

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT: Spiritually Secure

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Romans 8:12-17¹

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True Children of God

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons [and daughters] of God."

"Our lives are now the festive evening before the feast."

[Franzmann, *Romans*, 146]

Introduction

"Citizenship Undetermined." Having to clear up a matter with Social Security recently, imagine my surprise when the man helping me indicated this is how I had been classified. As I was born on a U.S. Army installation in France, someone somewhere apparently forgot to check a box, despite the fact that: 1) I have a valid birth certificate that says otherwise, 2) I've also been issued a Passport; and 3) the Department of the Treasury has been systematically cashing those quarterly tax payments I send just fine! So, what exactly does one have to do to be a citizens of this country?

No such proof is needed in the kingdom of our Lord's grace!

Main Thought:

The notion that we are children of God – His own sons and daughters ... is "the mainspring of Christian living." Yes, our adoption as the daughters and sons of God is "the apex of creation and the goal of [our] redemption."

[Ferguson, *Children of the Living God*, 5-6]

Therefore, let the Pentecost people of God rejoice to be who the Holy Spirit declares us to be – true *"children of God"* – leaving us to live out our high and holy calling to the praise of His glorious grace.

TRUE CHILDREN OF GOD LIVE AS TRUE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Amen.

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¹ Other potential "series": Heirs with Christ ... No Obligation ... A New Designation

"[So] if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." [Romans 8:11]

When we left off last Sunday, we did so with that life-altering promise ringing in our ears. Wherein, the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is the same One who now inhabits God's people by faith. It is this promise that inseparably links us to the Lord of Life – Father, Son & Holy Spirit!

Where, with that in-dwelling of Christ and the Spirit, we become: DEBTORS

¹² ***So then*** [on the basis of the previous promise], *brothers, we are debtors* [not in the sense we "owe" God to work off our debt to Him, but that in being set free from sin and death, we now seek to return thanks to Him by offering Him our very lives], ***not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.***

¹³ *For 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.*²

Let there be no doubt. Your forgiveness is full and free. Where, God's grace in sending His Son: first, humbles us and convicts us of our sin ... then, it gives us a song in the night ... emboldens our witness to the hope of Christ ... seeks growth in the fruit of the Spirit.

Not unlike in 2018, when a blind man fell onto the subway tracks in Toronto. What could have been a tragedy, turned into a story of heroism—when two men jumped down and pulled the man to safety. The most amazing part of the story? The "heroes" are unknown—acting not out of a desire for attention but out of good will ("Unknown 'Hero' Helps Man Who Fell on Toronto Subway Tracks," *BBC*, June 29, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-44664259>). Such is our "debt." Where, with the old "obligation" satisfied on Calvary's cross, our new obligation becomes one of joy. Living that new life in Christ because of the profound debt of His grace and mercy now becomes a source of pleasure. We wouldn't want it any other way. [Sermon Studies on the Epistles (A), 149]

² For an in depth study of "flesh" see Schuessler, *CPR* 3:2, 22

Wherein, what else do Christ's/Spirit's indwelling make us? CHILDREN³

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons [and daughters] of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons [children], by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

"Adoption is [at its essence] an act of grace." [Pogue, *Feasting on the Word (A)*, 3:257] Just ask most folks who have been adopted.

Where, Tim Keller, in his commentary on Romans notes that when one was adopted in Roman times, several things were set into motion: 1) old debts and legal obligations were paid; 2) a new name was given bringing about full rights as an heir; 3) the father instantly became liable for all actions of his new son/daughter, and; 4) that child now had a new obligation to honor and please his father. [*Romans 8-16 for You*, 25]

Child of God, this is us! Wherein by this blest distinction of being God's sons and daughters, we come, first, to rejoice that our place in this world is valued. Redeemed and forgiven, we *are* the children of God!

Second, our filial relationship to God is a powerful antidote to a world that does its best to diminish that calling. Yes, to this world you're a number, a consumer, even a commodity. To this world you are expendable, especially if you are deemed "defective" in some way. To this world you are of less value than a sequoia or a spotted owl. Even in death – as with that bizarre case of missing body parts at Harvard – you're worth more dead than alive!

But this is *not* who you are. Sure, although we be oppressed with anguish and terror on every side, and seemingly forsaken and utterly cast off, we are God's child. And what is He to you? Your Father in Christ! "You are beloved because of the Beloved. [Luther, Galatians 4:6, Middleton's translation]

³ "No whit inferior in status to a son born in the ordinary course of nature, and might well enjoy the father's affection more fully and reproduce the father's character more worthily." [Bruce, 166]

Where, if that isn't enough, to be grateful debtors and beloved children – by means of the Spirit's indwelling – you are also: HEIRS

¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

My parents were of modest means. Though I lacked for nothing, my inheritance upon their death was paltry in comparison to what others my age have received. But, like you, I possess a legacy far greater than anything of this world. Where, there is practically not a day that goes by that I don't raise a prayer of gratitude to God for such a high and holy distinction.

So might we all. Especially during those times when we are laid low by our sin, and plagued by Satan, where even the strongest Christian at times is prone to wonder about, and may even be heard expressing uncertainty that we truly possess *"every spiritual blessing"* [Ephesians 1:3-4]!

Where, children – young or old – need support and security. And we have it. Each Sunday we venture back to this Eden. Yes, "it is not a matter of feeling close to God or feeling far from God that makes a person a child of God or an outcast from God's family. It is faith worked and strengthened by the Spirit through the Word [and through the Sacraments]. If anyone has doubts about his/her faith, let [them] return to God's Word where the Holy Spirit will make [us] secure." [*Sermon Studies on the Epistles (A)*, 151]

Therefore ... DEBTOR ... CHILD OF GOD ... HEIR:

† Live out of your worth – to the fullest ... according to the Spirit ... out of grace ... according to His "law of love" ... generous ... compassionate ... kind ... for which there is no law.

"The obligation that we are under is not an obligation under the Law to do something in order that we may become something or because we owe God something. Our obligation is simply to be what God has made us."
[Adams, CJ, January 2002, 98]

† Continually seek to be Spirit “led” ... growing up/in/out of your Baptism, your pilgrimage to His Table, your time spent in His Word and in prayer.

Is it too small of a vision for this Pastor that each and every one of you would be in Bible Study at least once a week? Or that – in these dog days of summer – we would flock to the Lord’s house to be fed? Is it too small of a vision that instead of seeking what we get out of it, that the Spirit-filled child of God would willingly share his/her gifts according to the measure given you by the Spirit?

† Yes, revel and rejoice in who and whose we are in Christ ... applying the Gospel to every thought, word and deed!

Preach grace to yourself ... to others. Where, if we regularly recall what our Father in Christ has done for us, we will to embrace our indebtedness, we will cherish our childhood in grace, and in grateful response to all we’ve inherited, we will strive to serve and know him more. [Adapted from Keller, 23]

Conclusion

As to your Social Security, it’s set to be bankrupt by 2035! Where, all systems of security invented by men will always be uncertain. But we have “Spirit-Security” ... security that needs no IRA supplements, for our security is assured by each Christian’s “*Individual Redemption Account*,” purchased and won by Christ on the cross and given to each of us by the Holy Spirit. “It’s a security given not only for this life, but also the next.” [*SSoE*, 153]

Yes, rejoice to be a debtor, a child and an heir. Rejoice to be who the Holy Spirit declares you to be – leading us to live up, in and out that high and holy distinction to the praise of His glorious grace.

TRUE CHILDREN OF GOD LIVE AS TRUE CHILDREN OF GOD.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Bible Study:

OPEN:

1. What do you appreciate most about being the son or daughter of your mom or dad?

Read Romans 8: (1-11 by way of review), 12-17.

[NOTE: regarding *who* raised Jesus from the dead – it is a Trinitarian work: “The Father raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24). Jesus caused himself to be raised again (John 10:18). And the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead (v. 11). This is the unity of the outward working of the Trinity, even as it will be in the resurrection on the Last Day (John 5:21; 6:54; Romans 8:11).” (Koch, *CPR*, 12:2, 23)]

2. Having established that there is “*no condemnation*” for those who are in Christ Jesus, Paul speaks in v. 12 of the Christian’s “obligation” or “debt.” To what or whom is a Christian no longer obligated? To what whom, however, is there a debt owed?

[“The obligation that we are under is not an obligation under the Law to do something in order that we may become something or because we owe God something. Our obligation is simply to be what God has made us.” (Adams, *CJ*, January 2002, 98)]

3. In your own words what are the positive aspects of such a debt?

[Our debt to God for sending His Son as our Savior, 1) humbles us and convicts us of sin, 2) grants us faith to believe, 3) gives us a song in the night, 4) empowers our witness to the hope of Christ, 5) continues to form and shape the character of Christ in us, 6) cultivates the growth of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, 7) assures us in prayer, etc.]

4. If we are not set right with God by doing good works, what is the motive for changing our lives?

[It is simply to revel in the joy of being children of God ... “to live in the freedom of the grace of God, to be His children, and to look forward with joy in anticipation of the day when we will receive the full inheritance that is ours through Jesus Christ.” (Adams, *CJ*, January 2002, 100)]

5. Following Paul's argument in v. 13, how does one practically "*put to death the deeds of the body*?"

[FIRST, the word "put to death" in the Greek is a "ruthless, full-hearted resistance to sinful practice ... violent and total." (Keller, 22, READ "It means to reject ... This is war!")]

[SECOND, and more important, we revel in who and whose we are in Christ ... applying the Gospel to every thought, word and deed! We "preach grace to our minds." (23) ... meaning that "if we remember what Christ has done and will do for us, we will feel the obligations of love and gratitude to serve and know him." (See pp. 22-23)!]

[In summary, then, ruthlessly putting to death and turning away from sinful practices, we turn our hearts towards the things of God "by minding the things of God." (23) (See also Keller's observation & questions, pp. 23-24!!!)]

How does the Holy Spirit help us in this?

6. What, if any, sin are you "playing games with" instead of seeking to mortify it? What is the Spirit's holy remedy?

[Run, all the while recalling that you are no longer a slave but a son/daughter of God!]

7. How would you describe the differences between being a "slave" v. a "son" [child] of God?

[See Keller, 34]

8. What does this mean for day-to-day living as God's children [vv. 15-17]?

[There is incredible certainty to this life – and the next; we can speak with God on incredibly intimate terms; we are led by the Spirit to walk with Him; we get to inherit the full riches of Christ]

REFLECT:

9. With that assurance of our adoption as the children of God, as well as the assurances of the above vv., how does your life as God's child now look with regards to your past? Your present? Your future?
10. How might you preach some grace to yourself this week?

[Friday E-mail:] In his book *Run with Horses: The Quest for Life at Its Best*, Eugene Peterson reminds us of many of the ways in which modern life de-personalizes and degrades us. We become a number and not a name. We are valued for what we do not who we are.

Peterson writes:

"If I am frequently and authoritatively treated impersonally, I begin to think of myself the same way. I consider myself in terms of how I fit into the statistical norms; I evaluate myself in terms of my usefulness; I assess my worth in response to how much others want me or don't want me. In the process of going along with such procedures I find myself defined by a label, squeezed into a role, functioning at the level of my social security number."

However, Peterson writes, "No one can assess my significance by looking at the work that I do. No one can determine my worth by deciding the salary they will pay me. No one can know what is going on in my mind by examining my school transcripts. No one can know me by measuring me or weighing me or analyzing me." Why? I have a name! I have a name. "Call my name." Call me by that name.

What is that name? In the second of my sermon series entitled "Life in the Spirit," St. Paul brings us to it in **Romans 8:12-17**. Not to give the answer away, you might read it, and ponder it in preparation for this Sunday's message. In fact, upon reading it, you will note that not only are we given one name, one distinction, but no less than three (or possibly more)!

Where, "identity drives motivation, motivation drives action and action drives results" says Dave Lomas in *The Truest Thing about You [Identity, desire, and Why It all Matters]*. Yes, "Every action we take in life has a sense of identity behind it. How we see ourselves matters."

Child of God, how do you see yourself? To what are you called – to do, to be? "Call my name. Call my name. Remind me who I am in You, O Lord, and then, set me free to be and to do Your will." SYOS