

Romans

Romans Chapter Eight

Romans 8:16

November 28, 2010

This is lesson number 67 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

Romans 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

“Children of God”

Romans 8:14-17

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For 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." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and 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.

The Apostle Paul, by divine Holy Spirit inspiration, begins this section of Romans, Chapter 8, vs. 14-17, by saying that only those who are constantly being led by the Spirit of God are the ‘sons of God’.

The **first thing** that is true of every one of the ‘sons of God,’ is that the Spirit of God leads them. One of the surest ways that anyone can know that he or she is a believer in Jesus Christ is that they are being led, instructed, and corrected by the Spirit of God.

Day-by-day; all the time, does the Word of God bear on what you think and do? Sisters and brothers, when you speak a harsh word in anger; does the Spirit remind you that ‘a soft word turns away wrath’? Brothers, when you look on a woman to lust, do the words of the Lord Jesus remind you that that very thought amounts to adultery? When you answer to a matter and you stretch the truth to make your part look a little better, do you remember the Lord said, “Let your ‘yes,’ be ‘yes’ and your ‘no,’ be ‘no.’ ”

When you commit these sins, do not call God a liar by saying that you are not sinning, confess your sins to God and ask to be forgiven?

In other words, is the Spirit of God constantly leading and correcting you?

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The Spirit of God leads the ‘sons of God’ primarily through the Word of God.

We believe **in revelation**.

The doctrine of **revelation** says that if man is to know the truth about God that God must reveal Himself. Man by human reason and intellect can learn many things but he cannot know the truth about God and His redemptive work in Jesus Christ apart from divine revelation.

For example, all men know from observing the created universe that there is a divine nature {Godhead, Romans 1:20}. And that knowledge is sufficient to make all men accountable to their Creator. But that knowledge, which is called *general* revelation, does not reveal sin or the way of salvation from sin. There is also *special* revelation in which God reveals the truth about Himself. Cf. Matthew 11:25-30.

The Bible is the only inspired record of special revelation. The Bible is complete and there will be no more inspiration. By that I mean that God is not giving new revelation that is adds to or subtracts from the Scriptures.

So the first thing about the ‘sons of God’ is that they are being led by the Spirit through the meditation on the Word of God and by the preaching of the Gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The **second thing** about the ‘sons of God’ is that to some degree, they all were at one time, in the Spirit of bondage to fear; fear of their just condemnation under the holy law of God.

God the Holy Spirit applies the law of God to give the knowledge of sin. The Holy Spirit uses the law of God to bring conviction of sin through the spiritual understanding of the law and He convicts the ‘sons of God’ of their just condemnation under the wrath of God.

And for those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, the Holy Spirit does not leave them in this state of fear of condemnation.

In an act of sovereign grace the Holy Spirit uses the law of God to lead them to Christ. He shows them that although their condemnation is just, that God may

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justify them through the righteousness of His own Son, Jesus Christ, whom He, the Father, sent into the world as atonement for sin.

That is the Gospel. God justifies the ungodly and He adopts them as His children and gives to them all that He gave to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the Spirit of God leads the ‘sons of God’ and the Holy Spirit has given them the fear of the law of God.

And the **third thing** that defines the children of God is the ‘Spirit of adoption.’ God’s children are not brought ‘**again**’ to fear the bondage of the law and its condemnation.

His children cry out, “**Abba Father!**”

The ‘sons of God’ are in awe of the majesty and holiness of God.

That is the good kind of fear.

But there is no dread of punishment.

That is the bad kind of fear.

“**There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**”

That brings us to the **fourth thing** that **may** be true of the children of God.

I said it ‘may be true’ because it is possible to be a Christian and not have this great blessing from God.

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

There are two technical things about this verse that I will only mention and will not go into a long and detailed proof.

The **first** is the gender of the Spirit. The KJV translators followed the strict rules of translating Greek into English and assigned a neuter pronoun ‘itself’, neither male nor female, to a neuter noun, *pneuma*, or spirit.

Rom 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:
KJV

All the modern translations give the correct sense and use the personal pronoun, “Himself.” The Spirit Himself.... They know by other Scriptures that the Holy

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Spirit is a person and that the strict rules of translation should be bent to so indicate that the Spirit is a person.

The **second** technical thing is that the ‘sons of God’ and the ‘children of God’ are interchangeable terms. We mentioned that before and you must twist the Scriptures in order to make them mean different things.

The most important thing for us to see in vs. 16 is that the believer in Jesus Christ **may** have assurance of salvation.

That is what Chapter 8 of Romans is about; assurance in Christ.

Not all Christians have that assurance, but surely they may have it.

This is the greatest example of the difference between grace and works.

The Holy Spirit “bears witness” or teaches the believer that his eternal destiny is entirely in the hands of a merciful God. **That grace is grace!**

God the Father has chosen a people. God the Son has made atonement for their sin. God the Holy Spirit regenerates those given to the Son by the Father. And in great blessing: God the Holy Spirit bears witness to their spirit that they are the children of God.

Works religions teach that your eternal destiny is determined by what **you** do and by what religious group you belong to. You can never be sure of your salvation.

And at least they are consistent because works religions teach that you can never be sure of your salvation and in fact it is wrong, they say, to have assurance.

Works religions hold people in fear that they could lose their salvation if their relationship with the group is severed. They kick you out and you lose your salvation.

Works says, “You cannot know for sure if you are saved.”

Works says, “You may be saved, but you can still be lost.”

Grace says, “My hope and trust is in Jesus Christ and he will keep me safe!”

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And the Word of God says,

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

Can you think of anything better than that?
To know for sure that you are one of God's adopted children.

But how does this work? There is no single answer, there is no "One size fits all," kind of exercise that you can follow to have this assurance. It is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit.

But we can compare Scripture with Scripture. The surest way to understand any passage of Scripture is to compare it with other passages on the same subject.

Cf. John 7:37-39

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Does the Holy Spirit confirm your desire to drink the living water of Jesus Christ? Are you thirsty in your soul? Are you satisfied to live a day without knowing the love of God in Christ?

The apostle John wrote in his First Epistle at least **nine things** that are tests of our faith in Jesus Christ. John wrote these things, 'that you may know that you have eternal life...' 1 John 5:13

I won't try to review all nine of them but I will mention a few of them:

1 John 2:3-6

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in

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him. By this we know that we are in Him.⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

1 John 2:15-17

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.¹⁶ For all that is in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life -- is not of the Father but is of the world.¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

1 John 5:9-13

⁹ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.¹⁰ He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.¹¹ And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.¹² He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

What I am teaching is that not all believers have this great assurance, but I am teaching that all believers **may** have this assurance.

What I am teaching is not mysticism. Mysticism is some strange emanation, some eerie sensation of religious fervor.

What I am teaching is that the Holy Spirit uses the Holy Scriptures to bear witness with your human spirit that you are a child of God based on what God says and not on anything else!

I need to make something clear here although I have already said it.

You may be thinking, "I know that I am a Christian because I love Jesus Christ and I know that He alone is all my hope for salvation. I don't count on my obedience in any way to gain favor with God. But I cannot honestly say that I have experienced this work of the Spirit."

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But I still have doubts!

Henry Mahan: What do you doubt?

Christ's atonement? Christ's ability to save? Christ's willingness to save?

Perhaps the word is "disgust." If you look inward for assurance you will only be disgusted; look only to Christ.

When you were born again by the Holy Spirit in regeneration you were baptized by the Spirit into Christ Jesus. If you are 'born again' you are as saved as the man or woman who has been a Christian for fifty years.

Then there is this grand and certain assurance that comes when the Spirit of God bears witness with your spirit. **I have it and I want you to have it.**

There are times when as I read the Bible I know that what I am reading is true and that it is as if it had been put there only for me.

When I read in the Bible about how deceitful and wicked a man can be. I confess that before the Lord saved me I was like that.

When I read in the Bible about how the law convicts of sin and guilt and condemnation. I can say, "I know about that."

When I read in the Bible that the blood of Jesus is THE propitiation for sin. It was for me that he went to the cross!

When He rose from the dead, it was for my justification!

And He is coming back for me!

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

Everything that God has done for all of His children He would have had to do if I were His only child. That is how personal it is; **Abba Father!**

Are you being led by the Spirit?

Have you passed through the Spirit of bondage to fear?

Can you cry out, "Abba Father!"?

Do you have or desire to have the Spirit bear witness with your spirit?