopt, they would be your legal children and you would give them your inheritance. If you had a son who wasn't worthy of getting your inheritance, you would adopt another son who was worthy of that inheritance. That son was just as legal as your biological child. So adoption was a glorious thing in the Roman culture. Paul is bringing it over from that culture.

It is interesting, though, that in the Old Testament, Moses was an adopted child. Jochebed had to give Moses to Bithiah to raise as her son. He was adopted by the family of pharaoh. Ester was adopted by Mordecai and raised by him. Mephibosheth, who was the crippled son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was adopted into the home of King David, and he sat at his table and ate of his goodness. It's interesting that Saul was an enemy of David, and when we're adopted like Mephibosheth, we are adopted as enemies of God but become children of God. Mephibosheth was crippled in his legs, and we're crippled and can't walk in the ways of God.

Mephibosheth sat at David's table and ate of the goodness of the king. And we're adopted into God's family and enjoy the blessings from God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Adoption signified being granted the full rights and privileges and status of sonship into the family which one does not belong by nature. So when you become a Christian, you are regenerated; God is the Creator, and in His power He gives you new life. When you become a Christian, you are justified; God is the judge who actually declares you righteous. And when you are adopted, God is your loving Father.

There is something sweet about adoption. When you have biological children, which are a blessing, you don't get to pick them. Some of you say, "Amen. Preach it brother." You don't get to take them back to the hospital and say, "I'd like to exchange this one." You just get whatever comes. Praise the Lord for that. But when you are adopting, you get to pick. As an adoptee, you're specially chosen. You're taken into the family and have every right as a child in that family. You become heirs and joint-heirs with those other children in that family. Such is the case with Christians.

Notice, thirdly, in verse 15 that we cry "Abba, Father." The word "abba" is Aramaic and speaks of the intimate form of the word "father." Or we would use "daddy" or "papa." When you become a Christian, we have this intimate child-father relationship, so you cry "Daddy" or "Papa."

Jesus actually introduced this term. When Jesus spoke, He actually said the word "Abba." He taught us the Lord's Prayer, that we're all so familiar with. "Our Father" is "Our Abba in heaven, hallowed be Your name." When He was in the garden of Gethsemane, was praying in agony and sweating drops of blood, He said, "Abba, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Jesus, in Matthew 6:25, said, "Do not worry...what you will eat or what you will drink...what you will put on." Those are the things the non-Christian world, the heathen world has to worry about. But your Abba knows what you need, and He'll take care of you. He'll provide for you. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

I was blessed to have a loving earthy father. Some of us aren't privileged with that. Maybe you never even knew your biological father. But if you are a child of God, you have an Abba in heaven, Who loves you and cares about you and has promised to never leave you nor forsake you and has promised to take care of you. He loves you more than anyone ever could.

So when you get saved, you're led by the Spirit; you can look back over your life and see how God led you and guided you. I think of Psalm 23 where David said, "He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me." Also, God speaks to me and tells me that I am His child. And I speak to Him and say, "Abba, Father" in prayer. God, Who is infinitely high, is also intimately near. It's an amazing thing. So we're free to rest in God's abba love.

Here's the third and last point I want to make about what the Holy Spirit does for us. Not only does the Spirit lead us and frees us, but the Spirit speaks to us. Verse 16 says that the Holy Spirit assures us. My King James Bible says, "The Spirit Himself," which is unfortunate, because the Holy Spirit is not an "it." The Holy Spirit is a "He." You ask, "Well, why does it say 'it' then?" Because in translating grammatically, the word "spirit" is neuter, so they translated the word as "it." But the truth is that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. Jesus used personal pronouns when speaking of the Holy Spirit. He said, "He shall guide you," "He shall lead you," "He will show you all things," "He will come to you."

So the verse says, "The Spirit Himself bears witness..."—there's His work—"...with our spirit that we are children of God." Now Jesus moves from the word "huios" or "sons" to the word "techne," which means "born ones." We're born children of God.

This is a glorious truth; that the Holy Spirit is speaking to us and assuring us. What does the Holy Spirit do? He bears witness with our spirit, verse 16, "that we are children of God." The Spirit of God gives us blessed assurance.

I want to emphasize how important this is. I'm always amazed how many people come up to me and say, "I can believe for other people, but I have a hard time believing for myself. I know other Christians are going to heaven, but I don't know if I'll go to heaven." That's not what God wants you to think. God wants you to have blessed assurance. He wants you to know that your sins have been forgiven and that when you die, you'll go to heaven.

But you can actually have heaven on earth right now. Someone said, "A little faith will get your soul to heaven; a lot of faith will bring heaven to your soul." How glorious is that! There's no reason for anyone to not have assurance. But maybe you lack assurance because you're not saved. Maybe you haven't been born again. If that's the case, you need to get saved today. You need to trust Jesus Christ and be forgiven of your sins.

But if you are a child of God, nothing could be worse than to go through life biting your nails, freaking out, fretting, worrying about whether or not you're forgiven. "I don't think I've really been forgiven. I don't think I'm going to heaven. I don't think God has really accepted me as His child." God wants you to have blessed assurance. The Bible says, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."

Years ago I learned an important lesson about the assurance of salvation. It lies in three areas, and I want to share them with you.

How do we know that we are saved? Number one, the Word of God the Father. It's as simple as believing the Bible. He said it, I believe it and that settles it. God, in His Word, said that He has given us eternal life, and we believe that.

The second assurance of salvation is the work of God the Son. It's as simple as John 3:16: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him

will not perish but have everlasting life.” So you believe that?

The third assurance of salvation is in our text. It is the witness of God the Holy Spirit. How does the Holy Spirit witness to us? Verse 14 says that He leads us. If you look back at your life, you can say, “God’s never left me. He’s always been with me.” In my darkest, deepest moments, when I’m going through the valley, God’s always been there. I sense His presence.

The Holy Spirit also witnesses to us by putting a prayer in our hearts whereby we cry, “Abba, Father,” verse 15. The Holy Spirit also speaks to us, verse 16. It’s the inner witness of the Holy Spirit.

I realize that this last assurance is the subjective part. That’s why the assurance starts with the Word of God the Father and the work of God the Son. Because there are times when I don’t feel saved. Some of you don’t feel saved, so you don’t believe you’re saved. But I know I’m saved, because God says so in His Word. Jesus died for me on the Cross. And then it’s blessed assurance when the Holy Spirit comes to my heart and assures me that I am His child. What a blessing that is!

My question to you is, do you have this witness today? As you sit here reading this and reading His Word, do you have absolute assurance that when you die, you’re going to go to heaven? If not, why not? God sent his Son to die on the Cross for your sins. If you will reach out your hand by faith and trust in Jesus Christ, your sins can all be forgiven. You can be given new life, you can be justified and you can be adopted into God’s family. What a glorious truth that is! Trust in Jesus now.

There is one last verse of this text, verse 17, and in this verse Paul’s not giving us another work of the Spirit to bring assurance; he’s telling us this is the benefit and the result of that assurance. The fact that the Spirit leads us, is freeing us and is assuring us means that we’re children of God. Then there are three results. Number one, then we’re heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Number two, we will suffer with Him. Number three, we will be glorified together with Him. Those are the benefits. “Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

Notice in these three statements in verse 17, we become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. All God’s children will inherit the new heaven and the new earth. This world is not your home. You’re just passin’ through. “Your treasures are laid up beyond the blue,” to quote a familiar song. That should excite you. You’re not just living for your house and your car and your bank account. You’re not just living for the things that are seen but for the things that are unseen; they’re eternal. When the outlook is bad, try the uplook. That’s what this verse is saying.

You become an heir. You may not be set up to get some earthly inheritance and be set for life. But you’re a child of the King. You’re heir to the throne. You’re heir to all that God owns.

We drove to Monterey to see our kids last weekend. What a beautiful place that is—the coast,

the mountains. It doesn't really remind you of Menifee that much. We went through pasture lands, farms and fields and hills. As we were driving, I thought, I'm a child of the King. That cattle on those hills are my Dad's. They're my Papa's. This beautiful coast with the waves crashing over the rocks belongs to my Papa. I'm going to inherit all. We used to sing,

"A tent or a cottage, why should I care.

He's building a palace for me over there.

Rubies and diamonds, emeralds and gold.

I'm a child of the King. I have riches untold."

So we're heirs of God. We're going to inherit all things. In the Bible Jesus says, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." So we'll inherit all things.

And we're joint heirs with Christ. If you're a legal child in a family, you have a legal standing with other children, or joint-heirs, and so are we in God's family; we're joint-heirs with our big brother, Jesus.

Notice also that as God's sons and daughters, it means being identified with Him by suffering with Him. Now we like the inheritance part, but not the suffering part. But Jesus actually said that if you follow Him, you have to pick up your cross and die to yourself. Being a disciple, a child of God, means that sometimes you are suffering in this world. This is the mark of a true Christian. If you are living righteously, you will suffer.

The third result of the assurance is that we will be glorified together. That happens when our big brother, Jesus Christ, comes back in the Second Coming. And we come back with Him in power and in glory. We will become what the Bible calls "the manifest sons of God." We will inherit all things, and we will reign with Him for a thousand years. Then there will be "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

I pray that the truths of this text will sink down deep in your heart.

Verse 17 introduces us to the next section of Romans 8, which is a new hope. It's my favorite section of Romans 8. Take a sneak preview of verse 18. Paul says, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." So we will share in His glory.

When Jesus prayed in John 17, His great high priestly prayer, He said, "Father, I will that those Whom Thou hast given Me will be with Me, that they may behold My glory, the glory I had with You before the world was."

If you're a Christian, a true child of God, you're being led by the Spirit. If you're a Christian, a

true child of God, the Holy Spirit is reassuring you and leading you and comforting you. What begins with God's grace is going to end in glory.