

## **“THE SPIRIT ENABLES US TO SAY FATHER.”**

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**Scripture Text: Romans 8:11-17**

### **Introduction.**

What is Father's Day? Father's Day is that day when children pay particular attention to their father, and devote a little extra time, share a gift, share some meaningful words, express some gratitude. It's a day of praise, honor, and memories.

There's a sense in which every Sunday is a Father's Day. That day when children gather to express praise, gratitude and honor, to show appreciation and share some meaningful words directed to our heavenly Father.

### **The Fatherhood of God.**

J.I. Packer in his wonderful classic book, *Knowing God*, makes a rather bold claim. He says that the NT is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. As Yahweh was the OT Jewish name for God, Father is the NT Christian name for God. We don't get the NT if we don't understand God as Father.

God is a Father only to those who have the Spirit of His Son. The Spirit is the Spirit of adoption and sonship, if we have the Spirit we are sons of the Father. And please understand that Scripture uses the word sons and brothers in the inclusive sense just as they are also used in the English language.

Every time I read I John 3:1 I find myself pausing just to drink it in, just to let the truth of it settle over my soul. It's not a verse that should be rushed over or taken for granted or taken lightly.

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

### **Romans 8:11-17.**

Before we can talk about the *gifts* of the Holy Spirit we need to talk about the *gift* of the Holy Spirit, this mysterious gift of the presence and person of God generously given by God to all who repent and believe in His Son.

Before we can receive the *gifts* of the Holy Spirit we have to have the *gift* of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts won't make sense apart from the Spirit. The unspiritual cannot understand spiritual things.

With the gift of God's Holy Spirit believers receive many wonderful benefits and privileges, two of which are seen in our text, *life and adoption*.

### *The Spirit is the Spirit of life and The Spirit of Adoption.*

Jesus promised in John 14:18 that He would not leave us as orphans, but that after He left He would send us a helper and a comforter to be with us forever to give us life and to give us a place in the family of God.

This adoption is particularly remarkable when you consider we are a special needs adoption. When a couple decides to adopt a baby it's a huge step, but it's a quantum leap when they decide they will take a special needs baby.

God's adoption of every one of us was a very special needs adoption. We were deformed by sin, diseased by immorality, blotched by the leprosy of rebellion. God did not choose us because we were cute and pink and all wrapped up in a nice white blanket. 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" (Ephesians 2:2) "by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Ephesians 2:3). But God in His great and infinite mercy had compassion on us and chose us and adopted us. God adopts His enemies.

In fact, if we can play this analogy to human adoption out further, we were beyond a special needs adoption. God adopted us while we were dead. No one adopts dead babies, but God does because His Spirit of adoption is also the Spirit of life. The Spirit is the breath of God able to breathe life into our dead mortal bodies. We owe our lives to the Holy Spirit.

Parents who adopt have to jump through all kinds of hoops, tons of paper work, thousands of dollars and all kinds of requirements. God had to raise us from the dead first. God overcame every obstacle to give us life and to adopt us.

**Ezekiel 36:26** I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

If we remain in the flesh and live according to our flesh and our fleshly desires we are dead. But if we have the Spirit the old nature and the old man is put to death, the deeds of the body are put to death and we have life. The Spirit gives life to our bodies and souls by killing what kills us, our sin.

When Scripture talks about life it doesn't talk about eating right or exercising more or getting your sleep. It talks about sin and holiness. The only way to live is to kill sin.

**I Timothy 4:8** while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

Notice what Romans 8:13 says and how carefully it says it.

It doesn't say:

**Romans 8:13** if ... you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

It says:

**Romans 8:13** if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

There is no other way to kill sin, to gain victory over our indwelling sin. It is a work that can only be accomplished in dependency and reliance on the Holy Spirit.

So why must we work at it if only He is able to do it?

Because all His works and all His means are in us. Just as the Spirit is the Spirit of supplication and prayer, so He stirs our hearts to pray. He works in us to do the will of God by stirring our hearts to obedience.

He works in us to hate sin and stirs our hearts to put it to death by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Be killing sin or it will be killing us. If we love life and want to keep our life then we must hate our sin. Let us strive in the power and grace of the Spirit to be constantly killing our indwelling sin.

The Spirit's work is to point us to Jesus and to the glory of the Father. The Spirit doesn't point to Himself. The Spirit is constantly at work conforming us into the image and likeness of the Son, so that there is increasingly seen in us a family resemblance to the Father.

One of the biggest stumbling blocks with understanding the Holy Spirit is the whole thing of having some kind of supernatural experience of the Spirit. Many Christians feel like they are missing out on something that the charismatics and Pentecostals have. They want the supernatural buzz from a second experience or the baptism of the Holy Ghost or speaking in tongues. And then when they get it after a while they are back to feeling like there must be something more.

The problem with this is it makes the Holy Spirit to be like a fix of some mind altering drug or some strong alcohol.

The real work of the Spirit is to bring us into fellowship and communion with our heavenly Father. A huge part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to make us increasingly aware of and clear about our family relationship with God in Christ.

It is like what King David did to Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was Jonathan's son, he belonged to the enemy dynasty, he was crippled and lame, he was an outcast and David because of a covenant oath adopted him and invited him into the palace and to eat at his table with his sons.

The Spirit makes us more aware of what it means to be invited to the table of His Son and to sit with Him at His family table as one of His own children.

*The Spirit bearing witness with our Spirit that we are children of God.*

Why does the Holy Spirit continually bear witness with our spirits that we are children of God? Because adopted children need repeated assurance that they belong. God as a perfect parent goes out of His way to remind us and make us feel His love and security.

Our Father wants us to know how much He loves us, He wants us to know how secure we are in His family. We may act like *prodigal sons*, but He always acts like the prodigal's father.

The evidence of our adoption is when we fall we hate it and we long to return to Him. Even when our love wanes and fluctuates and fails, if our soul keeps reaching out to God then that's the Spirit of adoption testifying and leading and drawing us to our Father.

The source of our assurance is always the Spirit, and not our works or our goodness.

The source of our assurance is the promise of God that whoever believes on the Son has eternal life (John 3:36).

The source of our assurance is the fruit of our lives that shows the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

The source of our assurance is the deep inner witness in our spirits of the Holy Spirit's enabling us to say "Abba, Father."

Our having the Spirit of adoption is the grounds for our assurance, that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

That's why the Lord's Table is not a reminder of how bad we are but a reminder of the gift of our adoption and of our assurance that God is our Father because of the blood of the new covenant in Jesus.

When we stumble and fall, when the storms and waves overwhelm us, when Satan mocks us and condemns us we can answer, "Satan, get thee behind me. Yes, I am weak, yes, I have fallen again, but I have an oath and a promise from God based on His holiness, based on His satisfaction with His Son's righteousness and obedience, based on His finished perfect work. I have His Holy Spirit. God is my Father, heaven is my home and Jesus is my Redeemer and I know this because the Spirit of Truth has revealed it to me and I desire by His help to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh."

The Spirit of adoption makes us children, assures us of the Father's love and forgiveness, and guarantees our inheritance. Can you imagine what it means to be a child of the owner of the universe? It's way better than being a child of Bill Gates or Warren Buffet or Mark Zuckerberg. No Christian should ever fight over any earthly inheritance, that's like fighting over a piggy bank full of pennies.

**Ephesians 1:13-14** ... the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

So when we come to talk about gifts remember that the purpose of the gifts are for the benefit of the whole body, to conform us all to the image and likeness of Christ; to increase our love for each other in the family of Christ; and for maintaining the family honor and the family name, mainly in bringing all glory and honor to Christ.

### **Application and conclusion.**

Let me conclude with a Father's Day application. All human fatherhood should be a reflection of God's Fatherhood. No human fatherhood is perfect but all human fatherhood to varying degrees reflects God's Fatherhood.

So human fathers should take responsibility for their families the way God takes care of His children.

Human fathers should lay down their lives for their families and sacrifice for their families the way God does.

Human fathers should love their families the way God does.

Human fathers should live in such a way that his children can see something of what God is like.

Human fathers should not be absent or neglectful, but be available to their children the way God is.

Children should see in their fathers the combinations of characteristics that God has:

Strength and tenderness, wisdom and patience, example and instruction; wrath and mercy, not sinful human wrath but godly wrath that disciplines sin and folly without crushing or destroying the spirit.

To the extent that our human fathers failed us, and to the extent that those of us who are fathers have failed in this, the sadness of that failure is swallowed up by the perfect Fatherhood. God's love for us covers a vast multitude of sins against us and vast multitude of sins committed by us.

And for all who feel inadequate to be compared to the Fatherhood of God or feel they have fallen far short of the mark, know that what we are talking about is not possible without the Holy Spirit and is possible only in and through the Holy Spirit.

Fathers, as I say these words to you this morning, I feel the weight of my shortcomings and failures. I so want my sons to know the character and nature of God, I so want them to know what it is like to be a children of God and I have put up more hurdles and stumbling blocks, than I have paved the path and made it smoother.

I cast myself on the mercy of God and ask Him for more grace and more enabling strength and courage and wisdom from His Holy Spirit. I am a debtor to His help and mercy.

I find myself praying that my sons will see my bad example and not despise God but turn to God as their perfect heavenly Father.

We live in a world that hates the Father and the Son Jesus.

We live in a world that crucified Jesus and continues to crucify Him every day.

We live in a world that uses the name of God and Jesus as a curse word.

We live in a world that mocks those who believe in Him and follow Him.

Raise your children to love Jesus and resist the world.

Raise your children to resist the lies, to hate sin, to be not conformed to this world, but transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Raise your children to love their heavenly Father more than they love their earthly Father.

Raise your children to depend on the Holy Spirit and to love His adoption as His best gift.

Raise your children to say, "I am a child of God, I have the Spirit of adoption. God is my Father, heaven is my true home and inheritance, Christ is my elder brother, and every Christian is my brother and sister."

**Prayer:** Our Father in heaven, we acknowledge that we are weak vessels, earthen vessels. We have feet of clay, hearts that are prone to wander, wills that waver. We call on you. Renew our walk with Jesus this week that we might bear a more striking resemblance to Him. Lord give us the desire to want to be more like Jesus and less like the people we find ourselves imitating.