

# **“BY THE SPIRIT, SONS OF GOD, HEIRS WITH CHRIST.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church**

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**Scripture Texts: Romans 8:14-17**

## **Introduction.**

We are in the greatest chapter in the greatest book in the Bible. As part of your preparation for worship each week I urge you to read the whole chapter each week so you will constantly be refreshed by the context and the flow of Paul’s teaching.

Paul is talking about sanctification and because sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit Paul mentions the Holy Spirit over and over.

Each week as we work through Romans 8 Paul is leading us higher and higher into this refreshing and astonishing truth about who the Holy Spirit is and what He does.

A Christian is a person who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who enters in enabling us to repent and believe, it is the Holy Spirit who regenerates our cold, dead hearts, opens our blind eyes and deaf ears, who gives us spiritual awareness of spiritual things, transforming us into the image and likeness of Jesus.

How do you know if you are a child of God? Let’s be honest every Christian wrestles with that question. Everyone. We all have our highs and lows, our ups and downs, our times of questioning, doubting and wondering. So how can we have assurance?

**Romans 8:16** The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

How can we know that?

Back in verse 9 Paul said if you belong to Christ, if you trust in Jesus for your salvation then you will have the Spirit of God dwelling in you. How do you know if you have the Spirit of God dwelling in you? Last week Paul answered that saying:

**Romans 8:13** If by the Spirit you [are putting] to death the deeds of the body.

Do you get upset by what you hear on the news, by what is going on in our country, by the direction it is going, by our leaders and their sin? If you are only upset by other

people's sin, then you may not have the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit convicts us about our sin. The biggest issue you should have in your life should be you.

Do you see the log in your own eye, before you see the speck in someone else's eye? If so that is the Spirit at work. You can't do that without the Spirit.

That's sanctification, increasingly killing sin, hating sin, feeling remorse over what we do and don't do, fighting this war with our flesh, our carnal desires, our pride, our selfishness, our envy. When you sin you will notice it, your conscience will jab you, you will feel guilt or shame, you won't like it anymore.

Now Paul raises the bar even higher,

**He gives five more evidences or proofs we have the Holy Spirit.**

*First, we are being led by the Spirit of God.*

**8:14 All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.**

The Spirit is the grand influencer in our hearts and lives. When Jesus says:

**John 14:6** I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

It is the Holy Spirit who overcomes our rebellious hearts and changes our resistance into consent. It is the Spirit who changes our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. It is the Spirit who comes to enlighten us with understanding and guide us into the truth. The Spirit transforms and sanctifies us by the renewing of our minds proving to us what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

This is God at work, this is the hand of God, first loving, first acting, first leading us. The Spirit woe us

*Second, we are sons of God because the Spirit is the Spirit of adoption.*

Now Paul introduces something new, something he has not mentioned up till now.

Paul is writing to the church in Rome, a church full of believers, both men and women. And he refers to all of them as sons of God.

How does that strike all of you women? If you have been influenced by the spirit of our age, you might bristle at that. Or at least dismiss Paul as being woefully first century, he wouldn't say that if he was writing today.

If you think that you are misunderstanding what Paul is saying? Paul is not making a statement about ideology or culture or gender, he is making a theological statement. He is talking about sonship.

Notice the contrast between slaves and sons. If you have the Spirit of God, then you are no longer slaves, in bondage to the law, to the old ways, to the flesh, to fear of the wrath of God against all sin and unrighteousness.

God's adoption of every one of us was a special needs adoption. God did not choose us because we were cute and pink and all wrapped up in a nice white blanket. We were deformed by sin, we were in the gutter in the slums. Worse yet we were God's enemies, we hated God and wanted nothing to do with Him. We are the natural sons of Adam, meaning we are the "sons of disobedience" "by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Ephesians 2:2-3).

We all know how incredibly expensive adoption is, costing thousands of dollars and lots of prayers and patience. How do you make children of wrath into children of promise? It cost God the death of His only natural born Son to make us adopted sons. When God created us it only cost Him the speaking of a word and it was done. But when He came to adopt us it would come at the cost of life and blood.

**Galatians 4:4-7** God sent forth his Son, ... 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

"In the Roman world of the first century an adopted son was a son deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate; he was in no way inferior in status to a son born naturally" (F.F. Bruce).

The word son is a legal term that refers to a Christian's status and it includes both men and women. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ then theologically and spiritually speaking you are a son of God, because sons get the inheritance and you are heirs.

What a glorious blessing to be adopted into God's family and receive the permanent title of sons of God and now enjoy all the privileges, blessings, and inheritance rights as God's children. There is no higher position than to be adopted sons of God.

**I John 3:1** See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

***Third, the Spirit of adoption leads us to cry “Abba, Father!”***

Another evidence you have the Holy Spirit is you have a growing intimate connection with the Father and you call God your Father, you see yourself as His son, as His child.

Abba, Father. Jesus taught us and invited us to use the intimate language of Father when speaking to God. What an incredible blessing and privilege to be sons of God who can address God as Father, Abba, Father. No slave could ever use the word Abba.

People who don't pray to God as Father, don't know God and don't have His Spirit. The evidence of the Holy Spirit in your life will be seen in your prayer life and prayer language.

You won't just say your prayers, you won't just work through a quick grocery list of requests. You won't just see it as a duty, but as your lifeblood. Your prayers will grow in intimacy, in honesty, in heartfelt praise and petition, as a true son to a true father.

No formal, yes sir, no sir, like a slave. He gives us the change of heart to cry out “Abba, Father,”

This language is proof of the presence of the Spirit of adoption. You can't say abba, Father from your heart without the Spirit.

The word “cry” is meant to strike a deeper response in us, meant to call us to pray with an emotional depth, sincerity, and earnestness. This is a cry of humble dependence.

Are you a son? Are you a Christian? Do you have the Holy Spirit? This is your prayer. Ask God to give you His Spirit to enable you to pray from the heart. And be confident God hears because He has compassion and pity for His children. God delights in this prayer.

***Fourth, the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.***

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

We don't just have the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, we have the Spirit Himself, dwelling in our hearts.

Our spirit bears witness to the Holy Spirit when we are convinced and convicted of our sin, when we are convinced of the truth concerning Jesus, when we are drawn to righteousness and holiness, when we put our trust wholly in Christ, when we see our progress in the Gospel and sanctification.

The Spirit enlightens our understanding, opening our eyes to the truth.  
The Spirit sanctifies our wills, cleanses our conscience.  
The Spirit purifies our affections and desire.

Our spirit bears witness to the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. We can all attest to times when we have a greater sense of the Spirit's presence, power, prayer, peace.

***Finally, the Spirit bears witness that we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.***

Children are heirs of their parent's possessions. This is a law of nature.

By virtue of our sonship, by our being children of God, we are granted and guaranteed the right to be heirs of a very great, eternal inheritance, for more and far better than any inheritance on earth.

**Ephesians 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places

**I Peter 1:3-4** ... to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

We are heirs according to the promise of God and heirs of His promise, heirs of salvation, of eternal life, heirs of the kingdom of God. All that belongs to Christ, belongs to us.

So stop worrying about your stuff or your retirement. Relax and focus on what life is really about—God and His glory, of which we are heirs, and the weight of which far outweighs all of life's troubles.

Most of all we are heirs of God Himself, and joint heirs with Christ.

Not just heirs, but fellow heirs, co-heirs, joint heirs, meaning we will receive all that He receives, "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:3).

The glory He has received from the Father, He gives to us.

In this life our inheritance is His grace, in the life to come it is His glory. And a glorified body utterly free from every sin, temptation, idolatry, evil thoughts, sinful desires, completely free from sin and all its effects.

**I Corinthians 15:43** It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.

### **Implications and application.**

The Spirit longs to assure you of His presence in your life and of your position in Christ. If you are in Christ, then you have the Holy Spirit, and if you have the Holy Spirit then you are being convicted of sin and enabled to be continually putting sin to death. By the Spirit you are legally adopted to be full sons of God with every right and privilege, to have Him as your Father. You belong to His family, and you have access in intimate prayer to call Him Abba, Father, and to be heirs with Christ to the greatest inheritance you could ever receive.

**I John 3:1** See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

**Prayer:** Our Holy Father in heaven, send your Spirit upon us we pray. Don't leave us without this gift. For without your Spirit we are orphans on the streets of this world, we are lost, alone, hopeless, helpless. Pour out your Spirit here. Empower us to know how long and wide and high and deep is your love for us. Enlighten us that we might know in this life how great is our glorious. Come Holy Spirit, make us to be true children of God for His glory and for His namesakes. We ask this in the name of the true Son of God, Jesus Himself, Amen.