

## The Spirit of Adoption

Romans 8:14-25

### Interview Dennis

That's a wonderful story of adoption, and a great lead-in to our study... (Pray)

- Adoption is the “Cinderella” of Pauline theology; overlooked, **deserves attention**.
- Evidenced by the little emphasis in Theology books and sermons...

Three reasons why we need to elevate its importance...

#### a. **It helps us understand the Christian life.**

J.I. Packer:

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. 'Father' is the Christian name for God. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption.”

- Further, it's not just the concept of God's Fatherhood; adoption is an organizing concept of salvation that helps us understand the whole Christian life better.
- Think of how many doctrines can be taught in relation to it: God, Christology, the Spirit, Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, the Church, Mission, Heaven.
- Worldview questions are answered in it.

#### b. **It moves us moves us to worship the God of all grace.**

- “Adoption is the highest privilege that the gospel offers” (Packer)
- Murray: “Adoption is ... the apex of redemptive grace and privilege”
- In Romans 8, again, you can see Paul writing in a spirit of adoration.

#### c. **It serves as the great motivation for mission.**

- With gladness, we serve our Father, through the Son, in the power of the Spirit.

Paul continues to build on his teaching on the Holy Spirit, by speaking now of “The Spirit of Adoption.”

He shows us that the Spirit has **brought us into the family**, **provides personal intimacy with the Father**, and **assures us of future glory as co-heirs of Christ**.

## #1: Identity (14-16)

- “For” links it to the previous verse, that we are not obligated to the flesh.
- We are the grateful children of God who are led by the Spirit of God.
- Notice the obvious in these four verses: “sons of God” (14), “as sons” (15), “children of God” (16), “if children then heirs” (17); “adoption as sons” (23)

### A. Personal Identity

“adoption” - *huiiothesia* - meaning “to have the place of a son”

- 5x in the NT (though taught throughout). These 5 occurrences appear in Paul’s letters to 3 churches of a decidedly Roman background: Gal., Eph., & Romans.
- 3 of 5 are here in Romans: 8:15, 23, 9:4
- Many of the Roman Emperors were adopted, most famously being Julius Caesar’s adoption of Octavius (Caesar Augustus – Luke 2:1).
  - We have been adopted into a much greater line.... by the only Sovereign

The language of Romans 8:14f has echoes of the Exodus story.

- We have been taken out of slavery and made “sons of God” (cf., Ex 4:22).
- We are now led by the Spirit as the Israelites were led by the pillar of cloud in the wilderness.
- Gentiles Christians have been grafted into this sonship, being among the number of the family of God.

### Application:

So the basic question “Who am I?” is answered here!

- Not according to the flesh: black or white, Dem or Republican, North or South, American or not.
- Our fundamental identity is found in our sonship. We are children of God.
- American’s gospel: Be Sexy, Smart, and/or Successful and you will be Somebody.
  - It’s a self-made identity, not a Christ-provided, Spirit-given identity.
- Debbie, “What good is that if I can’t get a date?”
  - So much of spiritual growth is about identity formation.
  - *Learning to be in practice, what you are in position.*

### How did this happen?

- i. Not by our merit, but the Father’s mercy!
  - “View of God’s mercy” (Rom 12:1). You didn’t earn sonship; you “received” it.
- ii. It is made possible through our union with Jesus, our elder brother. (17).
  - “He is not ashamed to call us brothers” (Heb 2:11).

- After rising, he tells Mary "go to my brothers...I'm ascending to my father & your father" (Jn 20:17)

This identity produces a **desire to glorify our Father.**

- In the biblical period, your **vocation** and identity was based on your father...
- **John the Son of Zebedee**...was in the fishing business
- In a similar way, we could say "**Tony, son of God**" is to be about the Father's business.
- **Adopted sons and daughters take on the Family business.**
  - **Lawyer, finance, steel business, education** – all for the glory of the Father.

## B. **Familial Identity** ("we are children of God" (16))

In Rome, they were answering the question of "Who am I?" but also "Who are **we**?"

- These former **Caesar worshipers**, unclean... were now adopted bros and sisters.

You see if you get the wrong **identity** you will have the wrong **community/family.**

"**Brothers**" (8:12). What a word.

- We use the word "brothers" when we forget someone's name; as a pastor...; or girls when they don't care for **Kip** who has asked them out to Taco Bell.
- **Romans 12:10**, "Love one another with brotherly affection" (cf., **Rom. 15:4-7**).

**The church is a family of adopted brothers and sisters.**

- Like Rome, we look different, but have the same need
- **Joshua**, "Are all these people our family?"

Many treat the church more like... a **hotel not a family.**

- As a **building**. Go there occasionally for a brief visit.
- To be **Served**. If you like the service, you'll **leave a tip.**

Or as an event

- Stay for a few hours and talk about the show on the way home, and leave it there.

But the church isn't a hotel or an event. It's a family.

- In a family, you have **responsibilities** and **chores**.
- In a family, there's **empathy** and **concern**.
- In the church, we each take up responsibilities of service, giving, praying, and so on.
- You should not make your brother or sister carry all the duties.
- Not serving is a **brother/sister issue**.

What a privilege to be an adopted child of God....

## #2: Intimacy (14-16)

### 5 Ways the Spirit brings personal intimacy with the Father.

#### 1. The Spirit confirms the status change that has taken place. (14-16)

We know we belong to God by the Spirit.

- The phrase "Spirit of Adoption" means essentially the "Spirit who confirms adoption." (Moo)

Romans has been teaching justification by faith. That's a legal, judicial reality. How do we know the change has taken place? The Spirit's witness. He confirms it.

- we "are sons" (14).
- "Spirit of Adoption as sons" (15).
- "Spirit bears witness that we are children of God" (16).

We have the Spirit of Adoption, which confirms this unbreakable legal transaction. In **Galatians 4:5**, "God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts." Confirmation.

- Judicial: **Going to court with our kids.**
- Experiential: "Come see... Eyasu, Wow!" "Papa look. Papa look"

There is a **legal reality**, and an **emotional-experiential** reality.

- In a much deeper level, the Spirit of God is testifying that we are God's kids.

#### 2. The Spirit leads God's children into holiness (14).

Paul says that those who are "led by the Spirit of God" are sons of God.

- That doesn't **only** mean **guidance**, but also **holiness**.
- The Spirit never leads us into **sin!** (Some people talk like this – "the Spirit led me to cheat on my spouse! Nope!).

Paul is contrasting life in the **flesh** (see verses 12-13).

- Christians are "governed by the Spirit" or "controlled by the Spirit."
- The Spirit of God leads us into **War with the flesh**.
- **You are not a Zombie, or a vampire!** – alive but live with a never satisfied appetite
  - It's cool now to have Zombies, Vampires in books and movies. (Abraham Lincoln vs Zombies!)
- You aren't a child of flesh.
- **You aren't an animal ruled by your fleshly appetites.**
- You are a child of God who is indwelt with the Spirit of the resurrected Christ (8:11).

In other words, the adopted child receives a **new attitude toward sin**. The Spirit is “The Spirit of God/Christ (8:9)” and “The Spirit of Holiness” (Rom. 1:4).

**God’s kids hate sin. They long to be like Jesus.**

- We have **new values**.
- Why? Because His Spirit is in us.
- He is producing the character of Christ in us.  
Walker TX, UK, Cricket/Baseball, preach/office
  
- We are being made more like our elder brother Jesus; the purpose of our adoption (Rom. 8:29).
  - Sinclair Ferguson, Mrs. Woods. After the daily inspection of hair, feet, hands, “Your nothing like your elder brother.” It still hurts. Mrs. Woods, you are in for an amazing discovery, “I’m going to be like my elder brother one day.”
  - He is making us like our elder brother.

So adoption then is the giving of **double grace**. It has to do with **justification**, but then it deals with **sanctification**.

**3. The Spirit replaces fear with acceptance and security (15a).**

**V. 15a:** We did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but we received the Spirit of adoption.

- “received” – aorist – at conversion.

We don’t live in fear, but in this new position of **acceptance**.

The slavery of our old life saw God as our judge to be dreaded.

But now we see God as our Father to be adored.

**Freedom** and **security** now rules our lives, instead of **bondage** to **fear**.

We are at **peace** with God now.

We have **security**.

- **Orphanages are places of fear** – eating their cereal in window seal.
- Why? They had no security.
- “Where will I go if no one comes?” Prostitution, crime, girls transitioning out are promised jobs as models, etc

**"Paul could hardly have chosen a better term than adoption to characterize this peace and security" (Moo)**

#### 4. The Spirit enables us to cry out Abba Father (15-16)

The Abba cry relates to the phrases before and after.

**15a:** Because we are fear is replaced with acceptance, we cry out to our father.

Notice that it is a “cry.” (cf., Gal. 4:6)

- “**Krazo.**” It expresses a loud, spontaneous, emotional cry. A scream you might say.
- It’s not a little **cutesy little word.**
- It’s a word of **desperation**, and word of **profound weakness.**
  - It’s in the Psalter, “He heard my **cry**” (Ps. 40:1).
  - “I cried to you for help and you healed me” (30:2).
  - “We have not only the status of sons, but also **the heart of sons**” (Denny)
- Abba is what Jesus prayed in the Garden, as he was sweating blood, as he was falling on the ground (Mark 14:36).
- It was a scream of one soon to be crucified!

The way you know that you are God’s child isn’t that you are just **skipping around all day singing Tomlin songs.**

- It’s that you cry out to the Father in **desperation**, knowing he’s there.
- This assurance that you are a child of God is not something that is reserved for you when you are at your **best**, but it’s also there when you are at your **worst.**
- “**Father, oh Father!!**” is a basic Christian prayer.
  - **Not, “God... if there even is a god... why did you let this happen!”**
- Some of you have known these times of desperation, **perhaps even in the trials of adoption:** Things aren’t going as you expected...
  - **Financial difficulty.... Stuck in the process... Behavioral issues, Counseling is needed...**
  - **It’s the very fact that your heart instinct is to cry “Father” that you have the assurance that you belong to Him.**
  - The Spirit of God gives **us the instinct to cry out to the Father.**

The Father sees you **today broken and bruised and he ministers to you.**

- He hears your groaning and your loud crying, and **in that cry you are given assurance that you an adopted son and daughter of God.**

**Example: Baby houses – quiet.**

- We cry out to the Father because we have one! Praise God.
- He loves us with an everlasting, intimate, unconditional, unbreakable love.

## 5. The Spirit stirs up affections for the Father. (15-16)

Adopted children love the Father. This is just an extension of the **previous point**. The intimacy is amazing:

In Galatians 4:6: “**the Spirit** cries out Abba Father” but here in Romans 8:15, “**we** cry Abba Father.”

- So who is “crying Abba Father?” Us or Spirit? Yes.
- There is an **intimate harmony**; it’s **mysterious**.
- There is union with us and the Father.

As a result of this union, we have affections for the Father.

Adopted children of God aren’t merely those who want to **use** God. They are people who **love** the Father.

**Romans 5:5** – “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

His love has been poured in us, and worship now overflows from us.

### #3: Inheritance (17-25)

**V. 17:** Adopted children are **heirs of our new Father**.

The best is still yet to come for all of God’s children.

We go from slavery to **being an heir with the Crown Prince of the Universe!**

- We get to be **with our great God** in **a new world**, with **a new body**.
- *We will see Christ and be changed.*
- “The meek will inherit the earth.”

### Why sons, not daughters?

Well, those of you have watched *Pride and Prejudice* (or read!), know the answer.

- In Paul’s day, like the time of that movie (albeit a different time), only the sons received the inheritance.
- In *Pride and Prejudice*, Poor Mr. Bennet had five daughters, and no sons (and **noisy wife!**), and so the inheritance was going to pass by the girls to the cousin, Mr. Collins (**a boring preacher!**).
- In the gospel, all Christians are “sons” (Gal 3:28).
- Male or female, in Christ, all receive this inheritance.
  
- Adoption has an already dimension (14)
- Adoption has a not yet dimension (23) – We are heirs waiting to receive our inheritance.

- The Spirit is the firstfruits of our inheritance, guaranteeing the harvest to follow.
- The Spirit of God assures us that we are God's children, also assures us that we are heirs.
- Our adoption is true and real, but not complete yet. We aren't home yet.
- We are awaiting glory.

Paul introduces this idea of **future glory** verse 17, and then develops this hope in verse 18-30.

- Notice the emphasis on "**glory**" or "**glorification**" in 17-30.
- I will stop at v. 25.

But it's not a pie in the sky, over-realized eschatology.

- We're not in glory yet.
- Paul keeps our feet on the earth, and shows us that....

### A. The Path to Glory: Suffering (17)

- All **faithful Christians** will suffer as they follow Jesus on the Calvary Road.
  - "Did not the Son of Man have to suffer these things, then enter into glory?"
  - Before the crown, there is the cross...
  - Notice we are "heirs **with Christ**."
  - **Union with Christ** means that we share in his sufferings and in his glory.
  - Jesus prayed that we would be with him, and see his glory, and share in his love (John 17:24)
- All people will suffer in a **fallen world** (as he develops in verses 18-22).
  - In verse 18-22, he speaks of the "**groaning of creation**."
  - In verses 23-25, he speaks of the "**groaning of God's adopted children**."
  - He will then talk about **the Spirit groaning** in prayer on our behalf in 26-27.

It's interesting that Paul's **doctrine of adoption is written in the context of suffering**.

- It's fitting.
- **Behind every earthly adoption, there is tragedy. The backdrop is suffering.**
- **Here, the context for adoption is a broken, fallen, groaning world.**
- **And if you enter into the world of adoption and orphan care, you are entering a ministry all about suffering. You will sacrifice as you try to alleviate the suffering of others.**
- But we are not alone in the trials. "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you!" (John 14)

### B. Waiting for Glory (18-25)

"we wait for it with patience" (25)



## What do we do while we wait for the consummation of our adoption?

### i. **Contrasting the Glory with the Suffering (8:18)**

- “**compare**” (logizomai) means to calculate. Consider it from a **heavenly perspective**.
- Glory revealed “**in us**” is mysterious. Glory is coming “**to us**” and it will in a sense **reside “in us”** – as we are transformed.
- **When you contrast the glory that is coming to the present suffering, you find fresh strength...**
- **You find that in the scope of eternity, it’s like comparing a thimble of water with the ocean.**
- **2 Cor 3:17: “This slight momentary affliction... is working for us an eternal weight of glory**
- **Newton, “My carriage is broken!”**

### ii. **Anticipating the Glory with Groaning and Hope (19-25)**

#### **19-21: Poetically and prophetically, Paul describes creation anticipating future glory.**

**19: “waits in eager longing”** carries the idea of “**craning the neck or stretching forward.**”

- It’s an intense word.
- Creation is often personified with emotion in Scripture – “singing for joy” or “mourning”
- “**revealing of the sons of God**” – **In the end, God will lift the veil and reveal who are truly his children.**
- Phillips, “The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own.” Creation is longing to be liberated and transformed.

#### **20: The reason for creation’s longing.**

- This refers to to **the curse that came upon creation** when our parents sinned.
- As a result of the fall, we have floods, hurricanes, draughts, tornadoes, earthquakes, blood, death, sickness, etc.

**20b:** “him who subjected it” referring to God, who allowed creation to be drawn into the decaying effects of Adam and Even’s sin (Bird).

#### **21: The divine intention was **renewal**, not **corruption**.**

- God did it in hope that the whole creation would be liberated.
- **God will one day set the world free of decay.**
- **Therefore, the fate of creation is tied up with the humanity.**
- **The creation was marred through the sin of humanity; the creation will be restored when the children of God are glorified.**

#### **22: The pain is real.**

- The creation is in the pain of childbirth, that's some vivid language!
- It conveys not only the suffering of childbirth, but also the joyous outcome of a successful birth, with the arrival of new life.

**23: We join creation in this groan.**

- **“Life is pain, highness. Anyone who tells you differently is selling something”** (Princess Pride)
- We **groan in so many ways in this fallen world.**
- Because we have the Spirit, we groan – we live frustrated in a sense, because our salvation though real, is not yet consummated.
- **“adoption as sons”** – already not yet.
- One of the future aspects of our salvation yet to be experienced is **“the redemption of our bodies.”**
- Rom 8:11 – we will have a new body, free from corruption, decay, sin, and death.

**24-25: Christian hope.**

**24a:** We are saved “in hope.” That is, a hope that is part of our salvation since the time of our conversion.

- Thus **the gospel is not just a doctrine, it's a promise.**

**24b:** *Hope* means we are awaiting something we don't see.

- We have a promised inheritance, but we don't see it, touch it, taste it, or smell it yet.
- But we will.

**25:** Hope is **not** wishful thinking.

- **“wait for it patiently”** is perhaps better rendered, **“wait with endurance.”**
- **Our hope is founded upon the nature of God himself who made this promise to us.**
- We endure this life with confidence because **God keeps his promises!**
- We will inherit the world (Rom 4:13).
- The God who keeps His promises said so.

God the Father has planned this adoption; God the Son has made this adoption possible; and God the Spirit has applied it to our hearts.

### Conclusion

**Unbeliever: Receive adoption**

**Believer: Allow this doctrine to help shape your worldview.**

**Adoption as Worldview:**

**God.** Who/What is God?

**Authority.** To whom will I listen/submit?

<b>Creation.</b> Who created the world, including humanity? What makes humanity distinct?	<b>Identity.</b> On what identity will I build my life? What identity will influence my relationships and my choices?
<b>Suffering.</b> What's wrong with this broken world?	<b>Purpose.</b> What's my mission/vocation?
<b>Redemption.</b> Is there any hope for the world?	<b>Morality.</b> How do I live?
<b>Worship.</b> Who/What will I worship?	<b>Destiny.</b> Where am I going?

**Adoption changes everything. Romans 8 helps us get a unified perspective on life.**

- **God** – Triune. Father, Son and Spirit. Holy and Gracious; Transcendent and Intimate; Just and Merciful; Eternal and Unchanging; All Powerful, Knowing, Sufficient; Wise, Sovereign and Good.
- **Creation.** God made the world. The world is filled with expressions of His common grace. He made us in His own image -- to know Him and reflect him. Romans 8 shows us the unique relationship we can have with God by being adopted into the family.
- **Suffering** – This world is broken because of sin. Romans 8 shows us the need for personal and cosmic redemption, as both groan in anticipation of glory.
- **Redemption** – Yes. Romans 8 shows us that we have great hope. By faith in the crucified and risen Christ, we become adopted children. We and this groaning creation will be redeemed!
- **Worship:** We don't worship dead idols, but our loving Father, through the Son, by the Spirit.
  - We are lovers as well as thinkers, and therefore a properly Christian view of the world engages the whole person (Ryken)
- **Identity** – I am a child of God! I will build my life on that reality. I will allow this identity to influence my choices and my relationships.
- **Purpose** – Whatever we do in life, we are to be about the Father's business. We are to glorify Him in all facets of life, in word and deed.
- **Authority.** We listen/submit to God whose word is true.
- **Morality.** We obey God by the power of the Spirit, who is conforming us into the image of Christ.
- **Destiny.** Glory awaits us!

**Don't just believe the doctrine of adoption in your head.**

**Allow it to change your whole worldview.**