

## The Insiders: Joined with Jesus for the Father

Romans 8:12-17

*<sup>12</sup> So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—<sup>13</sup> for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*

### A Quick Guide to the Study

In chapter six of Romans Paul began a long and clear exposition of the victory that the believer has through the grace of justification. His exposition comes to its heart-level climax in the passage before us in Romans 8:12-17. The revelation is this. Walking free from the power and pollution of sin is all about being a child of the Father in the Sonship of Jesus Christ. What starts as a simple, clear, objective statement in Romans 6:14, “Sin shall no longer have mastery over you for you are not under law but under grace”, is not first and foremost a doctrine or theology to be applied by free-standing believers. It is the cry of the heart in wonderment and delight in the Father by all those who receive the same inheritance which gripped the human heart of Jesus Christ. As Sonship was and is for Jesus, so it is for those who are likewise the *workmanship* (poem) of the Father Ephesians 2:10). Jesus of Nazareth, the Father’s great ‘poem’, in whom all the wonder of humanity in union with the Father is expressed in the passion and rhythm of His image, says “The glory I received from the Father I have given to you”. Do we hear the Spirit singing the Father’s poem? Do we hear our own spirit affirming the glory received? Do we agree with these two and cry, “Abba! Father!”? Or do we stand apart, looking down on the cross from the lonely distance of our inglorious tower of unbelief, trying to work it all out and apply it so that we can have God inherit us?

### The Flow of Romans 8

With the “So then” of verse 12 Paul probably takes us back to what he started in Chapter six. How does a Christian deal with on-going presence of sin or temptation to sin? Is justification and forgiveness anything more than a legal transaction? Or does Romans 8:12-17 expose what justification looks like and feels like in human beings?

Justification before the Father is about the heart thumping, emotion filling, joy cascading, will releasing, confusion struggling, evil battling, love flowing life we see in Jesus of Nazareth. It is to be and behave as a true human being. Jesus wasn’t justified as a sinner of course, but He was true to being a real human being before the Father in joy. This experience of Jesus is taken by the same Spirit who hammered it all out in Him flooding our tired and emaciated humanity until it is filled up to all the fullness in this Firstborn among many justified children.

We often become verse hounds, true fact hounds, that is, we look into the Scriptures to find a verse for this and another for that. The result is we may become a mere library of facts: A

hushed place where we catalogue and muse and into which we invite people to come and enjoy the atmosphere of our brilliant conjectures, always talking about our last great insight. By doing this we expose ourselves as being more interested in formulas, theology, and faith as religion rather than a union with God Himself of the same order as Jesus of Nazareth.

Consequently we read with a verse clipping filter in our brain. This leads to both error in comprehension and the possibility of missing the logic and pungency of the word of grace. This in turn leads to a diminishing of faith as trust in communion and trust working out as love.

Paul has been riding the rapids of unimaginable mercy in his letter, not cataloguing info in a hushed library. He delivers us into a relationship with the living God not a resource centre about Him. He delivers us into a heart-reality that makes us alive to the Father in a world of contradictions, opposition, failures and illusions. It is from within this world we cry, “Father!” It is in this world we are told we share in everything that was true for the man Christ Jesus. The end of sin’s power and pollution is created in our union with the Son, and brings us to the goal of union with the Father.

Paul concludes this section with the startling 3 fold expression of true communion with the Father.

We have received the spirit of adoption

We cry out with Christ, ‘Abba! Father!’

We are graced with the very same inheritance of the Father as Jesus

Back to the flow then with all the juicy fors, buts and ifs that transport us into the truth that is our connection with Christ.

The revelation that starts this trilogy of communion begins in verse 12.

<sup>12</sup> *So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—  
<sup>13</sup> for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.)*

Paul then shares with us the logic of grace in union with Christ. The logic of grace when it comes to putting to death the deeds of the body is all about our participation in the Sonship of Jesus.

<sup>14</sup> **For** all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

<sup>15</sup> **For** you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again,

**But** you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”

**Then Paul explains the outworking of justifying grace at the heart level**

<sup>16</sup> *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,*

<sup>17</sup> *and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*

The Spirit is the One who brings this home to the whole person, not to a set of words or theology, but into the depths of our hearts. To call the Father, Father as Jesus did, does not come by us taking a lot of good words and applying them to our hearts or setting them as worship goals. The Spirit removes the ‘application pressure.’ The ‘application pressure has us on the outside struggling to apply the revelation and become like Jesus. How could we apply what it means to be sons in Christ from our grubby little towers raised to look down on the cross as a thing lying dormant until we give it access and importance in our lives. The heart is not free standing whereas to live by laws assumes it is. I.e., Me plus an applied law of Jesus equals holiness. The whole doctrine/experience of the Sonship in Jesus is quite the opposite.

### **The central revelation**

*<sup>12</sup> So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh*

Why is this so? Is it only ‘spiritually’ so? How has the ‘obligation’ been broken? Religion couldn’t do it, culture couldn’t do it, both throwing the onus back on some kind of commitment. It is because of all we have inherited in Christ from the Father. He alone has made what was true for Jesus true and real for us.

Inheritance means that which is totally given (right down to our human spirit being convinced and enlivened to see and embrace it). What we have been given does not simply alter our status before God, but also our participation with Him for the joy of it. A work, a change an exchange has occurred because of Jesus and what he and the Father made so by the Spirit.

### **We are His Father’s workmanship (Poem)**

*For we are **His workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).*

But before the ‘poetry’ can be released in us it must first be forged in the New Man. It must be created in the flesh and blood of Father’s great Poem and Poet, Jesus of Nazareth.

Paul has not been building a library for us in Romans 8. The Father has not been building a library for us in Jesus. A poem takes the passion of the poet and communicates the stuff of life and love in a way that moves us to the chore. It is communication from depths to depths. Poets spy out the glories and bring them shuddering home into our bleak and painful life. Their true rhythm and rhyme is not like a ditty or doggerel, but the beat of a heart, the spasm of muscle awakening to function and be active in love. Poets shepherd human spirits not just words. We don’t have to do with a wordsmith in Jesus, but the great Poet of God and real humanity. Paul, a long time dealer in religion and ‘libraries’ had to deal with the shuddering mercy that the Son-Poet-Jesus baptised him with in the dust of a Damascus road. “Who are you Lord?” “I am Jesus...!” Paul must be joined to Jesus. Only in Him could Paul inherit the Father.

So there was the Father, who had ‘written’ His long awaited creational glory into the heart of Jesus of Nazareth.

There was the Son who once had written all he knew and felt about the glories of the Father into the dust of Adam and Eve. He did not send the first couple to a library, but into communion, hearts aflame to meet Him and walk with Him.

There was the Son, now entered into that same dust. Not studying dust from a cloister, but feeling it, embracing it from the ground up. The same serpent came, the same attack on Father's glory came. But unlike the first two He stayed in the Garden and drank from the River of the Father's delights. Humanity was again in full flush. But the rest of the dust went on sucking up the wasteland.

In Him Father was spying out the glories of eternal family and writing them into muscle and bone, blood and synapse. Watching and working as the true Human came blazing into a foreign world of shaky tower builders, library builders and Poet dodgers.

Watching and working as the spirit of His true Man joined with the Holy Spirit and affirmed at every turn that it was good to be Fathered and good to be human.

Watching and working as this True Man ruled in grace and love.

Watching and working as righteousness, joy and peace blossomed as Kingdom fruitfulness.

Watching as the grace of life enveloped the lost kin of His Son, bringing them home in startling reality. The great surprise of joy always fresh upon them.

Watching and working as the creation long locked into its groaning cry to be free gets a whiff of this great Son and the cry goes up a hundred decibels in quickened anticipation of newness.

Watching as His own glory came reflecting back to Him not from a face or a feature but a heart that cried Abba Father, the echo of a human will crying,

*Who do I have in heaven but You and there is no name on earth I desire besides You*

Father saw (with you in mind) the glory of a humanity freely worshipping like this. The glory of a humanity that cried, "All that the Father has is mine!"

What the Father, Son and Spirit had forged again was a humanity freely loving.

*Sonship moves us from straining to do what God does to doing things as God does. PT Forsyth)*

Now the human heart in the Carpenter found nothing about Father's will a burden, a sacrifice or a duty. In this He stood alone. The new family must start from Him. The human spirit drawn into joy by the delight the Father showed in Him.

This was the birth of the Poet. The Poet who as the single Spirited Human faced every temptation we face but found in the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control the freedom to be pure. The Poet knows purity is delightful not deadening.

How do we put to death the outworking of idolatry? Not by a law that says you must not. Not from an encounter group who demand that we are accountable to them. Not from a thousand distractions. Not from weighing up the consequences (when did anyone who was just about

to be unfaithful to their wife ever weigh up anything). They are then caught in the logic of their flesh. It's a virus 1000 times more deadly than Ebola and Covid19 for it renders the person an enemy to the power and logic of grace.

### **But then came the crowning glory of this truly Poetic Man**

The Cross was the hour when his heart beat most perfectly in union with the Father's. The hour when Abba was the deepest cry ever heard from human lips. The hour when the spirit of all the library dwellers and tower builders was embraced into this holy Son and took Him to the extremes of death found in all of them. There the Poet held us, confessed the deepest terrors of our sins ripping at our humanity, sins gone out doing unsolvable compound deadliness. There the Poet reformed us and delivered us back to creation as true Family with Himself and the Father.

In those hours of the Cross, hours of crises that kept rolling in, piling up, suffocating the glory of the Man who delighted in the Father until He was unrecognisable. Blighted like all He was saving. Father stripped these crises off Him at the end of His suffering and revealed His Son the Redeemer, Lord of all.

There at the end of just judgement His one single desire remained to inherit His Father. "Father into Your hands I commend my spirit" This was no lonesome cry of a single son. This was the cry of the great Poet-Son the workmanship of His Father crying, "Father, into your hands I commend all my brethren" Here is what the prophets all cried out with certain hope, "I will be his God and he will be My Son" And all the family cried, weeping with the wonder of it all as the strange music of grace captured their hearts.

*We will behold your face with righteousness and be satisfied with your face when we rise*

So there is the beginning of the glory of what the Father has given us in being joint heirs with Christ. Father and Son agree, "*The glory Father you gave to me I have given to them*"

Do you hear the Father's Poet singing the glory of the Father from within the middle of the congregation? The Father gives you to His true Son in order to comprehend the fullness of the Father. Have you ever agreed with the Father that He has made these things so?

Then dance out of your death, not as some stoic religionist, hell bent on commitment to a cause, but as the new creation Father and Son forged for you. The Spirit must share all this in your depths, for He too is the great Poet of grace.