

Abba! Father!

Scripture: Romans 8:12-17

Introduction

Last week, we arrived at Romans chapter eight where Paul began describing our life in the Spirit. Before knowing Jesus Christ, our life was in the flesh, following the desires of the flesh and following the demands of the Law. After trusting in and becoming a follower of Jesus Christ, Paul mentioned “the Spirit of God dwells in you” and He gives “life to your mortal bodies.” Since the Spirit of God lives within Christians, they are no longer enslaved to the flesh and should no longer live according to the flesh. This means our post-Christ lives, after we begin following Jesus, should be remarkably different from our pre-Christ lives, before we accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Can you look at your life and see a difference in who you are and what you do as a result of the Spirit of God living within you? You should! Those who are being led by the Spirit of God will slay the desires of the flesh through the power of the Spirit and will enjoy eternal life. God and believers each have a role in sanctification. It must be by the Spirit and His power for we can do nothing apart from God, but you also are to “put to death” the sinful desires by taking an active role in battling sinful habits. Christians do this because they now belong to God the Father and have His desires and want to be like Jesus. Christians do this because they have a new family and a new purpose.

The passage this morning continues the thread of our living by the Spirit of God and speaks of our new relationship with our Heavenly Father. Today is Father’s Day - a day where we celebrate our earthly fathers. How appropriate it is for us to read this passage of Scripture that describes our relationship to our Heavenly Father. Some of you have or have had great experiences with your fathers. Some of you have fond memories of them being dad. Some of you, however, may have mixed views of your father or you may not have had good experiences with your fathers. They may have let you down. Our fathers are human. They make mistakes and they sin like the rest of us. They sometimes fail to be the fatherly figure we all need in life. Like all of us, they sometimes put themselves before others and act selfishly when they should act sacrificially.

We Are Adopted into God’s Family

Fathers are needed. Billy Graham once said, “A good father is one of the most unsung, unpraised, unnoticed, and yet one of the most valuable assets in our society.” We need good fathers. If you had a good father, you were blessed. When a father does not act fatherly by loving, protecting and serving his family as a father should, the family suffers. Oftentimes, a family is destroyed because of the selfish acts of one parent. Though you may not have had a good earthly father, there is a Heavenly Father who loves us sacrificially, who cares for His children, and those who trust in Jesus Christ are part of His family. They are His children.

Romans 8:14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

If we trust in Jesus Christ and are being led by the Spirit of God, we are God's children. All of us are His creation, but those who are being led by the Spirit are called His children. The only way for a person to become a child of God is through faith in Jesus Christ, "For all...who believed in [Jesus'] name, He gave [them] the right to become children of God." (John 1:12–13). Believers enjoy all the privileges, obligations, and inheritance rights of God's children. While the passage here in Romans reads "sons," the intent is that anyone who accepts Christ as Lord and Savior is a child of God. Both men and women who are being led by the Spirit of God are children of God. The means by which we become "children of a God" is through *adoption*. If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have been adopted into God's family.

Romans 8:15 *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*

Every child of God is an adopted child. That word *adopted* is considered by some to be undesirable. Some may think it means something less than a child. It does not! Adoption is a beautiful thing. It denotes a loving choice by the Father to bring outsiders, even enemies of Him, into His family. Many years ago, I did not really think about adoption until I sat in a meeting at church one day. There was an organization that helped Christian families adopt orphans from various countries around the world. I looked at all those children who needed a family, who needed a father in their lives (just like we all do!), and I realized the biblical truth of adoption. I realized that I was adopted. My Heavenly Father loved me so much that He sent His Heavenly Son, His only begotten Son, to bring me into His family. That is the kind of loving relationship anyone has who follows Christ. Like Paul, we might have once cried, "Wretched person I am," but through Jesus Christ, we can cry out, "Abba! Father!" This is the same way Jesus called to His Father. That is Who He is to us through Christ - He is our Father.

We Are Heirs Who Suffer with Christ

As a result of having faith in Jesus Christ, we receive a new identity. We are no longer called enemies of God, but are now called children of God. As His children, we are also heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:17 *If children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

It is typical for children to inherit their parent's possessions. In fact, many families are put into conflict over who gets what through an inheritance. Being children of God, we inherit certain things from God and with Christ - namely God Himself. Those who trust in Jesus Christ receive such things as forgiveness of sin, removal of guilt, a right standing with God, a place in God's kingdom, a place within God's family, the status of "child of God," and eternal life. We may often think of these things when we speak of inheriting from God. All who are God's children are heirs of His promises. Being a child of God means we receive all the promises, the gifts, the inheritance that come with being a child of a King. But, is there anything else?

Being a child of God also brings suffering. Some of you may be thinking, “Can’t we just be His children without having suffering?” Who wants suffering? Who wants to inherit that? No one! The presence of suffering in our life, however, is another sign of being a child of God. Not everyone who suffers is a Christian, but every Christian should expect to suffer some in this world. Christ suffered and He told us, His followers, to expect suffering from this world. If the world hated Jesus, it will hate you. In fact, if you are following Jesus Christ, you will be at odds with the world, and that will bring suffering. You should expect it. Suffering is oftentimes a result of evil done against God’s children.

Sometimes, though, suffering is a result of our own sin. We sometimes choose to disobey God which brings suffering upon us. We are sometimes like the child who has been told to behave but chooses not to do it. As God’s children, we will sometimes choose the desires of the flesh over the desires of our a Heavenly Father. When we do this, there will be consequences. As the saying goes: If you play with fire, you will be burned. If you get caught speeding, will you not get a ticket? If you disrespect your parents, will you not be punished? Do not think, though, that because you suffer as a result of sin that God does not love you. As a good, loving father, He will discipline you. Solomon once wrote about God’s discipline.

Proverbs 3:11–12 ¹¹ *My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, ¹² for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.*

No one likes discipline. When I was younger, I would often get myself into trouble that required some form of discipline. My father or mother would often tell me, “This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you.” I never believed that, until I got older. A good father does not want to discipline his or her child, but a good father realizes he must do it. In order for children to learn from their mistakes and to become better people, they must be disciplined. I may have despised my parent’s discipline at that time, but it made me a better person now. I learned from it. It is because they love us that our parents discipline us and it is because our Heavenly Father loves us that He disciplines us. God did not save you to just rescue you from the pit of Hell, but He saved you in order for you to be conformed to the image of his Son, Jesus Christ. (Romans 8:29)

We will be Glorified with Christ

That brings us to the last part of verse seventeen. Sharing the sufferings of Christ also means sharing His glory. We share the consequences of being a co-heir with Christ in terms of opposition from the world He came to save. As members of the same family we share in the trials of life as well as the benefits. Not only are we children of God, if we are being led by the Spirit of God, and fellow heirs with Jesus Christ, we also have the promise of future glory with Christ. Look at verse seventeen again.

Romans 8:17 *If children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

Salvation means having a new identity. Salvation means receiving the good gifts of the Father. Salvation means enduring the present trials and suffering of this world. Salvation also means that we have a glorious future waiting for us. While we enjoy a new relationship with God right now, we do not have to wait for it, we have the hope of a bright and glorious future that we will share with Jesus Christ. There will be a day when we cast off these mortal bodies that are encumbered with sickness and death, and these minds that are stricken with competing desires of the flesh and the Spirit, and put on a new glorified body free of sin, sickness and death. Our Heavenly Father has a great future planned for His children. We just need to trust Him and His Son.

Conclusion

In closing, what will get you through the storms of life? What hope do you have when, not if, but when temptation, trials, and suffering threaten to turn your life upside down? If you have trusted in Christ, let me encourage you along with the passage today, to not fall back into fear. If you have trusted in Christ and are being led by the Spirit, you have been adopted into God's family and are called a child of God. Believe it — you are a child of God! You have a new identity and a new family no matter what your earthly situation is. Rejoice in that.

To our earthly fathers, how can you fulfill the calling of being a father to your children? How can you accomplish this most important job anyone could have? I encourage you to look to your Heavenly Father and follow Him. Love Him and desire Him above all else, and as He sacrificially loved you, do the same for your children. Only by following the Heavenly Father will you be the father you need to be to your family. To everyone else, pray for these men. They need your prayers to be the godly men they ought to be in their families.

To all of us, my encouragement is much the same. Look to your Heavenly Father. When your earthly fathers let you down, or others in your family or your friends hurt you, or the world hates you, follow your Heavenly Father. Let His peace comfort you for you are highly favored by Him. Love God and desire Him above all else. Only then will you fulfill your purpose in life. It is only from a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ that we have hope and peace. It is only through Jesus Christ that we become children of God, heirs of the King, with a glorious future. Follow the Father. Love Him. Trust Him. This is good news. Thanks be to God. Amen!