

Sermon Title: The characteristics of a Child Adopted by God

Sermon Text: Romans 8:12-17

Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to reflect and rest in the inner vindicating witness of the Holy Spirit.

Sermon Proposition: There are 4 characteristics of a child adopted by God and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction: In addition to the truths of freeing believers from sin and death (Romans 8:2-3), enabling them to fulfill God's law (v. 4), changing their nature (vv. 5-11), empowering them for victory (vv. 12-13), and confirming their adoption as God's children (vv. 14-16), the Holy Spirit guarantees their ultimate glory (vv. 17-30).

I. The children of God put to death the deeds of the flesh by the Spirit. V.12-13

II. The children of God are led by the Spirit. V.14

III. The children of God are comforted by the Spirit. V.15

IV. The children of God are provided assurance by the Spirit. V.16-17

I. The children of God put to death the deeds of the flesh by the Spirit. V.12-13

A. It is important to recognize the remaining presence of sin in our flesh. (Romans 7:21)

1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,

Psalm 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; **24** And see if *there is any* wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

Haggai 1:5 Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! ...**7** Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways!"

B. To kill sin in our lives we must have a heart fixed on God.

Psalm 57:7 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise.

Psalm 119:5 Oh, that my ways were directed To keep Your statutes! **6** Then I would not be ashamed, When I look into all Your commandments.

C. To kill sin in our lives is to meditate on God's Word.

Psalm 119:11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!

D. To kill sin in our lives we must regularly commune with God in prayer.

1 Peter 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

E. To put to death sin in our lives we must practice obedience to God. When the Scriptures speak of growing in grace, perfecting holiness, and renewing the inner man, it is referring to putting sin to death. Sin that is produced by the remaining flesh in which believers remain temporarily bound to in this life, is all that prevents them from perfect holiness. (**Galatians 5:24-25**)

Paul wants to provide confident assurance to all believers that they have power for victory over sinful flesh that still clings to them. Apart from the effectual working of the Holy Spirit and His supernatural power, we could never put to death recurring sin in our lives.

II. The children of God are led by the Spirit. V.14

Paul illustrates the intimate and permanent relationship to God as a beloved adopted child. Paul continues to share ways in which God confirms that believers are eternally related to Him as His children, the first way is that His children are led by the Spirit.

The person who is truly experiencing and demonstrating the leading of the Holy Spirit at work in his life can be absolutely certain that he is God's child. It is important to notice the tense Paul uses here. Are being led translates into the present passive indicative of agó, indicating that which already exists. The genuine believer's life is characterized by the Holy Spirit's leading, but it is not always uninterrupted leading.

Yet at the same time a merely professing Christian does not and cannot be being led by the Spirit of God.

While God's children are secured in Him, even in disobedience occasionally, Satan still seeks to make God's children feel insecure, that's why Christians cannot afford to neglect the study of Scripture, prayer, fellowship with God's people, and live in careless obedience to God. Even for faithful children, doubts about our relationship to God can easily slip into our minds during times of pain, sorrow, failure, or disappointments, because of Satan the accuser of the people of God.

There are two primary ways in which God leads His children.

- 1) **Illumination** – by divinely clarifying His Word to make it understandable to our finite and still sin-tainted minds.

Luke 24:44 Then He said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me." **45** And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

Ephesians 1:17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, **18** the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, **19** and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power

- 2) **Sanctification** – The Holy Spirit not only turns the mind on, and opens the Scripture up to us, but He also divinely assists us in obeying the Scriptures, and that obedience becomes another testimony to our being children of God.

The Holy Spirit not only illuminates and performs His divine work in us at all times, He is our spiritual life.

III. The children of God are **comforted** by the Spirit. V.15

- A. The children of God are **freed** by the Spirit. V.15a

Hebrews 2:14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, **15** and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

- B. The children of God receive a Spirit of **adoption** by the Spirit. V.15b

The term adoption is filled with the idea of love grace, compassion, and intimate relationship. When that action is taken by the proper legal means, the adopted child attains all the rights and privileges of a member of the family.

- 1) OT illustration – Moses (**Exodus 2:1-10**)
- 2) OT illustration – Esther (**Esther 2:5-11**)
- 3) OT illustration – Mephibosheth the crippled son of Jonathan and sole remaining descendent of Saul (**2 Samuel 9:1-13**)

“In Roman adoption, the adopted child, especially an adopted son, sometimes had greater prestige and privilege than the natural children, the process of Roman adoption involved several carefully prescribed legal procedures. The first step totally severed the boy's legal and social relationship to his natural family, and the second step placed him permanently into his new family. Also, all his previous debts and other obligations were eradicated, as if they never existed. For the transaction to become legally binding, it also required the presence of seven reputable witnesses who could testify, if necessary, to any challenge of the adoption after the father's death.” [John MacArthur Commentary, NT Romans 1-8, pp. 436-437]

- C. The children of God gain **access** to their Father by the Spirit. V.15c (**Ephesians 1:3-5**)

Mark 14:36 And He said, "Abba, Father, all things *are* possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You *will*."

IV. The children of God are provided assurance by the Spirit. V.16-17

A. When we as believers are demonstrating these 8 qualities of God's children (v. 16)

- 1) compelled or motivated by the love of God,
- 2) feel deep hatred for sin,
- 3) reject the world,
- 4) long for Christ's return,
- 5) love other Christians and our enemies,
- 6) experience God's answers to prayers,
- 7) discern between truth from error,
- 8) long with vigilance a move towards Christlikeness,

then the working of the Holy Spirit is being evidenced in our lives, and should provide assurance that we are truly children of God.

B. When we as believers are following the path of glory. V.17

Because we are one with Christ, we are his fellow heirs and children of God the Father by new birth, therefore we are assured of being "glorified with Him." Yet at the same time, this oneness means that we must follow Christ's own path to glory, "suffering with Him".

(Phil 1:29; 3:10; 2 Cor 1:5)

The present tense of the verb and the continual mindset of this thought is explained in depth in verses 18-30, showing that this suffering is not the same as "dying with Christ" which happens at conversion. "The suffering that Paul is referring to is the daily anxieties, tensions, and persecutions that are the result of those who follow and model the One who was "reckoned with the transgressors" (Luke 22:37). Paul makes it absolutely clear that this suffering is the condition for the inheritance; we will be "glorified with Christ (only) if we "suffer with Christ" (or our suffering looks like His suffering). Partnership in Christ's glory can come only by the way or path of suffering.

What Paul is aiming at is the truth about the uncompromising "law of the kingdom" (Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.) according to which glory can only be achieved by the path of suffering. Just as Christ, has suffered and entered into His glory (1 Peter 1:11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.), so too Christians, "fellow heirs with Christ," suffer during this present time in order to join Christ in glory. (Philippians 2:27 For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; 30 because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.)"

[Douglas J. Moo "The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans, pp.505-506]