

Romans 8:15-17 (NKJV)

¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

¹⁷ and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.

Before I begin I realize not everyone here had a good human father, or even a present human father. I ask you this morning to visualize a good example of a father as I go over points of the the fatherhood of God.

Last week we learned about the Spirit of bondage again to fear, which I believe is the Holy Spirit's ministry to a person when originally bringing a person to Christ. This is a one- time ministry. Once completed, (and it is always completed in the life of a believer,) (the Holy Spirit never leaves a person to wallow in that state forever) once completed, they receive the Spirit of adoption. To move from the anguish of soul that the Spirit of bondage brings us, and to move to the confidence of our adopted status, is a very strong evidence of the regenerate status of a person.

Now let's look at the second half of the verse this morning.

We are told the believer has **received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."**

So we see here that just as the Holy Spirit caused us to enter a very fearful and desperate state, this same Holy Spirit works in us to where we cry out, Abba, Father. It is not that the Holy Spirit has any fear. But he creates that fear in us. And it is not that the Holy Spirit has any need to cry out Abba, Father. But he creates that desire and response in us.

Some would see this passage as a restatement of what Paul has said before. But I think this is more than a restatement. He has already laid out the assurance that we have on several fronts. I believe what he is laying before us this morning is assurance on a very specific and experiential front. This is not so much a cognitive evidence as a subjective evidence. It doesn't violate the intellect, but it goes deeper than the intellect. It is something true of a Christian in a way that might be hard to describe but easy to observe.

The believer has received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out "Abba Father".

Jonathan and I have an understanding about fishing. We believe it to be in a person's blood. We call it a gene and you either have it or you don't. If you have it, there is something about fishing that is addictive. And there is nothing like the

feel of something on the end of your line that is pulling line from your reel. If someone can take it or leave it, if they would just as soon sit around the house as go fishing, they don't have the gene. If they ask me the questions about the value of fishing like Ruth asks for example, they clearly don't have the gene. It is difficult to explain but it is easy to observe.

Well a believer has **the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."** This is a description of something a believer experiences. It isn't so much a doctrinal statement as a description of something the believer feels. It is something true of them. It isn't something they try to do. They just do it. They have the gene. They didn't do anything to put it there. But there is no denying that it is there.

Now, believers should and do accept as a fact that they are adopted into God's family. They realize that something profound and amazing has happened to them. And they must accept that as a fact by faith. That is all good and true. But this describes something more. This describes an awareness of a change inside of us. Adoption was more of a Roman term than a Jewish term. The people in Rome would have a clear understanding of adoption. Adoption required a strict process that a person had to go through in order to make an adoption legal. The Romans would have understood this. So adoption was a concept they were familiar with. The Romans would have understood that Paul is telling them that not only were believers given a new nature, but they have become members of God's own household by an official legal state. They are God's children by adoption. But the way this verse is worded, we not only believe the doctrine but we experience it.

Let's take a look at a couple of scriptures about this change.

Gal 4:6

⁶And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

Notice how the Holy Spirit is referred to here. Why? Why is it that God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son. What is true of Christ that is also to be true of us? How is it that we will experience the same type of thing that Christ experienced?

Mark 14:32-36 (NKJV)

³²Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

³³And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed.

³⁴Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, *even* to death. Stay here and watch."

³⁵He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.

³⁶ **And He said, "Abba, Father, all things *are* possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."**

Here was Christ in great anguish. He had taken on the sin of the world. He went from being sinless to bearing every sin that was ever committed as if He had committed them. He went to the point of having blood leak out his pores. This is not the kind of state that a person can live in for very long. It was a condition that was life threatening. Christ would have felt as if his life was coming unglued. He was not certain that he would make it to the cross in the state He was in. It looks like He asked for that cup of suffering to be removed so that He could accomplish His mission. He wasn't asking to get out of His mission. But He wanted to make sure He could accomplish it.

This is the state of mind Christ was in when Christ called out to His Father. And how did He reference His Father? What did He say when He called out to His Father in prayer?

He said Abba, Father! He called out trusting and depending upon a family relationship He had with His Father. He called out in complete confidence that His Father would hear Him, would concern Himself with His Child's needs. He knew that He could depend upon His Father to take care of Him. And it was a cry that didn't need careful deliberation. It was a reflex at the core of Christ to call out to His Father.

This was not a cold orthodoxy that was being displayed. Christ didn't take a course that told Him that when you address God you should make sure to address Him as Abba Father. No. That wasn't needed any more than Eli needs to take a course on who he should call out to if he is scared or hurt. He doesn't need to think through, now how exactly should I address Mom or Dad. He just calls out to them.

That is precisely the change that has happened in the life of a believer. It isn't just a fact that a believer has learned. It is something that has profoundly changed in his life. Now when the hard times hit.... When a disaster is looming, or we are experiencing suffering or when we need help or when we need guidance, we don't find that we run FROM God. Now we run TO Him. We are no longer like Adam and Eve trying to hide from God to keep our guilt hidden from God. Now we run to Him.

And we run to Him with the expectation that He will care for us. We expect that our Father will take care of what is wrong.

Think about this.

When you were a child, why did you cry out for your mom or dad?

- 1- They were your primary source of care. They are the ones who **had a history** of taking care of the things that you called out to them about.

- 2- They were **able** to take care of those things that you could not take care of.
- 3- They **wanted** to take care of those things that you could not take care of.
- 4- Why didn't you cry out to someone else's mom or dad? It would never occur to you. They aren't your mom or dad. You have a special privilege with you parents. And they have a special obligation toward you.

This is the supernatural miracle we are talking about this morning. This is one of the things that changes in a believer's life. There is a profound change in a believer's life whereby they have an impulse to cry out to a loving father with the expectation that this Father

Has a history of taking care of you

Is able to take care of you

Desires to take care of you

And is in a relationship with you that allows you this amazing privilege.

The difference between this being simply a fact that we know and this being our experience is the difference between a sermon that is interesting and a sermon that grips us experientially. One you can stand at an arms length distance and evaluate it. You can state what was good and bad about it. But the sermon that the Holy Spirit used to grip your soul you experience in a way that you cannot explain. You know you must respond. God has done business with you and you cannot deny it. So it is with this Spirit of adoption. The Spirit of adoption makes this truth of adoption something that cannot be ignored. It changes how we see the world. It changes our responses. It changes who we run to and how we run. It drives home this truth that we are now in God's family and it melts our hearts. It creates humility and gratitude. It moves us beyond orthodoxy to passion for God. We begin to be delighted in God. We begin to enjoy God. We revel in this true relationship that we have been granted with God.

And we learn to rest in the Father's provision, just as Eli knows that Mom and Dad will take care of him. He doesn't calculate it. He assumes it. It is just part of his world.

As the believer with the Spirit of adoption we can know rest in the hands of our Father. No one can harm us. We are safe. We are loved.

You know me well enough to know that I don't tend in the direction of ecstatic experience. I am not prone to the charismatic excesses. But this text this morning cannot be limited to a doctrinal statement. The nature of what is being said has to imply that something profoundly changes about a believer. And it is not in just what he thinks. It is a change in his relationship with God that transforms how he experiences life. Do you see what Paul is saying here? Have you seen that change in your life? Do you notice that when life's storms come at you that you are driven into the arms and communion of Christ and His people? Do you find that your comfort now comes from your child relationship to God your Father? Do you find

rest for your soul now comes from the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit? And do you find that solace comes from knowing what God, your Father has to say to you? That is an experiential element of the Holy Spirit's work that will be present in the life of a believer. It is almost like an instinct for God that we did not have until God put it there. If you see that in your life, it is a miracle. And it means, without a shadow of a doubt, that you ARE a child of God. The presence of this Spirit of adoption is intended to grant assurance. We will surely sin. We will surely fail our Father. But if the desire is in you to run to the arms of your Father, no matter what state you are in... Praise God. You did not put that there and you could not put that there. Only the Spirit of adoption could put that there. It proves you are a child of God.

Let's look more at the technicalities of this verse.

First let's look at the word "receive"

This word is used in two ways. It can mean "to take" which puts the emphasis on what the receiver does. Or it can mean to be given something, which puts the emphasis on what the giver does. In this case it seems clear to me that the emphasis is not on what WE do but on what GOD did. We receive this Spirit. We don't take the Spirit. God gives it and we receive it. We don't take the Spirit of adoption any more than we take the Spirit of bondage. If we were to describe it we would say it just sort of happened to us.

Words- Abba, Father.

Now why did Paul pick these words.

Abba is Aramaic and Father is Greek.

Think about this.

The Jews could easily think they had the corner on the market on spiritual things. But Christ himself, and then the Holy Spirit causes us to call out- Abba Father. We can see here that the Holy Spirit is doing a work across all nationalities and all cultures. We call out to what we know as Father, no matter what language we speak or what culture we are in. Every culture has some form of fatherhood. And this Holy Spirit will cause us to cry out Father in whatever language we speak.

Second- Abba is like Papa or daddy. It is a child's word. It isn't a formal title. It isn't an intellectual term. It isn't even used as the best defining word for the relationship. It is more the word in a child's mind that comes to contain everything that this important person means to them. Daddy is the person that can be depended upon. Daddy can do all those things that we need done that we are not able to do. Daddy can tell us it will be ok and we can believe it will be so. Daddy is the source of our security and comfort.

Third- A Jewish slave was never allowed to use this term toward a free man. A slave could not call his master Abba. That was forbidden. Only children of a freed man could call Abba, Father. So in this Paul is again making a powerful statement that God's children are no longer slaves. We are free. And the Holy Spirit will cause us to cry out in that freedom.

Now, the word cry- **we cry out, "Abba, Father."**

The word for cry means a loud cry expressing deep emotion. You can see why I am stressing the experiential regarding this idea this morning. The Spirit of adoption causes us to cry out with deep emotion, from the core of who we are, from our greatest need, and who do we cry out to- Abba Father.

You can't hardly make this out to be anything but a change in our hearts, a change in our emotions, a change in our responses. This is more than a doctrinal statement. It is a description of a reaction of the heart. It is a change in our affections.

It displays a real knowledge of God. Not just knowing about God, but trusting God and loving God. It isn't a display of dignity or pomposity. It is just an honesty with someone who has become familiar to us.

Notice too what you see with this heart felt cry to God, this prayer. It is not a formal and mechanical prayer. It is spontaneous and it is confident. Did you ever cry to your dad in desperation with a real need that he could meet and you doubted that he would meet it?

When I was 16 I was an idiot, probably like a lot of 16 year olds. I was out one night with some friends possum hunting. We would drive around on back roads looking for possums to run over. It was really just an excuse to drive around. Well I was on a back road and I forgot it had a hairpin turn. And to make matters worse they had just repaved the road which made the road about 4 inches higher than the berm. Well I went off the road and when I brought it back on the road I blew a tire which caused me to run off the road into a dirt bank. Some of my first thoughts were- I need help. I didn't have to make a check list of contacts and begin going through the list to find the people who would most likely help me. I called home. That's what anyone with a real family would do. And when I called home, I had to tell them I had an accident. But I knew that their concern would be first about me. And when I asked them to come pick me up, I knew they wouldn't say, well let me check my schedule.... Oh there's a good show on tv tonight. Sorry, you'll just have to stay in that strangers house and bleed on their carpet until we get there. I knew that I was having an emergency and they would meet my need. I never had any doubt about their love and concern for me.

Well if Our parents are like that, could we imagine calling out to our heavenly father and getting less? Can you imagine asking for bread and getting a stone?

The Spirit of adoption causes us to cry out with this kind of confidence. While in the past we may have been a God hater. In the past we may have, like Adam and Eve done all we could to run from God. Now the Spirit of Adoption causes us to run TO God. And we run to Him and cry out to him expectantly... even assumingly because He is, after all, our Father.

Ephesians tells us we were brought near. Let's look at that.

Ephesians 2:11-13 (NKJV)

¹¹ Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands--

¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

I pray that you are finding encouragement this morning. The most significant thing about a person is their position. If you are IN CHRIST JESUS, you might have been as far away from God as can be, but now you are brought near. You have relationship. You have peace with God instead of the enmity you once had. And the Holy Spirit will be working that change into your heart and into your head and into your reactions to all of life's events.

And the most glorious truth about a Christian is our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. What God is going to accomplish in our salvation is to cause us to fully enjoy this glorious adoption we have into God's family.

Close with Hebrews 2:1-18 (NKJV)

¹ Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

² For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,

³ how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*,

⁴ God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

⁵ For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.

⁶ But one testified in a certain place, saying: "*What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him?*

⁷ *You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands.*

⁸ *You have put all things in subjection under his feet.*" For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

⁹ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰ For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, **in bringing many sons to glory**, (*See Christ's purpose here. This is what He is up to. This is what he has plans. He intends and will bring many sons to glory.*) to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

¹¹ For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them **brethren**,

¹² saying: "*I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.*"

¹³ And again: "*I will put My trust in Him.*" And again: "*Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.*"

(Can we grasp just how amazing this is? Christ regards us as His brothers. He is referring to him like I refer to Butch. Christ regards us in this adopted state. He sees us that way. If you are ever depressed, let this truth sink in. Christ regards you as his brother or sister. The king of glory has received us into His family.)

¹⁴ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might **destroy him** who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

¹⁵ and **release those** who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

¹⁶ For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.

¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

I challenge you this week to pay attention to the changes God has wrought in your heart. And that as you notice those changes you will be assured of your salvation. And in that assurance we will live lives worthy of our calling. That we would live like Christ's brothers and sisters. And we would find our greatest pleasure in our new relationship with Him.

