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***Children of God***  
***Romans 8:14-17***

***14*** For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

***15*** For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!"

***16*** it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ***17*** and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

All who are led by the Spirit of God are ***children of God***.  
We are all children of God.

But that usually ***isn't our defining identity***, is it?  
Isn't it funny how we try to set our identity in this world?  
So often it's about what's on the ***outside***....  
What we're wearing, or driving, or where we're living.  
Have you noticed that most of the commercials on television,  
Even if they are for medications,  
Are focused on the outside?

And yet all of that superficial worldly stuff that supposedly identifies us—  
***it doesn't really define us, does it?***

We are ***children*** of God.  
That is our true ***identity***,  
We are God's ***beloved children***.  
All of us.

Unfortunately, we ***don't always live*** that way,  
And we don't always ***treat*** one another that way either, do we?

We tend to look at what we see on the ***outside***.  
We tend to pass judgment based on what we can see with our eyes.  
Instead of looking beyond the flesh, into someone's heart.

And all too often we base our identity upon who ***we've been told we are***, right?

Some of us have had ***parents*** who told us that we are beloved children, much like God told Jesus at the time of his baptism in the Jordan River.

A voice came down from heaven and said,

***this is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased.***

Some people have had parents who said

*you are my precious child, I love you, I'm proud of you.*

Some people have ***NOT had that***. Not at all.

For those who have not heard those words from an earthly father or mother, it can be heartwrenching to hear how other parents love their children.

This is why I ***don't preach sermons*** just about moms and dads on Mother's Day and Father's Day.

Yes, we celebrate parents,

but we also remember that not everyone has parents, or children, or happy families.

And yet regardless of who we are,

I think we all ***long to receive love*** from a parent—don't you?

Don't we all long to be beloved children, loved, accepted, & respected?

I think this is just an ***innate*** thing.

It doesn't matter how crazy your real parents are,

you always ***hold out some hope***

that they will finally get it right, you know?

I remember watching a video of ***Malala Yousafzai***, the Pakistani girl shot in the head by the Taliban because of her work to support the right of girls to get an education. In the video her father is saying about her, *I love her, I love her, I knew that I loved her when I first saw her.*

He goes on to say how proud he is of her education, and how he thinks she could grow up to be even more than a doctor—she could be in politics, and help save her country. NY Times, October 11, 2014, video, The Making of Malala.

There's something so ***powerful*** about the love of a parent, right?

The ***role of a parent*** is powerful.

The good and the bad from our families,  
are ***forever seared*** into our hearts and minds.

We all ***long*** for ***unconditional love***.

And even those who have received great parental love,  
realize that our earthly parents ***are far from perfect***.

So, I think the Bible reminds us—because it's sure full of messed up parents—that we all need something ***more*** than an earthly parent.

We need to ***know*** that we are loved,  
from someone beyond our own family--  
we need it from ***God***.

And here in Romans 8, Paul is talking about this love of God for us,  
He says we are ***adopted children*** of God.

***Adopted***. Maybe that seems strange to say we are adopted—  
because God is the one who made us.

But adoption carries ***special meaning***, doesn't it?

Usually parents don't choose their children---but adoptive parents do!  
They choose their children.

In other words, we are ***chosen***, we are ***adopted***, by God!

***14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.***

That's us—we are led by the Spirit.

Which is great news.

Paul goes on to talk about what ***living in the Spirit*** means.

He says, ***15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption.***

What does that mean?

It means, ***we're not slaves***, we don't have to be afraid—we're chosen children!

But what does it mean to be a ***slave, living in fear***?

In the book *Sons and Daughters*,

Brady Boyd talks about how whenever

we think we have to earn our way to God,

whenever we feel like we have to work our way to heaven,

that's when we are living in ***slavery***,

instead of the freedom of God's grace and unconditional love.

Brady Boyd, Sons and Daughters, Spiritual Orphans Finding our Way Home, Zondervan: Grand Rapids 2012, pg. 39-40)

But--If we accept God's grace through Jesus' death and resurrection,  
then we have nothing to prove,  
so ***no more slavery!***

In late September 1862 Abraham Lincoln announced the ***Emancipation Proclamation***, freeing all slaves beginning January 1, 1863.

When that day dawned, instead of rushing into their new found freedom,  
many slaves stayed put.

Slavery was all they had known.

No matter what people told them,  
they couldn't believe they were actually free.

Government officials would come knocking, saying, look, this is no lie.

Get your belongings and leave. Start living free.

And still some would ***stay*** as slaves.

Just like ***some of us do today***.

Instead of believing that we are free from our past and present,  
that we are forgiven, redeemed, and made new—  
we ***sometimes live as slaves***, instead of children of God.

***Galatians 4:7*** reminds us, ... *you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.*

We are ***no longer slaves***.

We are children of God, co-heirs with Jesus.

Do you know what Romans 8: 1-says?

There is now ***no condemnation*** for those who are in Christ Jesus.

No condemnation.

We are ***free***—free from guilt and shame!

Grace wins!

God's grace is much more powerful than guilt, or shame.

***Grace is what frees us*** from that slavery, and  
helps us live by the Spirit.

And we are ***children of God***, children who can call God "***Daddy***"!  
 That's what Paul means when he says that we cry, "***Abba! Father!***"  
*Abba* is the Aramaic word for Daddy.  
 It's a term of endearment.  
 God is our Heavenly Father, our Dad. Our Daddy.  
 God is also our Heavenly Mother, our Mom.

Because God is beyond being a man, or a woman.  
 In scripture God is ***described with both kinds of pronouns, did you know that?***  
 God is sometimes described in female imagery  
 (see Deuteronomy 32:18; Isaiah 42:14; 49:15; 66:13).  
 In Romans, Paul is just using a term people would have been ***familiar*** with—  
 And the same term that ***Jesus uses*** to talk to God,  
 and the same term he uses in the Lord's Prayer.

Isn't it amazing? That we can be that close to God?  
***Do you have that closeness with God?***  
 Do you want that?

Because the truth is,  
 We are so beloved, that we can ***reach right out*** to our heavenly Parent,  
 And God will respond.

This whole idea of being an ***heir of God***,  
 and a joint heir with Christ,  
 let's think about that for a minute.  
 That means ***Jesus is our Brother***.  
 Have you ever thought about that before?  
 It's a pretty neat thought.

And what about ***inheriting God's grace?***  
 One pastor said that realizing our status as heirs of God  
 is kind of like finding out that you have a ***long lost millionaire uncle***  
 who died and left his entire estate to you!

But how many of us live that way?  
 As beloved children of God?  
 We are all too often living as ***tired, stressed out people***,

running around like chickens with our heads cut off, right?  
Ok—maybe it's just me....

On our recent women's retreat we learned about taking in  
the peace and grace of God.

It was called the **CALM retreat**,

based on an acronym from one of Max Lucado's great books, called

*Anxious for Nothing*. From Max Lucado, *Anxious for Nothing: Finding Calm in a Chaotic World*, Nelson, 2017.

He came up with this acronym to talk about  
what we can do to let go of our fear and worry and anxiety as children of God.  
Remain **CALM**.

C—stands for **celebrate** God's Goodness.

A—stands for **Ask** for Help

L—stands for **leave** your requests with God

M—stands for **meditate** on the good things

What if we did live as **CALM children** of God?

Doesn't **giving up anxiety help us live as children of God?**

So much of our **past** causes anxiety.

So much of our baggage from **families** causes anxiety.

So much of our current **situations** causes anxiety.

And God wants us to live as beloved children---**free from anxiety**.

Now here I am preaching to **myself**.

I was in the hospital this week for heart and GI troubles—  
all likely caused by stress.

I need this CALM Lucado talks about, what about you?

**C---means celebrate God's Goodness.**

How do YOU do that?

I tend to do it with a cup of coffee,

my Bible and Streams in the Desert in the early early morning.

Sometimes I take my **journal** and write a list—of all the blessings, the gifts.

Other times as I **walk** the neighborhood I spend that time thanking and praising God—maybe for the beauty I see as I walk.  
How do **you** celebrate God's goodness?

***A—Ask God for help.***

Do you ask God for help?  
Or do you tend to try and do it all yourself?  
Do you run to friends or family for help, before surrendering to God?

I think we all get off course—the key is to **bring it all back to God--**  
Our heavenly parent, who loves us, and loves to help us!  
I remember something powerful I read a few weeks ago,  
that I shared in a kids sermon.

***God loves to hear your voice.***

Remember that.  
Ask God for help—first and foremost.  
After all, God is the only one who can truly change your situation, and God is the only one who can relieve your fear and anxiety.

***L—Leave your requests with God.***

This is a hard one.  
We tend to bring our burdens to God,  
and then just **take them right back.**  
Why?  
Well, it's hard to trust God sometimes,  
especially since we have to do that by faith, not by sight.  
But if we don't leave our burdens with God, how can God take over and bring the solutions?  
This takes practice—taking it all to God, and leaving it there.

***M—meditate on goodness.***

This one is so important, and I'm again, preaching to myself.  
Because it's so much **easier to meditate** on all that's going wrong,  
and all the ways we want to fix everything, right?  
It's easy to listen to all the **bad news** of the world, day after day.  
It's easy to listen to the **complainers**, day after day.  
But what about the **good things**?  
What about the scriptures—like God's promises?  
What about the blessings we have received?

How can we meditate on goodness?

And meditate on goodness bring us back to our ***identity as children of God***.

How do we start thinking about that?

We are ***God's beloved children***.

In his book, *Sons and Daughters: Spiritual Orphans Finding our Way Home*, by Brady Boyd. Boyd believes that if we ***understand our identity*** as children of God, then we'll know how to live.

He says, 'moment by moment, we come to God and say,

***"Show me the me you somehow see"***.

Brady Boyd, *Sons and Daughters*, (Zondervan 2012), pg. 55.

God--Show me the ***me YOU see***.

Now that's important and profound.

Do you see what ***you*** see, or what ***God*** sees?

God sees us as beloved children, ***free and forgiven and redeemed***.

But ***what do YOU SEE*** when you look in the mirror?

Sometimes we see only ***our past, or present*** circumstances—instead of the 'me' God sees.

We grow up in a ***bad circumstance***,

or we are experiencing a problem ***right now***,

and maybe we become a victim to our situation—

and we let that become who we are—someone who's been hurt.

Instead of a beloved child of God.

Or we get ourselves into a bad situation,

through ***poor choices***,

maybe we are the one who is abusing or neglecting someone else.

And that becomes who we are—a bully, an addict, a mess up—

instead of a child of God.

This is our nature—we tend to ***define ourselves*** by our situation, our choices, and the people around us.

Or we define ourselves by everything on the outside.

***But God does not*** define us that way.



**Nothing** we have done,  
 nothing that has been done to us, defines us.  
 Our families and circumstances do NOT **define** us.

**Only God defines us**—and we know that identity:  
 We are beloved children.  
 Forgiven sons and daughters.

We are **free from everything** else—  
 free to be the people God has made us to be.

Does all of this mean that life with God **will be easy**?  
 No, Paul specifically says in Romans 8:17-18  
*in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.*  
**18** *I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing  
 with the glory about to be revealed to us.*

Life with God is **not necessarily easy**, or free from suffering.  
 We know that life on this side of heaven is broken and fallen.  
 We will suffer.  
 We will have fear and anxiety.

But we will also see the **glory** of God—  
 And the suffering of today is nothing compared to what awaits us one day!

And in this life of suffering,  
 We can **choose—to remain CALM.**  
 Celebrating God's goodness.  
 Asking God for help.  
 Leaving our burdens with God.  
 And Meditating on good things.

Isn't that the **Good News** of the Gospel today?  
 To that, all God's people say, Amen!

