

The Spirit of Adoption

Romans 8:14-16

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Let's open the Word of God to the 8th chapter of the book of Romans, that beloved, wonderful treatise of the apostle Paul on the gospel and all the aspects of it. And we're looking at Romans 8 because that's the chapter on the Holy Spirit, and this would be Part 6, or message number six, in the study of the life of the Holy Spirit, life and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the believer— in the believer. What the Holy Spirit does in us. And I began this series because of all the misrepresentations of the Holy Spirit that abound in the contemporary Christian world. It is so terribly misrepresented, so insulted, so grieved, so quenched— to borrow biblical language— and so blasphemed. If you watch the current Charismatic lineup of Holy Spirit anointed people, you would have absolutely no idea what the Holy Spirit does. It seems as if they are the victims of an unholy spirit rather than a holy spirit, *the* Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit doesn't make people worldly, carnal, boastful, slick, unaccountable, outrageous, *et cetera, et cetera*. The Holy Spirit has one objective, and that is to make people holy— holy. So if somebody says that he is or she is anointed by the Holy Spirit, what should be manifest in that person is evident holiness. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. That's why He's called the Holy Spirit.

In Isaiah's famous trihagion, he hears the angels in antiphonal worship and they're saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." And that can be trinitarian. Holy is the Father, holy is the Son, holy is the Spirit. That's why there are three of them. This is angelic recognition that the Trinity is essentially holy, and the work of the Holy Spirit is essentially to produce that holiness in human beings, in us.

To better understand that, I want us to look at verses 14 to 16 of Romans 8. I'm going to read them and we'll come back to them in a while. "For all who are being led by the 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 a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba, Father'. The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God." Several references there to the Holy Spirit as there have been in the previous 13 verses because, as we've been saying, this, in Paul's great letter to the Romans, is the chapter that deals with the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers.

But let's go back to the starting point that we were talking about. God the Father is holy, God the Son is holy, and the Spirit is holy. With regard to the Father, Leviticus 19 says, "I, the Lord your God, am holy." And that, by the way, is repeated dozens of times in the Old Testament, God testifying to His own holiness. The Son of God is deemed to be holy in Luke chapter 1, He is called the holy child. And in the book of Hebrews, He is called holy and undefiled. And in looking at the third member of the Trinity, the Spirit of God, we read in Romans 1:4 that one of His names is the Spirit of holiness. So it is true, holy, holy, holy is a trinitarian confession. They're all holy; all members of the holy Trinity are by nature and essence and substance holy.

But there is a particular work of God the Spirit with regard to reproducing holiness in believers. That's His work. He works in what we call sanctification, which is separation from sin, to transform believers into holiness or, if you will, into the likeness of Jesus Christ. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is not body work. It can't be visibly seen in the way you wiggle or move or sway or fall over backwards or mumble or put your hands in the air. It is soul work, it is heart work. In the Old Testament, we would say the work of the Holy Spirit was to produce godliness. In the New Testament, we would say the work of the Holy Spirit is to produce Christlikeness. The message of the Old Testament is be like God. The message of the New Testament is be like Christ. The agent of that is the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the single-most clarifying verse on this is 2 Corinthians 3:18, a verse upon which I wrote a book once when I was asked, "Could you write a small book on the most important verse for Christians in the New Testament?" And I said, "Well, I don't know if I can know that but there's one I could pick," and I picked this one, 2 Corinthians 3:18: "We all with unveiled face, we have no obstructions, nothing blocking our view, behold as in a clear glass the glory of the Lord." As we look at the Lord, as we look at the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, and it's being done by the Lord who is the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit transforms us into Christlikeness as we gaze at the Lord Himself, moving us from one degree to another, one level of glory to another, to another, to another. That is His work. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. That's why He is called the Holy Spirit uniquely, or the Spirit of holiness, to produce holiness in us. As I said, in the Old Testament, the term was godliness. In the New Testament, it is Christlikeness. It's the sanctification. The Holy Spirit is— the theologians would say it this way: The Holy Spirit is the efficient cause— the Holy Spirit is the efficient cause; Scripture is the instrumental means that the Holy Spirit uses.

Let's back up a little bit and talk about this. I want you to get the big picture, okay? Because you need to understand that this work of the Holy Spirit is *the* purpose of God in redemption. This is not part of, this is not a sub-category, this is the purpose of God in redemption, to make a people who are holy, godly, Christlike. That's the prize of the upward call. That's the goal of redemption. The goal is not accomplished at justification; it is only accomplished at glorification when we all become perfect in holiness. And the work of the Spirit in the meantime is to make us more and more holy in this life until we reach that perfect holiness in the life to come. But let's back up a little bit and understand from the very beginning what God is doing.

Man created in God's image is the message of Genesis 1 and 2, is it not? Genesis 1:26 and 27: "God made man in His own image," in His own likeness, for one purpose, to reveal God, to reflect God's glory, to express God's character, to put His glory on display. Chapter 3, man falls— man falls, and that purpose is lost because now you have mankind sinful, incapable of reflecting or expressing the glory of God. That is why Romans tells us that we have all come short of what? The glory of God. That is universally true of fallen humanity. We can't do what we were created to do. Made in the image of God for the purpose of reflecting, expressing the glory of God; fallen into sin, corrupted, marred, distorted, perverted. We can't do it. And if you look at ancient history, after Adam, you see a few people who were rescued out of that condition and who truly became people who could reflect the glory of God. Enoch who walked with God one day and just kept walking right into heaven and didn't die. The sons of Seth who were a godly line, but there were so few people in that marred, perverted, corrupted humanity— listen to this— that a few generations later, God drowned the entire human race because there were only eight people who could reflect His glory. Only eight out of millions. He wiped them out, started all over again. That's how profound fallen corruption is.

God the Father then determined from that eight people to restore the terribly distorted, the terribly marred image of God in humanity by sovereignly and supernaturally and graciously transforming those sinners. It wasn't a superficial job. It wasn't a paint job. It wasn't something on the outside. Had to be something on the inside. He had to re-create them to be capable of manifesting His glory. Peter describes it in words that are very, very important, and very clear. Peter says in 2 Peter 1:4: "You have escaped the corruption." You have escaped being marred. You have escaped being in that perverse condition, you have escaped that by becoming— listen to this— partakers of the divine nature. Wow— partakers of the divine nature. The very nature that is God's has been given to you in a rebirth.

That is the purpose of salvation. The purpose of God's redemptive plan is to recover humanity from its inability to give Him glory. The purpose of salvation is to overturn the Fall and make men capable of glorifying Him. And for that, God has to re-create them. They have to be born all over again, spiritually. They have to have a new nature. They have to become new men. All that's biblical language. They have to have a new birth. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation, 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us. That whole work of doing that is the work of the Holy Spirit. We celebrate the cross, and rightly we should. We celebrate the love of God, the greatness of God, we sing hymns of praise to God. We sing about the cross and rightly we should, but in the middle of all of this, we forget that the real efficient cause, the divine source of everything that we are as Christians is in fact the Holy Spirit.

The plan of God is to take corrupt sinners who cannot glorify Him, who have no capacity, who come short of being able to do that, in whom the divine image is marred. It is marred to such a degree— here's how much it's marred— that apart from regeneration, all those marred people are so useless to God for the purpose for which He made man that He throws them into the trash heap of the universe, which is an everlasting burning pit called Gehenna which was the name of the trash heap in Jerusalem, where they burn forever because they are useless, without the possibility of any escape. How severe is the marring? Severe enough to throw humanity on the dump as absolutely useless. Let it be everlastingly consumed. The plan of redemption is to rescue some of those people, redo them, give them new life, regenerate them, re-create them, restore them, transform them, put them through a spiritual metamorphosis and make them partakers of the divine nature. That's such a great statement. That's God's plan. He initiated it.

Now, when God does that, what does a truly regenerated person who becomes a full partaker of the divine nature look like? I'll give you the answer in one word: Jesus. God initiated it and Jesus demonstrated it. When you look at Jesus, you see the perfect image of God in human form. Could He glorify God? John 1:14 says: "We beheld His glory." And what glory was it? "The glory as of the only begotten of the Father." He put God on display like God had never been put on display before. If you want to see the perfect work of the Holy Spirit in an individual, look at Jesus Christ. Remember what Jesus said. Everything He did was the work of the Holy Spirit in Him, right? Everything.

In His condescension, He yielded up all those prerogatives of His own and yielded Himself to the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit so that everything He did, He did by the power of the Holy Spirit. Even offering self in death and even rising from the dead was the work of the Holy Spirit. Because He becomes then the perfect model of the work of the Holy Spirit and the end result of that is a perfect humanity. And what will it look like? It will look like Jesus Christ. That's why it says when you go to heaven, you're going to have a body like unto His glorious body, and you're going to be like Him because you'll see Him as He is, and the day you see Him as He is, you'll be made like Him.

That's the goal. So what is the purpose of redemption? To create a humanity that is like Christ. Not that we are God, we will always be a glorified humanity, but we will be as much like Jesus Christ as glorified humanity can be. We will be perfect in the image of God in human form. So God initiated it, Jesus demonstrated it, and the Holy Spirit effects it. In the end, it is the Holy Spirit who raises us. We already saw that in this chapter.

It is the Holy Spirit who raises us. Verse 11 tells us that. So He will raise us to glory. We'll see more about that in future verses here. It is the Holy Spirit who raises us to glory and makes us, in the end, like Christ. We will then be that fully restored, glorious, perfect, righteous, holy humanity forever. But in the meantime, the Holy Spirit leaves us here so that we can do the work of evangelism, right? Because we are the source that God has determined to do the work of evangelism, but as long as He leaves us here, He has to get us into the sanctifying process. That's 2 Corinthians 3:18, from one level of glory to the next by degree, by degree, by degree. When you go to heaven, it's instant, you're immediately perfect. In the meantime, it's a progress done by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit starts it by giving us birth— we're born of the Spirit. He regenerates us. He is the one who gives us that new life. He's the one who rescues us from our corruption and our perversity and our wickedness. And He's the one who rescues us from being so hopelessly marred that we should end up on the trash heap of hell forever. He rescues us, gives us new life, re-creates us. He is the efficient cause of that, and the instrumental means that He uses is the Scripture. We are begotten again by the truth. We are sanctified by the truth. This is His work, and He will glorify us. So He regenerates us, sanctifies us, and glorifies us. He's the one, in a sense, who delivers to God this perfected, redeemed humanity.

Now, that's kind of the big picture. The Spirit's work, then, is the restoration of the image of God in man, ultimately in the glory of perfection in heaven when we're made like Christ. But in the meantime, in this life, He is committed to moving us by degree from one level of glory to the next, to the next, to the next. Now, there's another component in this that I want you to understand as I expand on that idea a little bit. I'm going to go back through that idea and extend it just a bit.

If you were to look at the Old Testament and ask the question: "What does it say about sanctification?" you wouldn't find anything in the Old Testament that says the goal of sanctification is to make you like Christ because they hadn't seen Christ, right? So the word that you need to use when you talk about Old Testament sanctification is godliness— godliness. The objective of the Old Testament was to have a people who were like God. In Leviticus, for example— and that's kind of the key place for this— starting in chapter 11 or even earlier and running all the way through to chapter 20 or so— ten or so chapters— you hear this: "Be holy for I am holy." "Be holy for I am holy." "Be holy for I am holy." This is repeated and repeated and repeated. Godliness, be like God, be holy like God is holy. How does that happen? Well, Leviticus gives us a critical insight into that in a number of places, but I'll just use two of them, or one to start with. Leviticus 20 and verse 8. In verse 7, there's that familiar statement: "Be holy for I am the Lord your God and I'm holy." But in verse 8 it says this: "You shall keep My statutes and practice them. I'm the Lord who sanctifies you."

Do you understand what that's saying? Sanctification is done by the Lord in a context of obedience. "You have to know My statutes and practice them." So again, the Scripture is the instrumental means by which the Lord sanctified His people, even in the Old Testament. He gave them His Word, they were to obey His Word, they were to practice what He said, and that is the means by which the Lord sanctified His people.

In chapter 21 verse 8, he talks about the same thing. "You shall be holy for I, the Lord who sanctifies you, am holy." Again, "I want you holy because I'm holy." And "I will sanctify you insofar as you believe and obey My Word." The instrumental means of sanctification is the Word.

Now, let me take it even a step further. To understand sanctification in the Old Testament, you have to understand one basic truth, and that is this: God was endeavoring in the process of sanctification by the work of the Holy Spirit to produce a family resemblance in His people, a people who are like God. In the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, He said this— chapter 5 of Matthew, verse 45: "Be like your Father who is in heaven." If you forgive your enemy, those who harm you, you will be like your Father who is in heaven. That's an Old Testament perspective on sanctification. Be like God. Be like God.

Another one in the same sermon— chapter 5— is this: "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." If you belong to God, if you are a child of God, there should be a family resemblance, right? That's the essence of understanding Old Testament sanctification. Sanctification in the Old Testament is seen as part of a true covenant relationship to God, and that covenant relationship is a family relationship. You've come into the family of God, and the process of sanctification is designed to make you more and more like your Father. That's sanctification in the Old Testament, godlike. That's what godliness is. The goal is the restoration of the divine image.

Now, what happens in the New Testament is very important but easy to understand. In the New Testament, the emphasis is not so much be like God, but what? Be like Christ. Why? Is that different? No. It is this, that Christ is the perfect representation of what a human being who is totally godlike looks like, right? This is a human being, fully human and godlike. John 1:14 again: "We beheld His glory," He was like God, He was full of grace and truth. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. He makes godly people Christlike people. Sanctification equals godliness equals Christlikeness. That's what holiness is, separating from sin unto godliness, unto Christlikeness.

So the wondrous reality of a life of Christ lived here on earth is you get to see what godliness looks like, what perfect godliness in a human being looks like. And that's the model, and that's why the apostle Paul said, "Be followers of me as I am of Christ." Or Christ says, "Follow Me, I'm the pattern." God spoke in time past, revealing Himself through the writers of the Old Testament, but in these last days, Hebrews 1 says, "He's spoken to us in His Son who is the exact representation of His person." So when somebody says to me, "I want to be godly. What does that look like?" I say, "It looks exactly like Jesus Christ." You want to see godliness in a human form? Christ. That's why we're told in 2 Corinthians 3:18 to look at the glory of the Lord because that is the standard of holiness and sanctification. And the Holy Spirit, as that vision becomes clear to us and dominates our minds, will move us from one degree to the next, to the next, to the next, even in this life. The divine miracle of regeneration is done by the Holy Spirit. The divine miracle of glorification is done by the Holy Spirit. And the divine miracle in the middle of sanctification is also done by the Holy Spirit and it is no less miraculous.

What the Holy Spirit does is He shows us the things of Christ. Remember Jesus said that in the Upper Room? He will show you the things of Christ. Why? Because it's only as you look at Christ that you see the full representation of God. It's only as you look at Christ you understand what godliness, holiness, sanctification is, and as you gaze on that all-absorbing perfection in human form, that becomes the model and the standard to which the Spirit of God forms you.

So when somebody says, "I'm anointed by the Holy Spirit," they ought to look a lot like Christ. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in every believer. The goal of the Holy Spirit is to produce sons of God who have a family resemblance who are like their Father and like their Brother, Jesus Christ, who is not ashamed to call them brother. That's the goal of the death of Christ and the resurrection. The goal of the death of Christ, the goal of the resurrection, was to go back to heaven having provided sufficient atonement and send the Holy Spirit. The goal of the death of Christ, the resurrection, was to send the Holy Spirit for the purpose of regenerating, sanctifying, and glorifying those who believe.

It's about family and it's about family resemblance that we're talking here, and if you go back with me to Romans 8— we finally got there— you will see that the main theme here is that the Holy Spirit is doing the work of adoption. You have the reference to sons of God in verse 14. You have the reference to adoption as sons in verse 15. And then you have the reference to sons of God or children of God again in 16. This is about being in the family, about this covenant relation to God that makes you a member of the family. And the work of the Holy Spirit is to make you look like the rest of the family, like your Father and like your perfect Brother. It's about family likeness.

It was no less than John Calvin, who had a pretty good grip on theology, who said, "This gift of sonship is the highest privilege of redemption and the primary work of the Holy Spirit." John Calvin said this is the primary work of the Holy Spirit. It is. Can I be so bold as to say even His work of inspiring the Scripture was a means to accomplishing His work of sanctifying and glorifying a people? The Scripture is a means to an end and not an end. This is the end. It is the highest privilege of redemption to become a son of God, and it is the primary work of the Holy Spirit to make sons of God by regenerating them, glorifying them, and in the middle, sanctifying them so that their testimony is believable. That's why we're here.

Well, this is powerful and foundational truth. We should know this. It's not only here in Paul's writing to the Romans, but he makes a similar reference to the urgency and the importance of understanding this at the end of chapter 6 in 2 Corinthians when he says, "'Come out from their midst and be separate,' says the Lord" and He's borrowing that, of course, from Isaiah. "'And don't touch what is unclean and I'll welcome you and I'll be a Father to you and you'll be sons and daughters to Me,' says the Lord almighty." God is making a family. God is redeeming a family. God is regenerating a family— listen— who will be able to demonstrate His glory by the image of God that is in them. In order to restore the image of God, we have to be re-created. We have to be reborn. And that's what regeneration and new birth is all about.

It will help you, I think, to understand the nature of adoption because you're probably saying to yourself, "Well, adoption, you know, it talks about that in verse 15, adoption, but adoption is kind of a second-class deal." You know, we read in the newspapers about the people who adopt kids and then put them on a plane and ship them back because they don't want them. Wow. And people say this all the time. You never know what you're going to get, you know, you can go through the legal deal and you can adopt a child but you can't change a child's heart. So you get what you get. And it may not work out very well and adopted children may turn out to be a disaster and a terror in the home, *et cetera, et cetera, et cetera*, because you can't really control what they are in the inside. You can do all the legal work on the outside.

You need to understand that the way the Bible talks about adoption is so complete and so comprehensive that it shuts out all those criticisms, and I'll explain that to you. In the 1st century, if

you were adopted, that didn't make you a second-class child, that made you a first-class child. And this is basic, okay? In all honesty, when you have babies in your family, you get what you get. Right? You might look at one kid and say, "Wow, we could use a little more brain power there. We could use a little less rebellion there. We could use a little patience there. But we got what we got." And I talk to enough parents to know that if they had been given a list of what they wanted, they might have been happy to put it in if they knew it would get the results they could expect. And that's why, actually, today people who go to those banks and buy sperm want sort of a genetic profile because they want to orchestrate the kind of kid they're going to have, they want to sort of manage that. But I mean reality is you get what you get. And that's okay because you understand that, you love those children. But in the ancient world, if you adopted somebody, you were adopting a son, in most cases. It wasn't rescuing kids from the street, they didn't adopt kids off the street as a rescue operation. You adopted a son because you found somebody who exceeded in capability the ones that you had. This is first-class stuff. An adopted son was deliberately chosen by an adopting father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate.

This might be how you dealt with a delinquent. You just adopted a noble young man to become your son. No way was that adopted son inferior. On occasions it might have been a daughter, but for the most part it was a son because they were the ones to whom the estate and responsibility passed. This would be typical. You chose this son because of his superior ability to represent the family, to manage the family's future, and to inherit the family's estate. This adopted son may well have been the apple of his father's eye, the joy of his father's heart. He may have received the best of his father's affection and education more so than a born son and may have even demonstrated his father's virtue and his father's training more perfectly than the others.

The whole point of the picture is to say this: You've been adopted. That's a divine choice. Not because before you were adopted you were so noble that God couldn't continue to keep His kingdom in motion without you. By sovereign, divine choice, God preferred you and He preferred me. Free, voluntary election. It's an amazing thing.

Let me tell you how it worked. A Roman adoption was a very formal event. It was difficult because in the Roman law, there was this rule called *patria potestas*, the father's power. That's Latin. And the father's power meant that he had absolute power over the family. He had absolute right to dispose of his children in the early stages of the Roman Empire, kill his children if he wanted, absolute control over them. In regard to a Roman son, he never came of age in the sense that he ever had any independence from his father's power. No matter how old he was, no matter if he was married, he was always under the absolute power of his father. If you were a son or a daughter, you were under absolute possession, absolute control by your father.

This made adoption very difficult because if you found a son that you wanted, you wanted because you could use him in your business, in your estate, in your family, for the well-being of your family's future, how you going to get the other father to let him go? If he's a noble enough son for you to want him so much, how is that going to happen? Well, some negotiations were involved in that. He had to formally pass out of the *patria potestas* of the man to whom he was born and pass into the *patria potestas* of the adoptive father. Two steps. Interesting. Step number one was called *mancipatio*, from which we get emancipation.

Mancipatio was carried out by a symbolic sale. A symbolic sale, actually, in which scales and pieces of copper were used, and three times a little ceremony went on. Three times there was a symbolic

sale. Here's the boy, and the money was placed on the scale. First time, the father would then take him back and say, "No, no." And then he would do it again, and the money would be put on the scale, and he would take him back again. And this was to demonstrate reluctance and to communicate that he wasn't just throwing this child away— this son away. Third time, however, he didn't take him back, and he was emancipated from the *patria potestas* of his birth father.

Then there followed a ceremony called *vindicatio*. The adopting father would go the praetor, who would be the Roman official or magistrate, present a legal case for the transference of the son from one family to the next. When it was all complete, adoption was complete. Very formal.

Now, here's what happened. This is important. Four very important things took place. One, the adopted person lost all rights in his former family. Had no rights, had no existence in that former family, and he gained all the rights of his new family. Couldn't go back and try to get something from his former family. All was completely cut off from the past, and he had all the rights of a fully legitimate son in his new family.

Secondly, he became heir to his new father's estate. He became heir to his new father's estate. That's why this was done. And when he became an heir to his new father's estate, even afterward, if other sons were born, they could make no claim against it because they were natural-born sons. It didn't affect the adopted son's rights.

Thirdly, the old life of the adopted person— listen to this— was completely obliterated. It was as if he never lived. All his debts were cancelled on the spot. All his records were obliterated. It was as if he was born the day he was adopted. Everything else went out of existence. He was like a new person who just started his life.

And fourthly, in the eyes of the law, the adopted person was permanently and absolutely the son of his new father. Does that sound like salvation to you? That's exactly what it is depicting, this concept of adoption. All our rights to our former family and our former father, the devil, are cancelled. We gain all the rights, fully legitimate sons in our new family, heirs of Christ, joint heirs with Christ of all that the Father possesses. We are the inheritors of His estate. Everything from our old life is wiped out, right? Isn't the debt that was against us cancelled at the cross? And aren't we the true sons, everlastingly the true sons of our new Father?

This is amazingly beautiful. And if you're still bothered a little bit by the fact that this seems still to be somewhat superficial, let me help you with that. You can adopt a child, but you have to realize that when you adopt a child, you can't change their nature, that child's nature. And we see that kind of problem all the time. "Well, we adopted this child thinking the best and this kid is incorrigible, this kid is rebellious, this kid is angry, this kid is"— you make up the letters, ADD, ADHD, bipolar, psychotic— whatever. And, you know, you went through all the deal to figure out the legal aspect of this thing, but you couldn't change the heart. That's where the biblical work of the Spirit of God is so different from adoption. Listen, we become sons by adoption but we also become sons by regeneration. Adoption gives us the name and the title and the rights, regeneration gives us the nature of our new family, the spiritual genetics of our new family.

The emphasis on adoption is to show that we were chosen. And it's the analogy that all the past is cancelled. It's as if we were born again and just started to live. That's why adoption is such an

important thing because it speaks of selection, election, choice. And then it speaks of cancelling everything in the past and a new family but not to the exclusion of regeneration. Adoption confers the name and the title; regeneration confers the nature. In other words, we now have become not just adoptive children but partakers of the divine nature. It's a staggering thing. And the Holy Spirit is doing all of this— all of this.

Now, let's look at these three verses. You know where we're going to go with it. so that's fine. How does the Holy Spirit demonstrate this adoption? One, by leading us, all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Or flip it over, whoever is a son of God is being led by the Holy Spirit. The first mark of adoptive sons is they're led by the Holy Spirit. They're led by the Holy Spirit. They're directed by the Holy Spirit. Their lives are controlled by the Holy Spirit. We are introduced to this marvelous reality that the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in our lives and internally, He is directing us. He doesn't lead by violence— listen— He doesn't lead by violence, He leads by inclination. He generates in us inclination, bending, changing our will, changing our desires, changing our longings, changing our affections, shifting our interests. This is miraculous and this is part of what it is to be a partaker of the divine nature. We love what the divine nature loves, all of a sudden. We love the law of God, Paul says in Romans 7; we delight in the law of God, Psalm 119— 175 times, David says it. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

How does He lead us? Two ways. Externally, by the Scripture— externally, by the Scripture, Psalm 119:18: "Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things from Your law." Show me the truth of Scripture. Externally by Scripture, internally by sanctification. Those two ways. Externally, Scripture; internally, sanctification.

What do you mean, the Spirit stirs the heart? I don't know— that's a miracle category, right? That's the miraculous. You're a living miracle. It wasn't just a miracle that you're saved, it's a miracle that you're being sanctified, and it's a miracle when you're glorified. You know the miracle of glorification. You know when you leave here and go to heaven and you receive a glorified body and you're in the presence of the Lord, that miracle nobody would argue about. And we understand the miracle of regeneration. But the miracle of sanctification is equally miraculous because you're being moved from one degree of glory to the next, to the next by the Holy Spirit. Externally, His instrumental means is the Scripture, and internally, He works to sanctify you.

That's why David prays in Psalm 143:10: "Teach me to do Your will." "Teach me to do Your will. Be my internal teacher." Or Psalm 119:35: "Make me to go in the path of Your commandments." "Make me go that way," and that's what the Holy Spirit does. Or Psalm 119: "Order my steps in Your Word." "Shove me that way." That internal work of the Holy Spirit whose temple we are. Verb tenses, we are being led, it's all the time, all the time, all the time, constant. Being led by the Spirit is not a moment of ecstasy, it's not some kind of moment of emotional elation. It's a way of life— invisible miracle, conforming you more and more to Christlikeness by bending your will and your desires in that direction.

Second thing the Holy Spirit does is give you intimate access to God. Verse 15: "You have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again." When you were an unregenerate person, when the image of God was so marred that you were doomed for the trash heap of the universe, the trash heap of eternity in hell, you lived in fear. You lived in dread. You lived in the anticipation of judgment. You were in bondage to sin; therefore, you were in bondage to guilt, anxiety, fear, trepidation, judgment. That's how you lived.

What happened when you were regenerated and the Spirit began a work of sanctification is this: You received a spirit of adoption or perhaps better, *the* Spirit of adoption, which some theologians say is *the* supreme name for the Holy Spirit. If you wanted to take the name of all names to give the Holy Spirit, He should be called the Spirit of adoption because it is His work of bringing us into the family and conforming us to the family resemblance that dominates what God has given Him to do, what the Father has given Him to do. We have in— by the Holy Spirit, you can't decide whether it's speaking about the Holy Spirit or the human spirit, it can be either one, but I like to think it's both. It is the Spirit of adoption who gives us a Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry, "Abba, Father." You didn't just rush into the presence of an infinitely holy God and say, "Papa." That's what Abba means, Papa. That kind of intimacy with God? That would shake the Jews to their sandals. "What? God is distant and holy and here comes this person rushing in, 'Papa, Papa, Abba Father.'" There's no fear, right? There's no fear. You have intimate access.

One of the great joys, *the* great joy, I guess, in some ways of being a grandfather is that amazing, unhindered, unrestrained affection that comes from grandchildren. Some people think I'm an important person; they don't. Some people think I'm hard to get to know; they don't. Some people think you should kind of keep your distance; they don't. Is there anything more precious than little children running up and throwing their arms around you as a parent or a grandparent in those times of basically unlimited, unhindered, unquestioning affection? "Papa." They come flying at me from every direction. And that's exactly what we have here. There's a sense in which we just rush in without fear to the presence of God because the Holy Spirit has made us sons by birth and sons by adoption with all full access to the Father.

There's a third ministry of the Holy Spirit in this work of sonship and that is not only is He leading us and giving us intimate access but He's assuring us. He gives us assurance. Verse 16: "The Holy Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God." He testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. The Holy Spirit comes to us, takes up residence in us, and confirms to our hearts that we belong to God.

Let me tell you where this comes from. In the adoption process in ancient Rome, seven witnesses had to be there. Seven witnesses. Seven eyewitnesses of the transaction in its fullness. Why? Well, what happens when the father dies and all the born children resent the adopted son who is the heir? There's going to be a battle. And so the children who are born to the father are going to say, "He's not legitimate, he's making an illegitimate claim," and somewhere there will be seven people who were eyewitnesses to this very legal transaction who can affirm the truthfulness and legitimacy of that.

We don't need seven. We just need one, the Holy Spirit who has sealed us to the day of redemption, which means we are protected until the day of redemption. No one can ever take our inheritance, it's reserved and set apart for us, as Peter says, right? Undeclared and laid up in heaven for you. The Holy Spirit is the seal, the Holy Spirit is the arrabon, the engagement ring, the guarantee, and the Holy Spirit is the first fruits. In other words, the guarantee of the full inheritance. That is what verse 16 is saying. He testifies with us that we are the children of God. He bears witness along with our spirit. There is an internal confidence that all is well. This, in a word, is called hope. We have a strong hope, don't we? And that's the work of the Holy Spirit, to give us that strong hope.

I don't live daily fearing I might not make it to heaven. Never enters my mind. Why? Because the

internal witness of the Holy Spirit gives me hope— gives me hope. If you were a child out in the streets or in a very difficult, abusive, perishing family, what you would want would be someone who would lead you and guide you in the right way, someone who would take all the fear out of your life, all the anxiety out of your life, and have all the resources that you could ever hope for, ever need, and far more, and somebody who would assure you of a future. If you could find somebody like that, that would make an adoptive child happy.

Well, you have that and more because that is what God promises you, and not only does He take you in by adoption, but He changes your nature, and then He begins to make you look like the Father and the Brother, Christ Himself. This is the blessed work of the Holy Spirit. Nothing less gives Him the honor He is due than to understand this.

Father we have been blessed this morning in so many ways, to know each other and fellowship with each other and sing together and listen to the beauty of such glorious, rapturous music, and now to be put in touch with these profound and wonderful truths that speak to us about us. How blessed are we. How unimaginably blessed are we and it's all by grace. We thank You, we bless Your name, and we pray, teach me, O Lord, to do Your will, along with David. Bend me that way, O Holy Spirit, incline my heart that way. Control my affections, my desires, my longings. Move me from one level of glory to the next, to the next, so that I might reflect the glory of God in an image of God, restored through the work of regeneration until the day of glorification. Thank You for such a high calling and such an amazing gift. You've not only given us Christ, Father, but You've given us the Spirit, to make us a living and growing, progressing miracle. May we ever be thankful to you, O blessed Holy Spirit, for this work. Thank You for living in us and effecting this. We are unworthy, we acknowledge that, but we are profoundly grateful. And may it be that the work that You are doing will be manifest to those around us so that they can look at us and see Christ. And we pray in His name. Amen.

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