

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Spirit Confirms Our Adoption

Scripture: Romans 8:14-16

Code: 45-59

Well, let's look together, Romans chapter 8 verses 14 to 16, and since you're not going anywhere tomorrow ... sit back and relax. And we're just going to look at God's Word and be blessed.

In Romans chapter 8, I want to read for you verses 14 through 16, just that brief three verses, and open up your hearts, I trust, to this most wonderful, wonderful passage.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear but ye have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

This has to be one of the most beautiful, one of the richest passages in all of the Scripture. It speaks about our relationship with God. And the word that keys it is the word "adoption" in verse 15. We are sons of God, in verse 14. We are children of God, in verse 16. And that is true because we have been adopted, as verse 15 indicates.

Now, the very word "adoption" needs our attention for a few moments. It's a rich word, it is a word filled with love. It's a word filled with mercy. It's a word filled with grace...the word adoption. To give you just a simple definition, adoption is a legal action whereby a person is taken into a family, usually not in anyway related to him. It's a legal action whereby a person is taken into a family usually not in anyway related to him. And when taken into that family, he is then given all the rights and privileges of a member of that family. It's a very beautiful picture. I think it's a very wonderful thing. I think even in the human realm, adoption is a merciful, loving, gracious, beautiful thing. Especially is that indicated to us in the Scripture.

Go with me for a moment to three cases in the Old Testament. First is Exodus 2 and here we find the first biblical case of adoption.

There went a man unto the house of Levi, took to wife a daughter of Levi, the woman conceived, bore a son. When she saw him that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months and when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes and dabbled it with slime and with pitch and put the child therein and she laid in the the flags, or the reeds by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off to see what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river and her maidens walked along by the river side and when she saw the ark

among the reeds, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child and behold the babe wept. And she had compassion on him and said, this is one of the Hebrew's children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away and nurse it for me and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child and nursed him." And she got to nurse her own child. It was all set up not only by them but God. Then verse 10. "The child grew and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son and she called his name Moses, and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.

And so, Moses was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. And it was God's plan through adoption to put him in a most strategic place.

Look with me at the second chapter of Esther ... the second chapter of Esther. And it says in verse 5, "Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew," you need to know that the Jews at this point are captives in Persia. "And there was a certain Jew in the palace whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away." So these are Jews in exile. "And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother and the maid was fair and beautiful whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter."

And here again, God has an adoption situation in a very strategic time and place in history. And first of all, Moses was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter in order that he might be placed strategically to be the deliverer of Israel. And here again, Esther is most marvelously adopted into Mordecai's family, that she too might be a deliverer for Israel. And indeed, it was her strategic place in the life of that pagan nation that really saved the lives of the people of Israel who were captive there. So two very strategic and very beautiful and wonderful stories of adoption.

But I think the most tender and loveliest adoption story of all of Scripture is found in 2 Samuel chapter 9. And I want you to look at that for a few moments and I want to share what I think is just a tremendously rich story ... 2 Samuel chapter 9.

Now we might understand that Pharaoh's daughter would be sympathetic to a little Hebrew baby floating in a little ark in the reeds and long to have a child of her own. We might say that that was an adoption out of sympathy. And then in the case of Mordecai and Esther, we might say it was an adoption out of responsibility. In other words, here is a young girl whose parents are dead, she is related to Mordecai and so he feels responsible to take care of her. And if, in fact, the adoption of Pharaoh was a sympathy... the adoption, I should say, by Pharaoh's daughter was a sympathy

adoption, and if Mordecai's adoption of Esther was a responsibility adoption, here is an adoption strictly and only out of love. And so, in a sense, this becomes the most lovely of all.

And David is the key to this one. In verse 9...verse 1 of chapter 9, in chapter 9 verse 1, David said: "Is there yet any who is left of the house of Saul that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" Now David had had an archenemy in Saul and repeatedly, Saul had done everything within his power to kill David. Saul's life was a tremendous tragedy. He was proud. He was jealous. He was murderous. And he despised and hated David. But his son Jonathan loved David and David loved Jonathan. And so, for the sake of Jonathan, David says, "Is there anyone left in the house of Saul that I may show kindness for Jonathan's sake?" David wants to extend kindness to the house of his enemy. And verse 2 says, "There was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when he had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he."

Saul's house by now, of course, as you know, had been fairly well decimated. "And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son who is lame on his feet." He says Jonathan has a son and this son is lame. If you want to know about it, you go back to chapter 4 verse 4. And it says, "And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son who was lame in his feet, he was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel and his nurse took him up and fled. And it came to pass as she made haste to flee, she fell and he became lame and his name was Mephibosheth." So, from the time he was five, he was crippled in his feet.

And so, Ziba tells David that there is this one grandson of Saul, son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet. And there's sort of a tone of disdain. I mean, we've got one crippled person and that's about all. And the king said unto him, "Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar." Very interesting ... Lo-debar.

Now here is the enemy, Saul. And here is a relation to Saul who is part of the enemy, he's crippled. He's not anyone who carries any weight in society. And he lives in a place called Lo-debar, which, by the way, means "the barren land." He is an insignificant man in an insignificant place.

Verse 5 says, "Then King David sent and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar. Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face and did abeyance." In other words, he fell down before the king. "And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant. And David said unto him, Fear not." Now David, of course, calling the man in, the man knowing that he was an enemy family to David would have been under fear. David said, "Don't be afraid." "For I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father and thou shalt eat at my table continually."

He says, "I'll give you back all the land that Saul originally possessed. I'll give you back all of that, not because you're worthy," he's very unworthy for his family had done all possible to kill the king. "And he bowed himself and said, What is thy servant that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?" I mean, he had been looked down on so long in his life, for so many years in his life, and this has got to be 14 or 15 years after Jonathan's death. For so long he's been looked down that he sees himself as a dead dog. And when you, in the east, call yourself a dog, that is the worst thing you could say. Did you ever go to the Arab countries and watch what happens to dogs? They're kicked an over the place. You might want to walk up to pet a dog in that part of the world, the dog will cringe and cower and run. And a dead dog is all he can see himself as.

"Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, I've given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to his house." He gives him ... he gives him back everything that belonged to the king in his house. "Thou therefore and thy sons and thy servants shall till the land for him." Not only does he give him the land but he gives him a whole group of people to take care of the land. He gives him all the servants. "And you bring in his crop that thy master's son may have food to eat, but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat always at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants." So he sets off, you know, here's 36 people to take care of the land. He got the land and 36 people to take care of it and they're under king's orders. But he says Mephibosheth is to have all that comes from that, but he's to eat his personal meals at my table.

"Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, saith the king," here it is, "he shall eat at my table as one of the king's...what? ... sons." Isn't that beautiful? As one of the king's sons. He's an adopted son. David adopts Mephibosheth. "And Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. And all who dwelled in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth. So Mephibosheth dwelled in Jerusalem for he did eat regularly at the king's table and he was lame on both his feet." It's as if to say, can you believe that? In that culture where they threw out people that were cripple? He ate at the king's table. Oh, what a wonderful thing.

Here is an adoption, an adoption of grace, an adoption of mercy, an adoption of love. And as you read it through, as I read it through, I was struck at how analogous it is to our adoption into the family of God. See if you can't sense that analogy.

David took the initiative, right?, in adopting Mephibosheth. And the Lord takes the initiative in adopting us.

David showed mercy to one who was unworthy, one who had descended from an evil enemy. So does the Lord seek among the children of the devil His sons to adopt.

David was motivated by love for Jonathan. And in our case, God was motivated by love for Christ and He redeemed us for Christ's sake, it says.

And David desired to show kindness and so Ephesians 2:6 says that we've been saved in order that God might show us eternal kindness.

And David chose one who was outside the standard of perfection. And so, God has chosen those who are outside the standard of perfection.

By the way, Mephibosheth means "a shameful thing." And he lived in Lo-debar which means "the barren land," or literally a place of no pasture. He was a nobody from nowhere. And those are just the kind of people God takes as His sons.

And then the climax, David brought him to his own table to feed him as one of his own. And so does the Lord bring us to His table.

And then David gave him an inheritance. And so does the Lord promise to us. And the analogy goes on and on.

It is a beautiful picture of spiritual adoption where God takes men and by His own initiative and based on His own love and not anything to do with their worthiness and for the sake of Christ whom He loves, takes as sons those who formerly were enemies.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 6, listen to two verses, 17 and 18. "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord. And touch not the unclean and I will receive you and will be a Father unto you and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty." The Almighty God is adopting children. And who are they? Those who separate themselves, touch not the unclean thing and come to Him. It started with the people of

Israel, Romans 9:4 says, "To them pertains the adoption." And, of course, has extended to all the redeemed in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:5, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus

Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will."

So, you see then that adoption is a very marvelous truth, a very beautiful biblical reality. Now let's go back to Romans chapter 8 and understand this particular passage in reference to the general idea of adoption. We who are saved have received the spirit of adoption. We have been made sons of God. We have been made children of God. We, who are unworthy, have been brought in as sons.

Now remember, just to give you a little background again, remember verse 1 of this chapter? Look at it for a moment. It's the key to the whole chapter. "There is therefore now no condemnation." This is a no condemnation chapter, the whole theme is that. This is no condemnation. That's the theme of the chapter. He begins with that. He wraps up with that. In verse 34, "Who is he that condemns..." and so forth. So there's no one that condemns. This is a no condemnation chapter. And by that he means we will never be finally punished for our sins. We will never have to pay the penalty for sin, it's already been paid by our Lord Jesus Christ. And so, we are under a no condemnation status.

Now in the chapter, this is such a marvelous truth, such an incomprehensible truth that the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul goes on to demonstrate our no condemnation status based on the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the unique work of the Holy Spirit to affirm and confirm our no condemnation status. No condemnation, listen now, was purchased for us by Christ. That's chapters 4, 5 and 6 and 7, too, as well, partially. He's already talked about the fact that Christ provided a no condemnation and now he tells us that the Holy Spirit secures that status. So chapter 8 really has a lot to do with our security. And that's why the end of it is, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ, shall..." this that or the other ... and we know that nothing shall separate us. So it's a chapter on the security of our no condemnation status. Christ provided it, the Holy Spirit secures it.

And how does He secure it? By these means, seven ways the Spirit secures our no-condemnation status. Number one, verses 2 and 3 we saw, He frees us from sin and death. Number two; He enables us to fulfill the law, verse 4. Number three, He changes our nature, verses 5 to 11. Then He empowers us for victory, verses 12 to 13. He guarantees our glory, verses 17 to 25. He intercedes for us, verses 26 and 27. And then the one for now, for our study tonight, He confirms our adoption. It is the work of the Spirit to secure and affirm and confirm our no-condemnation status by giving us the assurance that we're children of God, that we're sons of God. We enjoy the ministry of the Spirit in assuring us that we have been adopted by God. A great thought. It is by the Holy Spirit that we have been made sons. That's right. The Spirit is the spirit of adoption; it is the Holy Spirit who has adopted us, as it were. He is the one who placed us into the family of God by the miracle of regeneration, by the miracle of adoption. He transfers us from an alien family into the family of God and then confirms in our hearts that we are the sons of God.

Now let me just talk for a minute about adoption as such because when you say the word "adoption" some people think that's sort of a second-class status. You're not a real son, you're an adopted son, you're sort of a Johnny-come-lately or a Janie-come-lately. You got added on to the end of the deal because nobody wanted you and sort of second-class idea. But that is not true. It may be that some people in our day think of it that way but in the first century, it was quite the very opposite.

For example, in the Roman culture, if a father looked over his children, particularly his sons, and he didn't see among the born sons that he had brought into the world a son that he deemed to be worthy

to inherit his name, his title, his offices, his estates, he would go outside and he would find such a worthy son and he would adopt him into the family based upon his virtue, based upon his character, based upon his talent and that adopted son would then take precedence over all of his natural sons who didn't qualify at the level of qualification that the father had established. So an adopted son is not in the Roman culture a waif picked up off the street just so he's gotten cared for. No, no. An adopted son in the Roman system is a son who is chosen by the father for the purpose of inheriting the estate and of bearing the name and the title of that father.

And so, when it says in the Bible that we have become the adopted sons of God, it is not to say that God scoops us off the street somewhere just so we can get cared for, it is to say that God out of all the world has chosen us to bear His name and His title and inherit His estate. And it is not just that He takes us because we happen to come along through natural process, it is that He sovereignly chooses us out of all the world. That's a little different, isn't it? And that's the essence of this thought. We are the preferred of God. We are the choice of God by His free involuntary election and in no sense in the world are we inferior ... in no sense. We have been chosen to bear His name. We have been chosen to inherit His Kingdom.

And you know, in the Roman culture, it wasn't easy to do this because they had this thing called *Patria Potestas*, which meant "the rule of the father," and as long as you were the son of your father or the daughter of your father, he had total control over you for your whole life until he died. And he could kill you if he wanted to kill you. He could control everything about you. And so if you as a man was unsatisfied with the children you had and you went over to some other family and you saw the one you wanted in that family, you'd have to go through an awful lot to get him out from under that. He couldn't make the choice himself, you had to go through the father. And they had this very elaborate system called "*Mansupitio*" where they would attempt to emancipate one of the children from *Patria potestas*, that is the control of the other father. And then they went through a thing called "*vindicatio*," which took them through almost a courtroom procedure where finally legal status was given to that new adoption and the son could move from family to the other to bear the name and the title of that new father.

Now in the Roman adoption system, four things were consequential to adoption. First thing that happened was the adopted person lost all relationship to his old family. Everything was gone and he gained all rights to the new family. It's a beautiful picture of salvation, isn't it?

Second thing, it followed that he became heir to all the father's ... the new father's estate. And even if the other children were blood born, it did not affect his rights. He was inalienably the co-heir with them and perhaps even exceeding above them, if that was in the prerogative of the father.

The third thing that happened, according to Roman law, was that the former life of the adopted person was completely wiped out. All his legal debts were cancelled. They were wiped out as if he

had never existed. And the adopted person was given a new name and it was as if he had just been born. Sound familiar? When you came to Jesus Christ and were adopted into the family of God, all your past debts were what? Cancelled ... and you became a co-heir of all that the born son, the Lord Jesus Christ, possesses.

The fourth thing was in the eyes of the law the adopted person was literally and absolutely the son of his new father. And so, when we were adopted, all these things, no doubt, are in the mind of the Apostle and the Spirit, and we know they took place in our adoption. We have cut the cord with the past. We have become co-heirs to God's Kingdom. All the old debts are wiped out and we are absolutely and legally and forever the son of God.

Let me go a step further. Adoption is an insufficient term, as beautiful and rich as it is, to explain the whole of what happens to us because it goes beyond earthly adoption. It is not just that we are adopted; we are also regenerated, aren't we? We're also reborn. In fact, the adoption is so great that there's a whole recreation of the individual. And so we have two beautiful terms, we have regeneration or new birth, and adoption. And they're just two ways of looking at how God brings His children to Himself. Adoption ... adoption gives us the name of sons. Adoption gives us the title to the inheritance. Regeneration gives us the nature of sons and gives us the fitness for that inheritance. Both are important.

So, we're under no condemnation. Why? Because we've been adopted into God's family. And all the former debts are cancelled. And we belong to God. And that's why at the end of this whole chapter, as I mentioned, if there's nobody to condemn, if we belong to God and there's no higher court than God, if God has made us His children, if God has established our rights to be in His presence, if God has said we are His and we possess His Kingdom, then that's the highest court there is and we're not under condemnation as His children.

Now this passage says that not only have we received adoption--that's in the background--but we've received the Spirit of adoption. And what it's really saying is not only are we adopted, but the Spirit of God confirms that adoption in our hearts. So it is not only an objective fact that we're looking at, it is a subjective assurance. You hear that? The Spirit of God affirms that to our hearts that we belong to God.

Now how does He do it? Well, I'm going to break these down into three thoughts and they really overlap and intertwine and they're not distinct, but just so we can kind of follow the flow. There are three senses in which the Spirit of God affirms our adoption. We are led by the Spirit; we are freed by the Spirit; and we are told by the Spirit. And we'll just divide it down that way ... even though that may not be the most exacting Way to exegete the passage, it will help us to flow.

First of all, we are led by the Spirit. Notice verse 14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The first mark of an adopted son of God, the first confirmation, the first affirmation, the first assurance that I really belong to God, that I've been adopted into His family, that I'm in a no-condemnation status by that adoption, the first assurance I have is that I am led by the Spirit. I am led by the Spirit. The point is that if you look at your life and you can see the Spirit of God leading you, then you can be sure that you belong to God. That's an affirmation that you're a child of God, that you've been adopted into His family. For He gives His Spirit only to His children. We've just been through that in the prior passage. We are in the Spirit because we possess the Spirit. Verse 9 is saying that. And since we possess the Spirit, the Spirit confirms our adoption, our sonship, by leading us. And so when someone comes to me, and this happens quite often, and says, "I'm worried about whether I'm a Christian or not, I have all kinds of doubts." One of the things that I will ask them is this, "Do you ever have the sense of the leading of the Spirit of God in your life?" "Oh yes." Well, then look at this verse, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are what? The sons of God." And if you have the sense of the ongoing leading of the Spirit of God in your life even though you don't always respond the way you should, if ... backing up, for example, to verse 13 ... if you through the Spirit are killing the deeds of the body, that's evidence that the Spirit of God is there leading you away from sin, leading you to victory. If you're seeing victory over sin in your life, you're seeing it because the Spirit is there for--that's a transition word at the beginning of 14--as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they're the sons of God.

The point is that if you by the Spirit's power, verse 13, are killing the deeds of the body that proves you are being led by the Holy Spirit. And if you're being led by the Holy Spirit, you must be a son of God. To reverse it. If you are a son of God, you'll be led by the Spirit. And if you're led by the Spirit, you'll be killing sin. That's the flow.

So, the first way the Spirit of God confirms to us that we belong to Him is the Spirit's leading us, the Spirit's leading us. That is a great thought. I don't always follow the way I should, we don't always do that, but I can sense in my life the leading of the Spirit of God. That's just basic to Christian living.

Now the question that immediately comes into my mind, and probably yours: how does the Spirit do this? What am I looking for? How do I know I'm being led by the Spirit of God? I mean, how can I be sure?

Well, let me just start out and see if I can't give you a clear explanation of this. The Holy Spirit does not lead us violently. He doesn't grab us by the, you know, the hair and drag us. The Holy Spirit doesn't lead that way. He doesn't lead with violence; He leads by bending and changing our will. But nevertheless, He leads. And you know, I believe this is the promise of God to us. I don't believe that when the Lord redeems His people, Old Testament or New Testament, He leaves them on their own. I believe He promises to lead them. Let me show you why.

Go back with me, for a moment, to Proverbs. Do you know this verse? Proverbs 3:5 and 6? "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, lean not on thine...unto thine own understanding, in all thy ways acknowledge Him," what's the last line? "He shall...what? ... direct thy paths." That's the promise of God. He shall direct thy paths.

Now back up one more book to Psalms, verse 4 of Psalm 25 and here's the prayer of the psalmist. Psalm 25, verse 4, "Show me Thy ways, O Lord. Teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth and teach me for Thou art the God of my salvation. On Thee do I wait all the day." The psalmist is affirming the fact that he is dependent on God's leading him. And of course, the response in verse 9, "The meek will He guide in justice, and the meek will He teach His way." God does lead.

In Psalm 143, I love this, verse 10, it says: "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God." "The Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." He says, "God, You do the leading part, and then You teach me to obey Your leading."

So, the affirmation of those verses is that God is leading us, that God desires to lead us. You remember the statement of Isaiah chapter 30 verse 21? "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying ... this is the way, walk ye in it." In other words, the prophet says you'll be going through life and all of a sudden you'll hear a voice behind you and the voice will say, "This is the way ... walk ye in it." Have you ever heard that voice? Not an audible voice, the voice of conscience, of conviction is the voice of the Spirit of God prompting your heart in the right direction.

In Isaiah 48 verses 16 and 17, I'm just looking at some general Scriptures and then I'm going to get specific in a moment. Isaiah 48:16 and 17, "Come near unto Me, hear this," I love this, "I have not spoken in secret from the beginning." God doesn't have secrets. God does not have secrets. I haven't spoken in secret, not regarding what He expects of us, "From the time that it was, there am I, and now the Lord God and His Spirit has sent me. Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, the holy one of Israel, I am the Lord thy God who teacheth thee to profit, who leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." In other words, God says, "I am in the business of leading you. I am committed to teaching and leading and I'm not keeping secrets, I'm telling you the truth."

In Jeremiah 10:23 it says; "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O Lord, correct me." He says, "I don't know where to go and it's not in man to be able to know where to go so would You straighten me out, Lord?"

So all of these Scriptures are affirmations that we are dependent on the leading of God. And now we ask the question then: how does God lead us? Well, verse 14 says He leads us by His Spirit. All right, we ask this question: how does the Spirit of God lead us? How? Two ways...many ways, but boiled down to two. Way number one is illumination ... illumination. These are very important...illumination.

What do I mean by that? I believe the Spirit directs our path by giving us understanding of God's Word, that's illumination. I don't think we want to assume that it is something mystical and extrabiblical. There are certainly those times when the Spirit of God leads us very individually, very specifically, very purposefully in a practical way, but primarily, the leading of the Spirit of God is through the illumination of the Word of God. That's where it starts. We'll get to the other half in the second thought...illumination. The Spirit leads through the Word of God. And as the Word of God is read, as the Word of God is studied, as we meditate upon it, I believe the Spirit of God opens our minds, opens our hearts that we might understand.

Genesis is an interesting passage in chapter 41, verse 38, it says: "And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such and one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "For as much as God hath shown thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art." Now when they saw Joseph's wisdom, they said he must have the Spirit of God in him. The Spirit of God confirms to us the wisdom of God. Now for our day and our time, that is found in the Word of God.

In Ephesians, for example, chapter 1 verse 15, "Wherefore I also after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love to all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." Now listen. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that you may know what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and what is the exceeding greatness of His power ... and so forth.

I believe it is the Spirit of God who opens our understanding. Who enlightens our mind, who helps us to understand the Word of God.

In the third chapter of Ephesians, he prays that we would be strengthened with might by the Spirit. Why? To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. In other words, we will know God's truth; we will understand who God is by the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. In Colossians 1, you have the same kind of thing, in verse 8, it ends with the mention of the Holy Spirit. And then Paul launches into a prayer that you would be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. And I believe that comes from the ministry of the Spirit. And I believe primarily it comes as He illuminates the Word of God, as He opens the Word of God to our understanding. That's why Colossians 3:16 says that we are to let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly. As the Word of God dwells in us richly, as we take it in, the Spirit of God illuminates that Word, it becomes a living Word to us.

Look for a moment at 1 Corinthians 2, which is the most definitive passage in all the Bible, I think, on this matter of illumination. And we could say a lot about this passage because there's a lot in it ... time is fast fleeting away. But it says in 2:14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of

God." It's been talking about the revelation of God, how that men cannot receive it, it's not available through the wisdom of the world. In fact, the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, and so forth. And he finally comes down and says, "The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, they're foolishness to him, he can't know them, they are spiritually discerned." In other words, the natural man cannot understand the Scripture. He can't understand the revelation of God. It has to be spiritually defined for him, spiritually explained. But he that is spiritual, that is he that is under the teaching ministry of the Spirit mentioned in verse 13, he is able to judge and discern all things. For verse 16 says, "He literally has the mind of Christ."

So, the Spirit of God then illumines to us the revelation of God. The revelation, by the way, is mentioned in verse 13, the words which the Holy Spirit teaches. The Holy Spirit gave us the Bible and now the Holy Spirit illuminates to our minds that Scripture.

The gospel of Luke ends with an interesting statement in verse 45, near the end: "Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." And that, I think, is what the Holy Spirit does, though there it was Christ, it is the Spirit of Christ who does it. First He told them the Scriptures and then He opened their minds to understand it.

Now, the Spirit of God leads us primarily through the Word of God being illuminated to us by His ministry. So if you question whether or not you're a Christian, ask yourself, "Is the Spirit of God leading me?" You say, "Well, what do you mean by that?" Are you understanding the Word of God? Is He opening its truths to your heart? Are you coming to the true conclusions? Do you see the reality of the Word of God? Is the Spirit of God making it clear? Does it touch your heart with conviction? Does it give you joy when you see the joyous parts? Does it give you sorrow when you see the saddened parts? Is the Word of God a living book to you? If it is, it is so because the Spirit of God is illuminating it in your heart. There are all kinds of people across the face of the earth, in fact, anybody who can read, can read the Bible, but they cannot have it illuminated to their heart. That's the work of the Spirit in leading the sons of God. That's illumination.

Number two, I said there were two ways the Spirit leads. The second way, I believe, is sanctification. The first is illumination; the second is sanctification. And I just use that as a rather broad term but here I have the idea in mind that once He has shown us what it means, He then assists us in applying that in the progress of spiritual growth. The Holy Spirit not only illumines the mind, but He stirs the heart and the will. Now, friends, I can't give you any more information than that. I don't know how He does it. I really don't know how He does it. But I know the Spirit of God lives within the believer and I know He speaks to the mind and the heart of the believer, I know He can convict the heart I know He can bring joy to the heart. I know He can produce all of His fruit: love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. All those things the Spirit of God produces. I can't explain how. That's a miraculous thing, I can't explain, frankly, how God does anything. But it is more than just illuminating the mind. I believe the Spirit of God leads us by prompting the heart...by prompting

the heart.

In Psalm 119 and verse 35, the psalmist says: "Make me to go in the path, God, don't just show me the path, make me to go in it," shove me. And in Psalm 119:133 it says: "Order my steps in Thy word and let not any one iniquity have dominion over me." And so, the cry is not just: may I understand you with my mind? But may I act in response to my understanding with my will. So, the Spirit of God is illuminating the mind and activating the will. And In the first is illumination and the second we'll call sanctification, the process of spiritual response of separation unto God in acts of obedience.

Now, it's a present tense, verse 14, as many as are being continually led by the Spirit of God through the illumination of the Word of God and the sanctification of obedience to it, prompted by the Spirit of God, they have the confidence in their hearts that they indeed are the children of God. Now frankly, folks, when you have those times in your life that you're not in the Word and you're not walking in obedience, you will not have that confirmation. You will not have that affirmation. And that's why Christians will fall into times of doubt because they are not under that direct leading ministry of the Spirit of God. And that's why, you see, the New Testament is filled with exhortations. I mean, if we were always led by the Spirit of God all the time, we were always responding to illumination and sanctification, we wouldn't need any exhortations, would we? So, we say this. It is true that all Christians are led by the Spirit, but it's also true that we're not as good at following as we ought to be, right? If we're truly saved, we will follow, but we could follow better. That's why there are exhortations. True Christians are being led by the Spirit of God. True Christians are responding to His illumination and sanctification work, but they're not responding as fully as they could respond. And that's why there are exhortations.

So, when we say we're being led by the Spirit, listen, that is not a moment of ecstasy. People say, "Oh, I was led by the Spirit the other day to do so-and-so as a moment of ecstasy. I was lifted out of the mundane. I was elated. All of a sudden the Spirit of God led me into this..." as if the rest of their life they were wandering around in a fog trying to generate their own ideas. No, it's a way of life. It's the constant thing.

I tell you, I think about this and it's so exciting to me. Do you realize that all the time, all the time the Spirit of God is at work leading us to illuminate our mind to understand the Word of God and to sanctify our will to respond to that understanding? Bless God. If it weren't for that we'd go right down the drain. The Spirit of God is working ... I like what it says in Genesis: "My Spirit will not always strive with man," which is to say that it's a battle in there. And the Spirit was fighting at that point with unregenerate man, and I think He knows well the struggle with even regenerate men. I mean, He has to fight. He restrains sin in us. He helps us kill the deeds of the body, verse 13 says: "We through the Spirit do that." He's in there battling with us, isn't that great? I mean, you wouldn't want to be alone, would you? I mean, you fail even with Him there, with all the resources available. So important. I believe He injects thoughts, convictions, impulses, direction into our minds, into our hearts, into our

wills to get us going in the right direction. I don't know how He does that, I just know He does it. And I'll tell you something. When you see a crossroads in your life of temptation, you hear His voice, don't you? Sure you do ... if you're a Christian. And if you fall into a sin, you hear His voice again: "Why did you do that?" And He bangs away on you so you won't do it again, making it so painful that you never want to do it again. And that's why Galatians 5:16 says: "This say then, walk in the Spirit." The Spirit's got a path and He's trying to get you in it and Paul says walk in there with Him, get in those footsteps and you won't fulfill the lust of the flesh. And then 17: "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. You know, He's really fighting in there. The Spirit is having a warfare in you. That's right. And the warfare's against your flesh. What's that? That's your humanness, isn't it? Remember that in Romans 6 and 7? That's your fallenness. And the Spirit of God is fighting on the side of your new creation, your new nature, against your humanness, your fallenness, that body of death that's still there. And it's a real battle. But if you're led by the Spirit, you won't fall under the law and you won't produce fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy and on and on and on and on. Instead, you'll walk in the Spirit and you'll produce love, joy, faith, meekness in all those things. So get in there. Verse 25 of Galatians 5 says if you live in the Spirit, then walk in the Spirit.

And so, we're to respond to His leading. The Bible says you can quench the Spirit. The Bible says you can grieve the Spirit. The Bible says you can do despite unto the Spirit of grace. But you don't want to do that because when you do that and you don't follow the lead of the Spirit, you'll forfeit the confidence that He wants to produce in your heart. When it says love, joy, peace ... you know, I believe the peace that He produces is basically the peace of a contented heart that knows he's right with God. And when He's not able to lead in your life and you're not...or I should say when you're not following His lead in your life, you will lose the peace of a confident, settled relationship with God. He wants to affirm your no-condemnation status. He wants to affirm that you belong to God, you've been adopted. He wants to affirm that you're a son of God. And as you follow His leading, you enjoy that affirmation.

Let's look at the second and we'll just stop wherever we want to and pick it up next week and flow right into the next passage. The second thing the Spirit does in ministering to us the proof of our sonship in affirming our no-condemnation adoption status, first we are led by the Spirit, secondly, we are freed by the Spirit. "For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, you've received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

We are sons of God led by the Spirit because we've been adopted. We've been adopted and the spirit of adoption here, friends, is not so much talking about the transaction of adoption, but talking about our sense of belonging to God. He is the spirit in us who makes us feel like we belong to God which allows us to cry to God what? Abba, Father. It's not so much emphasizing here the transaction of adoption as it is the sense of being in the family of God. He is the spirit in us who allows us to feel like we belong to God which lets us rush into God's presence and say Abba, Father. And so, he says

in 15, you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear. See, before you were a Christian you were in bondage, right? A bondage to sin, bondage to judgment. Hebrews 2:15, boy, really lays it out very clearly, it says this: "And Christ came to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." You see, men live in guilt of sin. They live in the fear of judgment. They might hide from that fear, they might try to mask that fear, but it's there. There's a sense of the inevitable judgment on sin. Men fear that. There is a slavish bondage among the unredeemed; there is a fear of punishment, a fear of judgment, a fear of condemnation felt by those under the guilt of their sin without the relief of salvation. They live in fear. Oh, they may drink the fear away, or play the fear away, or try to forget the fear, evade the fear, substitute religion to cover up the fear but it's that that they're working to cover up which confesses that it's really there. For the law of God in the conscious of man, it says in Romans 4:15, works wrath, it works wrath.

And I believe men are under judgment, particularly Jewish people and I think if he has that in mind here, under the tremendous bondage of the law, these people knew they couldn't keep the law, they knew they were under the condemnation of God, under the judgment of God, there was a tremendous burden and that's why it was called the law of sin and death, that's why it's called in 2 Corinthians the ministration of death, the very law of God is called that. Because it was such a bondage. Psalm 77:3 says, "I thought of God and I was troubled," no wonder. You think about God very long and you'll be troubled ... holy God and unholy man. The thought of God aggravates grief, it aggravates guilt, it aggravates fear. So he says you didn't become Christians to be put again in a spirit of bondage to fear. I mean, you're in a no-condemnation status and the Spirit of God doesn't want to bring you back under some bondage of fear, that's an unhealthy kind of fear, not a reverence for God, but the fear of punishment, the fear of ultimate damnation, the fear of losing salvation, the fear of having to pay for your sin. No, no. He didn't come into your life to bring you under that, but you received Him so that you would have the sense that you belong to God and that because His love is shed abroad on you, because you have received the Lord Jesus Christ, you have no more fear for God has not given us a spirit of what? Fear, 2 Timothy 1:7. First John says, "For perfect love casts out..." what? And who loved us with perfect love?...God did, in Christ. So we don't have fear. I don't fear.

You say, "Well, how can you be ... I'm worried that He...I know I made a confession to the Lord, I'm afraid in the end I'm going to get there and, boy, I'm going to get it. And my salvation isn't real." Listen, the Spirit of God is in your life to confirm that you belong to God. He's the spirit of adoption. He's the spirit of adoption. But that confirmation, reminding us that we've been freed, comes to those who walk in the Spirit and follow His leading and as soon as you don't do that, as I said earlier, you will forfeit that sense of assurance. You don't forfeit your salvation, you just can't enjoy the assurance that it brings. It's the wonderful internal work of the Spirit as He frees our mind from any fear of bondage, as He frees our hearts from any fear of punishment, judgment, hell and liberates us to cry Abba, Father. Oh, that's a beautiful phrase.

Cry is krazo, a loud cry signifying deep emotion. And "Abba" is the Aramaic for "papa, daddy." You reserve that for just one person ... daddy. I mean, I had a guy the other day introduce me to somebody, he said, "This is a friend of mine, I want you to meet my pastor." He shook my hand and said, "Hello, father." He thought I was a priest, you know. I kind of wiggled my tie a little bit and... We kind of chuckled as we walked off. I've been called "father" a few times. Father is sort of a dignified term, we say George Washington is the father of this country, and so forth, but "papa and daddy," that's very intimate. And that's what Abba means. In fact we had a little Jewish family that lived across the street from us, they were from Israel, they moved here, they called their dad "abba." "Hey, Abba," We could hear them saying it all the time ... daddy, papa. I mean, who goes into the presence of holy God and says, "Papa," "Daddy?" I mean, that is really shocking news to the average Jew. And then he even translates it "Father." Father being the translation of the Aramaic which the Greek readers might not understand in Rome. It's a word of trust; it's a word of dependence, a word of intimacy, a word of tenderness, a word of love. It is a very, very personal word and I would hasten to add it is the very word our dear Lord used when He spoke to the Father in the garden of Gethsemane, He said, "Papa, Abba," Mark 14:36.

It is the Spirit of God working in our hearts and lets us rush into the presence of God and know that He loves us and He's glad we're there, right? And we're not intruding Him. Once we were trembling sinners living in fear, and now we are sons in the beloved care of our Father. Once we were strangers, now we are family. Once we were shut out, now we are intimate. And we can go into the presence of the Holy God of the universe and we can say "Papa," deep intimacy, warm fellowship. You see, it's the Spirit in your heart that gives you that sense. Do you ever have ... do you ever go to God with your deepest ... do you ever go to God with the silliest little things? And you say, "Lord, I just need to talk to you about this. Here's my problem." Do...the sense of intimacy you have with God, the eagerness with...which carries your heart into His presence is the prompting work of the Spirit of God affirming that you belong there. Do you see that? Isn't that a wonderful ministry? Cause you don't say, "Ah, God, I'm coming in...you know ... turn off the heat." But there's a sense of freedom and rushing into His presence knowing that He's intimate with you and you with Him. That's the work of the Spirit that gives you that sense of intimacy.

John Dunne, the poet, great preacher who became the dean of St. Paul's cathedral in 1621 wrote this hymn to God the Father, and it was written at a time of his life when he had some of these fears. Listen to what he wrote...just great.

Wilt Thou forgive that sin where I begun which was my sin, though it were done before? Wilt Thou forgive that sin through which I run and do run still, though still I do deplore? When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done, for I have more.

And in that particular verse, he's just saying, "Lord, it seems like this is my sin, though lots of folks have done it. And I do it and I come and ask for forgiveness and then I do it again. And when you've done with me once, you haven't done with me, I'm back." And he's feeling the burden of his sin. And he says in the second verse:

I have a sin of fear that when I've spun my last thread I shall perish on Thy shore. But swear by Thy self that at my death Thy Son shall shine as He shines now and heretofore, and having done that, Thou hast done, I fear no more.

Oh, that's great. If You'll just swear that at my death, Thy Son will still be there and shine as He's shone before, I have no fear. And of course, God did that in His Word. So, the Spirit of God produces the confidence in our hearts.

And a last thought, and we'll just wrap this up, 16, we are led by the Spirit, freed by the Spirit and told by the Spirit. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we're the children of God. You know, in that Roman adoption system, do you know what you had to have to get the adoption final? Seven witnesses. That's right. According to William Barclay's study of the Roman law, he says there had to be seven witnesses so that that's how important adoption was. You get the picture? What happens if you get adopted in a family and say, "Hey, I'm adopted into this family, I'm the rightful heir." And they say, "Hey, the father's dead, friend, the father is dead now, it's coming to us." Right? You'd have a fight on your hands, wouldn't you? With all the kids who were born into the family naturally? So you had to have seven witnesses. I mean, it would be tough to kill off seven witnesses, wouldn't it? And so as soon as the father died, all these witnesses would surface. "Oh yeah, we were all there." Seven witnesses.

And so it is that the Holy Spirit comes to our testimony. And the Holy Spirit bears with us the same testimony. We say, "Hey, I belong to God. I'm God's child." And somebody says, "Don't kid us. You don't have any right to inherit God's throne, who do you think you are? I work with you; I've seen your testimony. You're not a Christian. I've seen the way you act, the way you talk. You've blown it, friend."

Or, you say to yourself, "Boy, I failed so many times, maybe I'm not a child of God." And the Holy Spirit says, "Ahem! I was there. You are. And I am the witness and I bear witness with your spirit." And when you stand up and you say, "Yes, I belong to God and yes, I'm a child of God," the Holy Spirit comes along beside and says, "Yes, he is." And I believe it is again the mysterious internal ministry of the Spirit of God within us confirming to our own spirits that we are the children of God. And so, when someone would want to take it away from us, as it goes on later in the chapter to say, and would want to condemn us and would want to lay some sin against us and when Satan who is the great accuser wants to come in and accuse us and say "You don't belong to God, who do you think you are? You with all the sin in your life? You who fall short? You don't belong to God." Something in our heart says, "Yes I do, yes I do." And the Spirit comes along side and says, "Yes you

do." And He, by the way, is called by Isaiah "the seven-fold Spirit," interesting coincidence.

So, there's a double witness. I think there are lots of people in the world saying, "I'm a child of God, I'm a child of God," and they're saying it alone because it isn't true. And there is no Holy Spirit confirmation. And maybe they think if they say it long enough they'll convince themselves it's really true but there's no internal conviction that it's really true. "Well, I must ... I go to church and I'm very religious ... I belong to God ... oh, I belong..." But that's very different than you and I saying, "Yes, I belong to God." How do you know that? Because I have the sense of the confirmation of the Spirit of God in my heart that I belong to Him. What a great thought.

I want to draw this to a conclusion by just having you look at two passages. Second Peter 1, and just briefly, very briefly. You must understand this passage, and I'm not going to go into detail cause I've done it before. But how can you really enjoy this ministry of the Spirit? The leading, freeing, telling ministry of the Spirit? How can you enjoy this? Well, in 2 Peter 1 it says that we have been given by the divine power of God exceedingly great and precious promises, verse 4. "We have become partakers of the divine nature, we've escaped the corruption in the world through lust." In other words, it tells us we've been saved. We've been transformed. And then it says this, "Now in your life, you add to your faith virtue, and to your virtue knowledge, and knowledge self-control, self-control patience, patience godliness, and then brotherly kindness and then love," and you start adding those things in your life. And that comes when you walk in the Spirit, when you follow His leading, when you live in the freedom He gives you, when you hear His voice as it speaks and as you walk in that way you will never be barren nor unfruitful. You won't be barren or unfruitful, you'll be productive. But if you don't do that, verse 9, you will be blind and you can't see far off and you will forget that you were ever saved.

You see the point of the passage? I mean, assurance of salvation comes by the fruit produced in your life through the walk in the Spirit. The Spirit is there and the Spirit wants to lead you and He wants to have you cry Abba, Father, have an intimacy with God and He wants to tell your spirit that you're redeemed but He tells those things to you and they are heard by you and believed by you when you are hearing Him explain the Word of God and when you are following His impulses to obedience. And as soon as you don't do that, you'll forget, you'll be blind, you forget you were purged. So verse 10 says, "Brethren, if you want to make your calling and election sure," not sure to God, He knows, but sure to whom? Sure to you. "You do these things and you'll never fall from your confidence. You'll know there's an entrance for you into the Kingdom," that's what the next verse says.

So, assurance in our salvation is the ministry of the Spirit. You have no condemnation, beloved, but you can't enjoy that no-condemnation status unless you're responding to the internal ministry of the Spirit of God in leading you, in giving you that wonderful heart attitude that rushes into the presence

of God and cries out Abba, Father. And I'll tell you something, if you're not walking in the Holy Spirit in obedience to His will, you're not going to have the sense of His leading, right? And if you're not walking in according ... in accordance with His will and following His sanctifying promptings, you're not going to feel that you have access to God. I've had people say to me in the same circumstance, "I can't pray." Have you ever had anybody say that? I can't pray.

And furthermore, when you try to convince yourself you're really a Christian, you're not going to hear the affirming testimony of the Holy Spirit either. Because that comes to those who are walking in the Spirit. He's doing the freeing, He's doing the leading, He's doing the talking, but if you're off at a distance, you're not going to know it.

And one final passage, 1 John 3:18. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue but in deed and truth." Don't just say it, do it. "And by this we know that we are the truth." How do you know you're a Christian? How do you know you belong to the truth? How do you know you belong to Christ? "By this we know we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts." How do you assure your heart you're saved? By being sure that what you do is not just talk but what? Action, deed and truth. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, knows all things, beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then we have confidence toward God.

And whatever we ask we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight and this is His commandment that we should believe on the name of the Son, Jesus Christ, love one another as He gave commandment. He that keepeth His commandments dwells in Him, He in him, and by this we know that He abides in us by the ... what? ... by the Spirit whom He's given us."

As you walk in obedience, as you keep His commandments, your heart doesn't condemn you. You say, "I'm not condemned. I'm in a no-condemnation status. My heart doesn't condemn me." And how do you know that? Because you're living in truth and you're obeying not only in word and tongue but in deed and truth and as you walk down that path, your heart will not condemn you, and by your faithfulness and your obedience, you will know you abide in Him and who's giving you that confidence? The end of verse 24, "By the Spirit." It is the Holy Spirit's work then to assure us of our no condemnation status by affirming that we've been adopted as children of God. And He does that work all the time. It's just that sometimes we walk out of the sound of His voice and we lose that confidence.

Boy, when I think about what the Spirit is doing for us, isn't it wonderful? Oh my, all the things He does for us, freeing us from the law of sin and death, equipping us to kill sin, confirming to us that we are the children of God. How glorious.

There was an old Cornish preacher by the name of Billy Bray(?) and he just was so excited about what God was doing in his life, he wrote this: "I can't help praising the Lord. As I go along the street, I lift up one foot and it seems to say, 'Glory.' And I lift up the other foot and it seems to say 'Amen.' And they keep it up all day."

Well, when you think about what God's done for us, it's glory and amen.

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