

Theme: The believer's security through our son-ship in the family of God. Romans 8:14 – 17.

We have learned that the apostle makes a clear distinction between those who are in the flesh and those who are in the Spirit. We emphasized that it is the indwelling work of the Spirit that gives believers a new disposition of heart and mind. Such will “mind the things of the Spirit” v 5. Such have resurrection power v 11. Such will also mortify the deeds of the body through the power of the Spirit v 13. Such are also declared to be sons of God by adoption v14 – 17. All of these things work for the security of believers in Christ.

Q.1 What does it mean to be *led* by the Spirit of God?

This word “led” is consistently used in the N.T. for one who is under the direction of the will of another. It is used of the Lord being led of the Spirit into the wilderness and of the Lord being brought to Pilate by the Jews.

We learn that for a believer to be led by the Spirit of God is to be under His influence. The Holy Spirit teaches (John 14:26), testifies (John 15:26), reproves (John 16:8), and sanctifies (John 17:17).

This is much more than a legal adoption, it is the inner working of the Spirit producing a filial disposition. He gives them the very nature of sons of God enabling them to enjoy full relations with the Father.

Q. 2. What are the marks of son-ship given by Paul?

1. They are delivered from any sense of bondage. V15

“Of that spirit of bondage which many of the saints themselves were under at their conversion, under the convictions of sin and wrath set home by the Spirit; as those in [Act 2:37](#), the jailer ([Act 16:30](#)), Paul, [Act 9:6](#). Then the Spirit himself was to the saints a spirit of bondage: “But,” says the apostle, “with you this is over.” “God as a Judge,” says Dr. Manton, “by the spirit of bondage, sends us to Christ as Mediator, and Christ as Mediator, by the spirit of adoption, sends us back again to God as a Father.” Though a child of God may come under fear of bondage again, and may be questioning his sonship, yet the blessed Spirit is not again a spirit of bondage, for then he would witness an untruth.”
_Matthew Henry.

2. They are not living with an attitude of fear, as slaves (DOULOI in Greek) V15

3. They have the “spirit of adoption” – the indwelling nature of sons V15. This is the operation of the Holy Spirit on the heart of the converted soul producing a new attitude of love and loyalty toward God. The very life of God is planted in our souls so that we are experience a true loyalty to Him. Our heart affections are moved to desire and to enjoy fellowship with God. Charles Hodge points out that this is more than the disposition of sons, but the very Spirit of God's Son (Gal.4:6)

4. They are given the spirit of prayer in the nearest and dearest terms. We cry “Abba, Father”. That same prayer was in the heart of the Saviour (Mark 14:36). Paul was writing to Gentile converts and they too were given the freedom of heart to pray to God with a filial (family) ease.

Let it be noted that every born-again Christian has total access to God through Christ and the Holy Spirit as their advocate leads the believer to know and enjoy that child-like fellowship with God (Rom. 5:2, Eph. 1:4-6).

Note that this is God's decree from all eternity in His plan of redemption. All the estrangement from God that resulted in man's heart after Adam's fall – where man was made a rebel to God in heart – is removed. Through our union with Christ we are nearer to God than even Adam was prior to the fall.

5. The Holy Spirit directly ministers to their hearts concerning their son-ship. This is not the production of the flesh, nor of human learning. It is the supernatural exercise of the Holy Spirit operating in the believer's soul. The believer is given an unction from the Holy One that he is born of God (1John 2:20, 5:20).

The important thing to note in this ministry of the Spirit is that it happens to us. It is not our human energy producing spiritual grace. Rather it is God's grace producing the nature of sons in believers. Therefore, it ensures our security in Christ. The Lord keeps His children loyal to Him and in His love by the power of His Spirit effectively operating in their hearts (Philippians 2:12 -13).

Q. 3 What is the significance of believers becoming joint heirs with Christ? V17

The apostle emphasized: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." The marks of son-ship in God's people declare their union with Christ which in turn declare their legal standing in Christ. We are made sons in the family God. By referring to believers as joint heirs, the apostle pointed out that God bestows everything upon His people that He granted to His Son in the covenant of grace. All the benefits of Christ's life, of His death and of His resurrection are granted to the Christian.

The apostle goes one step further to include partnership in Christ's glory. The identification of believers with Christ evidenced in their willingness to suffer with Him declares them to be truly in union with Christ. They are to be known also as heirs of Christ's glory, but not because of their sufferings. It was their willingness to suffer for Christ that marked them as believers in real union with Christ.

It is to be noted that the apostles and the Lord Himself usually mentioned the believer's sufferings when they spoke about the glory they would one day enjoy. The two are often put in juxtaposition. They are placed together for the purpose of contrast.

The following references reveal this fact: Romans 5:5; 2Cor. 4:17,18; Col. 1:24 – 27; 2Tim. 2:12.

The argument of Paul to the Christians at Rome who were suffering for Christ centred on the fact that they were showing their partnership in the glory of the Lord by their willingness to remain true to Christ while under affliction. They chose to join the suffering people of God to know the eternal rewards which are bestowed on believers who suffer for Christ. See Rev. 2 for rewards to those who overcome through Christ.

Two Lessons: 1. We are not to be surprised at affliction. 2. We are not to be shaken by it. Read Psalm 73.

Observations:

1. What do we learn from these verses about the nature of conversion?

Ans: It is radical and discernable to the convert and those observing.

2. What shall we conclude of those who profess faith in Christ but do not love God?

Ans: Love to God is the chief mark of conversion, therefore, we cannot accept such a profession.

3. When we say that Christians do not live in an attitude of fear, do we mean they do not fear God?

The fear of the Lord is different from the fear of losing our souls.

4. How do these verses relate to the believer's inner witness that he, or she has been born again?

The inner witness is God's gift and assurance of salvation is to be enjoyed. Yet, we must align our inner experience with the revealed word of God.

5. Being called to be disciples of Christ all Christians are called to suffer with Him.

Luke 6:22; Acts 14:22; 1Cor. 6; Phil 1:29; Rev. 7:14