

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 21

I. Exposition of Chapter Eight. (Continued)

A. Verse 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.’”:

1. In the context of this epistle, it would seem that the “**spirit of bondage**” would be referring to the bondage of sin (**chapter 6**), the law (**chapter 7**) and death (**chapter 8**). All of these carry with it a tormenting kind of fear of God.
2. Instead we’ve received the “**Spirit of adoption.**” There are at least two views by scholars as to what Paul meant by the word “**adoption**” in the New Testament. (**8:15, 23; 9:4; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5.**) It’s important to note, however, that adoption in the Roman culture was somewhat complex and there were different kinds of “**adoption**”. The views explained below do not contradict each other so Paul could be referring to both to illustrate New Testament truth. The literal meaning of the word “**adoption**” is, “**son-placing**” or, “**to place as an adult son.**”
 - a. **First view:** Similar to our type of adoption today. “**Childless couples would often adopt a son, who then became their heir. Even if the adopted son had living biological parents, they had no more claim over him after the adoption had taken place. Often parents were willing to let their sons be adopted by another family if it meant a better lot in life.**”¹
 - 1) **The Consequences:**
 - a) The adopted person lost all rights in his old family and gained all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family. In the most binding legal way, he got a new father.
 - b) It followed that he became heir to his new father’s estate. Even if other sons were afterwards born, it did not affect his rights. He was inalienably co-heir with them.
 - c) In law, the old life of the adopted person was completely wiped out; for instance, all debts were cancelled. He was regarded as a new person entering into a new life with which the past had nothing to do.
 - d) In the eyes of the law he was absolutely the son of his new father. Roman history provides an outstanding case of how completely this was held to be true. (**Adapted from William Barclay’s, *The Daily Study Bible***)
 - b. **Second view:** There was a custom where a son born into the family would be received into the family as an adult son. This meant that he would become a full heir of his father. From that point forward, the son would be considered a man instead of a boy. This would take place between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. The boy would take off the “**cloak of childhood**” and put on the “**cloak of manhood**” which was referred to as the “**toga virilis**”.
 - 1) Application: “**The believer, after becoming a child of God through the New Birth, is immediately advanced to maturity of position, being constituted an adult son, by this legal placing of adoption.**”²
 - 2) In other words, we have been literally born into the family of God and, as far as the inheritance goes, we have received our “**toga virilis**”, which would be the “**Spirit of Adoption**” or, as **Galatians 4:6-7** states; the “**Spirit of Christ**” which declares us “**adult sons**” in terms of the inheritance. From other Scriptures, however, we know that we must also grow in the Lord and could still be “**babes**” or “**carnal**” (**I Corinthians 3:1**) in terms of our spiritual walk.
 - c. “**Regeneration has to do with son-making. Adoption with son-placing.**”³
3. “**...by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’**” – This is an Aramaic term and referred to what children called their fathers at home similar to “**daddy**” or “**papa**”. (Jesus and the Apostles spoke Aramaic.).⁴ Believers can now come to God and have a deep, intimate relationship with their Heavenly “**Daddy**”.

¹Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 353.

²Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*, p. 235.

³Herbert Lockyer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible*, p. 200.

⁴Robert James Utley, *The Gospel according to Paul: Romans*, vol. Volume 5, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1998)

B. Verse 16 – **“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,”** - Paul says that those who are God’s children, born again by the Spirit of God, know their status because the Holy Spirit testifies to our spirit that this is so.

1. Several scholars assert that the idea of a **“witness”** goes along with the theme of **“adoption”**. Every adoption in Roman culture had witnesses. In our **“adoption”**, we have the witness of the Holy Spirit.
2. The words **“bears witness”** mean, **“to provide confirming evidence by means of a testimony—‘to support by testimony, to provide supporting evidence, to testify in support.’”**⁵ (cf. 2:15; 9:1)
3. **Sometimes believers will doubt their salvation in their minds, but if they’ll get into the Word of God and “cry out” to their Abba, Father in prayer, they’ll get into the spirit and have the assurance of their salvation again.**

C. Verse 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.”** (cf. Galatians 3:26-29; 4:1-7)

1. As mentioned earlier, every **“adoption”** involved an inheritance.
2. To be an **“heir”** is to **“take possession”**; **“speaks of one who obtains a lot or portion.”**
As children of God we have an inheritance now and more inheritance to come in the future.
3. We are not heirs based on works, but because of Who we belong to. We share the heirship of Jesus. We are heirs of God through joint (equal) heirship with Jesus Christ!
 - a. Christ is the Creator of all things and the Heir of all things – **Colossians 1:16-18; Hebrews 1:2.**
 - b. Our present Inheritance:
 - 1) We are **“...sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise who is the guarantee of our inheritance...”** – **Ephesians 1:13-14.**
 - a) The word **“sealed”** means; **“to set a seal or mark upon a thing as a token of its authenticity or approvedness”**; It also has the idea of **“ownership”**.
 - b) The word **“guarantee”** means; **“a pledge, something which stands for part of the price and paid beforehand to confirm the transaction.”** – **Word Study Dictionary.** This also has the idea of **“a down-payment”**.
 - 2) The Holy Spirit is the **“down-payment”** of what God has in store for us. **II Corinthians 5:1-8.**
 - 3) Examples of what the Holy Spirit can do for us now – **Romans 8:11, 26; Romans 14:17; 15:13; Ephesians 3:16; Galatians 5:22-23; Titus 3:4-7.** (cf. II Peter 1:2-4).
 - c. Our future Inheritance:
 - 1) Is **“...incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”** **I Peter 1:3-4.**
 - 2) Involves the complete Redemption of our Bodies - **I Corinthians 15:20-54.**
 - a) Our bodies will be like His glorified body. **Philippians 3:20-21.**
 - b) Our bodies will be a real body of flesh and bone. **Luke 24:39.**
 - c) Our bodies will be incorruptible bodies. **I Corinthians 15:42, 53-54.**
 - d) Our bodies will be immortal bodies. **I Corinthians 15:53;**
II Corinthians 5:1-8.
 - e) Our bodies will not be subject to material limitations. **John 20:19-28.**
 - f) Our bodies will possibly be able to enjoy food. **John 21:1-14.**
 - 3) Involves the fact that Jesus has prepared a place for us – **John 14:1-4.**
 - 4) Involves permanent dwelling in the Presence of the Lord – **I Thessalonians 4:13-18.**
 - 5) Involves everything being made new – **Revelation 21:1-27; 22:1-5.**

⁵Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 417.