

“The Matter of Assurance – Part 2”
Galatians 4:4-6
(Preached at Trinity, April 7, 2013)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Last time our focus was upon **Verses 4-6** but particularly **Verse 6**. Christ has redeemed us that we might receive the fullness of our inheritance—that we might be adopted as sons.
He has given us the Holy Spirit as the earnest of our inheritance.
It is through the Holy Spirit dwelling in us we have come to know our rich heritage in Christ—that we are the sons of God.
Galatians 4:6 NAU - "God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"
Romans 8:14-16 NAU - "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,"
2. The Holy Spirit is a wonderful gift to the Christian. He is given to all of God’s adopted sons.
Romans 8:9 NAU - "But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."
3. In **Verse 6** Paul is telling us an important work of the Holy Spirit is assuring our hearts of our adoption. This is the essence of our assurance—the wonderful confidence that we are the children of God.
4. The Puritans taught that assurance is not of the essence of saving faith—that a true believer may lack the full confidence of his salvation. But they also taught that assurance is something all Christians should seek. This is consistent with our confession.
1689 Confession – 18:3 “This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be a partaker of it; yet being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of means, attain thereunto.”
9. Paul tells us that one way the Christian knows he’s a child of God is by the witness of the Holy Spirit. As I stated last time, I’m setting this before you under three headings.
10. First, if every Christian has the Holy Spirit why doesn’t every Christian have the fullness of assurance?
 - A. Last week I narrowed our focus to this single question. We sometimes lack assurance because of our own life. Instead of walking in the Spirit we give priority to our fleshly desires and quench the Spirit.
 - B. The Christian is commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In other words, the emphasis of our life must be to cultivate spiritual appetites—to love the things the Holy Spirit loves and hate the things He hates.

- C. This will have a direct impact upon His influence in our life, both in our sanctification and our assurance.
11. This morning I want to look at the other two aspects.
- I. First, the witness of the Spirit has a subjective aspect – He bears witness within our hearts.
Galatians 4:6 NAU - "God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"
Romans 8:16 NAU - "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,"
- II. Second, The witness of the Spirit has an objective aspect – He sets the testimony of Scripture before us
John 14:26 NAU - "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."
- I. First, the witness of the Spirit can be seen subjectively .
Galatians 4:6 NAU - "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"
- A. Notice, this blessing comes upon those who ARE sons
1. Paul is setting forth the logical sequence—the Holy Spirit is given chronologically after our adoption as sons, but only as a logical sequence—the blessing of adoption. We know theologically we receive the Holy Spirit simultaneously with regeneration, faith, and repentance.
 2. This is talking about His gracious influence in the life of the believer. The Holy Spirit is given to those adopted by the Father
 - a. These are the ones Christ came to redeem
Galatians 4:5 - "so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."
 - b. These are the ones who have believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ
Galatians 3:26 NAU - "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."
 3. Because we are the sons of God we have been given the Holy Spirit.
Ephesians 1:13-14 NAU - "having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance"
- B. Paul says here that God has sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts
1. By describing Him as the “Spirit of His Son” we find the dual aspect of the sending of the Holy Spirit. He is sent forth by both the Father and the Son. In Romans 8 Paul referred to Him as the Spirit of Christ
Romans 8:9 NAU - "But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."
 2. Paul says He is sent forth into our hearts
 - a. The heart is the seat of affection, the place of feeling. The Christian life is not void of feeling.
 - b. The Christian has a depth of feeling for his Heavenly Father. Where does this come from? The Holy Spirit stirs our affections. This is an important aspect of this witness of the Spirit within us.

- C. But here we must align the “heart” with the “spirit” as Paul stated it in Romans 8
Romans 8:16 NAU - "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,"

What exactly is our “spirit” or our “soul”

1. I think Paul is using “heart” and “spirit” synonymously. By the spirit Paul is talking about our inner consciousness.
2. We must resist the teaching that our spirit is some aspect of our being completely apart from our consciousness.
 - a. Sigmund Freud developed the idea where the unconscious mind has a will and purpose of its own and cannot be known to the conscious mind.
 - b. This is not a Christian concept. We must not draw such a separation of our spirit as to make it something completely apart from our consciousness. The Gnostics taught such a distinct separation between the spirit and the body.
3. Christianity involves the conscious mind. The Gospel is preached to the mind. When we speak of the human spirit we are speaking of the renewed mind, the mind in communion with God.
Romans 12:2 NAU - "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
Ephesians 4:22-23 NAU - "in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind"
4. I'm not saying the spirit and the mind are exactly the same. But they are connected. We must be careful not to separate our spirit from our consciousness.
 For example when we speak of our heart we are speaking of our passions and desires; that is, the desire of our mind in conformity to God.
Hebrews 10:22 NAS - "let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."
5. When we speak of our conscience we are speaking of our conscious knowledge of right and wrong.
6. It is also on the level of the mind that Satan tempts us.
 So this inner witness of the Holy Spirit, although hard to define, must be seen as a witness to our conscious mind.
7. John Murray – “This witness (of the Spirit) is conceived of as working conjointly with the witness born by the believer’s own consciousness.”
 William Hendriksen – “The Spirit testifies along with our regenerated consciousness by exerting a direct influence on the heart and mind.”

- D. The result of this witness of the HS in our hearts is we cry out “Abba Father.”
1. Abba was an Aramaic expression that signified a loving nearness of a child to his father. It doesn’t portray an unholy familiarity as some would suppose. It is not the equivalent of “daddy.” But it does express the loving trust and nearness of a child to his father.
 2. Notice the intensity of the expression:
"Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"
The word literally means “to scream.” It implies the fullness of feeling.
 3. Notice it is the presence of the Spirit dwelling in our hearts that cries out.
This presence of the Holy Spirit within us gives us wonderful assurance.
- E. The way the Holy Spirit works within us remains a mystery
1. Charles Hodge: “How the Spirit bears witness in our spirits the assurance that we are the children of God we cannot fully understand, any more than we can understand the mode in which he produces any other affect upon the mind.”
 2. How exactly does He work assurance in our hearts? How does He fill us with joy, peace, and hope? How is it that we have come to love the Christ whom we have never seen?
 3. It is the power of God in us. It is His working through us.
- F. There are difficulties with the witness of the Holy Spirit in us
1. There are remnants of sin still operating within us
 2. All of us confess times when these graces are weak, often like a flickering flame that seems about to disappear altogether.
This is the reality of the Christian life. On one hand the Holy Spirit dwells in us powerfully. On the other hand sin still plagues us.
Romans 7:18-20 NAU - "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not. ¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. ²⁰ But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me."
- G. There is another difficulty with this element of the Holy Spirit working in our heart. The heart is deceitful.
- Jeremiah 17:9** – “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”
1. We should weigh our feelings carefully.
 - a. On one hand an unbeliever can assure himself that all is well with his soul when it is nothing more than vain presumption.
 - b. On the other hand a true believer can be plagued by doubts and find little assurance for his soul.
 2. Christianity is a rich experience, but is not merely an experience – it is not void of objective truth
***no religious experience is ever necessarily valid in itself. It must be accompanied by other Biblical proofs.

3. Experiences can be counterfeit. Feelings can be produced artificially. There are churches that place a great emphasis on experience. Satan's counterfeits can be very convincing.
2 Corinthians 11:13-14 NAU - "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."
4. Some professing Christians seek one experience after another because they see the experiences as the only validation of their salvation. They know nothing of the actual Christian pilgrimage; one of strivings and battles, of victories as well as defeats.
5. Our hope isn't based upon feelings alone. And feelings can be misleading. So how can we know if the feelings of our heart are true?

II. This is where we have the Objective aspect of this witness of the Holy Spirit.

- A. The Holy Spirit bears witness with our mind using the testimony of Scripture
 1. The Holy Spirit makes the Bible a living Book. He illuminates our mind giving us instruction and understanding. He informs our mind and our conscience. He convicts us of sin.
 2. The Holy Spirit draws us to line up our testimony of being a Christian with the testimony of Scripture?
 3. For example:
1 John 2:4-5 NAU - "The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵ but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:"
 4. The Holy Spirit shows us from the Scriptures that our lives testify that we bear the mark of our Father, the mark of holiness. He shows us that we have truly followed Christ.
- B. Our life testifies to what we are. It testifies that we are the sons of God
Romans 8:13-14 NAU - "for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."
 1. For those who seek only to satisfy and gratify the flesh they are bearing testimony of the ruination of the soul.
For those who are striving to put to death the lusts of the flesh through the Holy Spirit they are bearing testimony of eternal life.
 2. The Christian is the one who has entered into the battle waging war against the flesh, against the world, against Satan.
But this is never done by the power of ourselves but the Spirit of Christ in us.

3. Paul says in **2 Cor. 13**
2 Corinthians 13:5 NAU - "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?"
 The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit regarding this examination. Is there a reality that Jesus Christ is in you? Do you bear the resurrection of His life in your life?
4. Are you a child of God? A son bears the family likeness.
Romans 8:29 NAU - "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son"

Conclusion:

1. The testimony of the Holy Spirit is both subjective and objective. There is the objective witness affirmed by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. There is the subjective experience within us affirming that we are God's children. He assures us of God's intimate love for us. It is the Holy Spirit is in us stirring us to prayer. He stirs us to seek communion with Christ. He puts sweetness in reading the Word of God and testifies to its truth. All of this affirms that we are the children of God.
2. The Christian life is an experience of grace. We struggle and sometimes fall. It is then that the Holy Spirit bears testimony in our hearts of a loving merciful Father who takes pity on us.
3. The Christian life is a life of the assurance of our Father's loving care. He assures us that we belong to the Father; that we are a part of God's family. The Holy Spirit presses this upon our heart and mind. When we fall we are assured of a loving Father who is ready to pick us up and restore us as sons. We have the assurance that He will not cast us off for a perfect Father does not cast off His child.
4. Do you have this assurance – the assurance where you know in your heart that you are a believer? There are times when our assurance is weak, but even then we have a gracious Father. We can pray asking Him to send forth His Spirit to refresh us and increase our faith.
Luke 11:9-13 NAU - "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ "For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. ¹¹ "Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? ¹² "Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? ¹³ "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"