

ROMANS 8:12-17 "To Be Adopted By God..... What A Concept!"

Rom 8:11 "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."

The Spirit of Christ who gives eternal life to our spirits and who will ultimately give life to our mortal bodies, where our mortal bodies will be reunited with our spirits at the final resurrection, is the same Spirit who is in us today encouraging and empowering us to live for the sake of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

We have been bought with a great price. This is why Paul tells us in 1Co 6:19-20 "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

John tells us what that cost involved for our Lord when he wrote in Rev 5:9-10 "And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

We were purchased with the blood of Christ with a specific purpose: to be made a kingdom and priests to serve our God as we live in this earth, and ultimately on the new earth, to glorify Jesus Christ who rules and reigns in righteousness.

What a great privilege to be part of that kingdom in Christ and what a great responsibility to be faithful to the Risen One who has purchased this life for us with His own blood.

This is why Paul continues to say in Rom 8:12-13 "Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,..."

Because of the price that it cost Christ to purchase our salvation we are under obligation to follow Him. The word obligation in the

Greek is better rendered a debtor. We are people eternally indebted to a God who owed us nothing but has given us everything in Christ.

But Paul's way of making his point is done in a way that brings out this contrast of the flesh or the old nature and the Spirit who gives life and gives us a new nature in Christ.

He says, 'we are most certainly indebted, but it's not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.' Why? Quite simply, if we are indebted to the flesh; in other words if we owe the flesh something, for which the flesh can take credit, then we would be obliged to receive the reward the flesh has for us.

But Paul tells us what that reward is in verse 13 "For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die;..."

The wages of sin is death. And so to be a debtor to the flesh, or the old nature, is to live according to its demands which results only in death.

And so in contrasting the flesh and the Spirit Paul's point is, to whom do you want to be indebted?

Rom 8:13 "For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,..."

The Spirit of the living Christ lives in all of us who have placed our faith in Him alone for our salvation. The deeds of the flesh are quite evident and we all battle the "old self" whose sinful nature wants to take center stage.

But, since we have the Spirit our new desires in Christ desire to please our Lord where we now have the ability to put to death the misdeeds of the body. And that is done by the Spirit as we live in the newness of Christ's life and the power He has given us.

Rom 8:14 "because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."

Notice that Paul is speaking to people who are believers in Christ; but notice that he doesn't separate faith from action. When he talks about being led by the Spirit he doesn't mean to be led around by the nose as though the Holy Spirit were dragging us everywhere as we scream and yell and follow only under compulsion.

Being led by the Spirit is most certainly being induced by the Spirit to follow Christ, but there is that aspect where we desire to be led and are willing to follow as we realize the love Christ has given us, and also as we realize that God is leading and will not lead us into a pit of destruction. We can and should trust Him.

These are the sons of God who have been given life and who show that they have life by their desire to be led by the Spirit and, are in fact, led by the Spirit. Again, it is not as though we are allowing the Spirit to lead us, He is leading because He owns us as we are new creatures in Christ.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ because nothing or no one can unseal what the Spirit has sealed for the day of redemption.

As we saw last week the Spirit of God is our down payment, if you will, as we look forward to actually receiving the inheritance we've been promised in Christ.

2Co 1:21-22 "Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, 22 set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

God makes us stand firm as we rest in Him and trust in Him and rely on the power of His Spirit whom He has given us as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. And there is a reason God takes such an interest in us and makes such promises to us and continually works with us and comforts us. The reason is found in verse 15 of our text.....

Rom 8:15 "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship.[Or adoption] And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

You and I, who have placed our faith in the living Christ, are no longer slaves to the flesh which only produces fear and dread because of its reward which is death.

We've been delivered from death through Christ. We know where we'll spend eternity. It's the weakness of the flesh and the enemy who continues to bring in doubt and fear as he tries to direct our eyes away from our loving Lord and point them to the old self.

If the old self is the one we're looking to get us through this life then we do have something to fear. But in Christ there's no excuse

to dwell on the dead man when we are alive in Christ who has brought us into His Kingdom and has called us sons and daughters.

2Co 6:16-18 "What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." 17 "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." 18 "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

That's what verse 15 in our text speaks to. The Spirit of God is nothing like the spirit of slavery from which we've been delivered. The Spirit of God brings us into His family. And that act is known as adoption.

Adoption is one of the most beautiful acts that we could ever experience. To be personally chosen by God to be part of His family is an awesome thing.

J.I. Packer in his book "Knowing God", which I highly recommend, speaks about this adoption from God. In fact, he starts off with a question. "What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God for His Father."

He goes on to say, "If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption."

Packer's point is that we were saved to come into a living relationship with God and that relationship is based on, not simply being declared not guilty of our sin because of Christ's blood, but on God's desire to bring us to Himself for fellowship, which can only come through the blood of Christ.

This is what Paul says in Gal 4:4-7 "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. 6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir."

We were saved to have eternal fellowship with God. God created us so that we might share in His eternity and His glory. And in the process we are made heirs and that is because we are His sons and daughters who have been adopted into the family through Christ.

Packer mentions that this relationship of God as our Father implies four things according to our Lord's own testimony in John's Gospel. **1)** It implies authority. God our Father is ruler and is worthy of our love and obedience. This is why Jesus speaks of His heavenly Father in terms of desiring to please the One who sent Him.

Joh 6:38 "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me."

Joh 4:34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."

Joh 5:19 Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."

Joh 17:4-5 "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."

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2) The Fatherhood implies affection.

Joh 5:20 "For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does."

Joh 15:9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love."

3) Fatherhood implies fellowship.

Joh 16:32 "But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me."

Joh 8:29 "The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."

4) Fatherhood implies honor.

Joh 17:1 "After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you."

Joh 5:22-23 "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, 23 that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him."

Our relationship to our heavenly Father is full and rewarding, but it's a relationship which has at its core an understanding that we are now His children who are to submit to His AUTHORITY, to bask and rejoice in the AFFECTION of His love He pours out on us, to enjoy His ever abiding FELLOWSHIP, and to HONOR Him with our lives.

What are some practical implications and applications of living by faith in the reality of being an adopted child of God who is our Father?

For one thing we look to the relationship Jesus had with the Father while on earth and we see that Jesus always had access to the Father.

Joh 11:41-42 "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me,..."

Packer makes the comment..... "[Jesus] wants His disciples to know that, as God's adopted children, the same is true of them. The Father is always accessible to His children, and is never too preoccupied to listen to what they have to say. This is the basis of Christian prayer."

Being a child of our heavenly Father brings with it the assurance that He knows our every need and is more than willing to meet those needs, whatever they may happen to be. But He wants us to know that our ultimate need is Him, and we must dwell in the presence of a Father who loves us.

Mat 6:25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"

In his book "Knowing God" Packer says of this verse in Matthew, "But, someone may say, this is not realistic; how can I help worrying, when I face this, and this, and this? To which Jesus' reply is: your faith is too small; have you forgotten that God is your Father? Mat 6:26 "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

I've got one more quote from Packer. It's a bit lengthy, but it's worth the reading because it sums up what it is to be an adopted child of the living God and Creator.

He says, "Adoption, by its very nature, is an act of free kindness to the person adopted. If you become a father by adopting a child, you do so because you choose to, not because you are bound to. Similarly, God adopts because He chooses to. He had no duty to do so. He need not have done anything about our sins save punish us as we deserved.....

.... But He loved us; so He redeemed us, forgave us, took us as His sons, and gave Himself to us as our Father. Nor does grace stop short with that initial act, any more than the love of human parents who adopt stops short with the completing of the legal process that makes the child theirs. The establishing of the child's status as a member of the family is only a beginning.....

.... The real task remains: to establish a genuinely filial relationship between your adopted child and yourself. It is this, above all, that you want to see. Accordingly, you set yourself to win the child's love by loving it. You seek to excite affection by showing affection. So with God. And throughout our life in this world, and to all eternity beyond. He will consistently be showing us, in one way or another, more and more of His love, and thereby increasing our love to Him continually. The prospect before the adopted sons (and daughters) of God is an eternity of love."

Can we trust a God like this? That's essentially the question that the Israelites posed to Moses when they doubted the love of their heavenly Father, who planned to bring them out from the bondage of Egypt.

They said to Moses, when they discovered that Pharaoh was coming out to the wilderness with his chariots to destroy them, "Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" (Exo 14:12)

They sought the things of the natural man, not the Spirit. The same struggle they had with their trusting in a loving Father is the same struggle Paul speaks of in this section of Romans.

But the answer is always the same. Here's how Moses responded to the people. "Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring

you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be [quiet]." (Exo 14:13-14)

No grumbling, no doubting, no raising fears for the rest of the Israelites. Moses said, 'let God be God and know that He is a Father who cared enough for you to bring you into a land flowing with milk and honey; the Promised land.'

But like the Israelites, who had a tendency to doubt their heavenly Fathers love and concern, we too want to camp on the bank and only dream of that heavenly city.

Listen to what God told Moses after he shared with the Israelites that the Lord would deliver.

Exo 14:15-16 "Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. 16 Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground."

The time is at hand to stop debating the goodness of God, the caring hand of God, the love of the Lord and start marching towards the Promised Land trusting that He goes before us.

God says, 'let's get a move on Moses, raise your staff, I'll part the Red sea and then walk with me through the sea on dry ground. No more standing around. Let's move. And as you move by faith, you'll see Me work in great and mighty ways.'

We're taught throughout God's word that God has loved us with an everlasting love. But, as Christians there comes a time to move ahead with our heavenly Father as he instructs us, guides us and empowers us to follow the One who has adopted us into His family and given us a place in that family with privileges and responsibility.

God has brought us out of the bondage of Egypt (the bondage of sin and its spirit of slavery), but with freedom comes the command from God to walk through in His victory.

Rom 8:15-17 "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. [Or adoption] And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs

with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

As children of God there are always growing pains and there is suffering, but when the phrase "we share in His sufferings" is used the literal meaning implies we share jointly, together with Christ.

We're not in this alone. Not only do we have each other, more important, we have our Father who has purchased us with the blood of His Son so that we might be adopted and share in the inheritance Christ has gained for us.

Sufferings in this world are not meant for our destruction, but they're meant for God to take opportunity to show how He can comfort and encourage us through the suffering and give us an opportunity to learn of His love firsthand.

Like the Israelites who experienced suffering in the desert, we too will find ourselves prone to wander as the writer of the Hymn "Come Thou fount of every blessing" says, but God is not lost. He knows where we are and He knows where we're going.

That's why it's so important to follow Him. Our God, our Lord, our Redeemer and Savior, our Father, who will never forsake us. We have received a spirit of adoption whereby we cry out, Abba, Father."

We may suffer jointly but there's one thing we know for sure, we will be glorified with Him and even today we are being prepared for that day.

It's the preparation that sometimes becomes uncomfortable, and raises doubts and fears. But it's during the preparation when we have the greatest opportunity to show the world that our heavenly Father is making us fit for heaven.

Let's not fight it by living according to the flesh, but realize that we are under obligation to put to death the deeds of the flesh and live according to the Spirit, with the express purpose of showing off our Father to the world. 'He's my Dad and He's loved me enough to send His Son to die for me. I in turn will give my all to Him.'

"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." Let's be imitators of our heavenly Father and shine before the world in such a way that our Father is glorified in and through our lives. And may we passionately seek the face of our

God and rely on the Holy Spirit for our strength to accomplish
God's will in all things.