

THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION (Romans 8:14-17)

INTRODUCTION:

Parenting is a wonderful experience! -- most of the time. Sometimes it gets difficult, especially when you have small children. *Someone has said that raising small children can be like being pecked to death by a duck!* My friend Gus used to say, "When you have small children, you have small problems. When they are bigger, you have big problems." Sometimes it may feel that way but what a joy to raise children and then see them grow up to be fine young adults.

Being a parent is wonderful, but being a child is even more wonderful. Most of us look back on our childhood experiences with nostalgia and remember mostly the good things. We remember the love of our parents, the warmth of home at Christmas, the joys of discovering all about this big wonderful world we found ourselves in, the wonders of childhood friends, etc. Normally there is no other time in our lives where we experienced more love, security and care-free living than in our childhood.

As Christians we have another child/parent relationship. This is the one we have with God. We are children of God and experience His love, care and provisions for us. There is no greater experience than to know that we have a heavenly Father who loves us, provides for us and care for us.

God is a great parent and He uses His Spirit to raise His children. What are some of the roles the Spirit play in this relationship?

THE HOLY SPIRIT TAKES CHARGE OF OUR MORAL DEVELOPMENT

One role is that the Spirit takes charge of our moral development. Verse 14:

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

A true father will do what he can to lead his child in the right direction. A parent who leaves his child to discover right and wrong from the child's experiences is not doing their duty as a parent. This is a problem in some families today. Children are not given much moral guidance. But God has not left his children to discover what is morally right and wrong. He has not left us to learn this through trial and error based only on human ingenuity. No, He has given to His children His Spirit to guide each one into righteous living. God takes a personal interest in each one of us. **Psalm 23 affirms that God leads us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.**

Verse 14 says, “**As many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God,**” I used to think that it was talking about the Holy Spirit leading me to discover God's will for my life. I need his leading in the big decisions in life like who to marry, what career I should pursue, etc. But the context of verse 14 is how the Holy Spirit leads us to "**put to death the deeds of the body.**" (Verse 13). This is talking about leading me to get control over personal sin in my life. This is talking about taking personal responsibility for my behavior.

Too often we follow the spirit of the Age rather than the Spirit of God. Whatever is acceptable in our society, we take as the right direction. No, we need to learn what is acceptable to God. Whatever is the trend of the day we go along with it. No, we need to be following the Spirit of God rather than the spirit of the Age.

As a child of God you need to learn how to be led by the Spirit to get control of your life. Without the Spirit's control in your life, you are subject only to the deeds of the flesh.

THE HOLY SPIRIT TAKES AWAY FEAR OF GOD AND GIVES A SENSE OF INTIMACY WITH THE FATHER

Another role of the Holy Spirit is that He takes away a fear of God and gives a sense of intimacy with the Father. Verse 15:

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."

We did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear. This is important. A Christian is not to live in fear. Many people do. We all are afraid of something, I suppose.

5-year old Johnny was in the kitchen as his mother made supper. She asked him to go into the pantry and get her a can of tomato soup, but he didn't want to go in alone. "It's dark in there and I'm scared." She asked again, and again he said he was scared. Finally she said, "It's OK--Jesus will be in there with you." Johnny walked carefully to the door and opened it real slow. He peeked inside and saw it was dark, he turned to leave when all at once an idea came to him he said: "Jesus, if you're in there, would you hand me that can of tomato soup?"

Here Paul is talking about fear of parents, especially our heavenly Father. We have received the Spirit of adoption. God has adopted us into his family and this is the highest privilege we can received.

J. I. Packer says this about adoption: "...adoption is...the highest privilege that the gospel offers: higher even than justification...But this is

not to say that justification is the highest blessing of the gospel. Adoption is higher, because of the richer relationship with God that it involves... Justification is a forensic idea, conceived in terms of law, and viewing God as judge... Adoption is a family idea, conceived in terms of love, and viewing God as father. In adoption, God takes us into His family and fellowship, and establishes us as His children and heirs. Closeness, affection and generosity are at the heart of the relationship. To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the father is a greater."

To realize that God would take me into his family, who doesn't deserve his favor, who had spent my early year fighting God's place in my life, who ran from God, sinned against God. That he would show his love to me by adopting me as his child is too great to fathom. The Holy Spirit makes this relationship real in my life.

The Holy Spirit cause us to cries out "Abba, Father" because the Spirit is the Spirit of Adoption.

"Abba" was a familiar term used by children of Jesus' day in addressing their father. It is the equivalent to our "daddy." In fact, I heard the report of a person visited Israel recently tell of riding on a bus and a little boy was trying to get is father's attention by pulling on his chin and saying, "Abba, Abba" or "daddy, daddy." It is a term of familiarity and intimacy, appropriate for someone with a childlike dependence on the adult.

The Jews of Jesus' day would never use this term in addressing God. It was too intimate. We can call God "Abba" (Daddy) because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of adoption. We sense that we have been adopted into God's family because of this cry of dependence we have within.

Adoption meant more in Paul's day than it does in ours. When we think of being adoptive children we do not think that is quite as great as being biological children. It seems to be something a little less than being a real children. But adoption was not so in Paul's day. In the Roman/Greek culture to be adopted meant that the son was deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate. We are God's children by his deliberate choice. God wanted especially you and me (and all believers) to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate. We are not second class children, but are his specially chosen ones!

A good parent lets his child knows not only that He loves Him but that He accepts him and that he is something special to him. God does this to his children by giving the Holy Spirit to produce that cry of "Abba, Father" and to be that Spirit of adoption in our hearts.

The Holy Spirit puts in our heart that attitude of dependence and childlike trust whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." He takes away the fear of God and puts in a spirit of intimacy.

THE HOLY SPIRIT TIVES US CONFIDENCE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND OUR GLORIOUS FUTURE

The third role that the Holy Spirit has is that He gives us confidence in our relationship with the Father and our glorious future. Verses 16-17:

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.

The witness of the Spirit to our spirit is that deep inner conviction that we are children of God. A witness is someone who tells what they have seen or heard about something. The Holy Spirit tells us in our spirits that we are the children of God.

I have a friend whose biological mother and father were poor, addicted to alcohol and was a wretched home life. When he was a small boy his biological dad died and his rich aunt and uncle adopted him and may him their own child. He literally went from rags to riches. He still has an inheritance of oil royalties and land he lives on. (He retired at about the age of 50). Each Christian's story is better than this.

We all came from a wretched spiritual condition of being in bondage to a slave master and God has adopted us and make us his own. It may seem too good to be true, but it is. God even gave us the Holy Spirit to tells us in our hearts that it is true and that his inheritance is greater than we can imagine.

This passage goes on to say that the Holy Spirit bears witness that we are **"...heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ..."**

We are "heirs of God." What is an heir? It is someone who will inherit something. It is someone who has an inheritance. We have an inheritance coming. What will it be? What will it include? What does God own? Everything! Does this mean we will inherit all that God owns? I'm not sure how much we inherit, but I know that at least it means that all of God's children are very rich.

The verse goes on to say that we are "joint heirs with Christ." What is Christ's inheritance? In Psalm 2 God says to Christ His Son, **"Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for your inheritance and the ends of the earth for your possession."** (8) In John 3:35 it reads, **"The Father loves the son, and his given all things into His hand."** And in I Corinthians 3:21-23, **"Therefore let no**

one glory in men. For all things are yours...And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Can you truly imagine the glory that is ours as the heirs of God? This is too much to comprehend. It takes the Holy Spirit to convince us of this exalted position. It's too good to be true. This is why the Holy Spirit is given to us to convince us that it is true.

CONCLUSION:

How should we respond to these grand and glorious truths? We are to live as children of God. We are to reflect our family heritage and family likeness. This is how the Apostle John thought about it in I John 3:1-3:

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God. And we are! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Believe, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

God is the perfect parent. Not only does He make us His children, but He gives us His Spirit to make that relationship real to us. The Holy Spirit's role in parenting us is:

To lead us to make good decisions about our moral development.

To cause us to cry "Abba, Father" that cry of childlike dependence upon God

To bear witness to our hearts that we truly are God's children and his heirs.

This is perfect parenting. We have received not the spirit of bondage to fear but the Spirit of adoption. Let us follow the Spirit's leading in our moral decisions, let us listen to His cry in our hearts to affirm our intimacy with the Father. And let us have hope in our future with the Father. Then you will be a good child. AMEN? AMEN!