

Romans 8:14-17

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[0:00] Good morning, please take your copy of God's Word, which I hope that you have with you this morning, and join me in Romans chapter 8. To continue our study of Romans 8, Lord willing, we will finish the chapter on Christmas Eve morning. That's the plan as it stands.

We will, of course, still take some time and turn our attention to the coming of Christ and all that that entails, which certainly includes what Paul's teaching us in Romans 8.

I want you to know that these decisions are made prayerfully and thoughtfully with the aim of best ministering to your souls. So we do hope that you'll be well served, that you don't miss too much those Advent-themed sermons as we continue with chapter 8.

Now this morning we have further opportunity to consider the ministry of the Spirit. Last week we saw in verses 5-13 that the Spirit, number one, gives us life.

Herein we find the doctrine of regeneration. That is to say that those who are in Christ Jesus were once dead spiritually, but are now alive spiritually.

[1:36] Those who are in Christ have been born again. Secondly, we saw that the Spirit empowers us to live like Christ. The third person of our Trinitarian God sets us free from bondage to sin and works in us to bring about holiness.

Our justification guarantees our sanctification or gradual growing in holiness. Now before we press in today's text, I want to briefly address the closing phrase of it at the outset, a phrase that we will consider, Lord willing, at greater length next week.

And that's this phrase, in order that we may also be glorified with Him. You'll see that there at the end of verse 17. And here we find the goal for the Christian life.

I think that John most succinctly sums up this idea of us being glorified with Christ in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 2, where he says, Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.

When we are glorified, we will be like the perfect, sinless Son of God. God accomplishes this saving work in our lives by the power of the Spirit.

[3:09] I'm aiming us there as we're thinking about these ministries of the Spirit together. Let me draw your attention just briefly to the names used for the Spirit in Romans so far.

Paul's doing this inspiration very carefully to help us understand something of the Spirit's work in our lives. We see Him called just the Spirit in chapter 8, verse 4, verse 5, verse 6, verse 9, verse 10, verse 11, and verse 13.

We see Him back in chapter 1 and verse 4 called the Spirit of holiness. We see Him in chapter 8 and verse 2 called the Spirit of life.

In chapter 8, verse 9, and in today's text, verse 14, we see Him called the Spirit of God. And then we also see Him called the Spirit of Christ in chapter 8 and verse 9.

So the Spirit brings about life and holiness, emanates from God, is part of the triune God, and works to magnify Christ.

[4:21] Paul says in Colossians chapter 1, verse 27, Christ in you, the hope of glory. The hope that we will one day be glorified.

Christ indwelling by the Spirit in us. So with this in mind, let's look at Romans chapter 8, beginning in verse 14. Let me remind you before I read it, beloved, that this is God's Word to us.

It was written for His glory and for our good, and so we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

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.

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs. Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

[5:25] Provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. I want to show you from our text four ways that the Spirit ministers to us.

I am not suggesting that the Spirit's ministry is delimited by these four things, but I do believe that they are the primary ministries of the Spirit.

They are as follows. Number one, because of the Spirit, we are led. Number two, because of the Spirit, we are accepted.

Number three, because of the Spirit, we are confident. And number four, because of the Spirit, we are rewarded. So firstly, because of the Spirit, we are led.

Each of these points begins with that because, because verse 14 starts with a four. Recall that when we see this word, it shows us what Paul is saying is a continuation of what he has previously said.

[6:29] This is not a disjointed thought. He is following a logical flow, and so we do well to remember the context as we consider what it means to be led by the Spirit.

The Spirit does give us inclinations about the everyday details of our lives, but this is not what Paul is talking about here. I don't want to limit that, that there are things we think perhaps we should say that are led by the Spirit, but that's not what Paul is saying in this text.

text. So, for or because what? We're immediately proceeding. Verse 14 is verse 13. I love how that numbering helps us.

Romans 8.13 says this, For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

It's just after that that he says, For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. Paul is specifically teaching that the Spirit empowers putting to death sin in our lives.

[7:43] The Spirit leads us away from wickedness, but not away from wickedness just to a position of neutrality, but also toward holiness.

If you move up the chapter a little more to verse 4, there we see, In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

So at the beginning, do not be confused. Paul is not talking about subjective inclinations here, but about objective holiness.

If we are led by the Spirit of God, we are being led to obey the good commands of God. That's here what he is talking about.

I also want to talk a little bit about the word all. It says, For all who are led by the Spirit of God. And this little word needs some attention. I will say simply, Those who belong to God are led by the Spirit.

[8:47] If a person is in Christ Jesus, then they are filled with the Spirit of Christ, and the only objective observable marker of the state of their souls is obedience to God's law.

There's a lot of confusion about that in our day. If you are in Christ, then you have His Spirit, and it evidences itself in obedience to God's Word.

Don't let somebody tell you that you have to laugh uncontrollably in order to be filled with the Spirit. It's not in the text. You can't find it in the text.

What are we to do? We are to obey God's Word. But all who are sons of God are led by the Spirit of God.

Now we also have to spend some time on this verb, led. What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? Perhaps you will tolerate me a little Greek nerdiness for a moment, and maybe you'll even enjoy it.

[9:51] I hope that you will. The verb led is in the indicative mood, which describes something as actual, not theoretical or merely possible.

So, actually led. It's in the present tense, which describes something happening with no reference to its completion. So, it's happening and happening and happening and happening.

In actuality, going on all the time. Not momentarily, not in little spurts, but all the time going on. And it's in the passive voice, which describes an action, where the action is happening to the subject of the sentence or phrase, regardless of the participation of the object.

So, it's happening necessarily to. You see, Paul is stating that the leading of the Spirit is a thing that necessarily is always happening to the Christian.

If you are a son of God, then you are led by the Spirit of God. We don't always follow the leading of the Spirit in our lives, to be clear.

[11:06] But you are being led if you are in Christ. Christ is in you. In fact, another way to translate the Greek verb here translated, led, is to take hold of.

If we belong to Him, then by the Spirit, He has taken hold of us. And He is aiming us in a direction, which I mentioned previously, which is that final glory that we await.

So, if we are led by the Spirit, then we are sons of God. Those led by the Spirit of God, the Spirit was sent by God the Father and God the Son to show that we are sons of God.

The gift that God had given us proves that we belong to Him. Here we see the contrast of two categories of people and a pressing question.

We see that those who are part of God's family and by implication, those who are not. You are either led by the Spirit and a son of God or you are not led by the Spirit and not a son of God.

[12:21] To which family do you belong this morning? Most important question about you. Are you led by the Spirit of God to put to death sin in your life and be obedient?

Do you hate your sin and possess an innate desire to obey God's good commands? Or are you looking for every possible excuse, any potential justification, to live your life on your terms?

I want you to keep Romans chapter 8 marked with me and turn with me to John chapter 8. It is altogether possible for somebody to profess faith in Jesus Christ and not be in Him.

This is addressed all throughout the Bible and I want to show you where Jesus addresses it specifically. John 8 beginning in verse 31.

Verse 31 reads, So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him. Verse 30 says that a number of Jews had come to believe in Him. Who had believed in Him.

[13:36] Now listen, these are people who have professed belief. We read that and we go, of course, they're Christians. They've become Christians. Jesus is addressing this very thing with them.

Those who have professed faith in Him. He says, If you abide in My Word, you are truly My disciples. And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

Now listen to how they respond. They answered Him, We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say you will become free?

Jesus answered them. Verse 34, Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. Had they been regenerate, they would already be aware of this reality.

Verse 35, The slave does not remain in the house forever. The son remains forever. So, if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

[14:45] I know that you are offspring of Abraham, yet you seek to kill Me because My Word finds no place in you. Like, full stop, are these people believers in Jesus Christ? Jesus says otherwise.

Right? I speak of what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have heard from your father. Two different families. They answered Him, Abraham is our father.

Jesus said to them, If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, works of faith. But now you seek to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God.

This is not what Abraham did. You are doing the works your father did. They said to Him, We were not born of sexual immorality.

We have one father, even God. Jesus said to them, If God were your father, you would love Me. For I came from God, and I am here.

[15:42] I am not of My own accord, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear My Word. You are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.

He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in Him. When He lies, He speaks out of His own character, for He is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell you the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God. So it is possible, right, to profess faith and not belong to God.

What does He say? If you abide in My Word, then you are truly My disciples. Now, if you are in this latter category, this professing, but not truly being saved, it is our prayer for you this morning that you would repent of your sin and place your hope in Christ.

[16:57] Without Him, there is no hope for this life or the life to come. Would you respond in faith to the invitation of the good news of Jesus' life, His death and resurrection on your behalf?

Would you be born again this morning? We read a statement together. It's from our confession of faith, which originates from the New Hampshire Confession of 1833.

We ask the question, what do we believe about grace in regeneration? And I love this succinct and well-packed answer that says, we believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated or born again.

That regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind, that it is affected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life.

Those found in Christ will be turning by divine power from their sin by faith to Christ and obedience to His Word.

[18:21] If we are sons of God, then we are led by the Spirit. And I just want to emphasize, don't turn this into an experiential, feeling-oriented thing.

Are you being turned from disobedience to obedience regularly? Do you desire to live in a way that is pleasing to our God?

Do you, in a growing sense, despise your sin? Do you feel the conviction of the Spirit in your life when you do things that you ought not do?

If you don't, I am worried for your soul. Repent and believe. Place your faith in Christ. Because of the Spirit, we are led.

Secondly, because of the Spirit, we are accepted. Paul says, verse 15, chapter 8, 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.

[19:35] I listened to a sermon this week by Steve Lawson. If you guys know Steve Lawson, you can appreciate him. You know his voice. You may hear his voice in his head. And he kept saying, Abba, and that may be the way you pronounce it, but it drove me crazy.

So I'm going to say, Abba, the rest of the morning. Paul here, with verse 15, with another four, elaborates on the idea of being sons of God with a denial and then an affirmation.

He's such a good teacher. He constantly says, not this, but this instead. He first says, you did not receive the Spirit of slavery to fall back into fear.

You did not receive condemnation. You did not receive the guilt that accompanies your sin, which rightly causes you to tremble before God.

Whether it is present in your conscience or not, if you are not in Christ, you at your very core know that one day you will stand before your Maker and you will be judged for your sin.

[20:42] If you are in Christ, then you did not receive condemnation. Chapter 8, verse 1. But have been delivered from slavery to sin and the just punishment that is due it.

Rather, you have received the spirit of adoption as sons. Now, a small note about the idea of being adopted as sons for the women of our church.

You want this to be true of you because in Paul's day it was sons who received the inheritance of their fathers. Just a little historical context helps us understand.

Today, inheritances are most typically divided equally, but not so then. So, just embrace the term. We should all want to be sons in the sun.

This is a good thing that we would be adopted sons of the Most High. So, if you are led by the Spirit of God, you are a son of God and you have received the spirit of adoption as a son.

[21:50] Paul is the only Bible writer that uses the word adoption. He only uses it five total times and three of those usages are found in Romans.

And so, this language demands our attention. Why adoption? Why this particular word? Elsewhere in the Bible, our regeneration has been described using the metaphor of new birth.

made new, made alive by this new birth which brings us to spiritual life. But here, as adoption.

And I just think this is a particular note, especially to where Paul's case is headed as we'll see in coming weeks. I believe that Paul means to highlight the choosing work of God in saving us.

Adopted children are chosen children. All of us love our kids, our biological kids. We don't not want them, but they were given to us.

[22:55] They were granted to us. Adopted kids are chosen. The emphasis here is on compassion and intimacy and grace and love.

We'll see this through the end of chapter eight. Paul is saying to us that God is lavish in the calling of a people for his praise.

Paul presses with the word adoption that we were once so evidently not a part of God's family, but we have now been made a part of his family. It places the work squarely in God's hands and leaves no room for boasting on our part, but only reveling in the saving work of God on our behalf.

as Paul unpacks the ministry of the Spirit, perhaps he has the words of Jesus in John chapter 14 verse 16 through 18 on his mind.

There Jesus said, I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever.

Even the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him.

[24:12] You know him for he dwells with you and will be in you. Then verse 18 says, I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you.

There, the acting work of God the Son, working in conjunction with God the Father, by the power of God the Spirit to be with us forever.

The doctrine of adoption is a precious, precious doctrine. Paul says, you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry, Abba, Father.

Now, Abba is the informal Aramaic term for Father. He steps out of Koine Greek for a moment and uses an Aramaic word.

Perhaps a modern English equivalent would be daddy. It's a term of affection. It connotes tenderness, intimacy, dependency, and a total lack of fear.

[25:22] We can boldly approach God because He is our adopted dad. Because of the Spirit, we are accepted.

We deserve to be God's enemy. But because of our regenerating work in our lives, He has granted to us the righteousness of Christ and now we are welcomed, open-armed,

rise out, Abba, Father. This should grab our attention. I'm going to tell you, but can you think for a moment where else you see this combination of Aramaic and Greek?

Abba, Father. When Jesus is in agony in the garden of Gethsemane, the night before His crucifixion, He prays to God the Father in this way.

Mark 14 and verse 36, He says, Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Remove this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what You will.

[26:49] I think that what Paul is doing here is he has in mind this text and he employs this language in chapter 8 to help us think about the suffering we'll have to share in with Christ.

In verse 16, he begins introducing this very idea and the waiting for and the longing for glory and the way in which God's working all things for good.

Paul is beginning to set us up to understand that because we are accepted by God, we can endure all things because we have an internal inheritance in Him. come what may, Romans 8 is going to say to us, if God is for us, who can be against us?

And he's drawing our minds back, I think, to these words of Christ on the cross. These deeply intimate ways of referring to God as our Father.

Now, you may have a difficult time thinking of God as your Abba Father, because perhaps your earthly father was unkind or harsh or maybe only extended love to you conditionally.

[28:04] But this is not so of your heavenly Father. Praise God for fathers that we can look to, that are an example of what our heavenly father is like, although imperfectly.

But if your father was not this, look to the text, your father is not God. Look to the text, what does the Bible say is true of our heavenly father.

J.I. Packer once wrote in a book called *Knowing God*, which I commend strongly to you. He said this, quote, you sum up the whole of New Testament religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one's holy father.

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.

If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new and better than the old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the fatherhood of God.

[29:34] Father is the Christian name for God. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption.

So because of the Spirit, we are led because of the Spirit, we are accepted. We belong. We are rejoined with our Creator.

Thirdly, because of the Spirit, we are confident. Verse 16 says, the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Our growing obedience to God's good commands gives outward witness that we are children of God. There is observable obedience.

But there is also an inner testimony. But this is not just an inner small voice. You don't ask yourself the question and the sound out of the void says, yes, you are in fact saved.

[30:38] That inner voice in our heads may be fickle and easily swayed. It is rather the inner work of the Spirit to illuminate God's Word to us, to sanctify our thoughts and our passions, and to compel relationship with God.

We can take up and read and God speaks to us by His Spirit through His Word. Gives us conviction of our sin, puts desires in us to change from one degree of glory to another that we might have loving communion with God.

Granting to the believer assurance is a ministry of the Spirit, but some people really labor over the assurance of their salvation, and I want you to know that I'm with you in that.

I understand where you're coming from. I think most often though, this is due to doctrinal confusion. Somewhere along the way, you've misread or been mistaught what the Christian life is to look like. This is why I will not tire of teaching the doctrines of grace. I will hammer them until the day I die, come what may, with all their beauty and all their complexity.

[31:59] This is why I will not tire of teaching the relationship between the law and the gospel. It's important that we understand the way in which the law is meant to convict us of sin and drive us to the gospel and then once we've been set free from the bondage of sin the way that law is meant to be employed in our lives to give evidence of our saving faith.

Now when I was a young teenager I believe I was converted at a very young age and I when we moved to Georgia I went to a church that was a rather a large church that in many ways was trying to manufacture revival many years later I can look back on it with some clear minded scrutiny but there were times I sat and I just wasn't sure am I a Christian I didn't have assurance in those days

and what was often told to me you all have heard this the pastor there would say if you ever doubt that you're a Christian he would say turn to the front of your Bible to the place where you wrote down the date that you walked the aisle and have assurance this was really problematic for me because I hadn't written a date down in the front of my Bible I turned to the front of it and there was no my handwriting in the front of my

Bible and frankly I'm glad there wasn't because it would have been a very paltry place to put my assurance I didn't need pragmatic decisionism I didn't need him to say you did this one thing one time therefore you're a Christian I needed biblical instruction in assurance I needed him to say have you ever doubted that you're a Christian let me take you to the word let me show you how you can know that you're in Christ just one example and I want to exposit this whole thing but I don't have time for it I wish he had taken me to a text like 1 John chapter 5 verses 1 through 5 there the apostle John writes everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God and everyone who loves the father loves whoever has been born of him right I'm sitting there going I believe that Jesus is the Christ and what am I supposed to do with that information love the church I do love the church I love! these people who are professing faith in Christ verse 2 by this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and we obey his commandments I don't obey his commandments perfectly but I want to obey his commandments I find in me that I am obeying imperfectly but some of those commandments I see a desire and a growing ability to do so verse 3 for this is the love of God are not burdensome for everyone who's been born of God overcomes the world and this is the victory that has overcome the world our faith who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God man I needed to sit on this and think about it and he wouldn't have read it to me and I wouldn't have gone hey assurance but I need help in this process

I need to be reminded that if I belonged to Christ then there was nothing I could do to stop that if he justified me he would sanctify me Thomas Brooks once said Puritan pastor this is on the back of your bulletin Christ is to be answerable for all those that are given to him at the last day and therefore we need not doubt but that he will certainly employ all the power of his Godhead to secure and save all those that he must be accountable for if you belong to Christ he will see you to the end that is the instruction that I needed because of the spirit I want you to know this morning beloved we are confident we can be confident you need to be taught how to be confident how to be assured in Christ so we are led we are accepted we are confident and lastly and briefly we are rewarded and if children then heirs heirs of

[36:49] God and fellow heirs with Christ provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him so briefly as we will pick this up Lord willing again next week if we are children then we are heirs heirs of God we have an inheritance that awaits us and it is a great inheritance because that inheritance is God himself if your eternal mindset stops at streets of gold and mansions then it stops too low we will have God and we will have God forever and there is no greater inheritance that he can grant us than himself just listen briefly to the testimony of a number of Bible writers the testimony of Asaph in Psalm 73 and verse 25 there he says to

God whom have I in heaven but you and there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you and Jeremiah and laments chapter 3 and verse 24 he says the Lord is my portion which means satisfaction therefore I will hope in him and the apostle John in Revelation chapter 21 and verse 3 records for us that he heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling place of God is with man he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God God himself is the greatest and highest good and our restoration to him forever is the very point of the gospel and the ministry of the spirit so because of the spirit we are led we are accepted we are confident and we are rewarded let's pray together