

## The Spirit of Adoption

Romans 8:1-17

KV 15: “The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”

Welcome back to all of our students, and welcome back everyone to our study of Romans! It has been 8 weeks since the last time we studied Romans, but this chapter is a great place to pick up. Spurgeon wrote, “This wonderful chapter is the very cream of the cream of Holy Scripture. What a grand key-note the apostle strikes in the first verse!” Indeed, this chapter is full of wonderful verses – I know a couple of people who chose their 2013 key verses from this chapter, including my wife, who chose the key verse of this message (verse 15). Today we will be looking at the first part – at the work of the Holy Spirit bringing us into adoption as sons and daughters of God. Last week we had our New Year’s Key Verse message, to set the direction for this coming year, and the verse we chose was 1 Cor 12:27: “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” This verse was chosen so that we can focus on growing in our relationships and love for one another – to build up the body of Christ within and without our members.

In the same way, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. We may take it for granted, but did you know that we all have been adopted into God’s family? I can say with complete certainty that none of us were naturally born as children of God, and if you told me I would not believe you. To be adopted means to legally take another’s child and bring it up as one’s own. By definition, since we are the children, we cannot choose to adopt God as our Father. Rather, it is solely the choice and the will of God to adopt us as his children. Have you ever thought about your relationship to God? Do you have any assurance that you are a child of God? Have you thought about the importance and great privilege it is to be God’s child? These questions can be answered in this passage, as we look at how God adopts us through the work of the Holy Spirit. As we learn more about how the Holy Spirit works, I pray that the Holy Spirit may move in us to desire to be adopted as children of God, or that we would desire to grow and mature in our faith. First, we will look at how the Spirit sets us free. Next, we’ll see how the Spirit gives life, and finally, we’ll learn about the Holy Spirit’s work in adoption.

### Part I: The Spirit Sets Us Free

Why does the Spirit need to set us free? Aren’t we free already? Isn’t America the home of the free? I don’t know if kids say this anymore, but I remember if I told someone they couldn’t do something, like spit their gum on the street, they would reply, “It’s a free country, I can do what I want.” The truth is, we are not free. We are all slaves to sin. Paul says at the end of Ch. 7, v.25, “So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.” We all have sinful natures. Eph 2:3 says, “All of us also lived among [those who are disobedient] at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.” We were by nature objects deserving of God’s wrath.

We want to do what we want, however we want, and we don't want anyone to stop us. When my neighbors play extremely loud music until 3am, they were by nature objects deserving of my wrath. When we went on our white water rafting trip 2 years ago, we were mixed in with wild and restless college students already drunk at noon. To the world, this might seem like fun, but this grieves the heart of God. Our hearts are always full of wickedness. I'll give an example a little closer to home. A few years ago, my little brother Joe, who was probably 9 years old at the time, became a little frustrated with piano practice. His playing seemed half hearted, but it angered me so much that I screamed at him harshly, "If you're not going to practice right, don't practice at all." I believe out of my anger, I hurt Joe, and I was cut to the heart, and I apologized. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment." The sin of my anger was equivalent to the sin of murder. There is no such thing as a small sin – the truth is, we are all sinners by nature, and we will be held accountable for all the sins we commit.

So what can we do? Can we ever pass the judgment seat of God? Because of our sinful flesh, we are powerless to obey God's law. Even if we break it at one point, we are guilty of breaking the whole thing. Who will rescue me? Who will rescue you from the wrath and judgment of God for your sins? Look at v.3, "For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did..." Stop there for a moment. "God did." What the law was powerless to do, God did. My friends, here is our Savior! He has come! What did God do? "What the law was powerless to do...God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh." We can see how much God hates sin when he sent his Son. He condemned sin in the flesh by pouring out his wrath on his one and only beloved Son, so that you would be spared! Jesus, the Son of God gave up all of his heavenly glory, emptied himself and took on flesh, so that he could offer his life for your sake. At this point we cannot say our sin was not that bad, our sin cost the life of God's own Son – but it was God's desire to save us.

Notice how the Trinity, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit work together for our salvation. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, who came humbly and obediently. Christ died on the cross to pay for our sins, and after 3 days, he rose again – forever defeating the power of sin and death. Jesus was sinless, so God was pleased and accepted his sacrifice as a payment for all of the sins for everyone for all time. Because He was sinless, he is able to exchange his life for ours – where he takes the punishment for all our sin, and we receive his perfect righteousness. The work of the Holy Spirit is to apply the righteousness of Christ to all who believe. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death." The Holy Spirit has come to set us free, through the work of Christ. Notice in verse 1 again, "Therefore, there is *now* no condemnation." The instant we believe in what Christ has done, we are free from condemnation. God remembers our sin no more! They are forgiven in Christ! As far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed your transgressions (Ps 103:12)! You have been set free now! Even as you sit in your seat, you are free! If you should die tomorrow (God forbid), you are free! The devil will try to attack you, he may try to bring you down to despair, but you tell him, no! There is now NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus! Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Christ Jesus our Lord!

## Part II: The Spirit Gives Life

Again, how is it that there is no condemnation? How is it that I am free from judgment? Look at v.3-4 again, “And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” We could not fulfill the law, but Christ fulfilled the law. When the Holy Spirit applies Christ’s righteousness to our account, the requirements of the law have been fully met. It is not by works, or by anything we do that can fulfill the law, but by our faith in Jesus Christ and what he has done for us that fulfills the law. Now notice who this is for ... v.4 says, “who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” Not everyone is set free – in v.1 it is only those in Christ Jesus, and in v.4 it is only those who live according to the Spirit. So we see here 2 types of people: those who live according to the flesh, and those who live according to the Spirit. In the same way, only one type will receive life, the other will not. Which one are you?

First, those who live according to the flesh. Those who live according to the flesh are not those who live according to the Spirit. You cannot be both – you will be one or the other. Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires. What is your mind set on? If you ask some people on the street, what is your number one wish, many people might say, “I want to win the lottery.” There are people I know who’s primary aim for every day is to impress girls. The mind governed by the flesh seeks to please itself. Sometimes it might seem like a noble cause, like trying to make sure everyone sees the 100 dollar bills I put in the offering, or praying out loud so everyone can hear me – but if my heart is seeking self-congratulation or praise, it’s of the flesh. Giving and prayer in themselves are good things, they are not wrong, but the motive should be seek God’s approval, not men’s. However, those who live according to the flesh do not seek God’s approval.

And here’s the greatest danger in those who live according to the flesh: The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law nor can it do so. This was our sinful nature. This is the nature of those who do not have the Spirit. They are hostile to God. One time I bought a homeless man on the street a whole pizza, large, 14 inches (or something). We used to talk a lot, and I’d get him a hamburger sometimes in the past. But this time, after getting his pizza, I asked if I could pray for him. He immediately jumped up, took the pizza box, and started running away from me. It was ridiculous, he was walking with this giant pizza box, saying, “I can’t believe you’re one of them. You tricked me. Get away from me! Get away from me!” I could not believe what I was seeing. So how about those people who do not believe in Jesus, but they live pretty good lives? I would dare to say, they’re not really living. How about the daredevils who do extreme sports? Do they believe in Jesus? If not, they’re not really living. They are hostile to God, and they will have no answer on judgment day. They are hostile to God. They might say, “Well, I’ll just believe when I’m 80 and on my death bed,” to them we need to say, “God have mercy,” because they think they can submit to God’s law on their terms, when Scripture says “they cannot do so.” V.8 says, “Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.” Ultimately, they will die, and when they meet God, they will be condemned because they did not believe in the One he sent to save them. V.6 says finally, “The mind governed by the flesh is death.”

Now how about those who live according to the Spirit? What are they like? Those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. Let us ask ourselves, are our minds set on what the Spirit desires? How do we know what the Spirit desires? We can know through the word of God. Through the Bible, we can learn more about who God is and what pleases Him. We can learn about his promises to save his people, and his heart for lost sinners. We can learn about his glory and power as he deals with the Israelites on their exodus, or with Job in the whirlwind, or about his kindness and mercy with David, and the sick, the blind, the hungry. We can learn to take the attitude of Christ, and even of Paul who said, “I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. (Phil 3:10).” We pray more, and pray continually. We live in repentance and confess our sins to the Lord. Although our flesh is weak, the Spirit helps us to set our minds on what the Spirit desires, so we live not to please our flesh, but we live by faith in step with the Spirit.

The mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. Life and peace I believe go together well. The mind governed the Spirit is a mind that knows the truth. It is a mind that can discern good from evil, right from wrong. The mind governed by the spirit then, is humility, meekness, gentleness, self control. One of the students of my former Bible teacher, who has since moved to New York, helped disciple a young man whose life was spiraling out of control. He sold drugs, and one day was caught in a gang shootout or crossfire. He prayed to the Lord, “If you get me out of this, I’ll go to church!” The Lord heard his prayer, and he kept his vow, and found himself in New York UBF I believe. There, he began to study the Bible, and his life began to turn around. He went back to school, and now he’s on his way to completing medical school. He’s married a woman of God and they will be expecting their first baby soon. He also helped turn around the life of a member of the band at the church, who used to have long hair and sell drugs. One day he talked with this young man, and not long after he cut his hair and devotes himself more to the ministry. We have similar stories from the testimonies here, I can name a few people.

Look at v.9, “You however are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.” Those who live according to the flesh do not have Christ. They do not belong to Christ. But those who live according to the Spirit- they belong to Christ. If you are in the Spirit, my friends, you belong to Christ! Sometimes, we need to be careful about the owner, right? If you buy a really nice car, like a new Porsche, and give it to a 16 year old, they might do some damage. But some people I know like to hand wash their cars like three times a week. It’s like their baby. We also need not worry when we belong to Christ – because he is the one who purchased us, at a very expensive price! He bought us with his own blood – so will he not then, handle us with the most extreme care? We are the bride of Christ, he loves us, and we belong to him!

Christ is the key to life, and it is the Spirit who gives us life. Look at v. 10-11, “But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.” It is righteousness that gives us life. Christ is our righteousness, and

when we have Christ, the Spirit can revive us. Why? Because – those who live in the realm of the flesh cannot please God, but those who live in the realm of the Spirit, are pleasing to God! They belong to God! When we live in the flesh, not in the Spirit, we are like zombies, the walking dead. We have no feeling, no spiritual sensitivity, no discernment of real truth and good and evil. If you poke a dead man with a stick, he will not feel anything. But when we live according to the Spirit, through Christ – we are given his righteousness. That means we are pleasing in God's sight, and he can come and dwell inside us. We become his home, the temple of the living God! And that's where the Holy Spirit works his miracles, and suddenly, we spring to life! Our eyes are opened to the truth. Our eyes are opened to God. Our eyes are opened to his word. Our eyes are opened to our sin, and to the glory of the wondrous cross. Jesus said "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." To know God and Jesus is eternal life, and that is true and real life.

We have an obligation then, to the Spirit who gave us life. We were not set free and then set loose to get lost again. We were set free so we can belong to Christ. We were not given life to squander it in the death and corruption of this world. So when we have life in the Spirit, we must not go back to our sins. Rather, by the Spirit, we must put to death the misdeeds of the body. Notice, it's by the Spirit. When we were slaves to sin, we could not put to death our misdeeds, because we did not have the help of the Spirit. Even now, we should not try to kick our habits by our own strength, but we must do it by the Spirit. And he is faithful to help. There was a time in my past, where I made vows to stop drinking for one month. Soon it became a joke because I could not even do that. I was not living in the Spirit, and tried to put my misdeeds to death on my own...but I was such a slave to sin. But through faith and repentance of my unbelief, through growing in living a life according to the Spirit – by the grace of God, my desires were gone. And I am not tempted to drink anywhere. By the Spirit, we can put to death our misdeeds, but first we must live by the Spirit. We may find ourselves fighting many misdeeds all our lives, because we still live in the flesh, but the Spirit will progressively cleanse us, and sanctify us. The Spirit gives us life, peace, and power.

### Part III: The Spirit of Adoption

We were once objects of the deserved wrath of God, but by the Holy Spirit we have been transformed. V.14 says, "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God." We have changed from objects of wrath to objects of love. We have been transformed from dead zombies into children of the living God. Not all of creation can claim that they are the children of God. The animals are not called children of God. The heavens and the earth are not called children of God. The angels are not even called the children of God. But who are we, the dust of the earth, to be elevated to the status of a son, or a daughter. It's as if I was a janitor at a large corporation, promoted to being the top Senior Vice President, but even greater. We who were sinners and enemies, hostile to God, changed into his servants, rather, into his children singing his praises. How marvelous, how wonderful is my song shall ever be, how marvelous! How wonderful! Is my Savior's love for me.

And how were we made children? Through the Holy Spirit. Can we all please read v.15, "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."



Notice first – we receive the Spirit. We did not take it, we do not force it, but it is received, it is given to us. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. After his resurrection, Jesus commands his disciples in Acts 1:4-5, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is the gift of God, sent by Jesus to work in us the spirit of sonship. We are no longer slaves to sin and fear. Slaves are not treated the same as sons – they were considered property, to be bought and sold, and had no rights. Rather, the Holy Spirit has brought about our adoption to sonship. I like those words, “brought about.” It shows that he did the work. He signed our adoption papers, all the legal documents and trains us up to be like children of God – the Holy Spirit brought about our adoption as sons and daughters.

And it is by the Spirit we cry “Abba, Father.” We have been reborn as children of God, objects of his love and affection – just like newborns and children toward their parents. The term Abba was an endearing term, like “Daddy,” or “Papa,” and signifies an intimate relationship. Just like when Ella says, “Dada,” to Dan or Mikey says “Doddy,” to Bob, the Father delights in his children, and we delight in God. We also cry out to God in prayer, and the first thing Jesus taught us to pray is, “Our Father in heaven.” God also has a deep concern for us, just as a parent would have a deep concern for their children’s safety and well being, God hears our cries when we suffer, or when we cry out for help, when we need strength and comfort.

As children of God, we also have received full rights as sons and daughters, and because we have become children of God we can have full assurance of an inheritance the God has promised us. We will inherit eternal life. We receive the kingdom of God as our inheritance – Luke 12:32 says, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.” During advent, we studied in Revelation the beautiful new Jerusalem, 1400 miles high, wide and tall – a city, made of precious stones more than half of the US in length and taller than satellites orbiting the earth! When Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many rooms, and I am going there to prepare a place for you (John 14:2),” he means it.

One last inheritance is glory – when Jesus comes again we will be changed, our perishable bodies will be raised imperishable, our dishonorable bodies in glory, our weakness raised in power, our natural body raised in a spiritual body, and our mortality will be clothed with immortality. The Holy Spirit has changed us into children of God, therefore we are no longer of the world. The world hates God, and is hostile to God, and when we have been changed, the world will hate us, because it hates God. So for a while, we must share in the sufferings of Christ, but when he comes again, we will surely share in his glory. And when we see all of heaven and the glory of God, and marvel at his work in saving us, we will worship him, and give him all praise, glory and honor.