

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHILD OF GOD

As I began preparation for this morning's message, I was sitting in the waiting room in the service department of a car dealership, praying that I wouldn't be advised that our car would cost us several thousand dollars in repairs. As is common in almost any public waiting room nowadays, there was a television turned on. That always irritates me because I don't like to listen to most of the trash that's on television these days and, in addition, I prefer to read or work while I'm waiting. And the program they had selected for the viewing pleasure of their customers was one reflecting the (elegance), (class), and (maturity) of a sophisticated audience. It was one we find so typically on so many networks today. I can't be certain, but I believe the name of the program was, *Divorce Court*. As I entered the waiting room, sat down, and opened up my laptop, the husband and wife on the program were arguing with one another, calling each other names, and making very insulting references to the character, ancestry, and personal appearance of the other. Imagine how romantic it must be to hear someone say, "I only married her to shut her up," or "I only married him because I couldn't find anything better."

The husband had been having an affair with the downstairs neighbor. Another neighbor had told the wife about it. She threw him out of the house and as she drove away in her car, he jumped on the hood. She drove forty miles per hour to the police station while he was hanging onto the hood. He then went to live with his "mama" and within a few days began an affair with her neighbor. A few days after throwing her husband out, the wife had another guy move in with her. She had two children, a ten year old and a five year old. She had a full time job which meant that she had to leave her children with the new boy friend. On and on the story went and all the time the judge was snickering and making sarcastic comments to both the husband and wife.

Now to show you how human I am and how controlled I can be sometimes by my sin nature, I went to the manager's office and in my most condescending manner and tone said, "*Can you have someone turn off that crap on the television!*" He had several people in the office with him and everyone appeared stunned. As I returned to my seat I couldn't help wondering if they were stunned by what I said or that I thought so little of their programming selection. Someone came and changed the channel to the Cosby Show and turned down the volume. I noticed almost immediately that I was able to work without distraction because, even though I could still hear the TV, I was not drawn to it like I was when I heard all the yelling, screaming, arguing, and sarcasm that was going on in the previous program. Betty could probably give you a clinical explanation for this, but it seems to be to be fairly obvious that we are able to function much better in a calm environment than in a stress filled environment. You may consider that to be a forgone conclusion that almost anyone could come to, but you wouldn't think so if you walked into almost any business office, retail establishment, manufacturing facility, or home. Almost everyone is working in and living in a stress filled environment and it's destroying their quality of life.

As I sat there, I couldn't help remembering one of the points we tried to make in last

week's message. Whatever you put into your computer, **your mind**, is going to be reflected in your behavior. Whatever, or whoever, controls your mind will control your behavior. If you allow the Spirit of God to control your mind, then you will have a mind that is intent on obeying the will of God. You will then be a person who allows the Holy Spirit to produce love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control in your life. If you allow your mind to continually be filled with programs like *Divorce Court*, and associate with people who live their lives like those people on *Divorce Court*, your life is going to be filled with anger, hatred, jealousy, greed, resentment, dishonesty, lust, perversion, and any number of other debilitating behavioral patterns, just as were the people on *Divorce Court*. Remember, whatever you put into your mind is what you become.

We ask you now to think on the things that you fill your mind with as we review the first thirteen verses of Romans chapter eight, and we think that will help you understand whether or not you're in step with the Holy Spirit of God.

Life in the Spirit

1 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

2 For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death.

3 The law of Moses could not save us, because of our sinful nature. But God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours, except that ours are sinful. God destroyed sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.

4 He did this so that the requirement of the law would be fully accomplished for us who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

5 Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit.

6 If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death. But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace.

7 For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will.

8 That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

9 But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all.)

10 Since Christ lives within you, even though your body will die because of sin, your spirit is alive because you have been made right with God.

11 The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you.

12 So, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do.

13 For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its evil deeds, you will live.

These verses are simply saying that because God came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ and became the perfect penalty for sin by dying in our place, we are given the free gift of salvation simply by believing in what Jesus did for us. When we make such a confession of faith and ask for forgiveness of our sins, God sends the Holy Spirit to live within us and provides the power necessary for the believer to be obedient to God's will, if the person asks for that power. Those who do not have such faith in the work of Jesus do not have the power of the Holy Spirit available to them and thus are not able to live lives pleasing to God. The only exception to this would be if an unbeliever calls upon God to reveal Himself and help him/her understand the truth that is necessary to have a relationship with Him. Those that believe will find joy and peace both in this life and in Heaven. Those who do not will find no lasting peace and joy in this life and will spend eternity in the most lonely and painful emotional confines of Hell.

We would also like to ask you this morning to think on what we said last week about giving yourself a test to confirm whether or not you're really saved. We'll take you through it one more time because we think it is so important to your life.

When you take this self-examination ask yourself these questions:

- ☞ Have I seen evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in my life?
- ☞ Have I experienced those things which the Bible refers to as the fruit of the Spirit?

LOVE	GOODNESS
JOY	FAITHFULNESS
PEACE	GENTLENESS
PATIENCE	SELF-CONTROL
KINDNESS	
- ☞ Have I experienced times that I long to communicate with God?
- ☞ Have I experienced a love for the Word of God even if I might not be feeling that right now?
- ☞ Have I felt a true desire to praise God?

We tried to emphasize last time just what the Holy Spirit does for the person who receives Jesus as their personal Savior. He frees us from our bondage to sin and death. He enables us to fulfill God's Law. He changes our nature and makes us all new on the inside. And someday when these mortal bodies we now live in are resurrected, He will make us all new on the outside as well.

Being controlled by the Holy Spirit and being controlled by the Word of Christ go hand in hand. If you want to live a Spirit-filled life, simply get your life under the control of the Word of God. As you saturate your heart and mind with the truth of the Word of God, it will begin to show in Spirit-controlled behavior. You must saturate yourself with the Word of God so that whenever situations come at you, your involuntary trigger responses are godly.

This is **not** going to happen by only attending a weekend service at church and occasionally making it to a Bible study. You must seize every opportunity to grow in the Word. When I first became a Christian, I felt a strong desire to learn everything I could about the truth of God's Word. As the Spirit led me into the Word and began to teach me, I found that I just could not get enough of it. Since that time over ten years ago, I have spent several hours almost every day reading and studying God's Word. When I tell people this, they look at me as if to say, "*Get a life. Look at all the things you've missed out on by spending so much time studying the Bible?*" What they don't know is that it was by studying the Bible that I was given a life.

If they only knew what they're missing out on. When you dwell on the Word of God, you get to know the mind of God. When you have that you receive something that you would not trade for all the power, money, riches, good looks, and athletic ability in the world. If I were to sum it all up, I would say that the Holy Spirit places a sense of assurance in your heart. Life is not without problems, pain, strained relationships, and financial hardship, but through it all you have this deep sense of assurance that God is going to provide for your every need. You feel the deep assurance that He loves you as His child and longs for intimacy with you. You sense you are going to be with Him in Heaven for eternity. You sense you are going to share in Christ's inheritance and rule with Him. You know that this assurance is never going to go away as long as you submit yourself to the Holy Spirit of God and remain in the Word of God. What a great way to go through life.

I still have problems in my life but I trust that God has me going through them for a good purpose. I know that He will never give me more than I can bear. If you don't have a similar feeling, you're missing out on oh so much. And if you don't develop this saving relationship with Jesus before you die, you will spend eternity wishing you had.

Now let us pick up our study of Romans 8 at verse 14, and we'll read Romans 8:14-16:

*14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God **are children of God.***

*15 So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, **adopted into his family**—calling him "**Father, dear Father.**"*

*16 For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that **we are God's children.***

This has to be one of the richest passages in all of Scripture. It speaks about our relationship with God, and the key word is **adoption**. We are **children of God** in verses fourteen and sixteen because we are adopted by God in verse fifteen. Some people look at the word adoption and assume it refers to something with a second class status. But in the first century it was quite the opposite. Adoption in the Roman Empire was considered a great honor. In fact, for the most part, it demonstrated such affection for a person that the one doing the adopting went to great lengths to bring someone into their family and give them all the rights and privileges, including an equal share of the inheritance, that was due each of the biological heirs. For example, in the Roman culture, if a father looked upon his children, particularly his sons, and he didn't see among his natural born sons

one that he thought worthy of inheriting his name, title, offices, and estates, he would go outside his family to find a son who was worthy. This father would then adopt him into the family based upon his virtue, character, and talent. That adopted son would then take precedence over all his natural sons who did not qualify at the level of requirements that the father had established.

So an adopted son in the Roman culture was not just some poor child who was picked up because he didn't have any parents. An adopted son in the Roman culture was one who was chosen by the father for the purpose of inheriting the estate and bearing the name and title of the father. So when it says in the Bible that God adopts us it means that God has chosen us to bear His name and His title and to inherit His estate. For those who are saved, they are the preferred of God, the choice of God.

So the word *adoption* was a word filled with love, mercy, and grace. Those people who are saved have been given such a great honor and privilege. According to verse fifteen they *have received the Spirit of adoption*. **They have been made the sons and daughters of God.** We who are unworthy have actually been brought into God's family as His sons and daughters. Do you know what that makes each and every believer? Royalty. Believers are the sons and daughters of the king. It is by the power and through the Holy Spirit that we have been made sons and daughters of God. The Holy Spirit is the *Spirit of adoption*. He is the one who has placed us into the family of God and who has then confirmed in our hearts that we are children of God.

Now I believe there is one other point that needs to be highlighted regarding the Roman policy on adoption. There were four major changes that occurred in the life of the adopted child:

1. The adopted child lost all relationship to his/her old family, and the child then gained all rights to the new family. **What a great analogy of salvation.**
2. The child became an heir to the new father's estate and his/her rights were not affected by the father's naturally born children. The adopted son or daughter was at least co-heir with the rest of the children, and could even be the sole heir if that was the father's wish.
3. The former life of the adopted child was completely wiped out. All of their legal debts were cancelled. The adopted child was given a new name. It was almost as if they had just been born. We find here another great analogy for salvation. When you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and are adopted into the family of God, all your past debts (sins) are cancelled and you become a co-heir of all that the born Son, Jesus, possesses.

4. In the eyes of the law the adopted child was literally and absolutely the

child of the new father. So it is that when we receive Christ as Savior, the very same thing takes place. We cut the cord with the past. We become co-heirs to God's kingdom. All the old debts (sins) are wiped out, and we are absolutely and legally forever a son or daughter of God.

So we can say as believers that we are under no condemnation. Why? Because we have been adopted into God's family and all former debts are cancelled. We now belong to God and the Holy Spirit of God confirms that adoption in our hearts. It is the Spirit of God who opens our understanding, who enlightens our mind to understand the Word of God. **As we read our Bibles, the Holy Spirit of God helps us to understand its teaching so that it becomes a part of us with the power to change us and make us holy.**

The unsaved person cannot understand the Bible because it needs to be defined and spiritually explained according to 1 Corinthians 2:14:

14 But people who aren't Christians can't understand these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them because only those who have the Spirit can understand what the Spirit means.

The Holy Spirit is there to help us at all times in our daily battles. He injects thoughts, convictions, impulses, and direction into our mind, heart, and will to get us going in the right direction. If you fall into a sin, you'll hear His voice saying, "Why did you do that? You knew it was wrong." And He can make the conviction so painful that that you never want to do it again. That's why Paul could write in Galatians 5:16:

16 So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.

The Holy Spirit is walking on a path. In the above verse, Paul is telling us to get on the path as well and walk in the footsteps of the Holy Spirit. **If we do that, we will not want to fulfill our sinful lusts and desires.**

We'll now move on to the section of Romans 8 that includes verses 17-30. **The great hope of every believer is Heaven**, the presence of God, and being transformed into the likeness of Christ. Let's begin by looking at Romans 8:17, and we'll begin with verse 15 so we have some continuity from where we left off:

15 So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family—calling him "Father, dear Father."

16 For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children.

17 And since we are his children, we will share his treasures—for

everything God gives to his Son, Christ, is ours, too. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

We will receive an inheritance that is the same as the inheritance Jesus Christ has received. Someday when we get to Heaven we are going to get everything that God promised to give to Jesus. What a staggering thought! I believe Paul confirms this in Ephesians 1:3:

3 How we praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we belong to Christ

This is getting exciting, isn't it? Just think, if you're a believer, you'll enjoy every spiritual blessing available in Heaven. As a believer, there will be nothing in Heaven that you won't have. You will even have everything that Jesus has. You won't be God, but you'll enjoy all the things that He's permitted to enjoy. Can you imagine anyone who wouldn't want to get in on this promise? Now let's continue in Romans 8:18:

18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later.

Any suffering that we experience as believers in this world fades into nothingness when compared to the future glory of Heaven. Believers know it will be OK there and everything that is wrong here will be made right in Heaven. All the injustice will become justice. All the poverty will become riches, and all the pain and heartache will be gone. So the suffering here is in reality hardly worth thinking about.

Now let us just shift gears here for just a moment. With all this talk about salvation and all the wonderful things that come along with it, some of you may be wondering, "*What if you do something bad and lose your salvation?*" Can anyone answer that question? Is there anything you can do to lose your salvation? What did we go over and over again in Romans 8:1?

There is no more condemnation for those who are in Christ!

ONCE YOU ARE SAVED, YOU'RE SAVED FOREVER. You are an heir forever. If you still have doubts, look at Ephesians 1: 11-14:

11 Furthermore, because of Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us from the beginning, and all things happen just as he decided long ago.

12 God's purpose was that we who were the first to trust in Christ should praise our glorious God.

*13 And now you also have heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, **he identified you as his own by***

giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago.

14 THE SPIRIT IS GOD'S GUARANTEE that he will give us everything he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. This is just one more reason for us to praise our glorious God.

A believer is sealed permanently, branded as God's possession forever. Nothing can break that seal. Verse 14 tells us that the Holy Spirit is the pledge, which means the down payment, or the first installment, or perhaps even the engagement ring of our inheritance, until the redemption (to be freed from the consequences of sin) of the purchased possession. When you were saved, you were purchased by God, but you have not entered into the full inheritance of that purchase yet. However, **you are guaranteed** that you will, and that guarantee is the gift of the Holy Spirit who is the engagement ring promising you that marriage, promising that you will receive that inheritance. We find the same message in Philippians 1:6;

6 And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again.

When God begins a good work, He finishes it, and He does it by the agency of the Holy Spirit. **We will enter into the fullness of our inheritance because it is guaranteed to us by the Holy Spirit of God.** A person simply cannot lose their salvation. Now if someone claims they were saved at one time and now are not, they were never really saved in the first place.

Now let's continue with Romans 8:19:

19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are.

What we have waiting here is the entire created universe with the exclusion of human beings and angels. Paul is referring to the material earth, sky, land, water, grass, flowers, animals, etc. And just what is creation waiting to see? Just look at the end of verse 19: *the revealing of the children of God.* That is when all sin will be gone, our sinful human nature will be gone, and we'll be standing in blazing holy pureness before our Lord and Savior, Jesus. So creation is looking and waiting and anticipating that full glory, when the saints (believers) will shine as stars forever. And just as a point of information, a lot of people think saints are very special people who earn special recognition from the Church and are appointed to sainthood because they're so good. That's nothing but a man-made distortion of The Bible. Let's look at Romans 1:7 (NRSV):

7 To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Also Romans 12:10-13 (NRSV):

10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor

giving preference to one another;
11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;
12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;
*13 distributing to the needs of the **saints**, given to hospitality.*

Also 1 Corinthians 1:2 (NRSV):

*2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be **saints**, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:*

Additional references can be found in Ephesians 1:1,18 and Philippians 1:1. A saint is a believer in Jesus Christ who has been granted salvation by God because of their faith. I'm Saint Ron. This is Saint Betty. You are a saint as well, if you're a believer. No one in the family of God is granted any title or blessing over and above anyone else. We are all equal in the eyes of God and as we mentioned earlier we will all be granted equally all the blessings of Heaven. And what a day it will be for the believer when they walk through the gates of Heaven.