

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

Marks of a Child Adopted by God

Scripture: Romans 8:14-16

Code: 90-172

Well we come to the heights again. Romans 8 in our ongoing study of Scripture and what blessed, blessed chapter it is. So rich and so full. and we're well aware if we've been here for the last few weeks, we're going through Romans 8, a chapter I've titled "Life in the Spirit" because that's really what it's about. And tonight we come to verses 14, 15, and 16 of this eighth chapter of Romans having already gone through the prior 13 verses.

Let me read these three verses as the context for the message tonight. "For all that are being led by Spirit of God these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God." Or as some translation put it children of God. You'll notice in verse 14 we are referred to as sons of God; in verse 15 we are referred to as sons of God by adoption; and in verse 16 again we are referred to as sons of God.

The theme of these three verses then clearly is our being adopted as sons of God. One of the most beautiful and rich theological concepts of the Scripture is this theme of adoption. In fact the very word is filled with grace and mercy and love. adoption by definition refers to a legal action by which a person takes in to his family a child not his own and usually not even related to him for the purpose of treating as and giving him all the privileges of his own child. That's adoption. A legal action by which we take someone who is not apart of our family in to grant them all the privileges of being our true child.

Now throughout the Bible there are some marvelous illustrations of adoption and I think they provide such a great background for understanding this passage that I want to take a few moments to point them out to you. In Exodus, chapter two, we come to the first great story of an adoption. A man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi and the woman conceived and bore a son and when she saw that he was beautiful or handsome she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Of course she was hiding the child from the Egyptians who were gonna kill all the first born children. When she could hide him no longer she got him a wicker basket, covered it over with tar and pitch, put the child into it and set him among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. The Nile had these tall reeds and she thought she could hide the child there. And his sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him. then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile and with her maidens walking along side the Nile and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid and brought

it to her. And when she opened it she saw the child and behold the boy was crying. And she had pity on him and said this is one of the Hebrews children. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?" And Pharaoh's daughter said to her go ahead. So the girl went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him and the child grew and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses and said, "Because I drew him out of water."

Here is the first adoption we come to in Scripture and it is the adoption of Moses. And most notably God allowed Moses to be adopted into Pharaoh's family so he might rise to the leadership that he did and lead the children of Israel out of the 400 year captivity. In the process God in His wonderful providential ways allowed Moses to be nursed by his own mother. It was in God's plan to place him in a strategic location for future leadership and He did that by having him adopted into the family of Pharaoh. So you could see all the way back then adoption was a significant thing. And you would also note that adoption didn't produce any kind of second class status or Moses would not have risen to the heights that he did in the leadership of Egypt.

If you will look further in the Old Testament for just a brief moment into another wonderful book that gives us insight into adoption turn to the Book of Esther. The Book of Esther. In the Book of Esther in chapter two and verse 5 we read now, "There was a Jew in Susa, the capitol, his name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, who had been taken into exile who had been taken into exile from Jerusalem with the captives who had been exiled with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had exiled. And he was bringing up Hadassah, which is Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had no father or mother." Here was Hadassah, her Hebrew name, Esther her other name, her name given in that culture. He obviously was related to her but her father and mother had died and she had become an orphan. So Mordecai as his own daughter. The young lady was beautiful of form and face and when her father and mother died Mordecai took her as his own daughter. Down to verse 15, "Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai who had taken her as his daughter, came in to go to the king," and so on and so forth and so on, again it mentions that he had taken her as his own daughter. She was the adopted daughter of Mordecai.

Over in the second chapter we find the very same thing again referencing her as Esther, the daughter of Mordecai who was under his care. In tender care for this orphan girl he did all he could to care for her and protect her as his very own. And as the story of Esther unfolds it becomes apparent the extent to which Mordecai would go for the care of this lovely Jewish girl.

But maybe the most notable and unforgettable story of adoption is found in 2 Samuel 9 and I want you to turn to that as well because I think while we could look more deeply into the story of Moses

and the story of Hadassah or Esther here is a wonderful story, a lovely story of adoption found in 2 Samuel 9. In this story David adopts a son and in fact David adopts the son of his evil, proud, jealous, murderous enemy. And what you have in this adoption is a wonderful picture of God's grace. Chapter 9, "Then David said, 'Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?'" Now I don't need to remind you, I don't think, that Saul had become the great enemy of David and Saul had tried on repeated occasions to take David's life, to kill David. And Saul's son Jonathan of course had befriended David and they had become knit together in heart and Jonathan often warned David about the approaches, the deadly approaches, of Saul. But David wanting to show kindness to the house of Saul because of Jonathan says is there anyone left of the house of Saul. "Now there was a servant of the house of Saul, whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David; and the king said to him, 'Are you Ziba?' And he said, 'I am your servant' and the king said, 'Is there not yet anyone of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God?' And Ziba said to the king, 'There is still a son of Jonathan who is crippled in both feet.'" That's all that really remained of the house of Saul. "So the king said to him, 'Where is he?' And Ziba said to the king, 'Behold, he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel in Lo-debar.' Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar. His name Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and prostrated himself. And David said, 'Mephibosheth.' And he said, 'Here is your servant!' David said to him, 'Do not fear, for I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall eat at my table regularly.' Again he prostrated himself and said, 'What is your servant, that you should regard a dead dog like me?' Then the king called Saul's servant Ziba and said to him, "All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson." This was Mephibosheth. And of course when David took over as king everything that was Saul's became his and he now gives it back to this grandson. "And you and your sons and your servants shall cultivate the land for him," that is Ziba, the servant, and all of his family, "and you shall bring in the produce so that your master's grandson may have food; nevertheless Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall eat at my table regularly." Now Ziba had quite a crew, he had 15 sons and 20 servants so they could do the work. "And Ziba said to the king, 'According to all that my lord the king commands his servant so your servant will do.'" So Mephibosheth ate at David's table as one of the king's sons. And Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. And all who lived in the house of Ziba were servants to Mephibosheth. And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate at the king's table regularly. Now he was lame in both feet." Why is that mentioned at the beginning and at the end? Because in that culture he would have been a deformed outcast. But David adopted him as a son and he ate at the king's table.

Do you see the picture of grace there? Do you see the imagery of the Lord Jesus Christ who picked us up in our deformity and brought us to the king's table? What a magnificent story of adoption this is and how beautifully analogous it is to our being adopted into God's family. The parallels in this story I think are striking. First of all David took the initiative. David sought out any remaining sons of Saul. And in our adoption the Lord took the initiative. Furthermore David showed mercy to one who was

unworthy, who had descended from an evil enemy and so does the Lord. The Lord doesn't seek those that somehow have something to commend themselves but the evil and the worthless and the useless and the spiritual outcasts.

Thirdly, David sought one who was socially outcast, who was socially rejected and even despised. One who normal kings wouldn't want in their presence. And so has God chosen us with our deep sinful deformity. Furthermore David was motivated by love. He had a love for Jonathan. In our case God was motivated by love. It was God's love for Christ that made Him come and redeem us and adopt us.

Ephesians 4:32, "For Christ's sake God has forgiven you." David did it for Jonathan's sake. God did it for Christ's sake. Furthermore David desired to show kindness, to extend magnanimous kindness, to pour out blessing and so has God who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. And adopted us as His own sons to inherit the fullness of His kingdom. David chose one, furthermore, who was outside the standard of perfection. You know what Mephibosheth means? Sad to think about. It means a shameful one. And from the time he was born he bore that name. A shameful one. He lived in Lo-debar. Now you've never heard of a place called Lo-debar, there actually was a place. You know what Lo-debar means in Hebrew? It means the place with no pasture. It was a desert, it was a wasteland. So here was an outcast from no place. Shameful and given the name shameful one. And so the Lord has chosen us, outcast, shameful, crippled spiritually, living in a wilderness with no food and no water. And David brought him to his table and made him one of his own. And so the Lord brings us to His table and gives to us life and peace and inheritance and provision and an honored position. It's just a magnificent analogy, isn't it?

That's how God has adopted us. We're the Mephibosheth's, we're the shameful ones that He has graciously brought into His palace and seated at the king's table. We inherit the kingdom. Adoption in the New Testament then can be understood by the richness of that picture. Paul in Romans 9 talks about the Jews, the Israelites to whom belongs the adoption as sons. God brought first of all the Jews in as His own adopted children but that wasn't gonna be the end of it. Galatians 4 tells us that in the fullness of time, verse 4, "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law in order that he might redeem those who are under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons." And he's writing to Gentiles here. God reached out and adopted first the Jews and then He went beyond that of course and adopted the Gentiles to become sons, that's Galatians 4:5. In fact all of us who are saved fit into Ephesians 1:5, "He predestined us to (adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself." When God and eternity passed before time began chose who would be saved He predestined them not only to be redeemed and not only to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ but to become His sons according to the kind intention of His will.

All of us who are believers then in the truest spiritual sense have been adopted by God into His own family. In 2 Corinthians 6:17 this is referred to, "Therefore come out from their midst and be separate

says the Lord and do not touch what is unclean and I will welcome you and I will be a Father to you and you shall be sons and daughters to me says the Lord Almighty. Turn from your sin, come to me and I'll make you My sons and daughters." Marvelous truths.

Now with that background let's go back to the eighth chapter of Romans. Perhaps we've enriched our understanding a little bit. Verse 14 where it says, "We are the sons of God," verse 15, "we have received the spirit of adoption as sons," and verse 16, "we are the sons of God," again. Now remember we're going through this chapter and it begins in verse 1 identifying a no condemnation status. We have a no condemnation status before God, we'll never be finally judged, we'll never be punished for our sins. We are in a no condemnation state. And it is the Holy Spirit who secures that. Now remember as we've been going through the chapter there are seven aspects of the Spirit's works, seven aspects of life in the Spirit that secure us in this no condemnation status. He frees us from sin and death, verses 2 and 3. He enables us to perfectly fulfill the law by imputed righteousness, verse 4. He changes our nature; that's convergence and regeneration, verses 5 to 11. He empowers us for victory, verses 12 and 13. He guarantees our glory, verses 17 to 25. He intercedes for us, verses 26 and 27. And then the passage we're looking at He confirms our adoption. He confirms our adoption.

We have no condemnation status because the Holy Spirit has made us children of God and confirms that reality. Key phrase in this little text is in verse 15, "We have received," we have received, verse 15, "the Spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out Abba Father." And I think spirit should be capitalized there. It is by the Holy Spirit that we've been made sons of God. As we've been learning it is the Holy Spirit that has freed us from sin and death. The Holy Spirit enabling us to fulfill the law through working in us the imputation the righteousness of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who has changed our nature. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers us for victory. And here it is the Holy Spirit who confirms our adoption. It is the Holy Spirit who brings us in to the family. The Holy Spirit transfers us from the alien family in to the family of God. He makes us sons of God.

Galatians 4:6, "And because you are sons," listen to this, "God has sent for the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying Abba Father." The spirit made us sons and the Spirit confirms that sonship by prompting us to cry out Abba Father. Now let's talk about the term adopted for a moment. It may sound somewhat second class to some people. There are some tragic things being said about adoption. There are some who've been teaching you should never adopt a child from an unconverted family. You ought to be careful who you ever adopt. I've read some material on this; it's quite frightening material because they say, these are Christian people who say this, you don't ever want to adopt anybody because of what the Old Testament says, "The sins of the father's are visited upon the third and fourth generation." And it may be that you're adopting a cursed child bearing a curse from several generations before. There are some who go to great length to warn us lest we adopt some cursed child. Let me respond to that and I intend to spend a lot of time on it but let me respond by saying this: that is totally a misrepresentation of what that means in the _____ when it says the sins

of the fathers' are visited upon the third and fourth generation. It does not mean that somebody three or four generations down the line is going to be cursed by God because of something done in their background, genealogy. What it means is plural; the sins of the fathers are visited upon the third and fourth generation simply means that when you have corrupt fathers, when you have corruption of the leadership of a nation it will take three or four generations before you'll ever root that out. It becomes systemic and endemic. Wickedness in a generation will be passed down because of evil influence. It is not saying that the sin of some person will cause a curse on some other person. It says the collective sins of the fathers, that is when the leaders and the heads of the nations are corrupt it will affect the people into the third and fourth generation.

And when you come to Ezekiel 18 if you want to read some interesting notes read my notes in the study Bible and Ezekiel 18 and hear God say never goes God hold anybody responsible ever for any sin but their own. No father will be punished for the sins of his sons says Ezekiel and no son will ever be punished for the sins of his Father. Ezekiel 18 lays out individual responsibility very clearly. And I say that because some people have put a huge cloud over adoption. And some have gone so far to say you might even get a demon possessed child because of some curse and antiquity somewhere. Nothing could be further from the truth. That is not what the Scripture is saying and no child is going to pay for the sins of any parent.

Adoption needs to be put back into the lofty position it belongs biblically and I think it has suffered greatly because of this seriously erroneous teaching. And if I sound a little exercised by it I am because I think it is such a terrible thing. In a time when we have a world so full of orphans who desperately need to be adopted you don't want to run around depreciating that. People don't need to be frightened about that.

In the first century, you will be happy to know this, in the first century when Paul was writing this adopted children were in many cases more honored than natural children. That's right. In many cases, in all cases it was seen as an act of honor to be adopted. And to be able to say in a world of illegitimate children and in a world of orphaned children I was chosen by someone. I wasn't just born into a family and you got what you got; I was chosen. Being adopted was a noble thing. An adopted son was deliberately chosen by the adopting father to perpetuate that father's name and to inherit that father's estate. And when a father in the Greek world didn't have a son he would go find the noblest available son and adopt him and give him all the rights and privileges. He was in no way inferior; in fact he was chosen because he may be superior. There were many fathers who had sons but their sons didn't meet their qualifications to pass on the estate so they went out and found one that did. An adopted son may have well received the joy of his father's affection more than a naturally born son and he may well have reproduced his father's moral standards more perfectly than natural sons.

And that's the whole point of biblical adoption that we become children of God by sovereign divine choice. We are the preferred choice of God. That's a remarkable thing, isn't it. On the basis of free

and voluntary election God has chosen us to be adopted as His sons. We will never be condemned - this is part of our no condemnation status - we will never be condemned because God has chosen us to be His children forever by His free grace and His uninfluenced sovereignty. We have been lifted to this place of honor and he will fulfill in us the good purpose bound up in that choice.

Let me just give you a little background beyond this in Roman adoption. Roman adoption was always rendered more serious and more difficult by the Roman law called Potrea Protestus. Potrea Protestus, that Latin phrase, meant the father's power. And in the Roman law the father had absolute power over his family. He even had power of life and death over his family. He had the absolute power of disposal and control. And as I said in the early days of the Roman Empire he could take his child's life with absolutely no recourse against him. In regard to his father a Roman son never came to age. That is to say that no matter how old he was he was still under Potrea Protestus, so were the daughters for that matter. No matter how old they were they were still under the absolute control of the father. Now obviously this made adoption into another family very difficult and very serious unless the person was an illegitimate child or an orphan. And if a man saw a son that he wanted and that son belonged to another father he had to go through a very formidable operation to get that person to pass out from under Potrea Protestus to his own control. There were two steps. The first one was called mansupoteo from which we get the word emancipation. And mansupoteo was carried out about a symbolic sort of sale. If the father would agree to let his son be adopted by another man there was this symbolic sale they went to; they had some scales and some copper and they used this symbolism to carry out sort of a transaction like I'm selling this young man to you. They did it three times. Twice the father symbolically sold the son and twice he bought him back and then the third time he didn't buy him back and the Potrea Protestus was broken.

After the sale there was ceremony called Vindacateo and the adopting father went to the Roman magistrate and presented a legal case for the actual legal transference of the person to be adopted into his own Potrea Protestus. And when all this was complete the adoption was done. Now there were four main consequences in a Roman adoption. The adopted person lost all rights in his own family and gained all rights in his new family. He gained all the rights of a fully legitimate son in his new family. secondly he became full heir to his new father's estate even if other sons, if there were no sons, if other sons were afterward born into the family who were real blood relations it did not affect his right of progenerate, his right to be the primary one. He was an inalienably identified heir. Thirdly, according to Roman law, the old life of the adopted person, this is interesting, was completely wiped out. If he had any debts they were cancelled, if he had any record of crime it was abolished. They wiped out all the records as if that person had never existed, as if they had never been born. And the adopted person was regarded as a new person entering a new life with no past. And fourthly in the eyes of the Roman law the adopted person was literally and absolutely the son of his new father in every sense.

Now when you think of our adoption like that it's a pretty wonderful thing isn't it. We have lost all the rights and all the claims of our past and we've gained all the rights and privileges of our new family. We have become heir to our Father's estate. Our past life is obliterated, blotted out and we are literally and absolutely the sons of God. Throughout the New Testament you see this imagery over and over again that when you become a Christian you enter into the very family of God. You did nothing to earn it, you did nothing to deserve it, you did nothing to choose it, God the great Father and His amazing love and mercy has taken the initiative to reach out to you and to draw you into His family and wipe out your past and give you a new life.

Now, when we talk about salvation in the terms of adoption, I just want to put in a footnote here so you don't miss the full picture, that's just one view of salvation. You could talk about salvation with the term of justification which is a different issue. It looks at salvation from the forensic side, from God declaring us righteous on the merits of Christ. You could look at salvation as regeneration which looks at salvation as the new birth. You could look at salvation under the term sanctification which means you're set apart from sin onto holiness. And you can look at salvation as adoption. Those are all facets of salvation. It's like one diamond with many facets; you can look at from many angles and see its beauty. We are regenerate, we are justified, we are sanctified, we have been converted and we have been adopted. So in one sense we are sons by adoption and we are also sons by birth. Right? Regeneration. You shouldn't be confused, you shouldn't say are we adopted or are we born: both. Those are just images. Those are just magnificent ways to look at what happened to us. And I think the reason that the New Testament introduces adoption is because adoption was such a remarkably lofty thing. To say that you born into the family of God might not be something very special but to say that out of all the world of people God Himself chose you and lifted you to the status of an heir and a joint heir with Jesus Christ to become His own son forever that says something unique.

That's why the issue of adoption, picture of adoption, is given for us in the New Testament because it opens up and enriches us with this tremendous dimension of salvation. Now that's all introducing us to verses 14, 15 and 16. Let's look at them. Now as we look at our adoption how does the Holy Spirit work with us? How does the Holy Spirit confirm our adoption? Three ways, we are led by the Spirit, we are freed by the Spirit and we are told by the Spirit we'll say or instructed by the Spirit. We are led by the Spirit, freed by the Spirit, instructed by the Spirit and these are the three ways in which the Holy Spirit confirms our adoption. Let me see if I can get through this in the next few minutes. It's doubtful. Let's see, verse 14, "For all that are being led by the Spirit of God these are sons of God." Obviously he is talking here about being led by the Spirit. The first mark of adopted sons of God is that they're led by the Spirit. The Spirit confirms our adoption by leading us. sometimes I'll even ask a person, they'll say I don't know if the Holy Spirit is at work in my life, I don't know if I'm a real Christian, I don't if I'm really saved, I don't know if the Lord dwells in me and I sometimes ask a person have you ever been led by the Holy Spirit. Because if you've ever been led by the Holy Spirit then you've been adopted into God's family because the Holy Spirit only leads the children of God.

Verse 14, "All who are being led by the Spirit of God these are sons of God." If the Spirit of God has ever led you into the path of righteousness, if the Spirit of God has ever led you into the understanding of Scripture, if the Spirit of God has ever led you to love the Lord your God, if the Spirit has led you to honor Christ, if the Spirit has led you to fall on your knees and repent, if the Spirit has led you to prayer and intercede on the behalf of someone else, if the Spirit has led you and prompted your heart to worship God you're being led by the Spirit is evidence that you're one of the adopted children.

The word simply says to us here that the Spirit leads. You could even put this verse together backwards; the sons of God are led by the Spirit of God. It just sort of a circle here; if you're being led by the Spirit you're sons of God; if you're sons of God you're being led by the Spirit of God. The Spirit dwells in you and the Spirit is in the process of leading you and that very leading is confirmation. As you go through your life and you see the amazing unfolding of the Spirit's work in your life. I mean perhaps it's more common for me than someone who is not in the full time ministry but I'm startled all the time about who the Spirit of God leads me. I go sort of willy-nilly into some environment and before I know God has unfolded an entire scenario there in His purpose and I can say I am here because the Holy Spirit brought me here. Spirit of God is the one who leads me to the Scripture, who leads me to understand the Scripture. The Spirit is the one who leads me to want to honor the Lord and worship Him and to serve Him.

And if you tie it into verse 13 where it says by the Spirit you're putting to death the deeds of the body and then it immediately says that all who are being led by the Spirit of God we can conclude that it is the Spirit of God and this is the connection he makes that is really leading you in spiritual victory over the flesh. So if you see in your life, look in your life, you see victory over the flesh. Oh you don't see it like you'd like to see it but do you ever see it? I mean do you ever win the battle with temptation? Are you ever the victor? Do you ever see sin being killed off? I mean are there those time when you really do triumph and you do go into the word and you do go on your knees before God in prayer and do worship with a full heart and when you give generously and when you seek to honor God and when you love Him and praise Him? Of course. That's proof of your sonship. That's proof of your sonship. The remarkable reality of verse 14 is that God's spirit and man's sonship are interwoven. Only those led by the Spirit are sons of God and sons of God are those led by the Spirit. It's a very simple, precise and clear truth. It's not a question are you always being led by the Holy Spirit discernibly and always obeying - it's the question are you ever led by the Spirit. And if you say yes to that then he's there.

There's another clear statement I believe, just to remind you, that there's no such thing as justification, some kind of declared righteousness apart from regeneration, apart from transformation, apart from sanctification; you are a new creation as we saw in verses 5-11. And may I suggest to that the way the Holy Spirit leads you is not by violence, it's not by violence against your inclination but it's by bending and changing your will. God does lead His children; you find that all throughout the Old

Testament. I don't even want to take the time to go into the passages because they're myriad. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding and all your ways. Acknowledge Him and He will - what? - direct your path. I mean this is pretty standard stuff; God leads His children and He leads them not only externally by the word which shows them the path to walk in but internally by the presence of the Spirit.

In Psalm 25:4 the psalm says, "Make me know they ways O Lord. Teach me Thy paths, lead me in Thy truth." In verse 9 He leads the humble in justice and He teaches the humble His way. So the Spirit confirms our sonship by leading us. As you look at your life you see the evidence of that all around.

Let me expand that a little bit, ask a question how does the Holy Spirit lead the sons of God? How does He do it? What is the nature of this leading? Well, as I said let me just get specific here. It really occurs I think in two ways. First of all He leads through revelation and illumination. What I mean by this I mean He leads us by helping us understand the Scripture. To start with, if you're going to be obedient to God and if you're going to walk in the will of God and if you're gonna do what God wants you to do, if you're going to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit you have to know the Scripture because that's an initially how He leads.

Back in Genesis verse 37 of chapter 41, now this is Pharaoh and Joseph. The proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants, Joseph's plan, "Then Pharaoh said to his servants, 'Can we find a man like this in whom is a divine spirit?' So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are.'" Isn't that great? Since you know what God wants you're the wisest guy around. First of all the Holy Spirit leads us through revelation and illumination and what do I mean by that? He leads us through the Scripture and the understanding of Scripture. Revelation brings us the Scripture; illumination makes it clearer.

The apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:17 prays that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give to you a Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. He prays that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of His calling and so forth and so on. The Spirit that opens the word to us that's the first way he leads us. And this morning we looked at a passage, I wanna draw you back to it, 1 Corinthians 2, this is a great passage. 1 Corinthians 2:10, "To us God revealed the truth," Paul's referring to, "through the Spirit for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God," and then he goes on to talk about how that nobody knows the truth except the Spirit of God and, "We have received," verse 12, "not the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God that we might know the things freely given to us by God." He's talking about inspiration here. He's saying look we're teaching you truth that has come to us by the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God being the author of Scripture. We come to you with both words and thoughts taught by the Spirit, verse 13. And then at the end of the chapter in verse 16 he says we have the mind of Christ. And he's talking about Scripture. I'm writing to you the inspired revelation that the

Spirit of God gives me that reflects the mind of Christ. This is a tremendous thing.

So the Spirit opens our mind by first of all putting the Word in front of us and then secondly illuminating it. Remember Psalm 119:18, the psalm that said, "Open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things out of Thy law." I have the law right here; it's right in my hands. Open my eyes so that I can grasp its truths. Galatians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly." And in that wonderful new covenant passage in Jeremiah 31 Jeremiah says in the new covenant there's gonna be a distinction from the old covenant and the distinction is gonna be that everybody is gonna know me. Everybody's is gonna know the truth. You're all gonna be instructed, you're all gonna have the truth from the greatest of you to the least of you.

So the first way the Holy Spirit leads us is through the revelation of Scripture which when we study it is illuminated to our hearts by His marvelous work.

Paul prayed in Colossians that we would be, verse 9, "filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that we could walk in a worthy way." So first of all, the Spirit leads us through revelation, that's the Scripture, and through illumination; opening up that Scripture to our understanding. Secondly, the Spirit leads us through sanctification, through sanctification. I'm looking at illumination and revelation as one facet dealing with the Scripture. The second one is sanctification. That is the inner powerful process by which the Holy Spirit allows us to practice the Scripture. Whenever you do what is right, whenever you obey the Lord, whenever you put the Word of God into action, whenever you obey Scripture in the sense of holy living duty toward God, service rendered it is because of the energy of the Holy Spirit. This is the mysterious subject at work. He not only gives us the Scripture and grants us the understanding but then he begins to work the Scripture into us.

You remember what it says in Jeremiah 10:23, "The way of a man is not in himself." Jeremiah said it is not in a man who walks to direct his steps; you can't do it, I can't do it. The Holy Spirit does it. He stirs conviction; I feel it, don't you? His conviction, guilt when I'm disobedient, he stirs my heart with love for God, he stirs my heart with love for Christ, he stirs me to do what is right, he prompts my heart to do that noble thing, that righteous thing. He's the one that moves on my mind, moves on my will, he's the one that can make me go in the path of God's commandments _____ said, for therein do I delight. He is the one who can order my steps. He is the one alone who can disallow iniquity from having sway over me. This is a constant and efficient work he is doing all the time. So he enables us to become more and more victorious over sin, which he was talking about earlier in the chapter as we remember from our study of verse 12 and 13. He is the one who gives us that triumph.

Now this doesn't mean that we're not apart of that. And here is the mystery folks, if you say well look it's all the Holy Spirit, He's doing it all, I mean what role do I have. Well it's a mystery beyond my

ability to comprehend but whatever goes on in your life that honors God the Holy Spirit does it but He doesn't do it apart from your will. He has to activate your will. And in some mysterious and wonderful way you and I have to be willing and if we weren't a factor then why all the commands, right. They would be pointless. Some people think it is so much the Holy Spirit that you just sort of don't do anything. These used to be called quietists that let go and let God folks who just flopped. And supposedly let God do it. And the other group was the pietists who believe the very opposite and they grit their teeth and grind away trying to live holy lives on their own. It's not a matter of chasing some personal self discipline goal, it's not a matter of trying to launch yourself into some moment of ecstasy; the Holy Spirit leads you. He will lead you constantly, regularly, but not apart from your will. And if you're not willing He'll chasten you and you'll forfeit blessing in order to make you more willing.

How does the Holy Spirit work? I think He works on our conscience, accusing or excusing us. I think He leads us and guides us in ways we don't know. I think He providentially opens up experiences for us to accomplish His purpose. Sometimes He uses suffering because we need to be refined but the Holy Spirit leads us. And yet Galatians 5 says, "But I say walk by the Spirit." He's leading but we've got to be following, right. and if you don't walk by the Spirit you're gonna be succumbing to the desire of the flesh and the flesh is going to lead you into immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, et cetera, et cetera. This is a great mystery. But living the Christian life takes all of Him and all of me.

I often am caught on this dilemma when people ask me to explain it; I really can't. it's a dilemma you have to explain on every front because if you ask me who wrote the book of Romans I would tell you the Holy Spirit wrote it, the Holy Spirit authored it, the Holy Spirit determined what would be said, every word was inspired by the Spirit of God but yet at the same time Paul wrote it and he wrote every word and it came out of his vocabulary and expressed what was in his heart. And as John Murray, the great theologian said, "Every major doctrine in the Bible has an apparent paradox that is irreconcilable here to our finite minds." Scripture says that we are kept by His power unto glory and yet it tells us to persevere and not turn our backs. Scripture tells us that God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world and yet it cries out to us to repent and to believe and if we don't we perish and we're responsible for that rejection.

I know that the spirit of God is the one who does all the good that's ever done in a believer and yet not apart from that believer's obedience. It is possible for us, remember this, to quench the Spirit, remember that in the New Testament Ephesians? It is possible for us to do despite to the Spirit of Grace, Hebrews 10. It is possible for us to grieve the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works and we work. Paul understood it as much as it could be comprehended. And he said this at the end of chapter one in Colossians, "I labor, striving according to His power which mightily works within me." I labor, to the point of sweat and exhaustion, I strive, I agonize and he was beating his body into subjection to do that and yet he knew that it was the power of God working in him. That's incredible truth of it. The first facet of our sonship is that we are being led by the Holy Spirit. What a tremendous privilege and

promise and he leads us through revelation and illumination and He leads us through the sanctifying process by which He leads us to obedience and conforms us from one level of glory to the next into the image of Jesus Christ.

Secondly we have been freed by the Spirit. We have been freed by the Spirit. Verse 15, "For you have not received the spirit of slavery leading to fear again but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out Abba Father." The emphasis here is on our freedom from our former slavery. We're no longer under bondage, we're not again under bondage. You know how we know that? Because the Holy Spirit freed us from the bondage in fear of punishment and death. We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear. We don't need to live in an attitude of terror. We've been delivered out of the slavery to sin because we have received the spirit of adoption who now lives in us and he has made us sons by which we can cry out Abba Father.

Before salvation all of us lived in slavery, slaves to sin, and we lived in fear of judgment. You know I think the ungodly are afraid of judgment. I think that's why they hate the gospel. They're in bondage to fear. They're in fear of death, in fact in Hebrews 2:15 it says they're in fear of death all their lifelong. They have problems with guilt, they have deep seeded fears, the conscience that God has given them, according to Romans 2, is screaming at them, accusing them. The Law of God written in their hearts is indicting them again in Romans 2. The Law of God written in their hearts, the Law of God prompting through their conscience, Romans 4:15, works wrath. And Romans 8:2 calls it a law of sin and death. The law hammers away at sin, it hammers and hammers about sin and it hammers about death. And men live all their lifelong in the fear of death. The thought of God aggravates guilt, the thought of God aggravates fear, grief, so that the slaves of sin live in a constant fear and a kind of apprehension of the righteous judgment of God and they try to hide from it but that only confirms its reality.

But we don't do that; we're not living in terror, we're not living in fear, we're not living on the brink of total breakdown under the burden of grief over the fear of death. We don't live like that. We've been delivered. We've been liberated. We don't look at God and duck; we look at God and say Abba Father. Abba means Papa. We come to God not in terror but as a loving Father. This is - we're no more slaves. We're now sons. Huge difference. We have received literally the spirit of adoption. That's just another title for the Holy Spirit. As I said it should be a capital S. He is called the spirit of adoption because He is not only the agent of our adoption but He is the indwelling source of our freedom. Freedom means peace, it means joy, it means hope, it means the absence of terror. Freedom from fear and anxiety and depression in the face of judgment.

We have a no condemnation status. We don't fear going before God; we go to God and say Papa. Papa. What a tremendous statement. We cry, that's crawzo, a loud cry signifying deep emotion, Abba, that's the Aramaic word for father but it's like daddy or papa. It was a word used by our Lord in deep agony in the garden when He cried out to the Father, He said Abba, Mark 14. It's a word of

trust, it's a word of tenderness, it's a word of love, it's a word of intimacy, it's a word of dependence, it's a very personal word. The Holy Spirit frees our hearts from the fear of God's judgment and that's how we know we're sons.

I respect my father, I've always respected my father, I've always tried to honor my father but I've never been in fear of my father. My father has never terrified me because his love is so magnanimous towards me. I'm no enemy and I'm no slave. I'm a son and I understand what that means. And before God I am a son. Once I was a trembling sinner living in fear and now I am a so basking in the love of my Father. Once I was a stranger and now I am family. Once I was shut out and now I am intimate. And the Holy Spirit confirms that to my heart.

It was during 1869 at the age of 37 that James Hudson Taylor entered into a new spiritual experience which he described to his sister. It came at a time when he felt as though he were involved in a losing battle. He saw himself as a man who hated sin and yet he was always suffering defeat. He was struggling against it but bringing himself close to despair and to struggle. There was one little ray of light and comfort even before he found all that God had in store for him and he described it in these words that are still memorable. Hudson Taylor wrote this, "I felt I was a child of God because His spirit in my heart would cry in spite of all, Abba Father."

This was scarcely less true in the case of John Dunn, the poet and preacher who became the Dean of St. Paul's in 1621. His once clever wit was channeled into new thoughts as a result of his life changing conversion to Christ and all the gifts of his early poems were brought to bear in his hymn to God the Father. And here's his hymn, "Will thou forgive that sin where I begun which was my sin thou it were done before? Will 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." Boy, what a statement. Will you just keep on forgiving the same stuff because as fast as your forgive it I do it. And then he said this, "I have a sin of fear that when I've spun my last thread I shall perish on the shore. But swear by thyself that at my death my son shall shine as he shines now and heretofore and having done that thou hast done. I fear no more." He needed the confidence that Jesus wouldn't forsake him and the Spirit granted it to his heart. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. He produces a childlike love for God, a childlike obedience to God, a childlike dependence on God, a childlike hope in God.

We are led by the Spirit; we are freed by the Spirit. And lastly we're instructed by the Spirit. Verse 16, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." The spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

I'm gonna close just this last little thought. God witnesses with our spirit. You remember I told you about the Roman adoption ceremony. Historians tell us that the adoption ceremony was finally carried out in the presence of seven witnesses. They wanted seven witnesses so that in case anything ever happened and the father may have died and the son may have tried to claim his rights

the family might have moved against him. They wanted to make sure there were seven witnesses to affirm that this adoption really took place. And it was a lot harder to corrupt seven witnesses of course because there were many and varied. And should a few witnesses die there would be some remaining. Should anybody try to claim that they weren't a true son the witnesses would rise to their defense. And what does Satan spend his time doing? Going to the throne of God and accusing the brethren, like he did with Job, and what is the Holy Spirit doing but interceding for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And the Spirit is witnessing before the throne of God that we are in fact God's sons and he is not only that but he is witnessing with our spirit that we are the sons of God. He is a witness of our adoption into the family. He can bear testimony, sumar tureto, literally continuing to give testimony along with us. Verse John 5:10 says you belong to God you have a witness in yourself.

The Holy Spirit comes alongside our own spirit and gives us witness. Boy what a marvelous ministry. Say how does that work? It's a confidence, it's an insurance that He just gives to us. He just speaks it to our hearts. People sometimes say to me do you - are you sure you belong to God. Yes. My theology secures me but more than that I have this deep seeded confidence that I belong to Him. Where did it come from? Well I think it's just the Holy Spirit who keeps on giving it. But may I suggest to you that it is a gift that comes to us when we're obedient and when we're disobedient it's forfeited. You are secure eternally but you may not always have assurance of your salvation because if you want to make - listen to this very carefully - 2 Peter, I'm gonna close here, if you want to make your calling an election sure, 2 Peter 1:10, "if you want to make your calling an election sure," sure to who? Not God because He's sure. If you want to make your calling an election sure then you better practice these things, verse 10 says, "and you won't stumble." If you don't practice these things you'll forfeit insurance. You won't forfeit your salvation, that's permanent, but you will lose your assurance. What things? Well back to verse 5, "Apply all diligence, add to your faith moral excellence, to your moral excellence knowledge, to your knowledge self control then add perseverance and godliness and brotherly kindness and love. And when these qualities are yours and they're increasing they will render you neither useless nor unfruitful. But if you lack those qualities," verse 9, "you will be blind and shortsighted and you will have forgotten that you have been purged from your sins." So make sure they're there and you'll make your calling and election sure. Great passage.

When you are obedient the spirit blesses you with assurance. When you're disobedient it's withheld. We're not under condemnation because the Holy Spirit has adopted us. The Holy Spirit who has adopted us leads us, frees us and assures us.

Father we thank You for this wonderful text of Scripture tonight. We are so blessed because of the mighty work of the Spirit in us, so grateful. And Lord we thank You that You are there in the form of Your Holy Spirit leading, freeing, assuring Your children so that we cry out to You all mighty God, Holy God, Abba Father. We are Your children. You've adopted us with all the rights and privileges and will give us our full inheritance in the glory to come. We bless You for that. We thank You for the

mighty work of the Spirit to produce and assure that that plan will be accomplished. We bless You for the gift of Your Spirit in our Savior's name. Amen.

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