

Romans 8:14-17

¹⁴For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.

When I initially gave an overview of Romans Mike and I had divided it up into verses 1-4 and then verses 5-14. It is difficult to make a clear division in these verses. For my purposes I would like to make the next section we study be verses 14-17. I think this passage needs to be taken as a whole to glean the most from it.

Now remember that the 8th Chapter of Romans is about the absolute certainty of the perseverance of the saints. Romans 8, if we understand it properly, leaves no doubt that everyone who God has worked his saving work out upon will be glorified. He cannot fall away, because it is God who is working this out. The promises are based upon God's character and God's ability. Verses 14-17 will be more cement in this foundation.

This theme began back in Chapter 5. That is where Paul said in verses 1 and 2- 1Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

In your Bible you may want to underline the words rejoice in hope of the glory of God. If you want to understand Chapters 5-8 in Romans this phrase will help you immensely. Beginning at verse 2 of Chapter 5 Paul lays out argument after argument for the solid basis of our hope of the Glory of God.

Remember how Mike went through the beginning of chapter 5 and showed us the deep significance of being in Adam and being in Christ. And that being in Christ was the basis of our hope of the

glory of God? And notice that this is not something WE did. It is something that Christ did.

Then Paul diverts to handling a few issues, a few obstacles that needed dealt with so his readers would not be derailed from the correct course by common objections. Once he finishes those he comes back to his theme in chapter 8 verse 1. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ (as opposed to those who are in Adam.) The man in Christ is done once and for all with condemnation.

In verses 2-4 Paul shows our reason for assurance by showing that we are entirely delivered from being under the law's condemnation and that we are now under grace in Christ and led by the Spirit.

Then in verses 5-11 Paul shows our reason for assurance by showing the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life for his sanctification, and ultimately his glorification. And that explanation even includes the pesky problem of the body that we are in.

Our complete, thorough and eventually perfect deliverance from sin is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit's presence in us. We see that the reason we are saved is so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. So up to verse 11 we are encouraged to be confident of our salvation based upon what God is doing for us and in us and to us. Up to verse 11 we aren't told to do anything. We are simply told about what is true about us.

I think the biggest mistake that people make when studying Romans is to read in commands where there are none. There are applications to make all along the path. But we have got to understand that what Paul describes in the first half of Chapter 5 and the first 11 verses of Chapter 8 are the description of every Christian. These are In or Out verses. You are either In Christ or Out of Christ. And the verses describe both positions and the operations performed by both positions. For instance a believer walks according to the Spirit.

Let's use an example here. If you were to describe a guitar player, how would you describe him? He is a person who plays a

guitar. At that point you are not describing how well he plays that guitar. You are just saying that he does, in fact, play the guitar.

I think the verses about walking according to the Spirit here are like that. There are plenty of verses in the Bible that tell us how to walk according to the Spirit more fully, more knowledgably, and just plain "better". But **these** are not those verses. These are more like "a guitar player plays a guitar" type verses. They are not "how to play the guitar **better**" verses. Paul will quickly get to that. But first he must lay the foundation of what a believer IS and how that happened. THAT is where our assurance comes from. After that he will get to the should's of the Christian life.

Verses 12 and 13 are exactly that. We are told that based on who we are we don't have any good reason to live after the flesh. In fact, based on who we are we should put to death the deeds of the body.

In verse 14 we are moving into another reason why we should have assurance of our salvation.

Let's follow the reasoning from verses 11-13 to verse 14. It seems to be saying if we are mortifying the deeds of the body by the Holy Spirit, it has to be that we are led by the Spirit to do so. If we are being led of the Spirit in this way, that is an absolute proof that we are the SONS OF GOD. And so he enters the next basis for our assurance of salvation. We should be assured because we are the sons of God! That is what verses 14-17 are about.

So 8:1 is the statement about about no condemnation

8:1-4 show this to be true on the basis of being free from the law
be being In Christ

8:5-13 shows this to be true on the basis of the Holy Spirit being in us.

8:14-17 shows this to be true on the basis of our being Sons of God.

Now, before we go too far I would like to point out something that is odd. Many people describe Romans 8 as a passage about sanctification. Yet oddly enough, the Greek word for sanctify is not used in this passage. It is used twice in Romans 5 and is translated Holy and is used in Romans 15:16 where Paul is talking about His ministry.

Now what is even more odd is that Romans uses the word Justified more than any other book. It also uses the word for Glory and Glorified over 20 times. The question has to be asked, WHY?

Why does Paul pay so much attention to Justification and Glorification and so little attention on Sanctification?

Look at chapter 6 verse 30. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Here Paul fails to even mention sanctification.

These he justified he glorified.

Paul's focus on Romans is on glorification. Sanctification is part of the process, but it is not Paul's primary focus. Why?

Paul is focusing on the assurance of salvation. He is focusing on the WHY of a life in Christ. He is not discussing the HOW of living a godly life. Paul wants every believer to know that we are sons of God. He wants us to realize that and appreciate that. For out of that truth springs forth praise to God. From that position we cry out Abba Father. We thank God that we, of all people, should have been delivered from the spirit of bondage. He wants our confidence to be on this rock solid base. So that we can withstand anything that comes against us. He wants us to rest assured that our glorification is coming, just as certain as our justification already has.

If that is true, why are there so many who make this chapter into a "How To" chapter? I like how Martin Lloyd Jones puts it. He says in the last 100 years people have gotten so miserably subjective. We have lost focus on what God has planned for us.

We tend to think about what I need today. We start and end with ourselves and our lives and our experiences and our happiness. We are focused on our struggles and we want to live victoriously. But we see our defeats and our sins and the most important question to us becomes "How can I overcome this defeat?" "How can I live a victorious life?" And as such, sanctification becomes the most important question of all.

But Paul knows better. He knows that if we are only focused on sanctification we will never have assurance. Our focus will be too much on what **we** do and not enough on what God has done and

what God will do. We forget that sanctification is God's process of preparing us for glorification. And it only makes sense in that perspective. So that is the perspective we must keep it in. That is why it is so dangerous to view Romans as so many popular books teach it. Paul has in mind glorification. He will get to sanctification but only when the stage is properly set.

Now- let's look at verse 14 as it refers to the Sons of God.

¹⁴For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

First it is logical to assume that there is a limiting factor here. It says "for as many" and that means they and they alone are sons of God. Only those who are led by the Spirit are Sons of God. So there are some who are and there are some who aren't.

If anyone ever tries to tell you that all people will be saved, take them to this verse. Not all are led by the spirit of God. Therefore not all are sons of God. But some are. And they will be the ones who will be displaying some success in putting to death the deeds of the body. That will be evidence of the Holy Spirit being in them.

Second- how do these who are sons of God ever get into that position? We know that we were all born in sin. We were born into Adam's family. We were sons of Adam. We were children of wrath. How in the world could we go from there to being sons of God.

The answer comes in the next verse: **you received the Spirit of adoption**

Most of us are familiar with the idea of adoption. Carla's dad was born of parents that he never remembered. He never met his dad. He didn't remember his mother. Legally he was his mother's child. Then two people who had no blood relation chose to adopt Charlie. They filled out all the papers. And the son who was born someone else's son became wholly their son. He was brought into a family to be treated as a son and to have all the inheritance of a son. And all this happened without Charlie ever having to decide anything or initiate anything. Charlie was chosen to be adopted into the Faisst family and the strength of his standing relied only upon the character of his parents and the clarity of the law.

If you are a believer this morning, this same thing is true of you. Except the family you have been adopted into is infinitely

better than you could ever imagine. Imagine that you were a child who lived on the street and got adopted into Bill Gates family. You would instantly have more resources at your disposal than you could have ever imagined. Your life position has completely changed. It will take years to adjust to your new position in life. It will take training in how to think and how to act in order to adjust to this new position you were given.

That is true of a believer a million times over. We were taken from being morally destitute to being covered in the righteousness of Christ. We have spiritual riches greater than our wildest dreams. All our sin debts have been paid. And we have been adopted by the richest family it is possible to have. And it isn't on a trial basis. It is legal and it is forever. The action cannot be reversed.

Let's look at another verse regarding adoption.

Ephesians 1:3-6

3Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

Look at the assurance that just pours from this passage. Look at what our Father has done.

First we see that He Blessed us with every spiritual blessing

Second we see that He Chose us before the foundation of the world

Third we see He predestined us to adoption as Sons

And fourth we see that by Grace he made us accepted in the Beloved.

Look at the implications here. It isn't like the Father walked into the orphanage looking for a cute kid. It's not like it is us who made the greatest impression on our future Father so he picked us. No. The wording won't allow that. God predestined us to adoption. It was all God's idea and it was all his decision. And that is precisely why we can have such a rich confidence. We played no part in

deciding this adoption so our decisions cannot undo it. We have no parental role here.

And before we start getting too cocky, look at the last point. By grace God made us accepted in the beloved. Grace means that it was all unmerited. It is all of God and none of us. Do you see the security that grants us. If God chose to start this, he will not ever chose to quit. And we know that God finishes everything he starts.

It is no wonder that Paul uses this family relationship to cement our assurance. We are children of God, not by natural birth but by choice. God's choice!

But there is more. A believer is also re-born. He is born again. There is a change of nature in Him. He can most truly say like a popular Christian song- I'm not who I was.

Let's take a quick look at the references to being born of God. They are all in the book of First John. Look at the difference this new birth makes.

I John 3:9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

A person who is born of God, who has been given a new nature, cannot bear to continually live in a sin. Why? Because God's seed is in him. And God hates sin. How could a person make peace with two enemies? It cannot be done. A born again person is a new person. It isn't just that a Christian shouldn't live continuing to commit a known sin. This passage says that it is absolutely impossible for him to continue to do so. The new nature simply will not allow it.

I John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

Here is another quality of someone who is reborn. Those with new life will love. They will give of themselves to meet another's need without regard for their personal expense because of their relationship with Christ. They will love their brothers, even at great expense to themselves. When you see them loving, you will know they are born of God.

I John 5:1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. 2By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. 3For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. 4For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Here we see three more qualities of a person who is born of God. First they will believe that Jesus is the Christ. A person who is not born again cannot have this saving faith. A person who IS MUST have it. So if we see someone who believes in Christ- truly- they are born of God.

Then if we are begotten we will love those who are also begotten of Him. We are drawn toward those who have a similar love for Christ. And we will meet their need. This is similar to an earlier point.

Third in this passage we see that whatever is born of God overcomes the world. When the same power enters us that resurrected Christ from the dead, it cannot come in without power to change. In fact, it is a necessary logical fact as far as John was concerned. If a person is born again, they are not overcome by the world. The world will not ultimately take over their lives. But they will overcome the worldly tendencies in their own lives. They will be found putting to death the deeds of the body. They will be found believing God instead of believing what the world tells them. They will be true to Christ and will resist the devil. Again- not perfectly, but substantially. You cannot have rebirth without power. It is impossible. And we do all that we do by faith- by belief in Christ and everything he says.

I John 5:18 We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.

Here is the final evidence from John. I think that not sinning and keeping himself here are referring to pretty much the same thing. Just as a believer will keep the commandments, he will also keep himself. It means to attend to carefully, to take care of. A born again person will watch his life carefully. He will guard it as a possession of another. He will live realizing that his body is not his own but it has been purchased. And as he does that by Faith the devil is powerless against him. The devil cannot overpower him. The devil cannot defeat him. The devil has nowhere to shoot where there is no armor. He cannot fire a dart where faith will not quench the fire.

As we look at the fact that believers are adopted children of God and reborn children of God, we have got to see that this change, just like justification cannot just a legal fact. It IS as legal fact but it is not JUST a legal fact. A person who is God's child has both power privilege. Being a child of God brings changes in a person's life. That is what allows John to say that if someone is born of God, if they are a child of God, they can't bear to live continually committing a known sin, they love their brothers, they will believe in Christ, they overcome the world, and they keep themselves in the Spirit in a way that the devil cannot ultimately touch them. Is this true of you this morning?

We need to do our best to incorporate these truths into our lives this week. Maybe it would be best to start with the question- what would change in my outlook if I believed I am really God's child and I really have a new nature. I am not only adopted by God's choice but I am reborn as well. What choices are we making that makes that look like a lie. How are we letting our current circumstances distract us from these glorious truths? And how would a person really feel if they truly believed they were a child of God? Really?