

Paul's Epistle to the Romans

LESSON XVIII : ADOPTED CHILDREN OF GOD — CHAP 8 VERSES 14-17

“If ‘life’ is the ruling idea in vv. 1-13, being ‘sons’ (v. 14; cf. ‘sonship / adoption’ in v. 15) or ‘children’ (vv. 16, 17) of God dominates vv. 14-17. The way these verses focus on this concept justifies their being treated as a separate unit of thought (the concept of sons / children of God comes up again in vv. 19, 21, and 23, but incidentally). Nevertheless, the connections between this paragraph and what precedes and follows are particularly close. On the one hand, being sons of God explains further why those who are placed under the dominion of the Spirit experience eschatological life (v. 14, in relation to v. 13). On the other hand, being children of God also places believers squarely in the ‘already – not yet’ tension created by their belonging to the new realm of righteousness at the same time as they continue to live in the midst of the old realm of sin and death. In a word, being a ‘child’ of God means to be an ‘heir’ of God also, and thereby one who must look to the future for the full enjoyment of ‘sonship’ (v. 17, in relation to vv. 18-30). These points carry the basic thrust of the paragraph, with vv. 15-16 a somewhat parenthetical elaboration and justification of the assertion that those led by the Spirit are sons of God. *This paragraph, then, carries forward Paul’s theme of assurance in three ways: (1) it gives further reason for the triumphant proclamation that believers who have God’s Spirit will ‘live’; (2) it adds to the growing list another important description — ‘sons of God’ — of believers as God’s people, the heirs of God’s promises; and (3) it provides yet further justification for Paul’s categorical assertion that ‘there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus’ (v. 1).*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 496f]

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (Rom 8:14-17 KJV)

because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (Rom 8:14-17 NIV)

for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God; for ye did not receive a spirit of bondage again for fear, but ye did receive a spirit of adoption in which we cry, ‘Abba — Father.’ The Spirit himself doth testify with our spirit, that we are children of God; and if children, also heirs, heirs, indeed, of God, and heirs together of Christ — if, indeed, we suffer together, that we may also be glorified together. (Rom 8:14-17 Young’s Literal Translation)

V 14 — CLARIFICATION: SALVATION NOT BY WORKS — Lest any misunderstand, Paul immediately clarifies his previous statement in v. 13: “*For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*” This command might be taken by some to mean, “If I want eternal life, I must mortify the deeds of the body.” Paul makes clear this is not what he meant by explaining, “those led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.” “This is signaled by the passive ‘as many as are led.’ “Literally: ‘as many as there are of them who are led ... they are’ ... Now he who gives himself to be guided by the Spirit of God, is certainly a son of God.” [Godet, *Romans*, pg 308]

HOW ARE BELIEVERS LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD? — Paul is probably referring here to a much more general “*leading of the Spirit*” rather than the definite, daily guiding alluded to by some. “*To be ‘led by the Spirit’ probably means not to be guided by the Holy Spirit but, as in Gal 5:18, to have the direction of one’s life as a whole determined by the Spirit. The phrase is thus a way of summarizing the various descriptions of the life of the Spirit that Paul has used in vv. 4-9. Paul may well want to include in this ‘being led’ an ‘inner compulsion’ and the involvement of emotions, but the context and the parallel in Gal 5:18 make it unlikely that the idea is specifically ‘ecstatic’ or ‘charismatic.’* [“*But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law*” — Gal 5:18 KJV] *The active ‘you put to death through the Spirit’ of v. 13 is one aspect of the passive ‘being led by the Spirit,’ pointing again to the inextricable relationship between ‘indicative’ and ‘imperative’ in Paul’s teaching about the Christian life....* The result of this Spirit-dominated existence is being ‘sons of God’: the one necessarily includes the other.... Verses 15-16 suggest ... that *‘being led by the Spirit’ is a ‘distinguishing sign’ of being a son of God.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 498f] “*To be led by the Spirit, and to walk after the Spirit, present the same idea, viz, to be under the government of the Spirit, under two different aspects, Galatians 5:18: 2 Peter 1:21. The ... phrase refers to the constant and effectual influence of the Holy Ghost in regulating the thoughts, feelings, and conduct of believers.*” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 265] “*We have still within us a principle opposing the Spirit, as it is said, ‘The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would,’ Galatians 5:17. But he is led by the Spirit, who, though enticed by the flesh to walk in a contrary direction, yet resists and contends against it, and mortifies the deeds of the body. The Holy Spirit thus leads those in whom He dwells to the mortification of sin. He takes of the glory of the person of Jesus, as God manifest in the flesh, and of His office, as the one Mediator between God and man, and discovers it to His people. Convincing them of their sinful condition, and of Christ’s righteousness, He leads them to renounce everything of their own, in the hope of acceptance with God. He teaches them as the Spirit of truth shining upon His own word, striving with*

‘them by it externally, and internally by His grace conducting, guiding, and bringing them onwards in the way of duty, and, as the promised Comforter, filling them with Divine consolation.... This leading is enjoyed by none but Christians; for ‘as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.’” [Haldane, Romans, pg 351] “What, then, does *the leading of the Spirit* actually mean? *It means sanctification. It is the constant, effective, and beneficent influence which the Holy Spirit exercises within the hearts and lives of God’s children, enabling them more and more to crush the power of indwelling sin and to walk in the way of God’s commandments freely and cheerfully.* The influence which the Holy Spirit exercises is:

- **Not sporadic but constant.** — It is not being injected into the lives of God’s children now and then, in moments of great need or danger. On the contrary, it is steady, constant, as even the tense here in Rom 8:14 implies. Believers *are being led* by the Spirit.
- **It is not (at least not primarily) protective but corrective.** — In the entire context nothing is said about guarding God’s children from receiving physical harm, nothing about keeping them out of danger when traveling. On the other hand, the immediately preceding context refers to putting to death the disgraceful deeds of the body, doing this ‘by the Spirit.’
- **It not merely directs but controls.** — To be *led* by the Spirit means more than to be *guided* by him, though, to be sure, the Spirit is also our guide (John 16:13). Cf. Matt 15:14; Luke 6:39; Acts 8:31. But the leadership provided by the Spirit amounts to more than merely pointing out the right way. It reminds us not so much of the Indian guide who pointed out to the white explorers the pass through the Rockies, as of the people who led the blind man (of Jericho) to Jesus (Luke 18:40). Merely pointing out the way to him would not have helped him. When the Holy Spirit leads believers he becomes the controlling influence in their lives, bringing them at last to glory.
- **On the other hand, it does not stifle or repress but helps and encourages.** — When the Holy Spirit leads God’s child, the latter’s responsibility and activity are not canceled or repressed. The blind man of Jericho *was not carried* to Jesus. He did his own walking. It is exactly as Warfield has pointed out: ‘Though it is indeed the Holy Spirit who keeps us in the path and brings us at last to the goal, it is we who tread every step of the way; our limbs that grow weary with the labor; our hearts that faint ... our faith that revives our sinking strength, our hope that instills new courage into our souls, as we toil over the steep ascent.’” [Hendriksen, Romans, pg 256f]

GOD MAKES THE BELIEVERS WILLING TO BE LED — “It is necessary, then, that believers be led by the Spirit of God. *The manner in which the Spirit leads them is not by violence against their inclination, but by bending and changing their will, in a manner consistent with its nature. When Jesus Christ says, ‘No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me, draw Him,’ it is not meant that God forces against their will those whom He draws, but it shows us that we are naturally so indisposed to go to Jesus Christ, that it is necessary that God, by His Spirit, draw us to Him, and that by His secret but powerful influence He changes our resistance into consent....* God gives His people to will and to do of His good pleasure, making them willing in the day of His power, and by His Spirit changes their hearts of stone into hearts of flesh.” [Haldane, Romans, pg 351f]

SONS OF GOD — “The phrase ‘son of God’ is used in the OT and Judaism to denote Israel as the people whom God has called to be ‘his own’ (cf. esp. Exod 4:22; Jer 3:19; 31:9; Hos 11:1; and, e.g., Sir. 36:12; 4 Ezra 6:58); correspondingly, Yahweh is pictured as Israel’s ‘father’ (e.g., Deut 32:6; Isa 64:8; Jub 1:25). The plural ‘sons of God’ is less often applied to the people of Israel, but it occurs often enough to make it likely that this is the source for Paul’s use of the phrase (cf., e.g., Deut 14:1; Isa 43:6; Hos 2:1 [LXX, quoted in Rom 9:26]). If this is so, then the connection between vv. 13 and 14 become clearer; the ‘sonship’ attested to by God’s Spirit brings life because ‘life’ is inherent in belonging to God’s people, the people of promise. *But we must not overlook a source for this ‘sonship’ idea even more intimately related to Paul’s theology — the unique sonship of Christ. Note, in this context, Rom 8:29 — God’s ultimate purpose is that believers be ‘conformed to the image of his Son’ — and the reference to Jesus as God’s Son in v. 3. The next verse, where Paul attributes to Christians the ‘Abba’ address to God that was peculiarly Jesus’ own, confirms that this dimension is very much present here.*” [Moo, Romans, pg 499]

v 15 — “Before moving on to the last element in the sequence that forms the backbone of this paragraph — Spirit / sonship / heir — Paul pauses to explain a bit more the relationship between the first two in the chain (hence the γάρ, gar = ‘for’). *Paul’s description of the Spirit’s work in conferring sonship forms one of the most beautiful pictures of the believer’s joy and security anywhere in Scripture.*” [Moo, Romans, pg 499]

spirit of bondage ... spirit of adoption — “The heart of v. 15 is an antithesis between two ‘spirits’: the ‘spirit of slavery,’ which believers have *not* received, and the ‘spirit of adoption,’ which we *have*. What are these ‘spirits’? A few interpreters think that both refer to the human spirit, in the sense of an inner attitude or disposition, with ‘received’ being interpreted rhetorically. But, in light of the manifest connection between the Holy Spirit and the believer’s sonship in v. 14 and v. 23 — not to mention Gal 4:6: ‘God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts’ — the ‘Spirit of adoption’ must refer to the Holy Spirit. Because of this, many expositors conclude that the ‘Spirit of slavery’ must also designate the Holy Spirit. Many of the Puritans (followed by Lloyd-Jones) saw a reference here to the sense of ‘slavery’ created by the working of God’s law in the heart of the person under conviction by God’s Spirit. Others take a less individualistic and more salvation-historical tack, viewing ‘Spirit of slavery’ as the Spirit’s work in the old age under the law [Chrysostom; Luther; Calvin ... Some of the fathers of the church (e.g., Irenaeus) used this verse to prove, against Marcion, that the Holy Spirit was operative in both testaments]. Certainly there is support for such a conception in Paul, since he claims that the law is ‘spiritual’ (7:14) and yet argues that it has brought, or confirmed, bondage to sin

(7:23). In Gal 4:1-7 the idea of slavery is specifically tied to the situation of being ‘under the law’ (see also the contrast in Heb 12:18-24, cited by Calvin). But it may be questioned whether Paul would speak of this effect of the law as brought about by God’s Spirit, in light of the contrast between ‘letter’ and ‘Spirit’ in 7:6 and 2 Cor 3:6-18. This makes it unlikely that ‘spirit of slavery’ refers directly to the Holy Spirit. Paul may, then, refer to the human spirit, enslaved to sin [e.g., Haldane]; but more likely **he uses the word rhetorically, as a hypothetical antithesis to the ‘Spirit of adoption’: ‘the Spirit that you have received is not a ‘spirit of bondage’ but a Spirit of adoption’** [see the parallel in 1 Cor 2:12 and 2 Tim 1:7. Cf. Godet; Murray; Cranfield].” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 499f]

again to fear — If our understanding of “*spirit of bondage ... spirit of adoption*” is correct, then “*again*” is used to modify “*fear*.” “[T]he Spirit that believers have received does not bring about ‘again’ that anxiety and fear of judgment which they suffered in their pre-Christian state (compare Gal 4:8-10). Since Paul has pictured the law as bringing awareness of sin and the corresponding penalty of condemnation (see 3:20; 7:7-13), he probably alludes to the ministry of the law. Contrasted with this inner sense of dread before God, the righteous judge, is the sense of peace and security before God, our heavenly Father, that is produced by God’s Spirit in the heart of Christians.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 500f] “That is, ‘The Holy Spirit, which you have received, does’ not produce a slavish and anxious state of mind, such as those experience who are under the law; but it produces the filial feelings of affection, reverence, and confidence, and enables us, out of the fullness of our hearts, to call God our Father.... In the words *again to fear*, there is an evident allusion to the state of believers prior to the reception of this, Spirit. It was a state of bondage in which they feared, i.e. were governed by a slavish and anxious apprehension of punishment. In this state are all unconverted men, whether Jews or Gentiles, because they are all under the law, or the bondage of a legal system.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 266]

THERE IS STILL A PLACE FOR PROPER FEAR — To provide balance to our discussion, we must remind ourselves that while servile, cringing fear has no place in the life of a true believer, we are still to have a reverential awe and fear of our Heavenly Father who does chasten and correct his children as necessary. “The passage before us, and many others, as that of 2 Timothy 1:7, — ‘*God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind,*’ — teaches us that servile fear ought to be banished from the minds of believers. **This fear is a fear of distrust, and not that fear to which we are enjoined in various parts of Scripture, namely, a reverential fear of God impressed by a sense of His majesty, which is the beginning of wisdom, and which His children should at all times cherish.** This fear is connected with the consolations of the Holy Ghost. ‘*Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*’ **There is also a salutary fear which ought always to be maintained in the hearts of Christians; for the assurance of his salvation, which a believer ought to cherish, is not a profane assurance which prompts him to disregard the authority of God, but leads to a diligent carefulness to conform to His word, and make use of the means for edification of His appointment.** This is what the Apostle intends when he says, ‘*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;*’ for God designs to banish from our hearts a carnal security, as appears when it is added, ‘*for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure,*’ showing that it is God who produces in His people both the will and the performance. This fear is required from the consideration of our weakness, our propensity to evil, and the many spiritual enemies with whom we are surrounded; and for the purpose of making us careful that we do not fall; while we ought not to doubt of the love of our Heavenly Father, but, considering the infallible promises of our God, and the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ, we should hold fast the assurance of our salvation. The Apostle Peter enjoins on those whom he addressed as elect unto obedience, through the foreknowledge of God, as loving Jesus Christ, and as rejoicing in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory, to pass the time of their sojourning here in fear, because they had been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. This consideration shows how horrible and dangerous is the nature of sin which works in our members. **This fear implanted in the hearts of the children of God tends to their preservation in the midst of dangers, as that instinctive fear which exists in all men operates to the preservation of natural life, and is entirely consistent with the fullest confidence in God, with love, and the joyful hope of eternal glory.**” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 354f]

adoption — “Paul could hardly have chosen a better term than ‘adoption’ to characterize this peace and security [produced in the heart of Christians]. The word denoted the Greek, and particularly Roman, legal institution whereby one can ‘adopt’ a child and confer on that child all the legal rights and privileges that would ordinarily accrue to a natural child. However, while the institution is a Greco-Roman one, the underlying concept is rooted in the OT and Judaism. **‘Adoption’ is one of the privileges of Israel (Rom 9:4), and Israel, as we have seen, is regularly characterized as God’s ‘son’ or ‘sons’ in the OT and Judaism. Once again, then, Paul has taken a term that depicts Israel’s unique status as God’s people and ‘transferred’ it to Christians.**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 501] “ Ὑιοθεσία [huiiothesia], *adoption*, is from υἱός [huios], *son*, and θέσις [thesis], *a setting or placing*: the placing one in the position of a son. Mr. Merivale, illustrating Paul’s acquaintance with Roman law, says: ‘The process of legal adoption by which the chosen heir became entitled not only to the reversion of the property but to the civil status, to the burdens as well as the rights of the adopter — became, as it were, his other self, one with him.’” [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 91] “The term adoption is borrowed from the ancient custom, especially prevalent among the Romans, of a man who had no children of his own adopting into his family the child of another. The father and the adopted child appeared before the praetor, when the adopting father said to the child, *Wilt thou be my son?* and the child answered, *I will.* **The allusion to this custom reminds believers that they are not the children of God otherwise than by His free and voluntary election, and that thus they are under far more powerful obligations to serve Him than are their own children to obey them, since it is entirely by His love and free good pleasure that they have been elevated to this dignity.**” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 356f]

THE “ALREADY – NOT YET” TENSION OF ADOPTION — To borrow Moo’s terminology, there is a “tension” between present-day reality and the future aspect of our adoption. “Since adoption, according to 8:23 [*Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.* ’ – Rom 8:23 NIV] takes place when the body is redeemed, some interpret ‘Spirit of adoption’ here in the sense of ‘the Spirit that anticipates, or pledges, our adoption.’ But this flies in the face of the immediate context, in which the stress is on the present enjoyment of our status as God’s children [note especially the present tense of ‘*we are crying*’ in the latter part of the verse]. We should, then, attribute the apparent contradiction between this verse and 8:23 to the ‘already – not yet’ tension of the Christian’s eschatological status: ‘*already*’ truly ‘*adopted*’ into God’s family, with all its benefits and privileges, but ‘*not yet*’ recipients of the ‘*inheritance,*’ by which we will be conformed to the glorious image of God’s own Son (see 8:29).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 501]

ADOPTION CONFIRMED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT — “[S]ince the Spirit is presented as the Father’s agent in conferring ‘life’ (see v. 11), it may be better to think of the Spirit as the agent through whom the believer’s sonship is both bestowed and confirmed.... *The Spirit not only bestows ‘adoption’ on us; he also makes us aware of this new relationship: ‘we have not only the status, but the heart of son.’*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 502] “*It is of the greatest importance to believers to be assured that they are indeed the sons of God. Without a measure of this assurance they cannot serve Him with love in newness of spirit.* The Apostle therefore enlarges here on his preceding declaration, that as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.... Our adoption reminds us of our original state as children of wrath and rebellion, and strangers to the covenant of God. It discovers to us the honor to which God has called us, in becoming our Father and making us His children, — including so many advantages, rights, and privileges, and at the same time imposing on us so many duties. These may be comprised under four heads. The first regards the privilege and glory of having God for our Father, and being His children. The second includes the rights which this adoption confers, as of free access to God, the knowledge of His ways, and the assurance of His protection. The third implies God’s love for us, His jealousy for our interest, and His care to defend us. The fourth, all the duties which the title or relation of children engages us to perform towards our Father and our God.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 356]

whereby we cry — “*In using the verb crying out,*’ Paul stresses that our awareness of God as Father comes not from rational consideration nor from external testimony alone but from a truth deeply felt and intensely experienced. If some Christians err in basing their assurance of salvation on feelings alone, many others err in basing it on facts and arguments alone. Indeed, what Paul says here calls into question whether one can have a genuine experience of God’s Spirit of adoption without its affecting the emotions.... What exactly Paul means by κράζω [krazō] is debated. Since the word is used frequently in the Gospels of those who ‘cry out’ under the influence of demons, and since Paul has been speaking of the believer as, in a sense, ‘possessed’ by the Spirit, it may be that the allusion is to an ‘ecstatic’ acclamation. If so, of course, we must be careful to distance the idea here from the type of ‘ecstatic’ utterances associated with some of the Hellenistic ‘mystery’ religions; for *Paul is quite clear in attributing this ‘cry’ to us, not to the Spirit (although see Gal 4:6), and clearly implies in v. 16 that this ‘cry’ is the product not of mindless possession but of conscious understanding.* Others, however, compare the notion here to the frequent references in the Psalms to people who ‘cry out’ to God in prayer, and still others to the ‘solemn declaratory word’ of a herald (see Rom 9:27). But, stripped of its non-Christian religious baggage, the first alternative offers the best interpretation. In any case, *we miss the connotation of the word if we neglect its allusion to the emotions.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 502] “*We cry* – Of a loud cry or vociferation; expressing deep emotion.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 91]

Abba, Father — “*In crying out ‘Abba, Father,’ the believer not only gives voice to his or her consciousness of belonging to God as his child but also to having a status comparable to that of Jesus himself. The Aramaic ‘abba’ was the term Jesus himself used in addressing his Father, and its preservation in the Greek Gospel of Mark (‘And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.’ – Mark 14:36 KJV) and in the Greek-speaking Pauline churches attests to the fact that it was remembered and treasured as distinctive and meaningful. In ascribing to Christians indwelt by the Spirit the use of this same term in addressing God, Paul shows that Christians have a relationship to God that is like (though, of course, not exactly like) Christ’s own relationship to the Father. In ‘adopting’ us, God has taken no half measures; we have been made full members of the family and partakers of all the privileges belonging to members of that family.... Many expositors have argued that the Aramaic [abba] was unknown among Jews as an address to God and suggested the speech of a little child (‘Daddy’). Yet the Hebrew equivalent of Aram. abba has turned up in prayers to God at Qumran, and the use of abba is not restricted to little children.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 502f] “*Abba* is the Syriac and Chaldean form of the Hebrew word for *father*, and therefore was to the apostle the most familiar term. As such it would, doubtless, more naturally and fully express his filial feeling towards God, than the foreign Greek word. It is rare, indeed, that any other than our mother tongue becomes so interwoven with our thoughts and feelings, as to come up spontaneously when our hearts are overflowing. Hence, expressions of tenderness are the last words of their native language which foreigners give up; and in times of excitement, and even delirium, they are sure to come back. Paul, therefore, chose to call God his Father, in his own familiar tongue. Having used the one word, however, the Greek of course became necessary for those to whom he was writing.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 266] Haldane adds an interesting twist to the discussion: “It would rather appear that the Apostle alludes to the fact that among the Jews slaves were not allowed to call a free man Abba, which signified a real father.... [P]aul alluded to a law among the Jews which forbade slaves to call a free man *Abba*, or a free woman *Imma*. *The Apostle meant that we were no more slaves, but freed by Jesus Christ;* and consequently that we might call God *Abba*, as we call the Church *Imma*. In translating the passage, then, the word *Abba*, although it be a Syriac word, and unknown in our tongue, must always be preserved, for in this term consists the force of the Apostle’s reasoning.” [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 358]*

v 16 — “This verse is not connected syntactically to v. 15, but its function, clearly enough, is to explain how it is that ‘receiving the Spirit of adoption’ enables us to cry out ‘Abba, Father!’ The Holy Spirit is not only instrumental in making us God’s children; he also makes us aware that we are God’s children.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 503]

THE HOLY SPIRIT TESTIFYING WITH OUR HUMAN SPIRIT — “While the first occurrence of *pneuma* denotes the Holy Spirit, the second, modified as it is by ‘our,’ refers to the human ‘spirit.’ This is, then, the only occurrence of *pneuma* in Rom. 8 that does not refer to the Holy Spirit. Paul refers to the human spirit here because he wants to stress that the witness of ‘the Spirit himself’ about our adoption as sons affects the deepest and innermost part of our beings. It is because of this that we cry so sincerely and spontaneously, ‘Abba, Father!’ Indeed, taking the verb Paul uses here to mean ‘bear witness with,’ Paul involves our own spirit in the very process of testifying to us that we are ‘children of God.’ ... The verb is *συνμαρτυρέω* [summartureō], and the question is whether the *συν* [sun] that forms the prefix carries its usual sense of accompaniment — ‘bear witness *with*’ — or whether it has simply intensive force — ‘bears witness *to*’ (BAGD note first-century B.C. examples of the word with this meaning). The verb has this latter meaning in its only two other NT occurrences (see Rom 2:15 and 9:1), and many scholars naturally prefer this meaning. On the other hand, a papyrus document from the second century shows that the word was still used to mean ‘bear witness with,’ and this additional nuance makes excellent sense in a context where two ‘spirits’ are prominent. **God’s Spirit joins in bearing ‘joint’ witness with our spirit; see Gal 4:6, where the Holy Spirit is said to ‘cry, “Abba, Father,”**” **It may even be that Paul wants to add certainty to the situation by adducing more than one witness (cf. Deut 19:15 and the Roman law that required multiple witnesses for an adoption to be ‘legal.’)**” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 503f] **“There are two persons actually concerned: the believer, and the third trinitarian person. The latter co-witnesses with the former, and confirms the testimony of the believer’s consciousness. It is as if, when the believer says: ‘I am a child of God,’ the Holy Spirit made answer: ‘Thou art indeed a child.’ In this reference, Pareus quotes John 8:17: ‘The testimony of two men is true.’”** [Shedd, *Romans*, pg 248] In contrast to that, note Hodge’s comments re: “the Spirit witnessing *to* our spirits” : “*Bearth witness to*, means *confirms* or *assures*. ‘The Spirit of God produces in our spirit the assurance that we are the children of God.’ How this is done we cannot fully understand, any more than we can understand the mode in which he produces any other effect in our mind. The fact is clearly asserted here, as well as in other passages. See Romans 5:5, where the conviction that we are the objects of the love of God, is said to be produced ‘by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.’ See 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Ephesians 1:13, 4:30; and in 1 Corinthians 2:4, 5; 1 John 2:20, 27, and other passages, the conviction of the truth of the gospel is, in like manner attributed to the Holy Spirit. From this passage it is clear that there is a scriptural foundation for the assurance of salvation. Those who have filial feelings towards God, who love him, and believe that he loves them, and to whom the Spirit witnesses that they are the children of God, cannot doubt that they are indeed his children. And if children, they know they are heirs, as the apostle teaches in the following verse.” [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 267]

children of God — Paul makes a minor stylistic change in wording here, from the Greek word *huiοι θεου* (sons of God) to *tekna θεου* (children of God). Both terms are used to almost the same extent to describe Christians.

v 17 — if children then heirs — “This verse is transitional, connecting Paul’s description of the adoption as children that believer’s enjoy at the present time (vv. 14-16) with his moving portrait of the culmination and full benefits of that adoption that await the believer in the future (vv. 18-30). Paul uses the concept ‘inheritance’ to introduce his qualifications of our adoption in terms of its future aspects. In many ways this concept is a natural one; a child who has been adopted into a family, while truly a part of that family, does not (usually) receive all the benefits of that adoption until a later time. In both Gal 4:1-7 and in this text, Paul uses this idea to emphasize the necessarily incomplete nature of those privileges inherent in the believer’s adoption into God’s family. But there is a deeper, theological purpose behind Paul’s use of the ‘inheritance’ idea. While the concept of inheritance was well known in Roman law (and this background undoubtedly contributes to Paul’s use of the imagery), the language of inheritance is also very prominent in the OT and Judaism. In the OT, the ‘inheritance’ is particularly the land, promised to Abraham and his ‘seed,’ a promise that is renewed after the disaster of the Exile [compare, e.g., Gen 15:7 with 17:8; Deut 30:5; Num 34:2; with, e.g., Isa 60:21; Ezek 36:8-12]. In later Judaism, however, the ‘inheritance’ did not always maintain a distinctive spatial focus and came to be used to describe eschatological life. Paul follows in this line by awarding the ‘inheritance’ promised to Abraham to all those who have faith (see Rom 4:13-15). As he puts it in Galatians, it is Christ who is ‘the seed of Abraham’ and heir to all that has been promised to Abraham; thus, it is those who are ‘in Christ’ who also become the seed of Abraham and heirs of the promise (3:16-18, 29). All this informs Paul’s description of believers in this verse as both ‘children’ and ‘heirs.’ Christians are God’s people of the new age, ‘children of God,’ and, as such, also the recipients of what God has promised to his people.” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 504f]

heirs of God — “Christians are, then, ‘heirs of God’ — meaning probably not that Christians inherit God himself, that they inherit ‘what God has promised.’” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 505]

joint-heirs with Christ — “**In immediately adding ‘fellow heirs with Christ,’ Paul is not correcting the first description but filling it out by reminding us that Christians inherit the blessings of God’s kingdom only through, and in, Christ. We, ‘the sons of God,’ are such by virtue of our belonging to the Son of God; and we heirs of God only by virtue of our union with the one who is the heir of all God’s promises** (see Mark 12:1-12; Gal 3:18-19; Heb 1:2).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 505] “Roman law made all children, including adopted ones, equal heritors. Jewish law gave a double portion to the eldest son. The Roman law was naturally in Paul’s mind, and suits the context, where adoption is the basis of inheritance.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 92] “Christ is

the heir, as being the Son of God. All things that the Father hath are His; and, as Mediator, He is appointed 'heir of all things,' and they are joint heirs with Him. The inheritance to be possessed by them is the same in its nature as that possessed by the man Christ Jesus; and the glory that the Father gives to Him, He gives to them, John 18:22. They participate of the same Spirit with Him; for they that have not the Spirit of Christ are none of His. That same life that He has is conferred on them; and because He lives, they live also. He is the fountain of their life, Psalm 36:9. The glory of their bodies will be of the same kind with His, Philippians 3:21. The glory that the Father gave to Him, He has given to them, John 17:22. They shall be admitted to the same glorious place with Him, and shall behold His glory, John 17:24. There must be a conformity between the head and the members, but as to the degree, He who is the first-born among many brethren must in all things have the pre-eminence." [Haldane, Romans, pg 365f]

if so be that — "The conditional particle with the indicative mood assumes the fact. If so be, as is really the case." [Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol 3 pg 92]

suffer with him — "*Because we are one with Christ, we are his fellow-heirs, assured of being 'glorified with him.'* But, at the same time, this oneness means that we must follow Christ's own road to glory, 'suffering with him' (cf. also Phil 1:29; 3:10; 2 Cor 1:5). Both the present tense of the verb and the continuation of the thought in v. 18 show that this suffering is not identical to that 'dying with Christ' which takes place at conversion. Rather, the suffering Paul speaks of here refers to the daily anxieties, tensions, and persecutions that are the lot of those who follow the one who was 'reckoned with the transgressors' (Luke 22:37). Paul makes clear that this suffering is the condition for the inheritance; we will be 'glorified with' Christ (only) if [stating a real condition, with emphasis, perhaps, on the condition: 'if it is indeed true'] we 'suffer with him.' **Participation in Christ's glory can come only through participation in his suffering. What Paul is doing is setting forth an unbreakable 'law of the kingdom' according to which glory can come only by way of suffering. For the glory of the kingdom of God is attained only through participation in Christ, and belonging to Christ cannot but bring our participation in the sufferings of Christ. Just as, then, Christ has suffered and entered into his glory (1 Pet 1:11), so Christians, 'fellow heirs with Christ,' suffer during this present time in order to join Christ in glory.**" [Moo, *Romans*, pg 505f] "Suffering, then, is a peculiarity in the earthly lot of all the heirs of heaven; they are all called to suffer with Christ. The man professing Christ's religion, who meets with no persecution or opposition from the world for Christ's sake, may well doubt the sincerity of his profession. 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' All the heirs will come to the enjoyment of their inheritance through tribulation; most of them through much tribulation. But so far from this being an argument against the sure prospect of that inheritance, it tends to confirm it. The expression 'if so be,' or since, does not intimate that this is doubtful, but establishes its certainty. **God causes His children to suffer in different ways, and for different reasons, for their good, as for the trial of their faith, the exercise of patience, the mortification of sin, and in order to wean them from this world and prepare them for heaven. Their sufferings are effects of His Fatherly love; and the great object of them is, that they may be conformed to Christ. Sufferings are appointed for them in order that they should not be condemned with the world, and, to work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.**" [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 366]

that we may be glorified together — ἵνα [hina], "'in order that' we may be glorified together." "The [hina] that Paul uses to connect our suffering with Christ and our being glorified with him does not indicate the purpose we have in suffering with Christ but the objective goal, or outcome, of the sufferings as set forth by God." [Moo, *Romans*, pg 506] "We are said to suffer with Christ, [hina], in order that we may be glorified together. That is, the design of God in the affliction of his people, is not to satisfy the demands of justice, but to prepare them to participate in his glory. To creatures in a state of sin, suffering is the necessary condition of exaltation. It is the refining process through which they must pass, 1 Peter 1:6, 7. The union of believers with Christ, in suffering as well as in glory, is what he and his apostles taught them to expect. 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me,' Matthew 16:24; 'If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him,' 2 Timothy 2:11, 12. The blessedness of the future state is always represented as exalted; it is a glory, something that will elevate us in the rank of beings; enlarging, purifying, and ennobling all our faculties. To this state we are to attain 'through much tribulation,' i.e. attain it as Christ did. And this is what the apostle here intends to say, and not that the participation of Christ's glory is a reward for our having suffered with him." [Hodge, *Romans*, pg 268] "**This ought to support Christians under their sufferings. What a consolation in the midst of afflictions for Christ's sake, that they shall also be glorified together with Him! In His sufferings He is set forth as their pattern, and the issue of them is their encouragement. They have the honor of suffering with Him, and they shall have the honor of being glorified with Him. They not only accompany him in His sufferings, but He also accompanies them in theirs; not only to sympathize with them, but to be their surety and defender. This community in suffering with Jesus Christ is sufficient to impart to His people the highest consolation. What an honor is it to bear, here below, His cross, on the way to where one day they shall have a place upon His throne! Having the same enemies with Him, they must have the same combats, the same victories, and the same triumphs. Since the Lord has been pleased to suffer for them before reigning over them in heaven, it is proper that they should suffer also for His sake and in the prospect of reigning with Him. For suffering with Him, they shall overcome with Him; and overcoming with Him, they shall obtain the crown of life and eternal glory.**" [Haldane, *Romans*, pg 366f]