

Subject: *Living as God's Children*

Scripture: *Romans 8:12-17*

Being a child of God changes everything about your life, both now and forever. Paul is fond of using the word “therefore” (vs. 12) to sum up what he has just said. He adds the word “brethren” to remind them that they are God’s children. Notice how often he refers to that:

Vs. 14, the sons of God

Vs. 15, the Spirit of adoption

Vs. 16, the children of God

Vs. 17, if children, then heirs...

And Paul refers to God’s children again in verses 19, 21, and 23. This is family truth.

The first part of Romans 8 tells us that God’s children have a new position, a new way of life, new freedom, new power, a new mindset, and a new resident (the Holy Spirit), and now in verse 12, we have a new obligation to live after the Spirit and not after the flesh.

The main truth in this text is that we have been adopted into God’s family. The word “adoption” means placing as a son. We need to understand adoption in light of NT times. Under Roman law (with which Paul was very familiar), the rights of a father were absolute rights. The father had absolute power and control over his family. So it was a very serious legal matter whenever a child was adopted from one family into another family. Four things happened in adoption of a child in NT times:

- 1) An adopted child lost all rights in the old family and gained all the rights of a legitimate child in the new family
- 2) The old life of the adopted child was completely wiped out and the child was regarded as a new person entering a new life
- 3) An adopted child was legally and absolutely the child of his new father
- 4) An adopted child became heir to his new father’s estate

Drawing upon that custom, it becomes an analogy for God’s people when they are saved. As children of God we have some privileges. We will mention three in this text:

1. We have God’s guidance (vs. 14)

God’s children are not left to themselves to make it on our own. God promises to guide us. Notice how verse 14 reads. It is a statement of fact and it is also a promise. The leading of God’s Spirit is a constant and ongoing source of guidance. It is a great evidence of salvation to know that God is guiding your life and you are following His leading.

God’s people are not *driven*, but they are led, and they are led by the Holy Spirit. Many people think that God leads us by feeling or emotion. They say, “I just don’t feel led to do this or that” and what that usually means is I don’t want to do this or that. God’s guidance is much better and more reliable than that. So how does God guide His children?

A. God guides us by faith

God saves us by grace through faith in Christ, and He leads us by faith.

Proverbs 3:5-6 ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Jeremiah 10:23 O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

B. God guides us by His Word

It is not enough to have the Bible, we need the Holy Spirit to help us understand it and apply it. This is the work of illumination. The Spirit makes it understandable to our finite minds.

Psalms 119:18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

Ephesians 1:17-19 ¹⁷ That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: ¹⁸ The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.

1 Corinthians 2:14-16 ¹⁴ But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. ¹⁶ For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

2. We have God's acceptance (vs. 15-16)

We have not received the spirit of bondage that involves fear (dread), but we have received the Spirit of adoption by which we cry "Abba, Father." Paul is not emphasizing the act of adoption, but the believer's assurance of it. God makes certain that His children know they are His children. We have the Spirit dwelling in our hearts and we know we have God's approval and His acceptance to come to Him as our Father. The main ideas are love, grace, and intimacy with God.

We read of some people in the Bible who were adopted. The first adoption recorded in the Bible is that of Moses, who was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. We read of Esther, who was adopted by an older cousin named Mordecai. One of the most touching is when David adopted Mephibosheth, one of Jonathan's sons. Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses out of pity and sympathy and Mordecai adopted Esther out of family duty. But David's adoption of Mephibosheth was motivated by pure grace alone. David took the initiative in seeking him out and bringing him to the palace. Mephibosheth was a cripple in both feet and could not walk, so he had to be brought to the king. Mephibosheth was not able to offer the king any service. The only thing he had was need. David brought him into his royal family and placed him at his table for the rest of his life. He knew that he belonged and he was loved.

When someone adopted a child in Bible times there had to be witnesses of that transaction to make it legal and valid. In the same way the Holy Spirit is the ever-present witness to testify that our adoption into God's family is valid. It is not some feeling or audible voice, but it is the work of the Spirit in our lives that testifies we are God's children.

He testifies through the fruit of the Spirit that He produces in us, by our love for God and for others, by our hatred of sin, our longing for Christ's return, our answers to prayer, our ability to know truth and error, our desire to be more like Christ—all of this is the Holy Spirit testifying with our spirit that we are God's children.

3. We have God's abundance (vs. 17)

Since we are children of God, then we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Paul will have more to say about that in verses 18 and following.

There is glory in our future, but first there is suffering. A famous preacher said "God had only one Son without sin, but He has no sons without suffering." We suffer with Christ now and we will be glorified with Him later.

Nobody likes or wants suffering, but God gives us everything we need to go through our suffering. Paul learned that no matter how long or how hard the sufferings of this life might be, God's grace was enough.

Philippians 4:13 *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

2 Corinthians 12:9-10⁹ *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*¹⁰ *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

What is true for Paul is true for us. We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. God provides what we need when we need it. He gives us grace now and will give us glory later.

Romans 8:32 *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*