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**Children of God**

**Romans 8.14-17**

**Series: The Pure Gospel**

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**The Village Church**

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I. **Family Resemblance**

- A. This is a picture of my family along with my brother a number of years ago
  - 1. The occasion is the internment of my father in the little church cemetery where we grew up
    - a. So Jean and I are there, along with Matt and Kate
    - b. And that man on the left of the picture is my brother, Steve
- B. You will notice that my brother doesn't really look anything like me!
  - 1. I have always been blond with a fair complexion
    - a. But Steve is as dark as I am light
  - 2. And that led to a lot of interesting conversations when we were growing up
  - 3. Like, "Which one of you is adopted?"
    - a. The answer is, neither
  - 4. Or, "What did the mailman look like?"
    - a. Don't even go there...
- C. Truth be told, we can account for the family resemblance in both our cases
  - 1. It's just that I favored the Hawkins side of the family
    - a. I resemble my father
  - 2. And Steve favored the Griffin side of the family – my mother's side
    - a. He took after our mother
  - 3. So all the speculation about our parentage was a waste of time
- D. But when we assess the family resemblance of us humans, we often rely on those superficial physical characteristics
  - 1. Like hair color
    - a. Body type
    - b. Facial characteristics
    - c. Height
    - d. Eye color
    - e. And so forth
  - 2. There are occasions where you look at someone, and look at their parents, and say, "Well, you can't deny her!"
  - 3. Or other occasions, like my brother and me, where you wonder about the family resemblance
- E. So how to we assess the family resemblance of a believer in Jesus to the family of God?

1. Well, we obviously can't do it the same way as we do with the human family
    - a. There are light haired and dark haired folks who belong to God's family
    - b. There are blue-eyed, brown-eyed, and green-eyed people who are in God's household
    - c. There are every conceivable skin color and race of people who are in God's family
    - d. And of course, there are male and female members of God's family
  2. So how do we know who belongs?
    - a. How can we tell who our brothers and sisters are who call God Father?
- F. Well, the 8<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Romans helps us answer those questions
1. And the answer serves to provide us with great assurance
    - a. Leading us to confirm our relationship with God the Father
  2. And the answer has a lot to do with how the Holy Spirit engages with believers
  3. For the in final analysis, it's not how we look on the outside – our physical characteristics – that confirms that we belong to God
    - a. It's how we look on the inside
    - b. Through the indwelling of the Spirit of God
- G. In this portion of Romans 8 we have learned that the distinguishing characteristic that sets apart the believer from the unbeliever is the work of the Spirit of God
1. **Romans 8:9** (ESV) —
    - a. 9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit,
    - b. if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.
    - c. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.
  2. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ
    - a. So that our family resemblance means that we bear in some significant measure the qualities and characteristics of Jesus
- H. And our life will increasingly take on those characteristics of Jesus
1. We will live more and more according to the Spirit of Christ
    - a. And live less and less according to the flesh, our sinful nature
  2. **Romans 8:5** (ESV) —
    - a. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh,
    - b. but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.
- I. Our text this morning provides four main ways we can recognize our family resemblance
1. And they are sources of great assurance for us as we consider the degree to which we can resonate with each of these experiences
- J. **Romans 8:14–17** (ESV) —
1. 14 **For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.**

2. 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, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”
3. 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,
4. 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.

## II. The Spirit’s Leading

- A. The first thing we see in this text is that those who belong to the family of God are those who are led by the Spirit
- B. Romans 8:14 (ESV) —
  1. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
- C. So the question is, are you led by the Spirit of God?
  1. Well, that raises another question
    - a. How does the Spirit of God lead the sons of God?
  2. There are a number of ways the Spirit of God leads the sons of God
- D. Now we may recognize that God sometimes moves in mysterious ways (as the William Cowper hymn suggests)
  1. Some people want the Spirit of God to write what we ought to do in lipstick on the mirror in the bathroom
    - a. But most who wait for such a revelation will likely be disappointed
  2. Others seek a particular kind of feeling about a decision
    - a. Both those feelings can be deceiving, and rooted in complex motivations and expectations
  3. At the same time, we know God does things in remarkable ways
- E. Augustine was converted by children playing, and as they played they sang a little kids ditty: *Tole lege* – which means “Take, read”
  1. Augustine found a Bible, turned to a random passage
    - a. His eyes fell on Romans 13.14
  2. Romans 13:14 (ESV) —
    - a. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.
  3. As one who had committed himself to fulfilling the desires of his flesh, he was convicted of sin
    - a. And it led to his turning his life over to Jesus Christ
- F. Maybe you’ve done that
  1. Opened up your Bible and found a verse that was meaningful to you, and that helped you make a decision
    - a. And God was gracious to you – and it all worked out for His glory
  2. But ordinarily that’s not the way God’s Spirit works to lead His people
- G. The way God’s Spirit ordinarily leads His people is by sanctification
  1. By the process of forming the human personality into the image of Jesus

- a. And as that process takes place, we find ourselves making decisions that are consistent with the mind of Christ
- H. Here's how it works
  - 1. We've already seen the centrality of the mind in those who are led by the Spirit of God
  - 2. **Romans 8:5** (ESV) — 5 ... those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.
- I. So let's begin with the mind
  - 1. **Romans 12:2** (ESV) —
    - a. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,
    - b. that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
  - 2. So the Spirit of God works by renewing the mind
  - 3. How is the mind of the believer renewed?
    - a. Well, that's pretty clear, isn't it?
    - b. It's by the Bible – the Word of God
    - c. The author of the Word of God is the Spirit of God
  - 4. **Mark 12:36** (ESV) —
    - a. 36 David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, “ ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.” ’
    - b. So Psalm 110 is said to have the Holy Spirit as the author
  - 5. **2 Peter 1:20–21** (ESV) —
    - a. 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.
    - b. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
  - 6. So the primary way the mind is renewed is by the Word of God
    - a. It's how the Spirit of God speaks!
  - 7. Many of you may want to say, I wish God would speak to me in an audible voice – then I will believe Him and follow Him!
    - a. He can – just read the Bible out loud!
  - 8. So the Spirit leads by renewing the mind
    - a. And it is by immersing ourselves in the scriptures that the Spirit leads us
    - b. That's why we have Study with the Pastor
    - c. That's why we go to Bible studies
    - d. That's why our CLS classes focus on the Bible
- J. Well, there's not only the mind through which the Spirit leads, there are the emotions
  - 1. And the Holy Spirit works to stir our hearts – the seat of our emotions
    - a. He works in us to create new affections
    - b. We used to hate God as unbelievers – or at least keep God at arm's length

- c. But now, through the Spirit of God, we begin to have a love for God and His ways
    - d. A longing for God
    - e. And we treasure our fellowship with Him
  - 2. We resonate with the psalmists who so frequently display God-centered emotions
  - 3. **Psalm 42:1–4 (ESV)** —
    - a. 1 As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.
    - b. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?
    - c. 3 My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?”
    - d. 4 These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.
  - 4. **Psalm 119:97 (ESV)** —
    - a. 97 Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.
  - 5. And the more the Spirit works in us, the more our emotions are sanctified
    - a. And we begin to feel the way Jesus feels
  - 6. Which is awfully important
    - a. Because in our unredeemed state our emotions were a mess of self-centered impulses
    - b. But by the Holy Spirit, they are transformed into godly emotions by His indwelling
- K. And then the Holy Spirit directs and strengthens our wills
  - 1. **Philippians 2:12–13 (ESV)** —
    - a. 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,
    - b. 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.
  - 2. As we grow in our sanctification, we find ourselves making God-centered, godly decisions
    - a. And we find our confidence in God’s guidance affirmed
    - b. And we are strengthened in our decisions to follow His leading through His word
- L. So “all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God”
  - 1. The Spirit leads us through sanctification
    - a. Transforming our minds, our emotions, and our wills
    - b. According to the mind, emotions and wills of Jesus

### III. **The Spirit of Adoption**

- A. The second affirmation of our belonging to God’s family is that God has given us the Spirit of adoption as sons

- B. **Romans 8:15** (ESV) —
1. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,
  2. but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”
- C. Paul, in this verse, argues that you have received the indwelling Spirit of God
1. And that Holy Spirit is not a spirit of slavery
    - a. But is, in fact, the Spirit of adoption
- D. This is a remarkable statement!
1. It means that we are in God’s household
    - a. But not as mere slaves, engaged to run household errands
  2. But as family members – adopted into God’s family
    - a. Capable of an intimacy of relationship that slaves could only dream of!
- E. The word in the Greek for adoption in this verse means to “have installation or placement as a son”
1. It is the procedure by which a person is taken from one family (or no family) and placed into another family
    - a. In this case, we’re taken from the family of Adam and placed into God’s family!
- F. Adoption is, of course, related to what happens in regeneration – by which we are born again
1. But regeneration refers to the **new life** that the Spirit of God brings to us
  2. Adoption refers to the **new status** that is accorded to those who receive this new life
    - a. So our new life now has a place, a context, a family in which our new life in Christ can be manifested and enjoyed!
    - b. We have a new family in which our new life finds a new expression
- G. Now the way Paul speaks about this is also remarkable
1. “... by whom we cry ‘Abba! Father!’”
- H. It is remarkable on two accounts
1. First, the very idea that we can call God “Father” is a game-changer!
  2. The Jews were very reluctant to call God “Father”
    - a. In fact, in the OT the word “father” as a designation for God only occurs 14 times
    - b. And it is never used as a personal address
  3. Example
    - a. **Psalm 103:13** (ESV) — 13 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.
  4. The closest thing we have in the OT of anyone using the term “Father” to address God is Isaiah
    - a. **Isaiah 64:8** (ESV) — 8 But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

- b. But even then, Isaiah doesn't really address God as "Father" the way we might use it to address our earthly male parent
- 5. And as time unfolded into the first century, the reluctance to use even the name of God was even stronger
  - a. The name of God was not to be spoken
  - b. The name of God given to Moses – **the tetragrammaton YHWH** – was not pronounced so we really don't know how it's supposed to be pronounced
  - c. We usually see it as **Jehovah or Yahweh** – but we really don't know!
  - d. And when the name was read in scriptures, the title Adonai was used instead
  - e. The name of God was so holy as to be unutterable by the ordinary Jew
- I. But Jesus changes all of that when He teaches us the Lord's Prayer
  - 1. **"Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven..."**
  - 2. This was a radical change for these Jewish disciples!
    - a. To address God using "Father" was a stunning
  - 3. You see, Jesus used the term "Father" when He was addressing God
    - a. That made obvious sense – Jesus was God's incarnate Son!
    - b. Why wouldn't He call God "Father"?
  - 4. But now Jesus gives us the same family status as He enjoys Himself!
    - a. We are told to call God "Our Father"
- J. And not only that, **"... but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry "Abba! Father!"**
  - 1. Not just "Father"
    - a. But "Abba, Father"
  - 2. "Abba" is the Aramaic form of address
    - a. And the disciples were struck by how Jesus used it
    - b. In Gethsemane:
    - c. **Mark 14:36** (ESV) — 36 And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."
  - 3. But in Aramaic, the term "Abba" is the term for father that a little child would use for his or her daddy!
    - a. Once the child was weaned, the first words the child would use were "abba" and "imma" – "daddy" and "mommy"
- K. So Jesus taught the disciples to use these special terms of intimacy, dependence, and endearment when addressing God
  - 1. And the Spirit of God dwelling within us gives us to impulse and permission to express ourselves to the Almighty Parent in just this way
  - 2. It's an indication that we really do belong to the family of God
    - a. That God really is, not just our King or ruler or household manager
    - b. He really is our Father, our Daddy!
- L. Do you have that impulse to call God your Father? Your Daddy?

1. To the extent that you do, that's an indication that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Adoption
  - a. And that you are His child, His son or daughter

#### IV. **The Spirit's Witness**

- A. But wait!
  1. It gets even better
  2. The Spirit who indwells us communicates directly with our own spirits, our own souls
- B. **Romans 8:16** (ESV) —
  1. 16 **The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,...**
- C. Normally, something mediates our communication with God, with the Holy Spirit
  1. We've already spoken about the scriptures – the Word of God, authored by the Spirit of God
  2. And the Spirit speaks to us, through our minds, using normal linguistic channels, in the seeing and hearing the Word of God
    - a. Teaching us the things about Jesus, about the Christ
  3. **John 14:26** (ESV) —
    - a. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.
  4. **John 15:26** (ESV) —
    - a. 26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.
- D. But now Paul indicates that the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, bypasses the mind from time to time and communicates directly to our spirits that we are his children
  1. This is a mind-blowing experience, to be sure!
  2. Have you had an experience like this?
    - a. In which the Spirit of God gives you an overwhelming sense of the presence of God?
    - b. A sense that cannot be defined verbally or described in words?
  3. The old-timers used to call this the “manifest presence of God”
    - a. In which the believer is overwhelmed with glory of God
  4. **2 Corinthians 4:6** (ESV) —
    - a. 6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
- E. Maybe you've been rendered speechless
  1. Maybe you've been moved to tears
  2. Maybe you've been overcome with a joy unspeakable, and full of glory!
- F. That's how the Spirit of God communicates with our spirits that we are His children

- G. Now it doesn't happen all the time
  - 1. We might wish it would
  - 2. But the times of the sense of the absence of God in this way give us the greater appreciation for those times when it does happen
- H. But I can tell you it will probably never happen without your taking the time alone with the Lord in your "secret closet" as Jesus referred to it
  - 1. Times in which you read the Bible and pray
  - 2. And times in which you shut your mouth and listen and see what God might say
  - 3. And sometimes He doesn't say anything
  - 4. He just communes with your spirit and assures you that you belong to Him
    - a. Like the mother or father who, in those moments of grief or tenderness, says nothing, but just holds you
- I. "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God..."

V. **The Spirit's Inheritance**

- A. Finally, there is the Spirit's inheritance
- B. **Romans 8:16-17** (ESV) —
  - 1. 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,
  - 2. 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.**
- C. "Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ"
  - 1. There are a couple of ways we take this idea of being heirs of God
- D. We are heirs of God in that we inherit the blessings of God that are reserved only for His children
- E. We inherit a **heavenly home**
  - 1. **John 14:1-3** (ESV) —
    - a. 1 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.
    - b. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms.
    - c. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?
    - d. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."
  - 2. This is a place especially reserved for believers
    - a. And Jesus Himself has promised it to us
    - b. It is part of our inheritance
- F. We inherit a **heavenly banquet**
  - 1. Jesus speaks repeatedly of a heavenly banquet – in which the family of God gathers around a table of wonderful sustenance
  - 2. There is the great wedding supper to which many were invited but many refused to come – so the disciples were urged to go out to other places and find others to come into the family banquet (**Matthew 22.1-14**)

3. In the parable of the prodigal son, there is a glorious banquet prepared for the prodigals who have returned (**Luke 15.11-32**)
    - a. Among whom we count ourselves!
  4. There is the banquet to which five wise women were admitted and five foolish women were shut out (**Matthew 25.1-13**)
  5. And there is the glorious wedding supper of the Lamb (**Revelation 19.6-10**)
- G. And then there is the **right to reign and rule with Christ**
1. **2 Timothy 2:12** (ESV) —
    - a. 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him...
  2. And Jesus, in parables, speaks of servants who have demonstrated faithfulness in their earthly responsibilities will be awarded cities over which to reign in the master's kingdom
- H. And then, of course, is the greatest gift of all – the likeness to Christ
1. Which we experience in measured ways on earth
    - a. But with fullness in the glories of heaven
  2. **1 John 3:1-2** (ESV) —
    - a. 1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.
    - b. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.
    - c. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.
  3. **1 Corinthians 13:12** (ESV) —
    - a. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.
- I. Those are all things we inherit from God
1. For we are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ"
- J. But you know, I'm not sure that's what this verse is referring to at all
1. I don't think it's referring to all the gifts and blessings that we certainly inherit from God
  2. I think "heirs of God" means that we are **"heirs of – God"**
    - a. That God Himself is our inheritance
- K. **Psalm 73:25-26** (ESV) —
1. 25 Whom have I in heaven but you?
  2. And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.
  3. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
- L. **Lamentations 3:24** (ESV) —
1. 24 "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."
- M. The text says we are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (or co-heirs)
1. What, then, does Christ inherit?

- N. **John 17:4-5** (ESV) —
1. 4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.
  2. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.
- O. Jesus inherits the manifest glory of God in its fullness
1. And He desires that we share in that fullness of His glory
- P. **Ephesians 1:14** (ESV) —
1. 14 [the Holy Spirit] who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.
- Q. **2 Corinthians 1:22** (ESV) —
1. 22 and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.
- R. If the Spirit of God is our “earnest” or deposit or guarantee of our inheritance, what could possibly be our inheritance than God Himself!
- S. Robert Haldane: God is the portion of his people, and in him, who is the ‘possessor of heaven and earth,’ they are heirs of all things.... God is all sufficient, and this is an all-sufficient inheritance. God is eternal and unchangeable, and therefore it is an eternal inheritance – an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away.... It is God himself, then, who is the inheritance of his children.... He communicates himself to them by his grace, his light, his holiness, his life.”
- T. Boice: If God is our inheritance, we can be assured of salvation, since nothing is going to move God. Nothing is ever gong to dispossess us of our heavenly inheritance.

## VI. Conclusion

- A. Are you His child?
- B. Are led by the Spirit of God?
- C. Have you received the Spirit of Adoption as sons?
- D. Has the Spirit born witness with your spirit that you are His child?
- E. And can you even grasp the glorious inheritance that comes from being His child?