

Romans Session 106
Life in the Spirit 10
The Spirit confirms our adoption 2

Romans 8:14-16 (NASB)

¹⁴ *For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

¹⁵ *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!"*

¹⁶ *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,*

We have been talking about our adoption into the family of God. We have learned that those who are led by the Spirit, are the children of God.

We have learned that we no longer are to live in fear and slavery to sin.

God is now our Father. And he Spirit testifies to that truth.

We have also learned that now that we are children of God, we have access by the Spirit, to God.

And God makes certain that His children know that they are His children.

We have said that the word adoption is filled with the ideas of love, grace, compassion, and an intimate relationship.

We said last time that the Child, adopted legally attains all the rights and privileges of a member of the family.

Ephesians 1:5 (NASB)

⁵ *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,*

For some people today, the concept of adoption carries the idea of second-class status in the family.

In the Roman culture of Paul's day, however, an adopted child, especially an adopted son, sometimes had greater prestige and privilege than the natural children.

According to Roman Law, a father's rule over his children was absolute.

If he was disappointed in his natural son's skill, character, or any other attribute, he would search diligently for a boy available for adoption who demonstrated the qualities he desired.

If the boy proved himself worthy, the father would take the necessary legal steps for adoption.

At the death of the father, a favored adopted son would sometimes inherit the father's title, the major part of the estate, and would be the primary progenitor of the family name.

Because of its obvious great importance, the process of Roman adoption involved several carefully prescribed legal procedures.

The first step totally severed the boy's legal and social relationship to his natural family, and second step placed him permanently into his new family. In addition to that, all of his previous debts and other obligations were eradicated, as if they had never existed.

For the transaction to be legally binding, it also required the presence of seven reputable witnesses, who could testify, if necessary, to any challenge of the adoption after the father's death.

Paul was very aware of this custom and may have had it in mind as he penned this section of Romans.

He assures believers of the wondrous truth that they are indeed God's adopted children, and that because of that immeasurably gracious relationship they have the full right and privilege to **cry out Abba** to God as their heavenly **Father**, just as every child does to his earthly father.

The fact that believers have the compelling desire to cry out in intimate petition and praise to their loving Father, along with their longing for fellowship and communion with God, is evidence of the indwelling Holy Spirit, which indwelling proves one's salvation and gives assurance of eternal life.

Abba is an informal Aramaic term for Father, connoting intimacy, tenderness, dependence, and complete lack of fear or anxiety.

Modern English equivalents would be **Daddy, or Papa.**

When Jesus is agonizing in the Garden of Gethsemane as He was about to take upon Himself the sins of the world, He used that name of endearment, praying "*Abba Father, all things are possible for Thee; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt*" (Mark 14:36)

When we are saved, our old sinful life is completely cancelled in God's eyes, and we have no more reason to fear sin or death, because Christ has conquered those two great enemies on our behalf.

In Him we are given a new divine nature and become a true child, with all the attendant blessings, privileges, and inheritance.

And until we see our Lord face-to-face, His own Holy Spirit will be a ceaseless witness to the authenticity of our adoption into the family of God.

This idea of Christians being God's adopted children was clearly understood by Paul's contemporaries to signify great honor and privilege.

In his letter to Ephesus, the apostle exults,

Ephesians 1:3-5 (NASB)

³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

⁴ *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love*

⁵ *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,*

Countless ages ago, before He created the first human being in His divine image, God sovereignly chose every believer to be His beloved and eternal child!

It should be kept in mind that, marvelous as it is, the term **adoption** does not fully illustrate God's work of salvation. The believer is also cleansed from sin, saved from its penalty of death, spiritually reborn, justified, sanctified, and ultimately glorified.

But those who are saved by their faith in Jesus Christ by the work of His grace have no higher title than that of adopted child of God.

The name designates their qualification to share full inheritance with Christ.

It is therefore far from incidental that Paul both introduces and closes this chapter with assurances to believers that they are no longer, and never again can be, under God's condemnation. (see 8:1, 38-39)

WE ARE ASSURED BY THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,*

To give us further assurance of our eternal relationship to Him, the Lord's Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

As noted above, just as the witness to a Roman adoption had the responsibility of testifying to its validity, so the indwelling Holy Spirit Himself is constantly present to provide inner testimony to our divine adoption.

He certainly does that through the inner work of illumination and sanctification, as well as through the longing for communion with God.

Now Paul does not have in mind just some mystical small voice saying we are saved. Rather, he may be referring to the fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB)

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

²³ *gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

Which, when the Spirit produces it, gives the believer assurance.

Or he may be thinking of the power for service;

Acts 1:8 (NASB)

⁸ *but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

Which when experienced is evidence of the Spirit's presence, thus assuring one of salvation.

When believers are compelled by love for God, feel deep hatred for sin, reject the world, long for Christ's return, love other Christians, experience answered prayer, discern between truth and error, long for and move toward Christlikeness, the work of the Holy Spirit is evidenced and those believer witness that they truly **are children of God.**

The nineteenth-century British pastor Billy Bray seemed never to have lacked that inner testimony.

He had been converted from a life of drunken debauchery while reading John Bunyan's "*Visions of Heaven and Hell*"

He was so continuously overjoyed by God's grace and goodness that he said, "*I can't help praising the Lord. As I go along the street, I lift up one foot, and it seems to say Glory, and I lift up the other and it seems to say Amen and so they keep on like that all the time I am walking.*"

Whenever the world, other Christians, or we ourselves question that we are saved, we can appeal to the indwelling **Spirit** to settle the question in our hearts. Providing that assurance is one of His most precious ministries to us.

John offers the encouraging words;

1 John 3:18-20 (NASB)

¹⁸ *Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*

¹⁹ *We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him*

²⁰ *in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.*

That is objective evidence that we are truly God's children. John then reminds us of that subjective evidence our gracious Lord provides;

1 John 3:20b-21 (NASB)

²⁰ for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

²¹ Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;

Do you and I have that kind of assurance? Do we know that confidence?