

# The Spirit of Adoption

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[ 0 : 00 ] Throughout this first half of Romans chapter 8, we have really tried to track with the Apostle Paul as he talks to us about the work of the Holy Spirit.

What is the Holy Spirit actually doing in our lives if we are followers of Christ? What has He done and what is He continuing to do? And last week we arrived at what I think is a crucial, very applicable, important verse for us as we live in this fallen world.

In verse 13 we saw that the Apostle Paul says that 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.

Paul says that you must be about the business of killing sin. You must be about the business of waging war on your own fallen nature and on all the temptations that would come against you in this world.

But he also says, as we saw last week, that the only effective means for combating sin is the power of the Holy Spirit. He says, if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

[ 1 : 22 ] So that one of the works of the Spirit is to empower and enable us to fight against temptation and sin in our lives.

And if you recall last week I told you I suggested at least three ways in which the Holy Spirit empowers us, enables us to fight against sin.

Three things that we actually have to do in order to use the power of the Spirit to fight against sin. And one of those we drew from Ephesians chapter 6 where the Word of God, the Scriptures are called the sword of the Spirit.

And so I just made mention of the fact that you've got to know the Bible, you've got to be keyed in to the Bible. And then I also mentioned that we need the church, we need fellow believers, we need both the church in a broad sense, we need all of us who gather together every week and who are in communion with one another, but we also need within the church, we need smaller groups of accountability, close friends that will talk to us and encourage us and pray for us and hold us accountable.

And that is a unique work of the Spirit as He draws people together and uses those bonds that He forms between us to help us to fight against sin. But the third thing that I mentioned last week, which is drawn actually from the text of Romans chapter 8 and partially from the passage we're looking at this morning, is that I said that you need to have your eyes fixed on your future, that you need to behold the promises of God, not just the Word of God in a general sense, but you need to know the promises of God and you need to cling to those promises when sin and temptation come your way.

[ 3 : 00 ] And in Romans chapter 8, Paul shows us, he gives us a glimpse of what our future holds. He promises us a great and glorious future.

In fact, you can see it in the passage that we're looking at this morning, where in verse 17 he tells us that if we are children, then we are also heirs. Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

That term glorified or glory is a key term throughout Romans 8 for helping us to grasp what it is that awaits us. It is a reality that is so great, it is a reality that is so far beyond our comprehension, that the best word that we can use to describe it is that it is glorious, that we ourselves will be glorified, that we will experience and receive glory in the presence of Jesus.

There is held out for us a future that far outweighs in pleasures, in ways of satisfying us, than anything this world has to offer.

And if you can fix your eyes on that future, then you can find a powerful, powerful tool through the power of the Spirit to use to fight against sin and temptation. Take a look at some of the things that

Paul continues to say throughout the passage.

[ 4 : 21 ] He says in verse 18, I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. The glory that awaits us far outweighs all of the suffering present in the world.

Now Paul was not thinking mainly of the small types of suffering that we generally experience. He wasn't just talking about minor suffering. Paul was well acquainted with deep suffering, his own pain and anguish, being imprisoned, being beaten, being shipwrecked multiple times.

Paul was aware of the depths of suffering that we can encounter in this world. And Paul says, against the greatest depths of human suffering, they do not compare to the glory that is to be revealed to us in the future.

He says that in verse 21, that all of creation, creation itself, will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

And then further down in Romans 8 and verse 30, he says that ultimately we have been justified in order that we might be someday glorified. So this term glory or glorification or glorified is the best term that Paul can use to help us come to grips with the great reality that awaits us.

[ 5 : 43 ] And we have to fix our eyes on that reality at times in order to deal with the present and the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Of course, we are not overly given to considering the future.

We just don't think about it all that often. We sort of live in the now most of the time. We just live in the moment most of the time. And yet, the Bible would call us to look beyond.

You know, we ask kids all the time, what do you want to be when you grow up? We don't ask adults anymore what they want to be. We just assume that they're being something. We don't worry about the future. The most future-oriented question we ever ask an adult is what do you want to do when you retire?

That's the most future-oriented type of question that we ever ask. We don't really dwell on the future. We just sort of focus on the present. And yet, Paul says we need to be aware of what awaits us.

In fact, he says that there's a great inheritance held up out for us in the future. Notice his language in verse 17. If we are children, then we are heirs.

[ 6 : 48 ] Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ. We are heirs with Christ. Heirs of what? Heirs of glory, of course.

Heirs of what? Heirs of all that Christ has earned in his life of perfect obedience. Heirs of eternal life because he will raise us from the dead and we will share in the life that Christ has.

Heirs of everlasting, ever-increasing pleasure in the presence of the Father. Heirs of, in fact, the entire world.

As Paul goes on to tell us throughout Romans 8, the world waits, the universe waits for its own transformation that will only happen when we are finally raised and transformed.

But we will inherit in that day, we will inherit the entire world. That's why Paul says in Romans chapter 4 that Abraham became an heir of the world.

[ 7 : 50 ] Not just the land of Israel. All of the land promises of the Old Testament were intended to point to something greater than that tiny sliver of land in the Middle East.

They were intended to point to the reality that God owns the world and someday his people will inherit the entire earth. Abraham knew that, became an heir of the world, and we through Christ become heirs of the world.

A new creation in which there's no sin, no pain, no death. And we are heirs of that world. We are joint heirs with Christ of a great, great inheritance.

That's the future that awaits us. And yet, we have to ask the question, and I think the question that this text this morning primarily addresses is, how do we become heirs?

How does that, how does that great hope become our hope rather than just something that we hear other people talk about or rather than simply words on a page? How does it belong to me?

[ 8 : 54 ] How can I really look forward to that? How can I feel and sense and know that that is my reality in the future? How can we know that? And that's what this paragraph is mainly aimed to teach us.

Notice the language, though, of heir. You know, of course, that an heir has to be, at least in the ancient world, an heir was a son. An heir was one who, by birth and by all legal rights, had a claim

upon what belonged to his father.

That was an heir. And here, Paul draws upon that language, and yet he does not say that we, by birth, are heirs. He does not say that we have an inherent right as people created in the image of God.

He does not say that we have an inherent right as human beings to be heirs of God and to receive from God all the blessings and promises that he holds out for the future. No, that's not the case at all.

He says that we must become heirs. We must become sons and children of God. Notice verse 14. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God, which implies that there are those who are not led by the Spirit of God, and therefore those who are not sons of God, not children of God.

[10:16] It is a great falsehood that has been spread, even at times by those who would claim to preach the Word of God. It is a great falsehood that has been spread that says that all human beings are God's children.

That is simply not true. All human beings are God's creations. All human beings are made in His image. We are held up to be higher than the rest of creation, but we are not as fallen creatures. We are not naturally God's children. We have no right and no claim to an inheritance from Him on our own. There are those not led by the Spirit, therefore there are those who are not sons and not heirs.

And the reality is that's all of us as we come into this world. We all come into the world partaking of the fallen nature of our father, Adam. We all come into the world dead in sins, dead in trespasses, with no claim upon God or His blessings or all the grace that He might bestow upon us.

And yet Paul tells us that there is a way in which we can become children of God. Verse 15, For you do 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.

[11:46] We can be adopted. We can become one of God's children. Not born God's children into the world merely because we're human beings, but there is the hope that there is a way that we might become the children of God.

Now how does that happen? Well, you could say on the one hand that it happens because God the Father adopts us. This is a thoroughly, what we would call a Trinitarian work. In other words, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all involved in the work of adoption.

And the work of the Father is clear. He's the one who actually adopts us. He is the Father. He is the one who brings us into His family. It is His inheritance that we receive.

We are heirs of God. And so God the Father is the one doing the adopting. But the Son has a role in this as well because it is only through faith in Jesus that we can become sons of the Father.

Jesus is the only one who is by nature a Son of God. And yet when we are united to Jesus by faith, we become His spiritual brothers and therefore we become the spiritual children of His Father.

[12:57] In fact, you can see this very clearly in Galatians. I want you to hold your place in Romans and turn over to Galatians chapter 4 where Paul speaks of the work of the Son in adoption.

In Galatians chapter 4, verse 4, Paul says, When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law.

Now here it is, verse 5 in the middle. So that we might receive adoption as sons. Christ has come to redeem us so that we might receive adoption as sons.

So it is through the work of Christ on the cross, bearing our sins in our place and our faith in Him that we can become sons of God.

Jesus is the one who does all that is necessary so that the Father might adopt us into His family. Or consider, for instance, one page over in most of your Bibles.

[13:58] In Ephesians chapter 1, we are told in verse 5 that God the Father predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ.

Our hope for becoming genuine children of God is a hope grounded in the work of Christ. And yet, if you'll notice in Romans chapter 8, verses 14 through 17, Paul does not focus upon that.

Paul does not go into detail about the role of the Father in adopting us. He simply says that the Father is the one to whom we call out and we are heirs of the Father. But he doesn't focus on the role of the Father. And surprisingly, Paul does not focus on the role of the Son in adoption here in Romans chapter 8.

No, Paul's focus here is upon the role of the Spirit in adoption. Notice verse 15 again. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery.

That's who we were. We were slaves. Paul says over and over in Romans 6, we were slaves of sin. We were enslaved. And because we were slaves of sin, we were also enslaved to fear.

[15:08] You've not been given a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. You see, before we come to faith in Christ, before the Spirit begins His work in us, we are slaves and we live under the fear of God's judgment and the condemnation that we deserve.

And even if we are not on the surface aware of that, as most people are not, there is still, Romans 1 tells us, there is still an innate knowledge of who God is and even an innate knowledge of the just punishment that those who deny Him deserve.

It's implanted in us as those made in His image. So that apart from the work of the Spirit, we remain slaves of sin and we remain all of our days in fear of the judgment that we rightly deserve.

But Paul says, the Holy Spirit has come to do a different kind of work in you. The Holy Spirit has not come to keep you in bondage so that you continue to fear in that kind of way.

No, the Holy Spirit has come so that you might be adopted. He has come as the Spirit of adoption. That is what He does.

[16:21] That is His work. He comes and He makes it so that we can be adopted. Now how does He do that precisely? There are two things I think we ought to note from Romans 8 about the work of the Spirit in our spiritual adoption.

The first is one that we have already seen a couple of weeks ago in Romans 8 even though we didn't address it under the terms of adoption. But if we become children of God the Father through faith in Jesus because we become Jesus' spiritual brothers, then we can then back up and ask the question, but how was it that I came to faith in Jesus?

And we answered that question a few weeks ago when we noticed that Paul contrasts those who are in the Spirit or walk by the Spirit with those who are in the flesh or walk by the flesh. So that if you just look up in Romans 8 a few verses to verse 7, you'll read this.

The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Now as we covered those verses, one of the things that we took note of was the reality that on our own we cannot, Paul says we're not able, we cannot obey God's law, nor can we please God in any way.

[17:39] So we do not naturally possess the ability to do anything pleasing to God, which would include the act of trusting in His Son. We don't have our own ability.

We don't possess that. We can't do that in our own strength and our own power. And it is uniquely the work of the Holy Spirit to change our hearts, to change us from the inside, who we are, so that we have new desires.

Desires for Christ. And so faith springs in us from the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit. And we said that that is what we call being born again or regeneration.

So that we would say that in one sense, the Spirit's role in our adoption is that He is the one who infuses life into our hearts so that we trust in Jesus and there through faith in Jesus become sons of the Father.

So that is a reality. The Holy Spirit is absolutely essential. We could not become sons of God because we could not trust in Jesus if it were not for the work of the Holy Spirit in causing us to be born again and therefore to believe in Jesus.

[18:50] So the Spirit has a foundational role in our adoption. We would never do the thing that is necessary for our adoption if it were not for the work of the Holy Spirit.

But there's more than that. And I'm so glad that there is more than that in this text. Because when we begin to think about those theological truths and those theological statements that are grand and glorious realities, sometimes we can focus merely on the abstract truth.

We can focus merely on the theological truths that are stated and we never begin to focus on the realities that those truths point toward and represent.

And yet, Paul's going to tell us that the Holy Spirit is not just doing things that we can celebrate and say, that's true, that's a good thing, I'm glad He did that. No, the Holy Spirit is actually doing something presently in the hearts of those who belong to Christ.

I want you to look very closely at verses 15 and 16. The Spirit of adoption is the one by whom we cry, Abba, Father. And the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. [ 20 : 09 ] How do you know that you are a child of God? How do you know it? How do you sense it? How do you feel it? How do you experience the joy to be had with knowing that you are an heir of God?

How does that happen? It is another internal work of the Holy Spirit. Because you see, the Holy Spirit does an initial work of causing us to be born again, but then when we trust in Christ as a result of our new birth, then the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us.

And one of the things that the Spirit does is He speaks to our hearts in a miraculous way. He makes us sense and feel and know that we are really and genuinely children of God and if children, then heirs.

This is a reason for rejoicing. Theology and these great things like adoption and redemption and regeneration, those types of things are not merely about truths to affirm.

They are wonderful realities to be cherished and to be beheld. And because of our adoption through the work of the Spirit, we can sense and know and feel and rejoice in our adoption.

[ 21 : 15 ] To know that we are sons of God and not in a generic sense. We are sons of God through Christ. So that when Paul says that we can now cry out, Abba, Father.

That's not a misprint in your translation. They didn't forget to translate the word Abba. Because the New Testament was originally written in Greek.

It's been translated into English, thankfully for us. But this word is not a Greek word. In fact, it is an Aramaic word. Paul wrote this word when he was writing in Greek.

He wrote it in Aramaic. And so when we translate it in English, we keep it in Aramaic. And what is significant about this particular word is that this is a word drawn from Jesus himself.

This is a term that Jesus himself used as he addressed God as his Father. See, we've become so accustomed to reading through the Gospels and seeing Jesus pray to God as his Father that we don't even think twice about it.

[ 22 : 18 ] But that was revolutionary. That was unheard of in Jesus' day. The people of Israel conceived of the nation itself as being in a unique sense the Son of God, but they did not think of themselves as individuals, as being able to call upon God as Father.

That was far too intimate a terminology. That was far too personal. I mean, you're talking about the Jewish people who eventually arrived at the point where they wouldn't even pronounce the name of God, Yahweh, as they read their Bibles.

They would pronounce another word in its place. So they're not given over to a sense of intimacy. And when Jesus comes along and begins to address God as his Father in their own language as Abba, that was off-putting.

That was strange to them. And yet it was Jesus' way of showing his disciples that he had a unique relationship with God the Father. In fact, it's when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 14, that we read of Jesus crying out, Abba, Father.

This is a term that only one who is really and genuinely a child would use toward someone else. It's the only time when you would use it.

[ 23 : 37 ] It was shocking that Jesus would use it in his original context. But now Paul says, we, through the work of the Spirit in our hearts, we can have such an intimate relationship with the Father that we can cry, Abba, Father.

He is our Father in a real sense now. We have been adopted into his family. In the Roman world, when a child was adopted, they became legally considered by Roman law, they became as much a son, as much a child, as the naturally born children of that parent.

They got an equal share in the inheritance as the rest of the children. They could not legally, by anyone, not anyone in the family or outside of the family, they could not legally be treated as anything other than a real child of the parents that had adopted them.

That's a reality that I think Paul is reflecting. As he writes to these Roman, predominantly Gentile Christians in the city of Rome, he's not only drawing upon the teachings of Christ as Christ cried out, Abba, Father, but he's also drawing upon this common cultural understanding of what adoption meant in their world.

And he's saying that because of what the Spirit has done in you and continues to do in you, God is now your Father. And that cannot be changed.

[ 25 : 14 ] He is your Father and you are a legitimate heir of all that is His and all that He holds out for His children.

This is good news. This is a truth to be cherished and rejoiced in. And it is uniquely the work of the Holy Spirit to help us to rejoice, to help us to cherish this truth.

That's why He bears witness to our spirits. Yes, there are objective truths that we can point to that can help us to gain a sense of security for the future.

So we read that because Christ was raised, we will be raised. That's an objective reality. He really was raised. That was a historical event that happened and because of that we have the hope of our own resurrection. But there are more than objective truths.

There is the inward sense and feeling. There is the subjective feeling put there by the Spirit so that we might know that we are children.

[ 26 : 19 ] You see, in our world today, parents often adopt kids. And yet we know that there is a time period between the legal adoption, between the moment when this child legally becomes a child of an adult, a particular adult.

We know that there is a period generally between the moment when they legally become a child and the time when they sense and feel and know that this is their parent. It's a time between.

But for us, the Spirit comes to immediately dwell within us when we trust in Christ. And from the moment of our adoption on, the Spirit bears witness with our spirit and moves us to cry out, Abba, Father.

It's a great reality held out before us. And we should cherish it and rejoice in it. And we should find our hearts stirred by it.

Let's pray.