

## Daddy

Romans 8:15-17

In 1984, Twila Paris sang a song called, the Warrior is a Child. The Christian is a warrior. But he is also a child. As a warrior, he is in a life-long war against sin. It is a long and difficult road to freedom.

In this struggle, he learns to fight using the Bible and Prayer. And he learns that it is only the power of the Holy Spirit working within us that enables victory.

God does not remain in heaven as a spectator. He gets down in the trenches with us and fights with us. And He indwells us with His Spirit of Holiness. As we struggle to put sin to death, the Spirit leads us and encourages us and even comforts us along the way. The Spirit is the One who tethers us to Jesus Christ, the Rocket of Righteousness.

Enabling us to defeat sin in itself makes us forever indebted to the Holy Spirit. But... as wonderful as it is that the Holy Spirit enables us to put to death sin, this is not his only task. He has another task assigned to him that is equally important, and to our hearts, even more precious.

It is right to think of this assignment as the crowning achievement of the work of the Spirit. Without this work, the other tasks given to the Spirit would seem empty and meaningless. What is this assignment? It is the work of enabling you to know the Sovereign and Holy God of the Universe as "Daddy".

The Christian may be a warrior, but he is also a child.

**John 1:11-13** <sup>11</sup> He came to his own,<sup>1</sup> and his own people<sup>2</sup> did not receive him.  
<sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

All who believe in Jesus Christ have the right to called children of God. This right is conferred both by God's legal declaration and our inward spiritual regeneration. God declares you to be his child and God gives you a new heart that is "born OF God".

One of the ways that Satan works to diminish the glory of our Adoption is to confuse it with another, lesser form of sonship that all who are created in the image of God enjoy. Because Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, they, and all of their descendants can rightly be called children of God. Every person has worth and dignity simply because they have been created in the image of God.

**Acts 17:26-28** <sup>26</sup> And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, <sup>27</sup> that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, <sup>28</sup> for ""In him we

live and move and have our being';<sup>1</sup> as even some of your own poets have said, " For we are indeed his offspring."<sup>2</sup>

But the universal Fatherhood of God by creation is a pittance compared to our sonship by Adoption in Christ.

The rights and privileges that are yours through faith in Jesus Christ as adopted sons and daughters are like the bright and shining sun. Our being children of God by creation is like the flicker of a candle in comparison. And it is the assignment of the Holy Spirit to progressively make known to you God as "Daddy."

Before we read the passage, there is another issue that I must address.

The reality is that many of us do not have a very good image of fatherhood. Some may not have a father at all. Others have had bad fathers. The world often promotes fatherhood as oppressive.

And even those who have had good fathers, have not had perfect fathers. If you are here today, and the idea of God being your Daddy does not sound all that wonderful, I encourage you to keep listening. God knew what he was doing when he designed the family, and fathers. You may not have a very positive image of God as Father yet, but the Spirit is working to improve that image. And as you experience God as your loving Father, He can heal the parts of your heart that have been hurt by the evils of this fallen world.

Read Romans 8:13-17.

In Justification, you are free from the law's condemnation.

In Sanctification, you are made free from sin's domination.

But in Adoption, you are brought to God himself and freed from sin's separation.

The Spirit is working to bring you to your Daddy!

1. The Holy Spirit is working to remove your slavish fear of God's Holy wrath.
2. The Holy Spirit is working to help you approach God with bold assurance.
3. The Holy Spirit is working to raise your view of yourself.
4. The Holy Spirit is working to help you anticipate your glorious future.

The Holy Spirit is working to remove your slavish fear of God's Holy wrath. (1)

<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery  
to fall back into fear,

When we first trust in Jesus, there is often an incredible joy associated with being fully forgiven and declared righteous through the merit of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

But as life goes on, and you continue to struggle against sin and experience the pains and trials of this life, it is easy to fall back into the fear of wrath that you once had before you were born again. The Holy Spirit is working to keep you from falling back into that slavish fear. Do not confuse slavish fear with reverent fear. Slavish fear is bad. Reverent fear is good.

The Bible teaches that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. To have a reverent fear of God is a good thing. In fact to have no reverent fear of God is the essence of godlessness. God is the most powerful Being in the entire Universe. You really do not want him as your enemy. To deliberately walk in rebellion to God will most certainly invoke God's anger: something that ought to create fear in us all.

This being said, the Christian is not to live in "slavish fear" of God. Justification removes forever the threat of condemnation. But removing actual condemnation does not remove all fear of condemnation. Because we still continue to struggle with sin, our hearts continue to think that God's hammer of wrath will eventually fall upon us.

We convince ourselves that without this constant anxiety we will never be motivated to put sin to death. But the exact opposite is true. As the fear of condemnation is removed, you are in a place to hate sin, not because of the wrath that it produces, but simply because sin is contrary to the God you love. The Holy Spirit is not working to produce anxiety – a slavish fear of wrath. The Holy Spirit is working to increase your hatred of sin, but not your anxiety of condemnation.

"The Holy Spirit, which you have received, does not produce a slavish and anxious state of mind... (an anxious apprehension of punishment) but it produces the filial feelings of affection, reverence, and confidence, and enables us, out of the fulness of our hearts, to call God our Father." Hodge

We need to hear this as God's children. For surely, we all have a tendency to fall back into slavish fear. God, as your loving Father, does not want you to live in slavish fear. It is the Holy Spirit who is working to remove that fear.

Christian, child of the God of Holiness, hear his Word to you:

<sup>15</sup> you did not receive the spirit of slavery  
to fall back into fear,

The Holy Spirit is working to help you approach God with bold assurance. (2)

but  
you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons,  
by whom we cry,  
"Abba! Father!"

The Spirit is continually urging you to cry out to the God of the Universe as “Daddy.”

A son or daughter ought to be able to approach their father with anything. Due to sin, of the father or the child, this is rarely the case. But when the Bible encourages you to call upon God as Father, it is encouraging you that your God is approachable, with anything.

The Holy Spirit is working to help you approach God with bold assurance. We do not usually think of the Holy Spirit in terms of sonship. The Spirit is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Person of the Trinity. It is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person, Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God. But Paul refers to the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of adoption.” This only makes sense because of the Trinity. When we have the Spirit, we also have Jesus. They are not two Gods. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and so, He is the Spirit of adoption. Receiving the Spirit of adoption is not exactly the same thing as legally being adopted.

God does not simply show us a legal document “You are my child.” God places within you, or unites you with, the Spirit of Sonship. This is difficult to grasp. Picture a family that has one biological son and one adopted son. They are both equally sons of their father. He loves them both. But the adopted son may still feel that he lacks something that the other son has. Imagine if you could take the spirit of the biological son and join it with the spirit of the adopted son. And then, this spirit would begin to impart his own feelings of sonship to the adopted son. This is an imperfect picture. But this is something like what God has done

God calls you his son. But that is not all that God does. He indwells you with the Spirit of his own Son. And that Spirit of adoption is working within you to cry out to God, “Abba Father.” What does “Abba Father” mean?

The typical interpretation is “Daddy”, or even “Dada”. The idea being communicated is one of a baby’s first words. Some have challenged this interpretation claiming that the idea of “babytalk” is not the true meaning of the word. It is simply the general word for “Dad”, something an adult would use just as easily as a child.

But I want to push back against those who are critical of the translation: Daddy. I believe that the Aramaic vowels and consonants are very purposeful. There is a reason that “abba” is very easy to pronounce, even for a child. This does not mean that its simplicity means only children could speak it, or that it was somehow inappropriate for adults.

If you look at the various languages of the world for the word Daddy, you will find that they are usually simple words that even a child can say. So, I have no problem whatsoever saying that Abba means “daddy.” As long as you understand that the word is entirely appropriate coming out of the mouth of an adult son or daughter.

Jesus, on the night before his crucifixion, when he was in his darkest hour, spoke to his dad this way.

**Mark 14:36** <sup>36</sup> And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Jesus was not a baby simply saying "dada". But I would never say that Jesus, as an adult, had less intimacy and familiarity with his Father at this moment than when he was a child.

And as a father of adult children, I can testify that I have no problem whatsoever when my kids call me dad, or even daddy.

The fact that the Gospels do not always have Jesus going around using the word, "Abba" is also instructive. Using this word in the Garden of Gethsemane displays the depth of the intimacy between the Father and the Son.

Let me ask you, when you have no one else you can go to, no one else who will really understand, no one who you are certain will be on your side, Can you call upon "Abba Father"?

Paul is not teaching here that you must convince yourself that God is Abba Father. He is telling you that God has placed the Spirit of adoption in you, and that this Spirit is encouraging you to call God "Abba Father." Are we listening to the Spirit? Or are we listening to lies?

I am convinced that we live far below our privilege when it comes to boldly approaching our heavenly Father. Satan, the father of lies, does not want us to enjoy the height and depth and width and breadth of the love of our Daddy.

The Westminster Confession of Faith has a chapter on adoption. All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, ( graciously grants ) in and for His only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption,

- by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God,
- have His name put upon them,
- receive the Spirit of adoption,
- **have access to the throne of grace with boldness,**
- **are enabled to cry Abba, Father,**
- **are pitied,**
- **protected,**
- **provided for,**
- **and chastened by Him as by a Father,**
- yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption,
- and inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.

The writers of the Confession knew that to have God as Daddy implied access to him, unrestricted access. God has made himself accessible to you.

You never have to wonder if God is interested in what is happening in your life. He is interested not because what you are doing is so wonderful in itself. He is interested because you are the one who is doing it.

God is not bored with you. He is not too busy for you. He does not have more important things to do than be with you. He is not frustrated when you come to him. He has the time and the interest in your issues. He gives to you his full attention. (I realize that God is doing this with countless other children, but he is God, right!)

God, as Daddy, is accessible to his children. Do you believe this? O, how it must grieve the Holy Spirit when we do not approach God!

God, as Sovereign Daddy, is also protector and provider. He is able to handle every problem. Nothing is too big for your Dad. There is no problem that he cannot handle. Is this not exactly what Jesus says in the Garden.

**Mark 14:36** <sup>36</sup> And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, knew that if he went to his Dad, he was going to the One person who could fix his dilemma. I hope that when you go to your Divine Dad, you also have confidence that he can handle your problems.

Jesus also is not afraid to voice to his Dad his desires. Jesus does not hesitate to ask. "Remove this cup from me." That is confident boldness. Jesus knew that it was God's will for him to go to the cross, and yet he still asks for the cup to be removed.

The Spirit is working in you to approach your Daddy with the same assurance, the same boldness. God, as perfectly wise and good Daddy, will answer our prayers for our good and his glory. It is not by accident that one of our most comforting verses comes only a few verses later.

**Romans 8:28** <sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,<sup>1</sup> for those who are called according to his purpose.

It is Jesus' confidence in the goodness and the love and the wisdom of his Father that enables him to say, "Not my will but yours be done." No one would dare to say such words without first being confident in God's goodness, and love and wisdom.

Maybe it is our pitiful grasp of God's deep love as our Father that hinders our surrendering of our will into his hands. J.I. Packer says as much in his classic book: *Knowing God*. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption. . . . 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 whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all.

— **J.I. Packer, *Knowing God***

Your heavenly Father is your provider. He is your protector. And he is absolutely able to be these things in your life. Not a hair can fall from your head apart from his will.

And the Spirit is continually working to help you enjoy Him, the way that he enjoys Him. As Daddy, God disciplines us. Dads correct their children. The confession uses the scary word "chastens". The truth is we often need God's discipline. The world has largely rejected the biblical doctrine of correction. The world hates corporal punishment as if it is itself oppressive. Nothing could be further from the truth. God, as your Daddy, is your authority. It is to your benefit that you learn how to submit your will to his. When you fight against his authority, correction is the best medicine. Correction is not oppression. It is one means by which God frees you from yourself.

God, as your Daddy, chastens you. But he never chastens you without also pitying you. Pity is God's ability to love you and to continue receiving you as his own child.

**Hebrews 12:4-6** <sup>4</sup> In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. <sup>5</sup> And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. <sup>6</sup> For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

God corrects his children because he loves them.

And when God corrects us, as our Daddy, he is always full of pity. There is no pity in the condemnation of all who are apart from Christ. But for those who are in Jesus Christ, God is full of pity. God, as your Daddy, cannot and will not correct you without pity.

It is good to learn the truth about our relationship with God as Daddy.

But it is the Holy Spirit alone who can powerfully work so that we cry out "Abba Father."

Throughout your life, the Holy Spirit is continually nudging you to be more bold, to have more assurance, in crying out to God as Daddy. The question is whether or not we are keeping in step with the work of the Spirit within us? Or are we resisting his nudging?

O that you would know the riches of God's fatherly love towards you! The Holy Spirit is working to raise your view of yourself. (3) The Spirit not only is bubbling up within you to cry out to God as Abba, he is also speaking to your heart convincing you that you are indeed a child of God.

<sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit  
that we are children of God,

You have all sorts of voices in your head. To many of them you should not be listening.

But, the voice of the Holy Spirit is one voice to which you should listen. How do you know when it is the Holy Spirit?

He is the One who communicates to you truth. The truth that is also found in the Word of God. In this case, the Spirit is communicating with your spirit that you are indeed a child of God.

We desperately need this because it is a truth that is so wonderful that it is difficult to really accept. And it is a truth that goes directly against many of our feelings and experiences.

I know of few Christians who would actually deny the doctrine itself. We accept the fact. But rarely do the implications of being a child of God penetrate down into our hearts. As Christians, even as well taught Christians, we continue to live like we are orphans, as if we did not have an all-powerful, all knowing, all-loving and tender Father. It is the voice of the Holy Spirit that continually encourages you that you belong to God as his son or daughter.

In Jesus Christ, you are royalty. It is not arrogance to believe that. You are not a random mixture of atoms floating through time. You have purpose and meaning that goes beyond simply being God's creation. You are a member of God's family. He has received you as his own. He has given you his very name.

I know that the world looks upon Christians as if they are insignificant. I know that from our own perspective it often looks to ourselves that we are not all that important. But the Spirit whispers the truth. You are my child. Your true worth is not yet visible to the world. But it will one day be revealed for all to see.

What you sometimes fail to recognize, and what the world flat out rejects, the creation is longing to see: the revealing of the sons of God.

**Romans 8:19** <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

Look around you. You are surrounded by saints. We may not look like much now. But wait until God completes his work and then reveals us to the world. O what a day that will be! I know, it is too good to be true. But it is true! Because you are a child of God, you are also God's heir. The Holy Spirit is working to help you anticipate your glorious future. (4)

17        and  
          if children,  
              then heirs-  
                  heirs of God  
                      and  
                      fellow heirs with Christ,

Does it stir your heart that you are an heir of God? If not, why? One reason is that we cannot yet see the inheritance. It seems like play money without true value. Maybe the place to start is to think about the inheritance that belongs to Jesus.

It is easier for us to imagine the glories that will be given to Jesus. He is perfect. He is the High King. All of the New Creation belongs to him. All of its glories are at his fingertips. He



is able to take pleasure in everything to its fullest extent. Nothing in all of the vast expanse of the universe will be kept from him. It is all his. Pretty cool right?

But wait minute! Paul says that you are a co-heir with Christ. What does that mean? One thing it means is that whatever belongs to Jesus also belongs to you. There is nothing in all the New Heavens and New Earth that will be withheld from you. You are an heir of God and a co-heir with Jesus. Being a co-heir with Jesus also means that you will be able to enjoy your inheritance with Him.

I have worked with people my whole life. One thing I have learned is that it matters to people who they are with. Very rarely do we truly enjoy any activity unless we have someone to share it with. Having the right person to share life with is just as important as living itself.

Well, God has taken care of both. He provides the life. And he provides himself as the perfect companion. The glory of our inheritance is that we get to share it with our Savior and Lord.

Are you a child of God? God gives this right to those who believe in his Beloved Son. Are you believing in Jesus Christ? Are you crying out to Jesus to save you from your sin? If not, then you do not have a right to become a child of God. I urge you to turn from your sin and believe in Jesus today.

But many of you are already believing in Jesus. You are God's children. But you live far below your privilege. We still live like practical orphans. As you hear the Word of God today, the Spirit is working. He is taking the truth of that Word and impressing it upon your heart.

The God of the Universe is your Daddy. He is removing slavish fear from your heart. He is encouraging you to approach God with bold assurance. He enables you to see yourself through the eyes of your Dad. And he is stirring your imagination of your glorious future.

The Spirit enables you to win victories as a spiritual warrior. But what good would that do if He were not also bringing you to know God as Daddy?

Twila Paris had it right – The warrior is a child!