

Romans (8:15-17)

The Spirit of Sonship

Part 32 – April 10, 2005

SONS OF GOD

Last week, we saw what it means to battle sin “by the Spirit”. The “Sword of the Spirit” is the Word of God; and he uses it to empower us to wage war, by instructing and illuminating the supremacy of God’s promises over whatever sin has to offer.

- We can not kill sinful acts by sheer will-power alone.
- We sever the root of sin by seeing Christ as superior.

[And we closed on verse 14] ... because those who are led by the Spirit of God are **sons of God**. - Romans 8:14 NIV

It’s interesting. We’re eight chapters into Romans, and this is the first time Paul has called us “sons” or “children” of God. It’s dangerous to see God as Father *before* Christ as Savior. Many false religions and New Age teachings place their emphasis on God as Father with *no* mention of Christ as Savior.

- We must grasp how desperately contaminated we are by sin.
- We must identify how thoroughly covered we are by Christ.

This is how we come to comprehend the passionate, personal plentiful, practical love of God-the-Father to us-his-children. Paul’s words are now thick and heavy and full of love and hope.

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 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. – Romans 8:15-17 NIV

Paul contrasts two key words: “slave” and “sonship”. The term “sonship” is synonymous with “adoption”. And, if you’ve adopted a child, you know that it is both a firm legal reality, as well as a full-hearted emotional reality. Paul calls the Holy Spirit the “Spirit of sonship” (adoption) because these are the two realities he makes real to us:

1. First, the solid legal reality through Christ as my Savior.
2. Then, the unshakable emotional reality of God as my Father.

Q: How does Paul tell us the Holy Spirit accomplishes that?

A: By replacing the fear of a slave with the love of a son.

Imagine a king sending his son into the fields to work with and watch over his slaves. During the heat of the day, as the king's chariot approaches, the slaves begin to work harder and harder. But the son relaxes in the presence of his father.

A few weeks ago (Romans 8:1), Paul really hammered the point that there is NO CONDEMNATION for the true believer. And that's very true.

- The condemnation of a slave becomes the conviction of a son.

Q: Do you know how condemnation is different from conviction?

- Condemnation says: *I'm worthless and I can't measure up to God's standard.*
- Conviction says: *To be more like my Father, I need to do *this* or *that*.*

This is how to distinguish (discern) the whispers of conviction from the Spirit, and the whispers of condemnation from the accuser.

The Spirit doesn't lead us by stirring up slavish fear, but by stirring up family affection. This is why verse 14 says: Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

ABBA, FATHER

And by [the Spirit] we cry, "Abba, Father." - Romans 8:15b NIV

The Greek word, "cry" denotes impassioned shouting - like a child would do if they were lost. The Aramaic word, "Abba," is equivalent to our word, "Daddy." "Abba ... Father."

The Spirit works to awaken a deeply authentic, childlike experience of God's affectionate *daddy* love as well as his authoritative *fatherly* love.

Now, notice the word: "by". It is *by* the Spirit that we cry, "Abba, Father." This is interesting, because when Paul wrote to the Corinthians he said:

... no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. - 1 Corinthians 12:3 NIV

These are the two profound changes the Spirit produces in you:

1. An obedient submission to Jesus as Lord.
2. A child-like cry to God as Abba, Father.

This is demonstrative evidence that God's Holy Spirit is *in* you!

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. - Romans 8:16 NIV

This is *how* he testifies to us that we're God's children.

1. He leads us into battle against our sin and put to death all that does not exalt our Lord nor honor our Father.

2. He motivates us into battle with the heart-felt affection and conviction of sons and daughters.

Paul didn't say the testimony of the Spirit was an unemotional deduction of a logically affirmed doctrine. From my heart there arises, not a *statement*, but a *cry*!

OUR INHERITANCE

Now Paul points out an obvious, but spectacular benefit of being officially adopted by God himself.

Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ ... - Romans 8:17a NIV

Q: Are you aware of what your inheritance will be?

A: Everlasting life and all the glory it contains.

There are (at least) three aspects to what god's heirs inherit:



1. God's **property** (a place to belong forever!)

Q: Remember when Jesus said: "The meek will inherit the earth"? (*Mat. 5:5*)
He meant it, literally.

The Apostle John caught a glimpse of it and recorded it:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth ... And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them." - Revelation 21:1-3 NIV



2. God's **person** (inexhaustible love & security!)

The first great tragedy of life is discovering that our mom and dad are both faulty and frail.

In God, that deep desire for parents who make no mistakes, who love unconditionally, and who live forever, is fully satisfied.



3. God's **perfection** (the ultimate extreme makeover!)

Our physical bodies are resurrected, redeemed, and replaced; and our moral imperfections are removed.

Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. -
Matthew 13:43 NIV

No matter how mangled, deformed, injured, or abused ... you will be made so radiant, resilient, and remarkable, that when others look at you, they will see the grandeur of the glory of God.

You know how you can marvel at a stunning sunset and yet have your attention drawn to God *because* of it's splendor? Just by looking at you, people will want to praise the Lord. How true is that of you right now?

This awaiting inheritance is a tangible hope that Paul wants each of us to have beyond what remains of life here on earth.

Q: Do you know why? Do you know what this hope does for us now?

- It decreases the stress and strain of sufferings.
- It increases our resistance to harmful pleasures.

Imagine driving down the coast to inherit a large, lavish estate. But just a mile before you get to its gates, your worn out, beat up, old Buick Roadmaster breaks down. As you walk that last mile of coastline, do you enjoy the scenery and anticipate your newfound wealth? Or ring your hands and obsess & complain about your broken Buick?

Q: Do you have a tangible *hope* beyond your mortal life that makes sin less tempting and suffering more manageable?

Because there is suffering; it's a condition of our inheritance.

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. – Romans 8:17 NIV

Q: But what kind of suffering? Battling sin? Enduring disaster? Facing persecution? Receiving God's discipline?

A: Yes! *Any* hardship or adversity we meet on the road to heaven, and endure by trusting in Jesus as Lord, and God as Father.

Q: And do you know why suffering is necessary?

[Because] ... suffering produces perseverance ... – Romans 5:3 NIV

Perseverance of what? Faith. How? By knocking the props of self-reliance out from under us, and forcing us to rely & depend more and more on God.

Character-building battles, courage-increasing persecution, and course-correcting discipline *mercifully* pull our attention from the comforts, securities, & pleasures of this world and focus it onto the next.

Life may seem like a battle with a broken Buick at times, but it is ultimately a scenic journey on our way to receive a spectacular inheritance from our loving Father.