

- I. Introduction (1:1-17)
- II. Credenda: "The Righteous by Faith" Shall Live (1:18-11:36)
 - A. No justification by our own righteousness (1:18-3:20)
 - B. Justification by Faith Alone in Christ Alone (3:21-4:25)
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 - 6:1-7:25 Answering questions. *Since the law cannot justify...*
 - 6:1-14 *Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*
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 - 7:7-12 *Is the law sin?*
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The Spirit of Adoption

Romans, Part XXXVIII

Romans 8:12-18

Stuart W. Bryan

I. The Universality of Adoption

Jesus is God's *only-begotten Son* who is *homoousios* with the Father. Yet so great was His love for us that He took on our flesh that we might become sons of God by adoption.

- *Eph 1:5 – Predestined unto adoption as sons*
- *Gal 4:4-5 – Redeemed for the adoption as sons.*
- *Rom 8:17 – Received the Spirit of adoption that we might cry out, "Abba, Father."*

¹*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (1 Jn 3:1)*

II. The Spirit of Adoption

Romans 8:12–17

¹²*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

A. Led by the Spirit of God (12-14)

To be *led by the Spirit of God* is to pursue holiness and sanctification; it is to *put to death the deeds of the body* and so reflect the glory of God. Those whom God has adopted as His children begin to reflect His character.

B. The Spirit of Adoption (15 cf. 5:5; Jn 1:12-13)

Yet we do this not out of slavish fear, some type of legal obedience that fears God's wrath, but out of love for our adoptive Father. If we are in Christ, we no longer relate to God as our Judge but as *our loving Father*. So Paul writes in Romans 5:5 that "*the _____ of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*" So what does that mean? On the one hand, the Spirit assures us of *God's love for us*. On the other hand, the Spirit generates *our love to God* (*contra* 8:7)

C. The Witness of the Spirit (16-18)

The Spirit assures us by His presence that we are *children of God*. And, *if we are God's children*, then we are God's *heirs, joint heirs with Christ*. Even as Christ has been enthroned on high and vindicated as God's Son, receiving "*the nations as His inheritance and the ends of the earth as His possession*" (Ps 2:8), so all those who believe in Christ shall likewise be enthroned and vindicated. "*The meek shall inherit the _____*" (Mt 5:5). In short, Paul assures us again that *all those whom God justifies, He will most certainly glorify*.

III. Some Privileges of Adoption

A. Sanctification by the Spirit (14 cf. 1 Jn 3:7-10; 5:1-4)

First, one of the privileges of being adopted as God's children is that we are _____ by the Spirit of God. God's children reflect God's character. The Apostle John writes:

⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. ⁸He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. ¹⁰In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

B. Assurance of Sonship (15-16 cf. Ps 103:13f; Mk 14:35f; Jn 5:20; 15:9f; 16:26f)

Our adoption assures us that God's attitude toward us is one of love and affection. J.I. Packer explains the glory of adoption by comparing it with justification:

"_____ is a forensic idea, conceived in terms of law, and viewing God as judge. In justification, God declares of penitent believers that they are not, and never will be, liable to the death that their sins deserve, because Jesus Christ, their substitute and sacrifice, tasted death in their place on the cross... _____ is a family idea, conceived in terms of love, and viewing God as father. In adoption, God takes us into His family and fellowship, and establishes us as His children and heirs. Closeness, affection, and generosity are at the heart of the relationship. To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the father is a greater" (187-88).

It is our identity as God's children that enables us to overcome fear and worry:

²⁵"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?... ³¹"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

The way we fight worry is to revel in our Heavenly Father's love for us:

²⁶In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; ²⁷for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.

C. Assurance of Glory (16-17 cf. 8:23, 35; Jn 6:39-40; Heb 2:10; 12:5ff)

All those whom the Father justifies, He shall most certainly glorify. But the pathway to this glory leads through _____ (Heb 2:10). Sufferings include both the hardships that come from living in a fallen world as well as the opposition that comes from living for God among a people who hate Him (cf. 8:35). The Spirit assures us *"that He who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus"* (Phil 1:6).

IV. Conclusion

All those that are justified, God vouchsafes, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption: by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God; have his name put upon them, receive the Spirit of adoption; have access to the throne of grace with boldness; are enabled to cry, Abba, Father; are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him as by a father; yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation. (WCF, Chapter 12)