

Romans 8:14-17

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[0 : 00] Daddy. Daddy. Daddy is a powerful word.

It has power for good. It has power to bring up painful memories. For some of us, it is a word with rich, warm, wonderful connotations of home and safety and security.

And for others, it does not. I remember my dad. He passed away in 2004. He was not always the most affectionate, coming from a stodgy New England family where children were to be seen, not heard.

And so, but he was always a cheerleader. He provided well. At his funeral, I shared about perhaps the most poignant image that I have of my father.

And that is this. When we were kids, we would often have vociferous and boisterous conversation at our dinner table. I don't know if your dinner table is like that or not. But we would get into loud conversations.

[1 : 20] And surprisingly, maybe to some of you, I was the quiet one. And I would try to insinuate my thoughts or opinions into the conversation.

And often find myself increasingly frustrated as I was talked over, dominated, shut out, denied. And at times I would just lose it.

And in frustration and tears, I would slam my chair back from the table and run away to my room. My dad would be the one who would come to get me.

Mom was probably more the one I would process my everyday trials with. But my dad would always come to get me. Not a lot of discussion, not a lot of words. He would say, hey, why don't you come back?

Why don't you come back to the table? What's your relationship with your father like? What have you experienced?

[2 : 21] You know, one of the things that I think is often true is that we project our human earthly relationships with our father onto our understanding of God as father as well.

For some of you, your earthly relationships have been full of pain or fear or trauma. And so when you hear the word God the father, it doesn't seem like a good thing to you.

Maybe some of you, it does. My hope is that this morning, as we continue in our series in the book of Romans, and as we look at a glorious passage about God and his relationship to us, as he is our Abba Father and we are his children, that God will redeem and renew and restore and refresh in you a sense of awe and wonder at God as our father.

So if you want to turn with me in your Bibles, if you're looking in the Pew Bibles, it's page 944. Therefore, we're in the book of Romans. We're going to be looking at verses 14 through 17 this morning, but I'm going to read the passage leading up to it so that we get a bit of the context.

So let's read together Romans chapter 8. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

[4 : 13] For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do, by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin.

He condemns sin in the flesh. In order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh. But those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death.

But to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.

[5 : 16] But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 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.

So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh. 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.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 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.

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. 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.

Let's pray together. Lord, we thank You for this glorious word and this glorious truth.

[6 : 49] And Lord, we ask for Your help this morning. Lord, for we acknowledge that it touches us deeply, and for some of us that will be a painful place for us to go.

But Lord, we pray that You would bring a healing and restoring. Lord, and bring awe and wonder. Lord, bring a sense of security and belonging, of hope and of love to our hearts.

Lord, I pray for Your help this morning. Lord, that I might preach Your word clearly, and that You might, through me, speak to all of us. Lord, we pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Well, as we're looking at verses 14 through 17 this morning, there is only one big idea.

And that is this. That we are sons of God if we are in Christ Jesus. Paul, in leading up to this, he's been talking about, if you were here last week, Pastor Greg talked about this incredible thing that God has done.

[8 : 01] He has made us now debtors, not to the flesh, not to our sinful nature, to continue living in rebellion against God, and in the ways that lead to death in our lives.

But instead, God has given us His Spirit, so that now we might actually live a new way in His power, by putting to death those deadly things in our lives, and instead living the life that God has won for us in His Son, Jesus Christ.

And so Paul says, for all who are led by the Spirit of God, and part of what he means by that is, all who are now putting to death the deeds of the flesh, all who are walking in this new identity, this new pattern of life that we have.

It's partly why I read 1 through 12, as well as the passage that we're looking at this morning, because I wanted you to see, Paul is building this argument. You are now in Christ.

There is no condemnation. God has set you free from the law of sin and death. God has now done what you could not do, so that you can now do what God calls you to. He has given you a life, and a life in His Spirit, free from condemnation, regenerated with a new life.

[9 : 22] And now, for all who are in Christ, for all who have placed their faith in Christ, He gives this incredible word. Lord, you are sons of God.

This is a remarkable thing. But we maybe need to clear the brush a little bit, because some of you are sitting here thinking, I'm not a son. I'm a daughter. Can't make it there.

Can't get to the son thing. How do we do that? And this is important for us to think through, because Paul, as you see further on, he goes to children.

Verse 16, he changes the image from son to children, and he could have done that from the very beginning. Why did he not do it? Well, because he is pulling on a first century vision of what it meant to be a son that was contextualized in the era.

If you were a son, you were, then, the carrier of the family line. You held all the privilege, all the position, and, particularly if you were the first son, all of the inheritance, maybe not all, but the lion's share of the inheritance would actually come to you as the son.

[10 : 49] And what Paul is referring to here is not a gendered position, but a social position. The ESV helpfully puts in, this word could be translated, sons and daughters.

It is clearly inclusive of all people, but he uses sonship because a son has a particular position in the first century of all of this privilege.

privilege. And here's the remarkable thing. What Paul is saying, given the flow of this argument, is if you are in Christ, if you've been set free from the law of sin and death, if the Spirit of God dwells in you, if you are led by the Spirit of God, then all of you, men and women, are sons of God.

Did you see the all in verse 14? Look at it again. All of you are sons of God. He's saying all of you are able to step into this privileged position.

What a wonderful thing this is. And Paul is saying this is true. This is true of all men and all women, which was revolutionary at that time. He's saying it is true for those who are slaves and those who are free.

[12 : 08] You are all members of God's family. When the social divisions of the day would have separated those out and said, no, they have to be kept differentiated. And even religiously, Jews and Gentiles, you are all brought in to God's family and able to be sons of God.

When for those from the Jewish background in that time, they would have seen those outside as unable to be brought in unless they actually became Jewish.

So Paul is saying something revolutionary here as he says, you are all in Christ sons of God.

Then he spends the next three verses explaining that and unpacking that more. And that's what we're gonna look at for the next couple of minutes together. First of all, look with me at verse 15.

You do 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.

[13 : 24] So the first thing Paul wants to do is to clarify, for some, sonship before God might be this fearsome thing. Right? To approach a holy God to say that you are his son and to be a part of his family, that might be terrifying because he might destroy you.

You know that God is a righteous judge. You know that God is a holy God who cannot tolerate evil in his presence. Paul says, no, becoming a son doesn't come with that kind of fear.

It doesn't come with the slavery of trying to please God and the despair of knowing that you're unable to do that. It doesn't come from the fear of rejection.

What if I blow it? Is God gonna throw me out of his family? In Romans 6, Paul has already said that when we were slaves to sin, we were unable to do what is right before God.

And if we are in that state, what a fearsome thing it is then to be called part of God's family. We're just gonna be constantly in time out the whole life.

[14 : 46] But the Christian life is not a dutiful one because there is now, therefore, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Because Christ has done for us what we could not do so that we might be accepted. And so, Paul spins his own and said, this is not, sonship does not have this fear that God is going to continue to command us to perform and therefore justify ourselves by our perfection.

He says, no, you have now received a spirit of adoption. Adoption as sons. And he says this amazing and incredible thing as he does this.

Because as we've talked about, being adopted as a son means that we have all the rights and privileges of sonship in a family that we do not, by nature, belong to.

In the Roman culture in the first century, a person who didn't have an actual son might adopt a servant, a slave, an orphan, to bring him in and say, you are now my son and you are going to take this role with all of the rights and the privileges and the responsibilities of sonship.

[16 : 09] And Paul is saying, that's what God has done for us. And as that son is adopted into a Roman family, all the past debts would have been paid out.

All the past outstanding requirements would have been solved. And that son now is brought in and he gets a new identity. He gets a new name.

He gets a new standing in society. He has a new inheritance of things that were not his before. And friends, this is what adoption does for us.

It brings us from a place of alienation to a place of belonging in God's family. adoption brings us from lostness and loneliness to being in a place of being loved by the creator of the world.

But friends, it's more than that because it's not just being made right and it's not just being put in a good standing. But he finishes by saying, by whom we cry, Abba, Father.

[17 : 26] Father. Daddy. The first word is Aramaic. The second one is Greek. They mean the same thing.

Paul repeats it so that we get it. Friends, God has described as many things throughout the scripture. He is the sovereign creator of the whole world. He is the ruler and the king over all things.

He is the judge to whom all are accountable. But remarkably, in the New Testament, Father becomes the most important, maybe, certainly the most central image of how we relate to God.

God. What a wonderful thing this is. This is why when Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, he begins not with, O great God or O sovereign, but Father, our Father.

Holy be your name. And so forth. So as J.I. Packer reads, by the way, J.I. Packer in his book Knowing God has a beautiful chapter on adoption, being adopted as God's child.

[18 : 55] If you are looking for more reading, I highly recommend it. In Knowing God, he writes this, Adoption is a family idea conceived in terms of love and viewing God as Father.

In adoption, God takes us into his family and fellowship. He establishes us as his children and heirs. Looseness, affection, and generosity are at the heart of this relationship.

To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the Father is even greater. And so friends, this says for all who are in Christ Jesus, we now have a relationship with God that includes both intimacy and authority.

We have a relationship with a God who is at once imminent and transcendent. He is both sovereign over all and yet he is the one that we can run to when we fall and skin our knee and need to be held.

He is the holy one who cannot tolerate evil and yet also he is the God of love. Behold how great the Father's love that we should be called children of God.

[20 : 27] Friends, think about this. if you'll excuse me I want to translate it out of the human realm for a minute. If you had a dog who had a master and every time he did something wrong he was beaten he was starved he was deprived when that man walked through the door at the end of the day what do you think the dog would do?

run hide cower at best not care and stay away.

But if that master is a loving master who showers his dog not only with provision of a safe place to live and food and exercise but showers that dog with affection and love and companionship.

I grew up with golden retrievers I know what they do. They jump on you they turn around in circles they chase their tail they slobber all over you but they rejoice and they come running to you.

Friends, if this is true of a dog how much more is it true? in our human relationships we have a heavenly father who loves us so much and we are able to come to him and cry Abba Father to him.

[22 : 13] Friends, Paul goes on not only do we have this intimacy rather than slavery but verse 16 being a child of God is an experiential as well as a positional relationship with God.

Let me explain those terms so you understand. A positional relationship is what we are declared. This happens whenever an adoption happens. There is a day when the papers are signed and that child becomes legally and relationally connected to the adopted parents in a positional way.

They are now parent and child father and son mother, daughter. They are now brought into that family. There is a position that is true. Verse 16 says there is more than just position.

the spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. Commentators argue a little about what exactly this means but in my understanding the most clear way that this makes sense is that God has given us his Holy Spirit to live within us so that the Holy Spirit might remind us that is bear witness or testify to our own spirits about who we now are as children of God.

The British preacher Martin Lloyd Jones quotes an old Puritan from a couple of centuries ago named Thomas Goodwin explaining it in this way. Picture a man walking along the road with his little boy holding hands father and son, son and father.

[24 : 05] The boy knows that the man is his father and that his father loves him but all of a sudden the man sweeps the boy up into his arms embraces him and kisses him. Now the boy is actually no more of a son when he is being embraced and kissed than he was before.

The father's action has not changed the status of the son but oh the difference in the enjoyment of the status.

That son walking along next to his father knows he's a son but when his father scoops him up and showers him with that love and affection it becomes not just a positional relationship but an experiential one.

And friends what Paul tells us is that for all who are in Christ Jesus if you are truly a son of God then the Holy Spirit is now telling you and reminding you on a daily basis that you are loved by God accepted by him welcomed by him embraced by him.

Friends this is the tragic end of the parable of the prodigal son. The prodigal son goes away abandons his father lives his own selfish life finally realizes how foolish he's been comes back knowing he has no right to reclaim a position of sonship.

[25 : 51] Yet when the father sees him coming down the road he runs in a most undignified manner he runs to embrace his son and he gives them all he restores to him all the full privileges of the robe and the ring and the sandals and he throws the party for that son to know how much he is loved and yet the son who's been there the whole time is out in the fields bitter and angry and won't come in to the party and to the father because he's not experiencing this because he doesn't know this his position friends the holy spirit for all who are in christ jesus is nudging and reminding and whispering and maybe shouting to your hurting stubborn hard heart i love you you are my child this is the most wonderful thing about adoption isn't it when we're born into a family you feel like yeah nobody got to pick me i just just happened for good or for bad but when you're adopted someone looks at you and they say i choose you and god looks at his children he says i chose you and you and you and you and you i chose you to be mine not because you are worthy not because you have to perform to keep it up not because of any of those things but because i loved you friends i wonder this morning if you were listening to the spirit i wonder if some of you are here this morning and you haven't put your faith in christ if you haven't experienced the father's love for you if you're still wondering whether god could accept you well friends this is what the good news of the gospel is all about that in jesus god has done everything necessary for you to be accepted by him and his call for you is to turn from all your other ways of trying to be right before god on your own to say i can't do it i'm a sinner and a failure to acknowledge your helplessness and then throw your trust on god and as he calls you to do that he will meet you and embrace you and then you will know the whispering of the holy spirit saying you are my child and i love you not only does being a child of god mean intimacy rather than slavery not only does it mean an experiential as well as a positional relationship but verse 17 it means we are joined with christ in all things look with me at verse 17 again i want you to look for the preposition with if the spirit nope that's a wrong verse i'm looking here verse 17 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 so friends this is the most amazing thing of all we are now heirs with god we've talked about this already this is part of the the reality is that when god brings us into his family he brings us into the family of god who owns and rules everything and specifically then he says in hebrews 1 2 that he has made god or made christ jesus christ the heir of all things and so we are now brought into a family where we have everything everything in god's kingdom everything in the world is is going to be ours one day we are brought into this incredible privilege and this incredible position all the riches of knowing god and being found in him all the wealth of participating in his perfect kingdom all the benefit of living under his loving rule and one day ruling with him over a redeemed creation where there will be no more sin and no more sorrow no more sickness and no more death there will be no more strife because the victory will have been won and we will be with him and just like the pevensees experience the fullness of life in Narnia as kings and queens as sons and daughters of Adam redeemed by Aslan we too will experience that richness and that fullness all the love all the privilege all the status and all the wealth that our hearts truly yearn for not the passing fleeting treasures of this world but the things that our hearts truly long for we have all of that in Christ we have all we ever need and what we will find in eternity is that the thing we most need is God himself and when we have him it almost doesn't matter everything else will fade because we have

God himself as our father and we are living with him as he reigns over his new creation and that will be enough for us friends I wonder though if you hear that and you think well that sounds really nice but that's not life right now is it Paul knows that that's exactly what the rest of this verse tells us see this is the interesting thing of what Paul is telling us is that when we are joined with Christ we are joined with Christ in all of who Christ is and what he's doing we are not called to be the redeemer in the same way that he is but we are called to live in the pattern of his life and being joined with him in this incredible position as joint heirs with him we then walk the road that he walked for us as we follow him and so we have this surprising thing because

I think that maybe you have experienced this to hear the message you are beloved child of God and he has given you everything that you need you have this incredible identity and position and inheritance and God is looking out for you and you think then why is my life so hard if my life is this hard how could it be that God actually loves me and is my heavenly father because wouldn't a father stop these things from happening and Paul says no Paul says that a loving father loves us so much that he wants us to walk the path that Christ walked and to know what that means because if by our logic God would prevent those things from happening do you know what would have happened to us

Christ never would have died on the cross the injustice and the suffering that he experienced for us never would have happened if he had been a heavenly father like that but in fact his love was so great for us that he allowed those things to happen in fact he planned for them to happen for our redemption Jesus who did not count equality with God something to be grasped but humbled himself took on the form of a servant suffered in his incarnate form tiredness and hunger but more than that as he identified with us he then went to the cross and took upon himself our sin and the wrath of God against that evil that dwells in the hearts of all of us apart from God Jesus walked this incredible path of suffering and he did it for our redemption so that by dying in our place and rising again to new life he would be able to defeat sin and death and so to capture us up with him in glory for he has been exalted to the right hand of the father he has a name which is greater than any name in heaven or earth and the

[35 : 53] Christian life now is not one that does not suffer but one that in suffering finds fellowship with the one who suffered for our redemption and in walking through that believing that God is doing a greater work of redemption in our lives in the lives of those around us and in this world than we could ever imagine and as we are identified with Christ and being a son of the father we know that this will be a part of what our lives will look like but friends we know it is all worth it because as we hang on through those hard things and as God gives us the patient endurance in our fight against sin in our fight as we experience injustice and fallenness in the world it will all be worth it because not only are we going to be with Christ in our sufferings but we will be with him in glory we will be raised with him to a new and eternal life where there will be no more sickness and sorrow and death and no more suffering we will be raised with him to this exalted position where we will sit and reign with him and we will know the father's love without pain without trial our sin will be done away with perfectly and what a glorious glorious thing it is and so in fact friends what Paul is telling us here is not only is that the path but in fact it is a sign if you are a child of

God if you are a son of God you will suffer it is an unpleasant truth to our ears and yet it is a consistent witness of the scriptures we will suffer in this world but it is in fact a sign that we are sons of God when we suffer with Christ and so anticipate and look forward to the glory that will be with him and so we say with Paul we count all things as lost for the sake of knowing Christ that we may know him and the power of his resurrection that we may share in his sufferings becoming like him in his death so that by any means possible we might attain resurrection from the dead and glory and this is our greatest hope that our sonship that our being a child of God is not just for this life but it is for eternity that we will be with him

Lord what a great hope this is for some of you this message this morning is a reminder a needed reminder of something maybe you've lost sight of about who God is and who you are in relationship to him for some of you this may be a revolutionary revelation I've never heard of this before God could really be like that to me for some of you it may still feel like a fairy tale too good to be true my prayer is that you may know the love of God the Father today that you may know his calling on all in Christ to be his sons and daughters his children let's pray behold what manner of love the

Father has bestowed on us that we should be called children of God Lord may by your spirit you help us this morning to know these things are true Lord to convict our hearts when we are doubtful when we find ourselves rejecting these truths Lord will you help us when we find that this is painful and we need your help and your healing to consider you as our Father Lord will you affirm and deepen our understanding of these things for your glory we pray in Jesus name Amen Amen to the a manure