

## The Christian's Confirmation

By David Harrell

*Bible Text:* Romans 8:14-17

Will you join me this morning by taking your Bibles and turning to Paul's epistle to the Romans once again? Romans chapter eight.

This morning we are in verses 14 through 17 where the Spirit of God speaks to us with respect to the Christian's confirmation.

Let me read this text to you, Romans eight beginning at verse 14.

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.<sup>1</sup>

American politics betrays the evils of men's hearts and the utter hopelessness of attaining any measure of Utopia as many would like to strive for. In fact, to expect self-willed, self-centered people to try to resolve politically the problems that are a result of their sin would be like expecting a pig to clean up after himself. It is simply not going to happen. Man is hopelessly enslaved by his nature, by his sinfulness and no amount of legislation will ever bring him lasting joy.

You see, man's problem is not political. It is not philosophical. It is not an economic problem. It is a spiritual problem. What is needed is transformation, not legislation.

Neither the liberals nor the conservatives have any chance of ever bringing about lasting peace and prosperity in our country. As we look at Scripture we see that the world is being prepared for the antichrist. Sadly, whether it is the immoral, drug-addicted leftist of the occupy Wall Street mob or the social and fiscal conservatives of the tea party, both groups are consumed with the things of this world. And this is a system controlled by Satan, temporarily so, at least.

And so this is all they have. This is all they know, this world, this life. So, therefore, for Christians as citizens of another kingdom to somehow get heavily involved in the political process is frankly a waste of time. You are just rearranging the deck furniture on the *Titanic*.

You see, folks, we need to be about the gospel. That is our great commission, the gospel of Christ.

Now the same destructive forces that are at work here in our country and in our world today were at work in the first century when Paul penned this epistle. Those first century

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:14-17.

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Christians were dealing with enormous problems in their lives. They were struggling to survive in a morass of evil. But unlike the deception and the uncertainty of this world, the promises of God to those that he has redeemed are absolutely certain. They are true. They are forever safe because we belong to him.

And therein is our great confidence and joy. For this reason Paul says in Romans five verse two:

“...we exult in hope of the glory of God.”<sup>2</sup>

And, my friends, it is this hope, this hope in the glory of God, this assurance, this security that we have as believers, this is the hope, this is the promise that Paul continues to develop here in chapter eight. And what an encouragement this must have been to those early believers when they heard this epistle read to them for the first time. What an encouragement it must have been as they took time to meditate upon these truths.

Now prior to this Paul has gone into great detail explaining how as Christians we have been justified. We have been declared righteous because of the imputed righteousness of Christ. He has emphasized our union with Christ. We have been placed in Christ and therefore we have been forever removed from the realm of condemnation. He has gone on to describe how that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit who has radically changed our nature. He is the one that empowers us to put to death the deeds of the body which is something utterly foreign to the unregenerate. The unregenerate man lives according to the flesh. He is enslaved by his sin. The thought of in any way putting to death the deeds of his body are completely foreign to him. Because of his nature, he is incapable of conforming to the moral character and the desires of God.

The apostle has also revealed to us how this abiding presence of the Holy Spirit guarantees our salvation. We have an assurance that cannot be shaken. So this is the theme, the security of the believer, the assurance of the believer. This is the theme that we have here in chapter eight, the assurance that all that God has promised, he will accomplish perfectly. And what we have in him can never be rescinded. It will never be discarded. Its promises can never be thwarted.

You will recall in verses 12 and 13 the last time we were together the apostle deals with the Christian's obligation, that we are no longer debtors to the flesh. We are debtors of the Spirit and so our joyful obligation is to submit to him, the one who empowers us to put to death the deeds of the body.

And now here in verse 14 through 17 he addresses the Christian's confirmation, that which proves or validates the genuineness of our faith. And key to understanding this confirmation is to understand and experience and manifest the works of the Spirit and I would like to list them under the following four headings. We are going to see that he

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 5:2.

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leads our lives, he relieves our fears, he assures our spirit and, finally, he guarantees our glory.

Now this morning we will only have time to look at the first two: he leads our lives and relieves our fears.

Now as we make our way through this magnificent chapter we find ourselves ever ascending a path that takes us higher and higher to the heights of grace. Just when you think there can be no greater vantage point to view what God has done for us, he takes us yet another step and we say, "Oh, my, I cannot even fathom anything more magnificent."

Think about it. He begins by telling us that no more condemnation. You are in Christ. Wow. That is absolutely staggering. Once I was in Adam. Now I am in Christ.

And so the ultimate basis of my assurance and my grounds to claim eternal security is because I am in Christ. But he doesn't leave us there. He takes us yet higher. He tells us, "And you are also empowered by the Holy Spirit within you so that you can live righteous lives. You can put to death the deeds of the body."

All who are being led by the Spirit of God... he is telling us here that you are sons of God. Not only that, let me tell you something else. You are a fellow heir with Christ. And the Spirit of God guarantees all of these glorious truths and he goes on and on from there.

So let's continue to ascend this mountain of grace that is ours that is confirmed by the works of the Spirit in our life.

You might want to ask yourself. How can I really have this assurance of salvation? What are some of the measures that the apostle tells us here that we need to look at, some of the standards that we can compare our lives to?

Well, first of all, he leads our lives. Will you notice verse 14?

"For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."<sup>3</sup>

Now some technical things first that are important. The word "for" tells us that he is expanding upon a previous theme, the theme that we have in verse 13, that the Spirit of God is the one that empowers us to put to death the deeds of the body.

So what we are seeing here is he not only does that, but he does something else. He leads our lives. He is our guide.

The term "led" in the original language can also be translated to guide or to direct, to so influence others as to cause them to follow some kind of recommended course of action.

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<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:14.

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That is the idea. And grammatically it indicates that this is an influence of a leading that already exists. However, it is not one that can ever be interrupted as we can see.

You see, being led by the Spirit will be the mark of the genuine believer. It will be the mark of the sons of God. A Christian will not only be one who is putting to death the deeds of the body, but also will submit to the leading of the Spirit. And others will see it.

To say it a little bit differently: The overall direction of a Christian's life will manifest a continual leading by the Spirit of God. Although at times, due to sin, we may temporarily grieve or even quench the Spirit by yielding to the flesh the old nature.

Now this is the most magnificent reality when you think about it, that the Spirit here is leading us.

Now, certainly if these things are missing in the life of a professing Christian, he has no legitimate claim to Christ. And so it is important that we examine this. In fact, is further underscored by the grammar of the phrase. Notice he says:

“...these are sons of God.”<sup>4</sup>

It is emphatic. In other words, what he is saying is these and these alone are the sons of God, those who are being led by the Spirit. Anyone making a claim to be a child of God who is not being led by the Spirit of God does not belong to the family of God regardless of what he may believe.

So measure your life against these standards, not against man's standards.

Now often we hear people talk about the universal fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man and how that we are all God's children. I am sure you have heard that before. Yeah, we are just all God's children. So there is kind of an attitude there of so we just need to be tolerant of everybody. That is kind of the mood that we have especially in our culture today.

Well, that is true only in the sense that we are the children of our Father meaning the creator. But that is not true with respect to being his adopted sons.

You see, biblically, the only ones that are children of God are those that have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their only hope of salvation. These are the sons of God. In fact, we are told in John one and verse 12:

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> John 1:12.

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You see, only those whom the Father has adopted can call him Father. Otherwise, according to what Jesus said in John 8:44, you are of your Father the devil and you want to do the desires of your Father. He went on to say in chapter three verse 36 that the wrath of God abides upon those people.

You see, these will not be the ones led by the Spirit. According to Ephesians chapter two and verse two he says that they are going to be led by the Spirit referring to the ruler that is now working in the sons of disobedience. You see, disobedience will be the chief characteristic of their life.

Verse three tells us that they are by nature children of wrath.

So, practically speaking, what does this look like, being led by the Spirit? Have you ever really thought about this? Have you asked yourself? How can I recognize this magnificent reality that is so important when it comes to confirming the genuineness of my faith?

Well, I hope you have, but if you haven't, we are going to do that right now.

May I offer you three ways that we can experience this in our life, three ways we see it. First of all, we see that illumines our minds with truth. Who among us could possibly say that we would have seen the truth of the gospel were it not for the power of the Spirit of God that gave us eyes to see? It is fascinating that Jesus promised to send the helper in John 16 verse seven. He was going to send the helper, referring to the Holy Spirit. And in verse eight he says:

“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment.”<sup>6</sup>

And then in verse 13 Jesus described him as the Spirit of truth who will come and guide you into all the truth.

All right? What is the truth? Well, the truth is the Word of God authored by the Spirit of God. Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17:

“Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.”<sup>7</sup>

So the true sons of God will be led by the Spirit of God to understand and embrace the truth of the Bible that he has authored.

Many people are deceived into believing that there are numerous forms of truth that can make us sons of God, other philosophies, other religious systems, other sources, frankly, that have not come from the Spirit of God. I think of the Roman Catholic Church that has added to the canon of Scripture all of the traditions received and developed by other

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<sup>6</sup> John 16:8.

<sup>7</sup> John 17:17.

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people down through time resulting in all manner of spurious doctrines that are not found in the Bible.

And then you can think of all the cults that are out there like Mormonism, cults that were spawned by an angel who supposedly gives some kind of special revelation that ends of contradicting Scripture or adding to it. And, I believe, that an angel truly did that. It is not an angel from God, but an angel from Satan, a demon. And I think of Joseph Smith that had an angel come to him and communicate to him what is now Mormonism, an angel he called Moroni.

And think about all the things that has come out of that. These are things not from the Spirit of God. They believe that God is himself a created being. They would deny, for example, the trinity. They deny that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. They believe in millions of gods. They don't even know how many gods they have.

When Mormons die they believe that couples that were baptized in the temple there in Salt Lake who have been faithful Mormons get their own planet where they can enjoy celestial sex forever and ever. That is not from the Spirit.

Then they can produce more gods and more gods.

Frankly, Mormonism is rooted in sexual deviancy and it has enormous parallels to Islam where there, too, you can be enticed by the 70 virgins and so forth.

Joseph Smith and Brigham Young were into polygamy, that really legitimized their pedophilia. They believed that the Bible had to be corrected by the writings of Joseph Smith. So you end up with the pearl of great price and the doctrines in the covenant.

Beloved, none of this is from the Spirit of truth. People that believe this are not being led by the Spirit. These types of things come from the father of lies.

As a footnote, when you think about it, here you have got Joseph Smith the founder of Mormonism. He receives this revelation from Moroni and then years later there is another Mormon, a lady by the name of Stephanie Myer, who ends up having a dream about a young girl who gets visited by a vampire that loves her very much, but wants to suck her blood.

Well, she then authors a very popular romance novel called *Twilight* that is turned into movie series as I understand it, something that has just literally swept the world. She is now a multi, multi, multi millionaire and this is marketed primarily to impressionable pre teen and teenage girls. And, as you look at this perverted demonic garbage, what you see is a variation of counterfeit of the gospel, that you can be born again. But not by the blood of Jesus, but by becoming a vampire and sucking the blood of others so that you can be forever young and on it goes.

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I might add that any parent that would allow their child to even remotely be influenced by this time of demonic material is simply not a believer that is being led by the Spirit of God. This is wicked, wicked stuff.

Every religious system other than biblical Christianity is false. It is deadly. They are counterfeit truths. Paul calls them doctrines of demons. They are inspired by Satan, the Father of lies who, at times, can appear as an angel of light. None of this is authored by the Spirit.

But we must remember that there is a great battle for the truth, an ancient battle that has been going on. It is being waged in the realm of the supernatural. It is for this reason that John warns us in 1 John four verse one.

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”<sup>8</sup>

So we must understand that it is only the Holy Spirit that will lead the true sons of God through his illuminating work so that they can see the truth and embrace the truth. This will not happen with the unregenerate. You will remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians two verse 14.

“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things.”<sup>9</sup>

In other words, he is able to make spiritual judgments.

“...yet he himself is appraised by no man. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE SHOULD INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.”<sup>10</sup>

Now how can we possibly have the mind of Christ? Because we have the resident truth teacher within us, the Holy Spirit that illumines our minds.

John described the Spirit's illuminating work, as well, in 1 John two verse 27. He says:

“And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.”<sup>11</sup>

You will recall in chapter eight verse five the believers are the ones that set their minds, Paul tells us, on the things of the Spirit. This is part of what it means to be led by the Spirit of God here in verse 14. Because of the empowering work of the Spirit of God

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<sup>8</sup> 1 John 4:1.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:14-15.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:15-16.

<sup>11</sup> 1 John 2:27.

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within a believer, his mind will habitually focus on the things of the Spirit, the things that the Spirit draws his attention to.

As you may recall, this would include what Paul referred to in 1 Corinthians 2:7 as the wisdom of God:

“...a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory.”<sup>12</sup>

In verse nine:

THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD,  
AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL  
THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM. For to  
us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things,  
even the depths of God.<sup>13</sup>

You see, these are the things of the Spirit. These are the truths of Scripture that will dominate the mind of the sons of God. Why? Because the Spirit has illumined his mind, because the Spirit leads him. The Spirit of God is not going to lead you to look at this twilight type of stuff. It is going to lead you the opposite direction. You will be absolutely repulsed by that type of thing if you are truly born again.

I think of Lydia. Remember the seller of purple in Acts chapter 16. She comes and she hears what is going on and in verse 14 it says:

“...and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.”<sup>14</sup>

This is how the Spirit leads. This is how he guides us into all truth. And it was for this reason Paul prayed for the Ephesians in chapter one verse 17.

“...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.”<sup>15</sup>

He went on to pray:

“...that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened.”<sup>16</sup>

So, dear friend, if you profess Christ, but you are not becoming increasingly convicted of sin and righteousness and judgment, if the truths of Scripture are boring or foolish to you, if somehow the philosophies and other religious systems in the world that are apart from the revelation of Scripture really capture your mind and your heart, if you are infatuated

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<sup>12</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:7.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:9-10.

<sup>14</sup> Acts 16:14.

<sup>15</sup> Ephesians 1:17.

<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 1:18.



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with mysticism and the occult, if you hold sacred the views of others who speak contrary to or in addition to the Word of God, then you are not being led by the Spirit. You are being led by a Spirit, but not the Spirit. You are being led by the Spirit of the antichrist.

Another evidence of Spirit leading, besides the illuminating work upon our mind is that he activates our will with desire.

Let me explain this to you. We know biblically that prior to being born again our wills are in bondage to our sin nature.

People say, "Well, what about our free will? Wait a minute we have got free will here."

Well, yes. It is free. It is always free to choose wrongly and that is exactly what it will always do. You see, the issue is not a man's will, but his desire. His desires that come out of his sinful nature.

My will is perfectly free to reject Christ, to abandon my wife and become a Buddhist monk. But I have no desire to do that. Likewise, the unregenerate man has the freedom to repent, to believe in the gospel and be saved. But he has no desire to do so unless the Spirit of God does something. You will recall in Romans eight verse seven:

"...because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so."<sup>17</sup>

But in the inscrutable mystery of regeneration where the Spirit causes us to be born again, the Holy Spirit works with the human will causing a man to freely and to voluntarily repent and place his faith in the living Christ. There is no coercion here. There is just an irresistible compelling of the Spirit.

Paul spoke of this in 1 Thessalonians one verse five. He said:

"...for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction."<sup>18</sup>

And Paul tells us in Titus 3:5 that we are saved:

"...by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit."<sup>19</sup>

And, as a result of that, we become new creatures in Christ. Again, the old things pass away. The new things have come, 2 Corinthians 5:17.

The Holy Spirit then leads us. He persuades us, if you will. He guides us into loving the

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<sup>17</sup> Romans 8:7.

<sup>18</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:5.

<sup>19</sup> Titus 3:5.

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things that we once hated and hating the things that we once loved. He changes our desires which activates our wills to walk uprightly with him, to become more like Christ.

2 Corinthians five verse 14 Paul described how Christ's love for us motivates us to serve. As he said:

“For the love of Christ controls us.”<sup>20</sup>

The term literally means to pressure in order to produce action. He activates our will on the basis of love. And what is the first fruit of the Spirit? Love. It is the Spirit that does this.

Dear Christian, don't you love to hear the Lord's voice in his Word? Don't you love to do his will? Of course you do.

1 John 5:3 we read:

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.”<sup>21</sup>

Oh, but they are to a non Christian. They are extremely burdensome. They scoff at all that the Lord has asked us to do that we would do joyfully just for a non believer to come to church and worship and hear an exposition of the Scripture, why, he would rather do almost anything in life than that. And yet for those of us who love Christ, because of the Spirit's work within us to give us the desire to activate our will, we gladly do that. Not out of duty, but out of desire.

Jesus said in Matthew five verse six that we will hunger and thirst for righteousness. Again, not so the unregenerate. He hungers and thirsts for unrighteousness. He loves his sin.

It is fascinating. As we look at Scripture we see that the great desire of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Son. In fact, we read this in John 16 verse 14. The Lord said:

“He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you.”<sup>22</sup>

And as we look at the Word of God we see that God is revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ which is the subject of the New Testament which was authored by the Holy Spirit who puts him on display.

The Spirit is like the wind. He is invisible, but he is powerful. And we can see the effects of the Spirit in our lives even though we cannot see him. He is the one that causes us to bear fruit, Galatians five, the fruit of the Spirit, the natural, automatic manifestations

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<sup>20</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:14.

<sup>21</sup> 1 John 5:3.

<sup>22</sup> John 16:14.

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of Christ like virtues that gradually grows on the vine of a believer's life. We see the works of the Spirit through the spiritual gifts that he gives us. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 12 and verse seven Paul tells us:

“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”<sup>23</sup>

Manifestation, *fanerwsiv* (fan-er'-o-sis) in the original language. It means to make something visible.

You see, the invisible Spirit makes himself visible through those that he indwells. The Spirit gives every believer a spiritual gift and it is fascinating, again, as we look at Scripture we learn that these spiritual gifts are a specific free bestowment of God's grace which enables the believer to function in the realm of spiritual things in order to minister to others as the Holy Spirit works through us to do his will, to ultimately exalt Christ and live for the glory of God.

And that is what the saints will do. In ever increasing maturity we will more and more exalt the Lord Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit. And, again, none of this is done by some kind of divine coercion. He does not force us. We do it freely. We do it voluntarily. It is a desired act of our will, because we desire to serve him with all of our heart.

If the Spirit forced us to do these things against our will, well, then he would never be grieved, nor would he be quenched in the life of a believer, which we are warned will happen when we disregard the promptings of the Spirit of God, again, as he has revealed himself to us in his Word.

In Psalm 32 verse eight, fascinating text. He says:

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you.”<sup>24</sup>

Don't you love that?

“I will counsel you with My eye upon you.”<sup>25</sup>

Then he goes on to say:

“Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, Otherwise they will not come near to you.”<sup>26</sup>

I like the way Calvin renders that phrase. He says, “Lest they kick against thee.”

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<sup>23</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:7.

<sup>24</sup> Psalm 32:8.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Psalm 32:9.

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In horse language we would say, "Unless they refuse to yield to you pressure." That is the key in operating a horse are a mule. You see, they are utterly useless unless they learn to yield to pressure. And we use bits and bridles and spurs and things like that to give them that pressure, to hold them in check. Otherwise, they just live to themselves, controlled only by their instincts. And this is such a picture of the unbeliever. They are not led by the Spirit. They do not yield to him. They are stubborn and unyielding, stupid, ignorant. Therefore they are useless.

But oh how different the believer where the Spirit of God causes us to yield. Think of what the psalmist said in Psalm 119 verse 16.

"I shall delight in Thy statutes; I shall not forget Thy word."<sup>27</sup>

Or, as the psalmist entreated the Lord in Psalm 143 verse 10. He says:

"Teach me to do Thy will, For Thou art my God; Let Thy good Spirit lead me on level ground."<sup>28</sup>

What a joy it is to submit to his gentle promptings? Yet it is the Spirit that activates our will to do so causing us to bear fruit and proving, therefore, that we are sons of God, causing us to enjoy the blessings that are available to us in Christ.

So, how does the Spirit lead? Well, he illuminates our minds with truth. He activates our will with desire, but third and finally he animates our heart with hope.

In Romans chapter 15 verse 13 Paul prayed:

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."<sup>29</sup>

Beloved, hope is the steadfast, confident assurance that God will fulfill everything that he has promised. And it is the longing of the believer's heart for those things to happen as quickly as possible. Don't you long to see Christ? Of course you do. A believer's mind will be set on things above, not on the things of earth. This will be the prevailing theme of a soul that has found its greatest satisfaction in God alone. This is something that the Spirit of God has animated within our heart, this hope. This will be a certain mark of a child of God.

A true believer, said differently, will live in light of eternity. Not so the unregenerate. They have no hope. They have no joy. They have not peace. They live only for this world. Why? Because they do not have the power of the Holy Spirit to animate this hope within their heart.

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<sup>27</sup> Psalm 119:16.

<sup>28</sup> Psalm 143:10.

<sup>29</sup> Romans 15:13.

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Paul tells us in Titus two and verse 11:

“For the grace of God has appeared.”<sup>30</sup>

Referring to the Lord Jesus and the gospel and the Spirit of God, all that is mixed in with our salvation.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us.<sup>31</sup>

Ask yourself. Are you looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ?

If so, you have every reason to believe that you are one of the sons of God because you would not be doing that were it not for the Spirit of God within you to animate your heart with such hope.

As a pastor, I have had many opportunities to be around elderly saints who are about to slip through the veil of this life and many times they get to a point where they really don't say anything and they don't look at you much and if they do I am not sure they are even seeing you. And there is really nothing of this world that interests them. Many times they are unable to speak. They are weak. They are despondent.

But, oh, dear friends, when you mention the name Jesus, when you begin to sing a hymn of praise you suddenly see them come alive. I have seen it over and over again. In fact, sometimes they will begin to sing a little bit with you and you haven't heard them speak a word in weeks. It is an amazing thing.

What has happened? I will tell you what has happened. It is the Spirit of God leading them. He is the one that is animating their heart with the hope that is within them. You see, they are looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus.

You see, the one who caused them to originally be born again, who gave them the gift of faith, who energizes their life with a living hope now engages them yet again. This is what I mean by the Spirit animating our heart with hope.

Hebrews 11:1:

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Titus 2:11.

<sup>31</sup> Titus 2:11-14.

<sup>32</sup> Hebrews 11:1.

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And it is the Spirit that gives us this faith. They are like Abraham, remember, who was looking for the city which has foundations whose architect and builder is God. He is looking for the heavenly Jerusalem all of his life. He desired a better country Hebrews tells us, one that is a heavenly one.

This is all of the result of the work of the Spirit. So when the Spirit of God is leading you, these are the types of things that you will see.

So you want to ask yourself. Has he illumined my mind with the truth of Scripture? Has he activated my will with desire so that I want to put to death the deeds of the body and I see this happening? And the greatest joy in my life is found in knowing and serving the living Christ.

Moreover, he is the one that has animated my heart with hope. Ask yourself. Do you abound in hope by the power of the Spirit?

Said differently, is the greatest passion of your life to see the Lord Jesus Christ face to face.

If so, you have ever reason to believe that you a son of God.

But the inspired apostle reveals yet another confirming work of the Spirit that we are sons of God. Not only does he lead our lives in verse 14, but he relieves our fears. Notice verse 15.

“For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’”<sup>33</sup>

No although they try to deny it and anesthetize it, non believers are slaves to fear, the fear of death, the fear of eternal judgment, because they are slaves to their sin. Again, having been at the bedside of many unbelievers who are about to die, I have seen this first hand. I have seen this fear. And yet many times that fear is accompanied with an angry rebellion against the gospel. I have witnessed to people and had them growl at me. I have had them spit at me. I have had them turn their face away from me. They do not want to hear the gospel of truth. They continue to suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

And some of them are trusting in their good works or some religious affiliation to get them into heaven. But they are utterly bereft of a confident assurance based upon all that we are examining here before us. They do not have a heart that would exult in the glory of God because they have never been led by the Spirit of God.

How different the child of God who has received a Spirit of adoption as sons here in

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<sup>33</sup> Romans 8:15.

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verse 15.

You see, we enjoy a Spirit induced sense of sonship. Can I put it that way? We have a hope that does not disappoint according to chapter five verse five:

“...because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”<sup>34</sup>

In other words, we enjoy a subjective awareness of the love of God. And this is true of every child of God. If you have not experienced this, I cannot explain it to you. But all of you who know and love Christ know precisely what I am talking about.

In 1 John four verse 18 John is speaking of the fear of judgment in the unbeliever and he says:

“There is no fear in love.”<sup>35</sup>

Referring to the fear of judgment. And this now is speaking of the believer. But he goes on to say:

“...but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.”<sup>36</sup>

You see, we don't have that fear. We have been perfected in love. We are hidden in Christ.

So we have confidence even in a coming day of judgment. We have no fear of what is going to happen when we stand before our creator.

In fact, the writer of Hebrews says this in Hebrews chapter two beginning at verse 14.

Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.<sup>37</sup>

My friend, one day you will be confronted with the very real possibility that you are going to die. I have been there before. Obviously I have continued to live, but I know that feeling when you think I am probably not going to survive. And when that time comes you will face one of two kinds of experiences. You will either be terrified with uncertainty or you will experience a peace that surpasses all comprehension. And these two experiences are determined solely on the basis of whether or not you have the Spirit

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<sup>34</sup> Romans 5:5.

<sup>35</sup> 1 John 4:18.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Hebrews 2:14-15.

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of God dwelling in you or not. If you are a son of God and you have the Spirit within you, then you will enjoy that peace, but not so if the Spirit is not in you.

Paul tells us in 2 Timothy one verse seven that that Father has not given us a spirit of timidity, that is, of fear, but of power and love and discipline. And so, indeed, as Paul says here in verse 15 of chapter eight, we have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

This is so wonderful, dear friends. The Lord wants us to absolutely know that we are his. Now think about this concept of adoption. It is very powerful in helping us to understand the assurance that is ours in Christ.

Adoption, *uioyesia* (hwee-oth-es-ee'-ah) in the original language, is a compound word. It is made up of the word "son" and to place. So adoption in the New Testament does not mean what it typically means today, namely the taking of a child into a family to be a legal member of the family, but the literally meaning of the Greek Word is son placing. The idea of taking a minor, whether in the family or outside and making him or her the rightful heir.

So the picture here is that the Holy Spirit places children of God as we see in verse 16, the *teknon* (tek'-non) in the original language, the born ones, the children. He places us in a legal standing before God and in an intimate relationship to him.

And as we look at Scripture we see something so amazing. You see, every believer is a child of God by birth and an heir of God through adoption. Not only that, we are joint heirs with Christ and we will receive the fullness of his inheritance to share with him one day in glory. That is just over the top astounding.

Now Paul does not press this analogy of adoption too far. So it would be a mistake for me to do so. But given their knowledge of Roman law and adoption, this certainly would have had a deep impact on the early saints there in Rome with respect to appreciating the intimate standing that they have before their heavenly Father.

John MacArthur had a very interesting insight on this. Quote, "Because of its obvious great importance, the process of Roman adoption involved several carefully prescribed legal procedures. The first step totally severed the boy's legal and social relationship to his natural family and the second step placed him permanently into his new family. In addition to that, all of his previous debts and other obligations were eradicated as if they had never existed. For the transaction to become legally binding it also required the presence of seven reputable witnesses who could testify, if necessary, to any challenge of the adoptions after the Father's death," end quote.

My, what a powerful picture of God's love for us as his adopted children.



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So even with what little we know about Roman adoption we can see the power in this term as it is applied to us who have been given, as Paul says, a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out Abba, Father.

Abba is the informal Aramaic term for father. It could be translated like daddy or papa, a term of intimate love and endearment. In fact, our Lord used this term, "Abba" in his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

What a staggering truth. Think about this. It is the Spirit of God that not only empowers us to feel our sonship, but also to have a compelling desire to cry out to God as our Father with full confidence of the level of intimacy and trust that a child would have when crying out to his earthly father.

Beloved, what liberty is ours, what fellowship, what intimate joy. No fear of judgment. No sentence of death here. No worry that somehow we were unable to fulfill the law so we can't come into his presence. No trembling with grief and humiliation, but rather just a confident joy. We are hidden in Christ. Christ sees us in him. We can cry out to him, "Abba, Father."

And my dear wife knows that there are times when I have told her that I am in the vault of study and I must not be interrupted. And she understands that so when the phone calls come in or people come to the door they are very kindly turned away until another time. But, oh, dear friends, when one of my little ones knocks on the door and I look at see their little face it is all together a different story. Why? Because they are mine. They are my children.

My reaction is not one of anger, but one of unmitigated joy. This is my child. This is one that I love. Enter in. Come. Sit on papa's lap. But, oh, if one of those children were to come up to that door and cry out to me in fear, "Papa, help," I would instantly fly to their aid. How much more the attentive love of the heavenly Father to whom we can cry? What an assurance when we know these truths of our heart and we have experienced them and we have cried out to him as our Father and we have watched him tend to our needs?

When that happens, dear friends, you know you are being led by the Spirit of God, that you are a Son of God.

In the mid 1800s, some time after seeing their father fall overboard from a boat and drown right in front of her, Karolina Sandell-Berg, a Swedish lady, penned an old Swedish hymn that I have sung many times having grown up in the first Swedish Baptist Church in the United States there in Moline, Illinois. And it went like this and I close with these thoughts.

Children of the heav'nly Father  
Safely in His bosom gather;  
Nestling bird nor star in Heaven

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Such a refuge e'er was given.

God His own doth tend and nourish;  
In His holy courts they flourish;  
From all evil things He spares them;  
In His mighty arms He bears them.

Neither life nor death shall ever  
From the Lord His children sever;  
Unto them His grace He showeth,  
And their sorrows all He knoweth.

Though He giveth or He taketh,  
God His children ne'er forsaketh;  
His the loving purpose solely  
To preserve them pure and holy.

Lo, their very hairs He numbers,  
And no daily care encumbers  
Them that share His ev'ry blessing  
And His help in woes distressing.

Praise the Lord in joyful numbers:  
Your Protector never slumbers.  
At the will of your Defender  
Ev'ry foeman must surrender.

Oh, dear Christian, be encouraged if, indeed, these confirming works of the Spirit are evident in your life. Does he lead your life? Has he relieved your fears? If so, you can be assured that you are one of the sons of God.

Let's pray together.

*Father, thank you for these eternal truths that ignite our hearts with praise and give us such assurance. May we meditate upon them in the days to come. May they be the theme of our songs. Lord, may they be the great topic that we share with our children and grandchildren and friends to the praise of your glory. Lord, bring conviction to anyone who does not know you as Savior. Oh, God, may today be the day that they bow the knee to the truth of the gospel and repent of their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that they might be saved. I ask this in the precious name of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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