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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***.

Does that describe you?

Are you led by the Spirit of God?

Are you a child of God?

In case you are wondering, the answer is **yes!**

Being a child of God is our ***identity***,

We are people who follow Jesus Christ,

And we are God's beloved children.

All of us.

But we ***don't always live*** that way, do we?

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.

We all ***long to receive love*** from a parent.

We all long to be beloved children, loved, accepted, honored, & respected.

Doesn't it just ***make your day*** when someone says I love you?

What about when they say I'm proud of you?
How much more powerful it is when a parent says that to their child.

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 and her are **sitting side by side** and the father is saying about her, *I love her, I love her, I knew that I loved her when I first saw her as a newborn.*

It was just **so heartwarming** to hear this Father talk about his daughter.

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?
I was watching this video of Malala and her father, thinking –yes, the good and the bad are forever seared into our memories.
The role of a parent is powerful.

We all **long** to receive love and acceptance and pride from a parent.
We long for **unconditional love**.
Some have never received such love.
But even those who have, realize that our earthly parents are broken, fallible people who sometimes hurt us too.

We all need something **more**.

We need to **know** that we are loved,
from someone beyond our own parents or families—
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 to adopt 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.
Remember last week's message?
How we are no longer bound to the flesh, but we are free to live in the Spirit?

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'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)

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

Max Lucado has a great illustration
about living in **slavery vs. freedom in Christ**.
One day he was dropped by his insurance company.
He received a letter about his one too many speeding tickets and fender benders,
and as he thought about not being 'good enough' for insurance coverage, he thought
about the **spiritual parallel**.

What if we are **afraid of receiving that kind of a letter** from God?
What if we feel like we already have?

He wrote an imaginary letter from the **Pearly Gates Underwriting Division** to Mrs. Smith:

Dear Mrs. Smith,
I'm writing in response to this morning's request for forgiveness.
*I'm sorry to inform you that you have **reached your quota** of sins.*
*Our records show that you have **erred** seven times in the area of greed,*
and your prayer life is substandard when compared to others...

Further review reveals that your understanding of doctrine is in the lower 20th percentile, and you have excessive tendencies to gossip.

Because of your sins, you are a high-risk candidate for heaven.

You understand that grace has its limits.

*Jesus sends his regrets and kindest regards,
and hopes that you will find some other kind of coverage.*

Max Lucado, *In the Grip of Grace*, (Nashville: Nelson, 1996), 70.

Do you ever worry that **God has sent you that kind of letter?**

Are you **overwhelmed with any guilt and shame** from the past?

Are you living as a **slave**?

Or are you living as a **beloved child** of God?

Remember what we learned in Romans 8: 1-11 last week:

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

No condemnation.

We don't have to live in slavery,
because now we are **free**—free from guilt and shame,
free from legalistic living.

Grace beats guilt, remember?

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

Grace is what frees us from that slavery to sin.

Grace helps us live by the Spirit.

Because we live in the Spirit, we are **children of God**.

Not children with a distant Father, but children who 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 for Dad.

That's our relationship to God.

God is our Heavenly Father, our Dad. Our Daddy.

That's not to say that God is a man.

God is beyond that.

We know from scripture that God is **beyond male or female**,

and in scripture God is also described in female imagery
(see Deuteronomy 32:18; Isaiah 42:14; 49:15; 66:13).

But Paul is using a term people would have been **familiar** with—
a term for Daddy---

because it's the same term that **Jesus uses** on the cross to talk to his Father God, and
the same term he uses in the Lord's Prayer.

Isn't that amazing?
That we can have that closeness with God?
Do you feel like you have that closeness with God?
You can!
We all can!

We are children who are so beloved that we can **call God 'Dad'**.
And Paul goes on to say that
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.

This whole idea of being an **heir of God**,
and a joint heir with Christ,
let's think about that for a minute.

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!

Imagine that!
But isn't that our **position** with God?
Jesus HAS died, and left an unbelievable inheritance to us!
We have the gift of God's unconditional love and grace—we are beloved!

But how many of us live that way?
Do we **know and believe** that we are beloved children of God?

Can you recite Bible **verses** about the God's love for you?
There are some great ones.
The famous **John 3:16** *For God so loved the world that he sent his only Son...*
Or the beautiful **Isaiah 43:1-5** *Do not fear, for I have redeemed you, I have called you*
by name, you are mine. When you walk through the waters and fires of life...do not
fear, for I am with you..you are precious in my sight, and honored and I love you.
Last week's verse is another one—
Romans 8:1 *There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Pastor David Lose says that we should all try saying this:
I am God's beloved child.
And God will use me to change the world.
I am God's beloved child. God will use me, to change the world.
(from David Lose's, Dear Working Preacher, Dec 30, 2013)

Can you imagine **saying that in the mirror**, every day for 30 days?
They say that's how long it takes to get a new habit in your heart.
For some it might take longer if this is the opposite of what you've been hearing all your life.

I am God's beloved child. God will use me, to change the world.

Can you imagine how different our lives, our world, would be if we **believed** that? If we **lived out** of that identity?

God refers to us as **precious children** all throughout scripture.

Jesus often referred to people as Son or Daughter.
Son your sins are forgiven (Mk 2:5),
Daughter, your faith has made you well (Matt 9:22).

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

The question is, how do we **know** this? **Believe** this? **Live** this?

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 in you?

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 that becomes 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.

But God does not define us that way.

In Luke 15:21 the **prodigal son**, when he returns home to his father, after
squandering all the inheritance he demanded early, he comes crawling back to his
dad and says “*I am no longer worthy to be called your son*”. *And what does the Father
do? He says bring out the fatted calf and the finest clothes. My son who was lost, has
been found!*

This is how **God feels about us!**

But do you know what the Bible says about you, as a child of God?
Maybe you need a pencil to write a couple of verses down:

Romans 8:14-17 says, For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.
15 ... 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...

Galatians 3:26-29 says, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

These verses remind us, that nothing we have done,
nothing that has been done to us, defines us.
Our families and circumstances may **describe** us,
but they 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.
People who will change the world.
Children of God.

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 says, ... 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 live by the Spirit.
We live as children of God, as heirs with Jesus.

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

Isn't that great news?
There's lots of ***Good News*** today, in Romans 8!
We are led by the Spirit.
We are chosen—we are God's children.
And we are forgiven and free!
May we all praise God, and let all the people say, Amen