

## Holy Spirit Adoption, Romans 8:12-17, 10/11/20

*"If the church would hoist its sails and catch the wind of Romans 8, there's no telling what might happen."*<sup>1</sup> I couldn't agree more with N.T. Wright's assessment. Last week we began to study a chapter that is the great anthem of power and assurance in the life of the Christian. This is why I am challenging you to memorize this chapter. I put out a challenge to you all, dinner on me for anyone who memorizes this chapter. Now there were some big talkers this week, and I love that, you can do it! But whether or not you memorize this chapter, more importantly, my hope is that you would believe Romans 8 so deeply that you would catch its winds!

As a review [Title Slide], in verses 1-11 Paul tells us that there is a struggle inside every one of us for control of the driver's seat of our mind. That struggle is between the Holy Spirit and the flesh. The reason we may find ourselves stuck in the same cycle of sin, bad attitudes, fighting with your spouse, not growing in our walk is because the flesh is driving...and we know the destination- destruction- because our flesh will rob us of true life. When we allow the Holy Spirit to drive by surrendering to His desires, we will experience victory over strongholds, life and peace. A life characterized by the fruit of the Spirit.

Today [Title Slide] we are going to learn that one of the main roles of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christ follower: to give us assurance that we are adopted sons and daughters of God. <sup>15</sup> *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.*

Adoption is close to my heart because my mother was adopted by my grandfather, Paul Schwartz. My mother was the result of an affair. Humanly speaking, she was an accident, unwanted at the time by my grandmother, who twice attempted to abort her to no avail. But in God's mercy, He took what was meant for evil and turned it for good, into a beautifully redemptive story I have shared before with you. My grandfather, even though he was the victim of an affair and not the biological father, legally adopted my mother and loved her as his own child until the day he died.

Now as amazing as my mom's story is, if you know Christ, do you know that you have a far more amazing adoption story? In Christ, slaves to sin and rebels of God become His beloved children forever. Sinclair Ferguson once wrote *"the notion that we are [adopted] children of God, his own sons and daughters, is the main spring of Christian living. Our sonship to God is the apex of creation and the goal of redemption."*<sup>2</sup> And as an aside- as Christians we should be advocates of all human life. Both the unborn and born. And so I would encourage you to support families and organizations that promote foster care and adoption with the same vigor that we support pro-life organizations and policies.

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<sup>1</sup> N.T. Wright, quoted by J.D. Greear in sermon

<sup>2</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, quoted in Tim Keller's *Romans For You*.

Before we go any further, you may have noticed the gender masculine pronouns and reference to adoption to “sonship” [verse slide] and maybe you ask- what about women, that makes me a little uncomfortable and concerned, as if Paul is saying God only adopts men as sons. Here’s the reason, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman law, only males could be given the privilege and power adoption to sonship. However, here Paul is to apply this legal practice to his day and expanding it to include male and female, to all believers! How do we know? Because there is no male, female, Jew or Gentile, slave or free in Christ. And all who are in Christ have the Spirit and all who have the Spirit are adopted by God. Tim Keller speaking on this point says, “That was a subversive thing for Paul to take a masculine only institution and show that in Christ, the institution of empowering through adoption is used on females as well as males without distinction. Christian women should not resent being called sons any more than Christian men should resent being called the bride of Christ. Christians are all sons and all the bride. God is even-handed in his use of metaphors.”<sup>3</sup> So with that said, let’s get into the text.

### Three Results of Holy Spirit Adoption

#### #1 We Obey as Sons NOT Slaves.

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

*<sup>14</sup> For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup> 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.*

Paul is making a crucial point about the two ways in which we can approach obedience as a Christian: **as a slave, or as a son.** It is possible having trusted in Christ to make us righteous, to fall back into a spirit of slavery, of drudgery. To approach obedience to God from a fearful state of insecurity like a slave wondering, “if I slip up I might be beaten.” To return to an attitude of performance-based acceptance, if I don’t do enough God won’t love me or accept me. And so obedience- living in sexual purity, being generous, Bible study, going to church, serving people becomes a burden. That’s falling back into a spirit of slavery.

But our obligation to obey is not to the enslaving flesh Paul says, but the Spirit. A son or daughter doesn’t obey out of fear but out of secure love in his relationship to a good father. When a son slips up, he trusts the forgiving and disciplining love of a good father. A son joins in the father’s work, but out of delight to please his father and because he trusts that obedience will be life-giving and beneficial. The same acts of obedience can have radically different motives and on the surface you may not even know. Two Christians may financially give for different reasons, two Christians may serve in Children’s ministry for different reasons. Two people

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<sup>3</sup> Tim Keller, *Romans For You*, p.26

leading a Bible study for different reasons. What is your motive for obedience- as a slave or a son?

See a slave master says, "You obey for my benefit." But a good father says to his son, "You obey for your benefit." This completely changed my struggle with sexual sin. Instead of the drudgery of resisting my urges as a burden and getting burnt out with the battle, being half-hearted and saying, I'll try a little but I'm not going to give up everything, I began to fight and obey as a son, as an act of worship to my Father who has my best interests in mine. Paul says, through the Spirit's sonship we mortify, that is we "put to death" the misdeeds of the flesh. This means we don't play "The Price is Right" with sin- getting as close to the edge without going over. You don't aim to wean yourself off of it, or say "in moderation" or "I can keep it under control." We declare war on it!

C.S. Lewis- "God says give me all of you! I don't want a certain amount of time a certain amount of your talents or money or a certain amount of your work. I want you. All of you. I have not come to torment or to frustrate the natural man or woman but to kill it.

No half measures will do. I don't want to only prune a branch here and a branch there rather I want the whole tree out. Give me yourself and in exchange I will give you myself. My will, shall become your will. My heart, shall become your heart."<sup>4</sup>

Sounds radical. Yes! You will only be willing to obey, surrender yourself on a daily basis as a son not a slave.

## #2 We Experience Intimate Security.

<sup>15</sup>And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Abba is not the Swedish pop band from the 70s. Abba is an Aramaic word that means daddy. It is likely the first or second word a child will learn. It is the most simple, informal and intimate title for God and it is the one the Spirit of God enables us to cry out! This is how Christians can approach the all-powerful creator of the universe, who sustains every atom in existence moment by moment. This is a breath-taking truth! The Spirit, experientially makes God so real, so familiar, so familial to us. God is no longer a distant God or force. He is not merely a God in whom we believe intellectually or theologically. We need to understand just how unique this makes Christianity from every other religion, whose God's are impersonal or so transcendent that they cannot have a relationship. This only happens through the Spirit, you can't fake it, you can't manufacture it. The Spirit testifies- bears witness, whispers to our inner parts that we are secure and safe in the arms of our loving father.

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<sup>4</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Shannan and I are watching the **World's Toughest Race** on Amazon Prime right now. Now I've gone on mountaineering expeditions and done my share of adventure sports- but these people are on a whole-nother level. These teams race through 417 miles of unforgiving jungle, mountain, river and ocean in Fiji over a period of 11 days. Shannan just say to each other, how are these people even the same species as us? One of the most powerful stories they follow is **Mark and Travis Macy**, a father-son team of racers. A few years ago Mark was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and this will be the last competition they do together. And every step of the way Travis is there protecting, encouraging and serving his father. But one segment really got me. In an interview with Travis he says through tears- "I keep thinking about this memory I have growing up, every night my dad and I would walk out into the woods and take our dogs for a walk. There's such darkness in those woods. And I remember thinking, "How can dad not be afraid walking around here with the darkness of the woods, we've got bears and mountain lions...how can he not be afraid?" And I would reach into his pocket and grab his hand and I would get this feeling that it's going to be OK, I'm with my dad and it's going to be OK."

This is what the Spirit does in those moments when we are tempted by our circumstances to be afraid. What if I lose my job? What if I never recover from this illness? What if I never find someone to marry and I'm alone? In the scary and uncertain darkness of our circumstances the Spirit grabs our hand and puts it in the grip of our good Father so we can say, "Abba, father!" I no longer need the assurance of good circumstances to have joy and security when He has my hand.

Where do you need to **experience intimate security**? To feel the strong grip of the Father's hand in your life today? Cry out to "Abba, daddy" and may the Spirit minister his comfort, assurance and security to you.

### **#3 We Become Royal Heirs.**

***<sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if (since) indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.***

In 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman culture adoptions usually occurred when a wealthy adult had no heir for his estate. A son would be adopted and would receive all the privileges of full sonship including full inheritance, just as a natural son would have. And all this is in Paul's mind when he calls us heirs of God. This means we are princes and princesses of the almighty king! You might not feel particularly royal, but make no mistake you are.

Did you know that **Prince William** of England has a real job? I kind of always assumed he just hung out at the palace being fanned and fed grapes. Up until just recently **Prince William was a rescue pilot**. No matter what title or military rank Prince William, no title will ever be greater than **Prince William**...unless He knows Jesus! Because if He knows Jesus he is a Prince of the Almighty King!

Listen, even if you make Partner at the law firm, Manager or CEO, Millionaire, or get the title Doctor, or Champion in your sport- those titles pale in comparison to your royal title. **Royal Son or Daughter of the King**. And if you have been called by other titles- stupid, worthless, ugly, loser...That is not your title. You are a royal son or daughter of the King. Are we living like it?

### **Three Results of Holy Spirit Adoption**

**#1 We Obey as Sons NOT Slaves.**

**#2 We Experience Intimate Security.**

**#3 We Become Royal Heirs.**

Philip Yancy- "If I could sum up the whole Bible in one statement it would be this: God gets his family back. The whole Bible is about God going after His children."<sup>5</sup>

How did God go after his Children? By sending our older brother, Jesus Christ, on a rescue mission for us his lost siblings. Did you notice Paul said, we are co-heirs with Christ? Our older brother gave his life to rescue us. He suffered and is now glorified at the right hand of the king. The inheritance that came to Jesus as our older brother is coming to us if we are in Christ.

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<sup>5</sup> Philip Yancey, *Vanishing Grace*