

Adoption (4)

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[0 : 0 0] please have your bibles open again with me at the chapter we read together romans chapter 8 we may read verse 15 together again for he have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear but he have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba Father not the spirit of bondage to fear but the spirit of adoption we have been thinking on these times together on this great doctrine of adoption and thinking of how it is in so many different ways a medicine to our souls we saw how it covers the whole theme of our salvation our freedom from the slavery the bondage of sin how it frees us from powerlessness enabling us to mortify to put to death the misdeeds of the body how it is our freedom from the attitude of a slave it brings us the new motivation for serving and pleasing God and I want to look this evening with you at how our adoption as children of God delivers us from our insecurity in our relationship with God how in fact it brings us a true assurance of our being right with God in the world around us in the everyday natural world a great deal of people's problems often arise with their relationships with their parents often there is a sense in a father-son or daughter relationship that the father's love is somehow to be prized from him unwillingly it has to be earned by proficiency at school or in career there is a terrible insecurity in that kind of relationship during the Olympics

Claire Balding, the TV commentator, was very much to the fore in her autobiography she reveals a lot about her relationship with her father which in turn goes on to explain quite a lot about her own lost situation and she says that she spent a great deal of time growing up trying to please her father trying to win the approval of her racehorse training father she told one friend I was head girl at school and I thought that would satisfy him I won the ladies racing championship and I thought that would satisfy him I was president of the Cambridge Union and I thought that would satisfy him now I present racing you know what he said to me you nod too much here is a young woman whose relationship with her father was one of insecurity where she thought she had to earn had to win his love and approval by her success and the whole purpose of Paul's 8th chapter to the Romans is to show how we may know a rock solid security in our relationship with God and essentially what that security is based on is the objective fact of us being adopted as children of God and the spirit's work in making us experientially aware of it feeling it experiencing that fact and I want you to note especially the way that Paul teaches us in Romans 8 and in the rest of his epistles his teaching method because it's typical of the way the New Testament brings us up in godliness trains us to go on in godliness

Paul teaches us two great truths and he always teaches us then in a particular order first of all he tells us who we are in Christ and then he tells us how we must live who we are in Christ then how we must live never the other way around he assures us of our salvation and then energizes us to godliness this is who you are in Christ this is how you must therefore live and so here we have the blessings of sonship sounded forth loudly powerful and then alongside these the summons to live like sons so Paul is the great pastor and he is concerned that that we shouldn't be insecure as believers that we should have assurance he's concerned for that but that security cannot be should not be based on our feelings alone it is based on the promises of God and the the moral evidence in our lives of sonship we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear but we have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry

Abba Father not the spirit of bondage but the spirit of adoption there's a bit of a debate as to whether Paul is speaking about the same the spirit in the same sense in these two words is it the human spirit in the first word is the spirit of bondage and the holy spirit in the second sense well clearly it's the holy spirit in the second use I think what Paul is saying that you are the holy spirit which you received is not a holy spirit of bondage but it is the holy spirit of adoption be clear as to the nature of the spirit that is in you we are not under the fear and bondage of the law as a slave in

which our acceptance before our father is always based on our works but rather Paul is saying the spirit brings us into our relationship with God which is one of reassuring sonship this is our birthright as Christians this is what God desires us into and so this relationship to God is adopted sons is the most basic and the most liberating truth in our new lives now we are going to range over this chapter together and we are going to consider what we could call five smooth stones thinking of David and Goliath the way that David went to the brook and picked up five stones there are five smooth stones with which we may slay the giant of insecurity from this chapter five reasons why we need not doubt that God loves us if we are his why we may be secure in that love without slipping back into a works based righteousness and hence spiritual exhaustion first of all the fact that our adoption is based on an act that breaks the condemnation of our past second the evidence of our being led by the spirit in a war with sin thirdly there's a new intimacy with God that we've been brought into fourth Paul is going to mention the witness of the Holy Spirit and then fifthly there is a reassuring promise that there is nothing in the future that will ever separate us will ever break our relationship with God as our father so the first of these Paul tells us objectively that we are freed from the condemnation of the law verse 1 of chapter 8 there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death when we when we lapse into a feeling of insecurity when we have a great angst about our relationship with God it is a sign that we have lapsed into thinking in terms of works rather than our gracious acceptance by God we feel like Claire

[9 : 07] Balding felt in regard to her natural father that we are unworthy children and somehow we have to earn God's favour towards us by living lives which are better doing more producing more results and as long as we live like this we are not experiencing the blessings of sonship and in Paul's words we have slipped from being sons to slaves and to all such fears Paul comes and tells us that all the power of our past life to condemn us and to make us feel that we have to all over again earn the acceptance of God that has been dealt a final blow there is no longer any condemnation we have had a new relationship established and our old relationships have been decisively broken when God brought us from one family into another think with me for a little while about what the concept of adoption meant to these Roman readers they were familiar with the idea of someone being transferred from one family situation into another and there were four things that happened four things which are very relevant to our experience of being

Christians and having security with our heavenly father first of all the adoptive person's relationship with his old family his former family that was rendered null and void it was wiped out he couldn't go back and try and get something from his former family he no longer had a relationship with that old family it was all completely cut off secondly he became the heir to his new adoptive father's estate he was an heir to everything supposing there was a naturally born son born after that did not affect the adopted son's rights to an inheritance he was as much a son as any naturally born son thirdly the old life of the adopted person was completely obliterated it was as though he had never lived all of his debts were cancelled on the spot all his records were obliterated there was a sense in which he started again on the day that he was adopted everything else went out the window he was a new person he was living a new life and fourthly he would take on the name of his adoptive father a new name and a new family membership the old past life obliterated out a new life given to him a new status a new name a new relationship to the father this is what Paul is speaking about here in the beginning in relation to the power of the breaking of sin to condemn us stories told of a soldier in the US civil war that was accused of desertion and he languished in jail for some time expecting to be executed and unexpectedly he received a pardon and he reenlisted entered the war he didn't survive the war but when they found his body his body was found at the site of a daring assault on the enemy position and in his breast pocket of his uniform was the letter of pardon the knowledge that all of the accusations against him had been obliterated that there was no longer any condemnation hanging over him had energized him had brought to him a new patriotism a new zeal for service and the adopted child of God knows that all of the obligations he had incurred all the debts that he had incurred while in the old family at the time of being a son of disobedience a son of wrath they have been cleared the condemnation has been broken and the second smooth stone in the slaying of this giant of insecurity is the leading of the spirit Paul explicitly tells us that this is an evidence of our sonship in verse 14 he says as many as are led by the spirit of God they are the sons of God we were thinking of this earlier how does one know

who are the sons of God well they are the people who are led by the spirit of God again being led by the spirit of God is not a matter of hearing our voices directing you to go here or there to do this or that to say this to somebody or all the rest of it but it is a moral leading the holy spirit of God taking us by the hand and empowering us to serve God leading us in paths of righteousness connected with the mortifying of sin in verse 13 those who are led by the spirit they are the sons of God they are also those who are mortifying the deeds of the body they are the ones who are on a war footing they are actively engaged against the enemy you see there is no conflict like this in an unbeliever somebody who is not a

Christian is quite content to wave the white flag against sin not to give it any opposition to be courting our temptation and so on these are signs that we are not the children of God that we have come to terms with sin we are no longer resisting it the Christian on the other hand is someone who is keenly aware of the presence of sin who longs to be rid of it and who is following the leading of the spirit in seeking to put the deeds of the body to death who is seeking to deny sin the oxygen to live and thrive the third encouragement that we have before us that gives us security in our sonship is the new intimacy the new approach the new access that we are given by the spirit who is called the spirit of adoption it is by him Paul says that we cry

[16:16] Abba father now we are so familiar with the fact that we address the living God as father that sometimes the sheer wonder of this is lost on us our authority for doing this comes from the Lord Jesus Christ who addressed the living God as father which of course was his proper relationship to him but who also taught his disciples to pray our father who art in heaven and of course there is the wonderful balance there the father to whom we pray is the father who is in heaven who is over us to whom all reverence is due but nevertheless he is addressed as father now that is something that the Jew never did God was known in some ways as the father of Israel but to address God himself as father was something that they did not do there was a distancing in their relationship between them and

God and now by the spirit of adoption there is this great leap forward there is this closeness of the believer to our heavenly father you'll know that the word Abba was something that a Jewish child would use to address his father it's an address of intimacy as well as honour and also the word to cry indicates the exclamation that a child would make perhaps at stumbling and hurting himself and would instantly and without thinking cry out Abba so it becomes the natural thing of the believer the child of God to know a closeness and an intimacy with God that spontaneously would come before him and address him as father a closeness a drawing near to

God it's a wonderful biblical picture of this closeness this privilege that we have as new covenant believers in the old testament it's the story of David when after Saul's death some years later he wants to show kindness to the house of Saul for Jonathan's sake and he finds out if there's somebody still alive of Saul's household and of course Mephibosheth Saul's grandson and dearest surviving relative is still around he was only five when Saul and Jonathan had been killed in Jezreel and his nurse knowing that the normal thing for a new and rival king on coming to the throne to do was to wipe out all potential rivals sought to flee with the child but dropped him and he became crippled in both feet and he lives as an exile in Lodabar for years until one day

David's mind turns to showing acts of mercy and when David hears of Mephibosheth's existence his words are interesting he says where is the sun where is the sun and you wonder when the last time it would have been when Mephibosheth would have been referred to as this sun or the sun he would have been referred to as many things he would have been referred especially to as the crippled one where is the cripple you know the way that people refer to others often by that which has maybe stigmatized them you know so and so he's the alcoholic or she's the single man or he's the guy who just got divorced and so on

David asks about this son David summons Mephibosheth and Mephibosheth is coming and he's coming in fear and trembling before David and he's probably expecting he's not going to see the day through and instead he's adopted he's made a son brought into the house of the king and David insists on an access David insists on an intimacy in the relationship and David insists that he will always eat at his table he's not to remain at the distance he's to be dining with the king what a beautiful picture what a glorious picture of our privilege as the children of God not at arm's length but brought near to

[21:45] God we don't deserve it worms we are sinners crippled by the fall and God makes us his children and instructs us demands that we dine with him always we're made members of Christ's

body branches in the vine stones in the building a bride for the groom a priest in the new generation a dwelling place of the spirit all these symbols of intimacy closeness and above all sons of the living God sons of the father the new nature brought about by the Holy Spirit comes to us and enables us propels us into the presence of God reassured of our sonship fourthly there's the witness of the spirit verse 16 the spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of

God this is sometimes regarded as controversial what's meant by this it's certainly not meant that there's an audible voice that tells us that we are Christians that we are believers nor is it I believe some experience that some call baptism of the spirit subsequent to conversion but I believe that what Paul is pointing us to here is that manner of experience that is somehow easier felt than felt some of those times that every or most Christians will experience at some time or another in different situations where we know that we are in the presence of the living God when we are deeply moved from within by the spirit of sonship in particular

I think it refers to those intense spirit induced feelings of love and longing that we may know from time to time most of us will know I'm sure what it is on occasion to be simply overwhelmed often in worship as we feel God so near to us overwhelmed by a knowledge of the Father's love for us or Christ's sacrifice on our behalf and we simply feel the tears welling up within us a melting of the heart perhaps when we're singing the praises of God with the people of God or maybe just alone in your room meditating on the promises of God and what we are doing in effect is we're crying out with John himself and we're saying behold what manner of love the Father has given us that we should be called the sons of

God a kindling of our spirit by the Holy Spirit or it could be that sense of longing that Paul is speaking of in verse 23 when he says even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption to wit the redemption of our body eagerly waiting our adoption this is interesting isn't it because clearly our adoption is something we already have but Paul is saying that there is a longing there is a groaning for an adoption which is also future and it's very likely that Paul has in mind here a particular aspect of the way that the Romans went about adoption you see when a child was taken out of one family and placed into another the adoption had taken place it was settled it proceeded but there was also a later ceremony there was an opportunity given later to publicly declare the fact that this was the son and heir it was a ceremony perhaps like the Jewish vermitzor when a Jewish boy becomes a son of the covenant ages 13 and we're longing for this this aspect of our adoption which will only come when we have resurrection bodies when Jesus comes again and there's something within us Paul says that is longing for that this world is not my home I'm just passing through and as believers we know something of that longing we long for the Lord

Jesus Christ to return we know that we will never be completely fulfilled we will never be completely satisfied so long as we are in this life and so God is set within our hearts by the spirit of adoption a longing for that fullness of our adoption which will come when Jesus returns and that Paul says reminds us of our security that I believe is part of what's meant as the witness of the spirit and then finally finally our security as sons rests on the simple promise of God the promise that there is nothing there is absolutely nothing that shall separate us from the love of God no matter what what you or I are going to face in the future there is no circumstance which is going to sever a relationship with God as father there is nothing which is going to make

[28 : 05] God love you less than he does now nothing at all whatever it is whether it's tribulation whether it's the feeling of being absolutely crushed whether it's distress whether it's the times when you feel utterly at your wit's end or persecution when the opposition rages against you you feel or rather it's difficult to feel the presence of God he's not left you he's not deserted you he's still your father you're not separated from his love or famine or nakedness or peril or sorrow the promise of God that God will not abandon us his children we rest on his promises as I was thinking of this a wonderful picture came to mind of a story I heard regarding a Karen girl a little girl from

Burma one of the hill tribe the Karen hill tribe and as you know the Burmese have been persecuting their own people including the Karen people for over 50 years now and this girl's village had been torched by the Burmese army and all of the houses were destroyed and she'd been left behind and a group of aid workers came into the village and they found this little girl all alone and she was sitting under a tree and she was singing to herself the beatitudes blessed blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven but a beautiful picture absolutely alone not forsaken crushed persecuted

but not abandoned by a heavenly father friends that is the tremendous privilege that we have as children of the living

God his promises and we can stake all our future on the bare promise of the word of God and we can know God with all assurance with all security but maybe maybe as we've spoken tonight about this relationship with God the father maybe you're sitting in church tonight and you are not confident of knowing God as your father because these things don't really apply in your life you have no confidence that you're no longer condemned by the law you're not really engaged in resisting sin you're not led by the spirit in that way you're quite happy complacent with your life and you don't know that ease of access into God's presence and you couldn't really claim the promise there that you'll never be separated from the love of God and therefore where does where does your assurance lie if it doesn't lie in these places one of the worst things is to go through life with a false assurance with a false security

Jesus presented some of the most awesome parables warning against the danger of being falsely secure what an awful thing it will be for those who do appear before Christ at the end of the day and appear before him with all boldness and point to the various religious things that they did some with remarkable similarity to the deeds of Christians and Jesus will say to them depart from me I never knew friends if you ask anyone at all thinking along these lines thinking that they are all right as they are and yet you cannot look to these Bible based signs for security if we are in that situation we need to look to the foundations we need to look to Christ let me urge you at the close of this service at the close of this communion weekend to look to the

Lord Jesus Christ whose blood has paid the adoption price who has made it possible for us who are sons of disobedience sons of wrath to become sons of God will you trust the Lord Jesus Christ tonight and acknowledge your need and believe that he is the savior who is suited to you the only one who can deliver you from sin the only one who can place you in God's family and if you will come to him in all humility and repentance and receive his forgiveness he is as good as his word and you will be received to all the glorious privileges of the children of God amen may God bless to us this precious gospel now concluding psalm is psalm 72 and we can sing first of all from verse 8 to 10 and then from verse 17 to the end of the psalm 8 to 10 and 17 to 19 his large and great dominion shall from sea to sea extend it from the river shall reach forth unto earth at most end they in the wilderness that dwell bow down before him must and they that are his enemies shall lick the very dust the kings of Tarshish from the isles to him shall presence bring and unto him shall offer gifts

[34 : 34] Sheba's and Sheba's king his name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall men shall be blessed in him and bless all nations shall him call verses 8 to 10 and then 17 to 19 of psalm 72 his large and great dominion shall from sea to sea extend with large and great dominion shall from sea to sea extend and from the

Missouri Hymn His heavenly shining the heavy dust.

The kings of darkness and the isles.

To them shall rest and spring. And under him shall all our lips.

Keep us, I must keep us king. His name forever shall endure.

[37 : 19] Lost like the slum it shall. Men shall be blessed.

In him are blessed. On him shall shall be born.

Now blessed be the Lord of God.

The God of Israel. For the king and oh.

In holy camp ex- ■■■■.

[38 : 33] And bless the King, His glorious name, to all eternity.

The Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit. Amen.