

Romans 8:12-17 (Robert Kerr) 71830

Bible Treasury: Volume N9, Romans 8:12-17, Notes on (8:12-17)

We have to do tonight chiefly with the last three verses. The fifteenth verse gives us a very impressive and instructive contrast between the spirit we have not received and the Spirit we have received. We can truly say we "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." There was a time when we had grounds of fear—a certain fearful looking for of judgment that indeed distressed us. It is not so now. Are we not brought into perfect peace by that perfect sacrifice? "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." So that we have not received the spirit of bondage and of fear. Terror and dread have disappeared. We have got to know something of that perfect love that casteth out fear. It is not such a simple thing after all to believe the great love of God; it is so utterly beyond our comprehension. There is not a single thing in ourselves to draw out His love. But He has loved us, and surely when He has shown such great love to us it is ingratitude indeed not to believe Him. His is the perfect love, not ours.

I am not quite sure but that there is a thought here of the contrast between the Jew and the believer. We can understand a Jew having fears and anxieties. A Jew might have peace on the day of atonement, but how soon that peace would be gone! "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God.... For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." He hath obtained eternal redemption. He offered full satisfaction to God for the sum total of our sins, therefore we are delivered from fear.

But then we are exhorted to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Deliverance from fear is a very special blessing.

Then you see what we have received—the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." The Jew could never cry, "Abba, Father," much less the Gentile, who was without hope and without God in the world. This is special; peculiar to those who are in Christ.

Now let us look into this matter of the Spirit of adoption. Adoption is a word occurring frequently in the New Testament and in one sense also in connection with Israel. They were an adopted people—and ourselves have received the adoption of sons—but what a difference between the two cases! "We are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." We have the Spirit now, but we are waiting for this redemption. When the Lord comes and we are fashioned like unto His body of glory, we shall know what this adoption is.

We need to go further down to feel the full force and enter into the reality of this. The most affecting scene that our eyes can rest on in the whole word is that scene in Gethsemane. There the Lord uses these words, "Abba, Father." See how near we are brought. We only have these words three times in the whole of scripture—in Mark, in Romans, and in Galatians. One of our hymns says, "None but children Abba say." Adopted children in the East never use this word. The spirit (of adoption) bears witness to a great fact, that is, we are the children of God. You may have noticed how very constantly the apostle John uses the word "children"; in fact we get nothing else there. I know our precious translation gives the word sons (ch. 3, vers. 1 and 2), but it should be children. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God." Sonship brings in a different line of truth altogether. You may be sure the Spirit of God never uses a different word without a distinctive meaning. In the writings of the apostle Paul we get both words. They are used in this very chapter: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." The children are to be manifested as sons before the world.

I want you really to see to-night that we are in reality horn into the family of God. This word "children" is intended to bring us into the reality and intimacy of our position with God. David adopted Mephibosheth, brought him into his own family, and he sat at the king's table, but you can all clearly see that Mephibosheth could never be David's child; he was Jonathan's son and must remain so. That is adoption, but here we have something much better than that—"born of God," "quickened by his Spirit." The thing for us to do is to believe it. Being born of God the sense of relationship is given to the soul, "and the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." The word "sons" implies heirship, but is there not something sweeter in being brought into the family of God? There is a blessedness in that that no one can describe. The witness of the Spirit comes in here just at the right place. It would be a valuable exercise to trace out the varied blessings given to us through the indwelling of the Spirit. We have the Spirit dwelling in us here, and an Advocate with the Father in the heavens. God, in His matchless love, has fully provided for us. Surely we shall be brought safely through when this is so.

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." One believing is a different creature from what he was before. When you believe, there is the witness of your own spirit that you are changed. But the matter is of such supreme importance that it is not enough to have that witness, therefore "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit." He gives and maintains in us the sense of this relationship into which we have been brought; that we are in very deed and truth children of God. He is our Father, loving us and caring for us. Many people have never got beyond "Almighty God." That was very comforting to Abraham, but we are brought into the family of God. A young convert may be very ignorant of the truth, but in his simplicity he very soon cries, "Abba, Father." And this is very beautiful. Somehow he naturally addresses the Father; it is the Spirit leading him unconsciously. Nothing delights Him more than for us to fully believe that He is our Father. And so "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Do we really believe that tonight? Everyone must see that if this is true there is in it an immeasurable amount of blessing. Children of God. We have received this witness of the Spirit teaching and enabling us to cry, "Abba, Father." The love of God flows to us in all this, and should be enjoyed by us. What a claim this gives us, you see, upon His love, His care, His watchful eye. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him." Good things! all manner of good things! God will never give a bad thing to one of His children, you may rely upon that. Always good. Alas! how often we allow unbelief to keep us from opening our mouths wide to Him.

It is a supreme privilege to be allowed to come to Him as our Father with our wants.

The matter does not end there. It necessarily follows, if children, then heirs. Look what it means. Heirs of God. God is our Father, we His heirs. What does that mean? Look further. "Joint heirs with Christ." He hath given all things into His hands. He is the heir of all things. "That he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." Not only will this world be in His possession, but the whole universe. And we are joint heirs with Christ. Do you see what that means? No, you do not. Of course, you do not. It goes beyond us completely—the breadth, the length, and depth, and height. If we really believed it, it would surely remove envy and jealousy. When we come to think how superior our inheritance is to anything the world has to offer us we should surely be above its petty things. They must all go, but all is secure that is laid up in the heavens for us. How this should cheer us, and how it should gladden us! If it were half believed as it should be it would fill us with joy. These are realities—realities. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." It is revealed in the word, but we have not yet the experience. We are going to share the inheritance of the whole universe with Him.

Now bringing us down to our present condition: "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." The glory comes in again. Tribulation is the present thing, but the bright glorious future is coming. It seems to me impossible for a Christian not to suffer with Him. He suffered for righteousness' sake and for the sins and woes of the world. We suffer in sympathy with Him. It is impossible to pass through the world without feeling it in some measure. It only proves more clearly and fully that we are children of God. We have been given to Christ out of the world. Very few have the privilege now of suffering greatly for Him. Many have suffered for Him in the past and have laid down their lives for His sake. Just so. But this is almost lower ground, and takes in every child of God. What then? "That we may be also glorified together." This goes beyond glorified bodies; that will be at the coming of the Lord, but this at His appearing. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." We shall be glorified together before the eyes of the whole universe when He comes to be glorified in His saints. What a future opens up before us! Glory upon glory! It is a privilege to suffer with Him—all privilege. God grant His blessing. Amen.

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