



22.
'Becoming a child of God'
Romans 8.12-17

Background

Key to this whole chapter is what Paul describes as 'the freedom and glory of the children of God' (v.21 – NIV), or, as older translations have it, 'the glorious liberty of the children of God'. The *freedom* he is describing throughout this chapter, in other words, is very specifically the freedom which belongs to the children of God – and which, indeed, flows directly from the fact that in Christ we are the children of God.

It's for that reason that at this central juncture in the chapter Paul picks up on precisely this great reality – the privilege and blessing of 'sonship', your being in Christ a child of God.

The popular misconception with which many seek to comfort themselves is that "we're all God's children" – whereas in truth it is specifically only *in Christ* alone that this privileged reality is known: and sometimes, in order to stifle that misconception, the significance of the doctrine of our 'sonship' in Christ has been given less prominence than it warrants – and less prominence than the Scriptures themselves accord to it. Consider, for instance, the great exclamation of John in 1 Jn.3.1 – "*See what great love the Father has lavished in us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*" In other words, it's not just some nominal status that's given to us in Christ, but a wonderful reality.

The verses which comprise this study address just this glorious theme of our being in Christ the children of God: Paul spells out the implications of this reality for us in v.17, having first pointed up the primary ways in which we know that to be the reality in our lives (vv.12-16) – this culminates (in v.16) in what is in some ways the high point of all Christian experience, something C H Spurgeon described in these terms: "*I believe that the Spirit of God sometimes comes into a mysterious and marvelous contact with the spirit of man, and that at times the Spirit speaketh in the heart of man by a voice not audible to the ear, but perfectly audible to the spirit which is the subject of it. He assures and consoles directly, by coming into immediate contact with the heart.*"

The passages referred to under 'days' 5-7 highlight the degree to which this doctrine pervades all Scripture: it's worth reading them all, but if short of time begin with **'days' (1), (2), and (4)**.

1) Monday 24th June – house rules

Read [Romans 8.12-14](#)

“.. those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God ..” (Rom.8.14)

“I’m no longer a slave to fear: I am a child of God,” runs [the song](#). But how do you know? The first proof – your living is now directed and informed by God’s Spirit: He sets out the ‘house rules’ for His children, the ethical lines on which you’re to live life.

In practical terms what does it actually mean for you to be ‘led by the Spirit’?

Why is your conduct an evidence of your being a child of God?

How does this not become a subtle form of ‘legalism’ or ‘salvation by works’?

In what ways would it be clear to others around you that you are ‘led by the Spirit’?

Prayer: Show me the ancient paths, O Lord: teach me by Your Spirit each day where ‘the good way is’, and give me the boldness and grace to walk in that way.

2) Tuesday 25th June – cry of the heart

Read [Romans 8.15](#)

“.. the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship ..” (Rom.8.15)

The Son of God dwells by His Spirit in each believer. What He is, we now are. No longer slaves to fear, but sons and daughters of the Most High. The second ‘proof’ of that kicks in in moments of crisis: we instinctively turn and cry to Him for help as Father.

What instances have there been in your life which illustrate that you are ‘no longer a slave to fear’?

How well do you cope with crises which arise in your life?

Is it to your heavenly Father that you turn when troubles come?

It is specifically to *the Father* that Jesus pointed His disciples to be praying ([Mt.6.5-15](#) and [Lk.11.1-4](#)): in what ways does the prayer Jesus suggested help you in your own praying?

What are the arguments for “the Lord’s Prayer” being said more regularly together in our services of worship?

Prayer: Help me to remember throughout today that You have brought me into Your family, my Lord and God, and made me Your child: and help me to live as such always.

3) Wednesday 26th June – intimacy

Read [Romans 8.16](#)

".. the Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God's children .." (Rom.8.16)

"This is something subjective, something which essentially belongs to the realm of feeling and subjectivity, and the emotions. It is something within us at a deeper level than the level of the intellect" (D M Lloyd Jones). God speaking directly to His child.

Have there been times when the Lord has intimated His love to your heart with an immediacy and intimacy? Give thanks again for all such occasions.

What steps might we take to know more of the experience to which Paul alludes whereby the Lord by His Spirit 'testifies with our spirit' that we are His?

Prayer: *As a deer pants for streams of water, so pants my soul for You, O Lord! Draw near to me again and reassure my troubled spirit with fresh overtures of Your love.*

4) Thursday 27th June – royalty

Read [Romans 8.17](#)

".. we are heir – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ .." (Rom.8.17)

Royalty involves responsibility as well as privilege. God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, provides the benchmark for what it is to be a child of God: in Him we get to share in the costly service of the kingdom – and we get to share in the glory of the King.

Why should we expect, and accept, suffering as part of our discipleship of Jesus?

Read [Phil.3.10-11](#): what has been your experience of participating in the sufferings of Christ?

To what extent and in what ways has such experience brought you a fuller experience of 'the power of His resurrection'?

As a 'co-heir with Christ' what is the inheritance to which you are looking forward?

Prayer: *You gave me hope, my Lord, when I was in despair. You gave me a future, when all I had was a messed-up past. How richly has Your grace abounded towards me!*

5) Friday 28th June – the real big Brother

Read [Hebrews 2.10-18](#)

".. so Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters .." (Heb.2.11)

God's great purpose in His Son assuming our full humanity was that He (the Lord Jesus) might be "the firstborn among many brothers and sisters" ([Rom.8.29](#)). As our older Brother He takes the flak, pleads our cause, feels our pain, and helps us in adversity.

If you were asked what difference it made having Jesus in your life, what would your answer be?

What privileges in being a child of God do these verses underline?

Prayer: *As You have shared in our humanity, my Lord Jesus, grant me grace to step into the shoes of those I meet today that I may share their burdens and help them.*

6) Saturday 29th June – committed

Read [Hosea 11.1-11](#)

“.. when Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son ..” (Hos.11.1)

God’s commitment in love to His people saw His own eternal Son step into their shoes and ‘retrace’ their rebellious steps ([Matt.2.13-15](#)). That commitment in love to His children means as well that, come what may, He can’t and won’t ever give up on them.

What has been your experience of the love of God towards His children which is described here?

In what ways are you able to say that the Lord ‘taught (you) to walk’ (v.3)?

Prayer: *You have shown us what is good, O Lord, and what You now require of us. Teach me to walk humbly with You throughout today, acting justly and loving mercy.*

7) Sunday 30th June – compassion

Read [Jeremiah 31.15-20](#)

“.. though I often speak against him, I still remember him ..” (Jer.31.20)

A window into the heart of God and the love that He has for His people. God’s not afraid to give ‘an unruly calf’ of a child the right good ‘talking to’ which the child needs. But His heart yearns for His children and has great and enduring compassion for them.

What does the Lord mean when He says that He often ‘speaks against’ His child – and how have you experienced that?

Read [Jer.31.21-25](#): what would the assurance of v.20 mean for those in exile in Babylon, and how do these verses comfort and encourage you?

Prayer: *As You have been so patient and gracious to me, O Lord, help me to bear with others similarly. Give me a deep compassion for the least, the last and the lost.*