***Children of God, No.1  
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**The Children of God**

Please turn with me to Romans 8. We're beginning a new section this morning, verses 14-17, entitled "The Children of God." In Romans 8:13, which leads into this section, we read, "For if ye live after [that is, under the control of the] flesh [the sin nature], ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit [God the Holy Spirit] do mortify [put to death, put aside] the deeds of the body [the evil deeds of the body produced by the sin nature], ye shall live."

This is a very dramatic verse in the Word of God. It declares that a Christian who lives under the control of the sin nature has upon him the stamp of death. This death, as we pointed out, is in the form of broken fellowship with God the Father. This is a very serious matter, because that further terminates all forward progress in the Christian life. It terminates all capacity to understand the Word of God. It terminates all capacity to be able to pray to God in a successful, productive way. And worst of all, it terminates all leading of God the Holy Spirit, so that there is no decision possible within your life, at any point in time during the week, which is a God-ordained decision. It is a very serious matter to be out of temporal fellowship. It is indeed a variant of the status of being spiritually death.

**The Sin unto Death**

There is another form of death that comes from those that live under the domination of the sin nature and push it too far, and that's what the Bible calls the "sin unto death," that is, physical death that may be imposed. A Christian, of course, can die basically three ways. First of all, the worst of all possible ways is to die under the judgment of God because of this sin unto death.

The people of the Old Testament were warned about the seriousness of placing themselves in that condition as well as we today. Therefore, in the book of Psalms 118:17-18, we have this caution declared, "I shall not die, but live, And declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me very much: But He hath not given me over unto death." Here, the psalmist is praising God for the fact that while God has chastened him, he has not gone so far as to be delivered over into death. And therefore, he says, "I will not die, but live, and declare the works of God." And the reason he will not die is because he has repented and expressed that repentance of broken fellowship in the form of confession of his sin.

In the New Testament, this same principle is laid out in 1 John 5:16 as it applies to those of us who live in the church age. 1 John 5:16 says, "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it." When a Christian has moved beyond the point of no return, it is willfulness in sinning. It is willful violation of the Word of God. There comes a time when praying is useless. He cannot be returned. He cannot experience the healing of the body, whatever is necessary to escape the death that God has imposed. This is the discipline that God imposes upon a persistent, willful, unrepentant, carnal believer.

The people of the Old Testament were often guilty of this very thing, and nobody knew this better than the prophet Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 44, beginning at verse 11, we have Jeremiah indicating this discipline upon rebellious believers in the form of physical death. Jeremiah 44:11, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut you off from Judah [that is, from the people - the covenant people of God]. And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an horror, and a curse, and a reproach."

In Jeremiah's day, there were some of the Jews that thought they would escape the judgments of God that Jeremiah said were coming upon them because of their sin as a nation by escaping from the nation of Israel. And so they were planning to go to Egypt. Jeremiah came back to them and said, "I'm going to tell you what God has said about your alternative plan. If you go to Egypt, you have doomed yourself to death. God has said if you go to Egypt, He will see to it that every one of you will die." Most of them didn't believe him, and they went, and indeed, this is what historically happened to them. Verse 13 therefore says, "For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: so that none of the remnant of Judah, who are going into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape."

Nobody will return from Egypt, he says, except a few who may have changed their mind and escaped and changed the plan. So, physical death is one of the things that God uses to punish those who are in His family who are rebellious, and this is one way that people check out of this life.

Philippians 3:18-19 deal with this same concept again in the church age. Philippians 3:18, "(For many walk, of whom I have told you often [speaking of Christians here], and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)" They are the enemies of the cross, and verse 19 says because they, as Christians, are the very enemies of the cross of Jesus Christ by what they do, they are on the road to destruction.

Going out of life as a Christian under the sin unto death is a very miserable way to die. It is a fearful, it is a painful, it is an agonizing way to go, and many a Christian checks out in that way. And the reason for is he has been willing to subject himself to the old sin nature to the point that God has no further use for him on this earth. And I don't care if he's young, if he's in the prime of life, if he's wealth, if he's of great abilities, if he's in a position of power, if he's in a position of authority - none of that makes any difference. Indulge the sin nature to a certain point, and you will push God to the point of imposing the sin unto death.

In 2 Timothy 2, beginning at verse 11, the apostle says, "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He will also deny us: if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself." So that at least we may add the comfort of this verse that says no matter extreme may be our carnality, and even when we have pressed God to the point of taking our physical lives, we will go to heaven. We may even deny Him, we may say, "I don't even trust in Him as Savior anymore," but verse 13 says, "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself." The new birth He gave you cannot be reversed. So, this is a terrible way to die, but it is a way that at least has a silver lining: that the person does go to heaven.

**Suicide**

A second way that a Christian may experience physical death is by means of suicide. Here, a Christian usurps God's right to take his right at the proper time. This, of course, is a Christian who is out of fellowship in performing an act of this kind, but he does go to heaven. Now, I hope none of you will assume that because I have said that that we are suggesting and counseling you to go out and commit suicide. For some of you, we might perhaps might wish you would, but we don't want to encourage you to do such a thing.

You may have heard the news that the church in California just won the lawsuit because one of their counselors had been dealing with emotional, mental traumas of one kind or another, and the person had suicidal tendencies. And the counselor pointed out this particular fact, the one that we pointed out to you here in 2 Timothy, that no matter what happens, once you're a Christian, even if you take your own life, you will go to heaven. But he was not suggesting that that was the solution to the person's problems and indeed pointed out that very fact.

Well, the man did go out and commit suicide, and the family brought suit against a large, evangelical, biblical church - a very good church out in California. And the family said that the man committed suicide because of the counselor's advice that he would still go to heaven. But fortunately, the courts had enough rationality this time not to come up with something like public policy and to realize that, as the judge said, this was an act of faith into which the courts cannot enter a decision. And so, thank God, the church was preserved from the consequences of that suit. You might want to continue praying for them, because there are always higher courts and higher idiots to appeal to.

**Dying Grace**

There is, of course, the real, desirable way to leave this life, and that is in the status of dying grace. This is a spiritually mature believer who, when he is confronted with this transition from this life into eternity, does so in a status of poise and peace, knowing that he's moving into the Father's presence in heaven and into his true, eternal rewards. It is the only honorable way for a Christian to die, but it does take preparation beforehand. It is not something that you just say, "Well, this is how I'm going to do it," because I can assure you that you are not going to do it that way. You will not leave this life in peace and control and in full capacity understanding of what is ahead until you have learned what is ahead, until the Word of God has been absorbed into your soul so that you know what is taking place in this transition. But when you do know that, then God's grace comes in and carries you through with ease, and it's a picnic all the way, no matter what the suffering may be at the moment. And of course, immediately following the departure of the soul from the body, you have entered the marvelous realm of the presence of God and things beyond your farthest imagination. It is the honorable way to leave this life, and that is what we would all aspire to.

A Christian may, of course, also go into heaven via the rapture without dying first. But the point of Romans 8:13 is that playing games with the sin nature is a serious business. It not only loses your contact with God in time, it may also produce the death of the body prematurely. Christians are, therefore, to deny control of their bodies to the sin nature.

**A Woman's Right to Choose**

The women's liberation movement, as you know, loves to champion the concept of a woman's right to exercise control of her body as the justification of the abortion of her unborn child. We have placed in the auditorium this morning a very significant article that I think you'll find very informative, very illuminating, and if you have not secured a copy, reach over and take one, be sure and take it home with you, and pursue it this afternoon. It will give you an updated picture apart from the Bible on the subject of abortion, and the consequences of this act of women from the frame of reference of a man who claims to be an atheist and who was the proponent of abortion and upon whose recommendations and information the Supreme Court in 1973 made that barbarous decision to legalize abortion. What he now as a medical doctor, after 60,000 abortions, has finally come to a conclusion, now that science during that period has developed instruments and techniques to literally enter the womb and see what goes on and to see what the nature is of that life that is in there.

It's informative, but it is amusing to listen to women talking about having control over their own bodies when it is, in fact, the sin nature which is enslaving the woman and exercising control over her own body which leads her to choose to murder her unborn child. And make no mistake about it; it is murder. She doesn't control her body at all; it's the sin nature that does it.

I saw part of a Donahue program this past week, and it was dealing with a man who was being sued by his former girlfriend. They had been engaged to be married, and she decided that she would like to begin ahead of time on having a child, and so she suggested premarital sex. That was the first sin. Immediately, the breath of death was out upon their relationship. They, being out of touch with the Word of God, did not realize, were not aware, that there was immediately a stamp of death upon their relationship because of premarital sex which, of course, the Word of God forbids. Sex always within marriage.

Well, after the pregnancy was instituted, they had a falling out, and they decided to call off the marriage, which is what very often happens in those occasions when people make this kind of a decision and say, "Well, we're going to get married anyhow; let's go ahead and get started. It doesn't matter even if we have a pregnancy." You would not believe how high the percentage of times those relationships break up, and because they have this stamp of death upon them, they're off on the wrong foot to begin with, and it's very hard to get back in sync again after you start off that way.

So, the lady decided to have an abortion. Her boyfriend refused and objected; he wanted this child to live. We may commend him for that. She made the second sin nature decision to have the abortion and proceeded to do so. He got a court order; they rushed him to the room when the abortion is in process, trying to stop it. The whole thing, one ball of wax of a mess of unimaginable complexity. Well, the child was aborted, and the program was about the right that she had to control her body.

And as the camera passed, and as the microphone was passed around this room full of women, of course, this discussion was held in Boston, in the people's state of Massachusetts, which is not known for a particular enlightenment to begin with. The room was full of these women, and they were all cheering on this lady's decision to kill the baby. And one very sophisticated lady got the microphone, and she smiled, and she was so good-looking, and she said, "The whole point is that I have a right to control my body."

And I had a funny thought that popped into my mind as I watched her and listened to that statement. Of all things, I thought about the prediluvian era when Noah was walking around preaching the concepts of the righteousness of God while he was building the ark and all these people from this extremely sophisticated and advanced civilization that surrounded Noah were all smiling and laughing and making fun of him. And I thought to myself, "Now it is just such an confident woman who has made that statement there on the Donohue program who was clawing on the outside of the ark screaming to get in when the flood began and who came to a point in time when she found out she didn't have any control over anything but that the devil had taken her down to her eternal doom."

**The Blessings of God**

This is madness. This is insanity. The world does not understand it, because it does not have the mind of God. The sin nature is the most deceptive, it is the most contemptuous thing that is within us. We inherit it from the Garden of Eden, and most people do not appreciate how terrible it is and how quickly a Christian who is in spiritual rationality can go off the deep end and go bananas. So that suddenly, everything is inverted in the mind, and the very opposites that God is pursuing are the things that even the Christian can pursue.

So, the control over the body is something which indeed is our right as Christians to exercise. And what Paul has been saying in the book of Romans is just that: you do not have an obligation to give up control over your body to the sin nature, but rather you have an obligation to permit God the Holy Spirit to control that physical structure and not let it become an instrument of evil. It is the sin nature that does the enslaving of the body. The person who is spiritually alive and who is in fellowship with God the Father will put to death the evil plans of the sin nature for his body. And that's what Paul means in verse 13 about mortifying the deeds of the body.

Now of course, this is not a system of self-denial and self-crucifixion to punish the body. We're not talking about asceticism. We've got plenty of that in the Christian community as well. The evil deeds of the body, of course, include all of the human good that the sin nature puts out. You don't want to forget that. That is as onerous to God. He hates that as much as He does the sin that the sin nature produces. Human good, of course, is any system of self-righteousness, or any panacea for improving the devil's world. You cannot improve the devil's world. All the libs make that mistake. All the liberals make that mistake that they think they can improve the devil's world; you cannot. And any system of self-righteousness or any system to improve that world is human good. And human good is bad because it distracts the believer from walking by means of the Holy Spirit on the basis of doctrine, and consequently, it destroys the basis of his personal prosperity and blessing.

I need not tell you in how often government is engaged in human good activity. Government is constantly making laws to produce something good, and instead, it only produces suffering, shortages, and loss of freedom, simply because government is control by human good mentalities, and that is the nature of the devil's world.

Only the Christian, therefore, who is fed the Word of God in the local church services can produce the divine good works which indeed do bring God's blessings. Most people, you know, attend church to endure it. Most people attend church to endure some kind of a ritual and hopefully to get some kind of a profit from God. Most people in our country attend church to endure it rather to enjoy it as spiritual enlightenment so that they can grow up into the full maturity of their royal priesthood. The charismatic types, of course, go to church so they can get beside themselves with an emotional jag that they feel free then to make fools of themselves in front of other people and to go out and crank out human good under the delusion that they're serving God. That is the deception of the sin nature.

It is only the Christian who knows the Word of God and who operates on it that can indeed so relate himself to the Spirit of God that God's righteousness if functioning so that God has something toward which to direct blessing. If you do not have the target of divine righteousness functioning within yourself, you have no blessings. And I don't care how well off you are in life or how great things are going for you or whatever else, you can just attribute it to the fact that your human capacities have put together a good setup for yourself. Blessings that you will carry out into eternity come only when God has a target for which to direct that blessing of the product of righteousness within you. It is the will of God, therefore, that we produce divine good works with our bodies so that we will be the recipients of His blessings.

All of our blessings are based on the fact, of course, that our sins have been imputed to Jesus Christ and His absolute righteousness has been imputed to the believer. Now we have in us the one thing which God can bless: his righteousness. Not our good works. Not our sincere efforts. We've got the one thing that He can bless: His righteousness within us. God does not bless us for what we do but for what He does as divine good through the Word of God based upon the absolute righteousness which is in us.

Christians often make the mistake of seeking to be blessed by God on the basis of what they do for Him instead of on what He does for a Christian who is willing to go to the high ground of maturity. It is doctrine in the human spirit, of course, which builds the capacity in our souls to receive God's blessings. And God glorifies Himself by transforming yielded believers into an object that can receive His blessing.

It is a joke in so many religious, so-called Christian groups, that they talk about glorifying God as if they had the capacity to do it. There's only one way that God glorifies Himself, and that is when He pours blessing upon you. And he can do it because you have the capacity to receive it because there is a righteousness, a godliness, a holiness functioning within you so that the Spirit of God is in control. When that happens, then there is a magnet drawing the blessings of God, and then He is glorified in that blessing. It is no glory to God to keep us in poverty, to keep us crawling around on our hands in the dirt, or anything else that the average Christian is inclined to do.

So verse 13, leading into our new section, basically says there are alternatives in the Christian life. They are alternatives of death from reversionism or blessing from spiritual maturity. Reversionism is maladjustment to the justice of God, while spiritual maturity is an adjustment to it. Either way, Christian adjust ourselves to the justice of God as revealed in doctrine, or God the Father takes action of divine discipline against us. If a Christian adjusts to the divine justice, he comes under blessings from God who can then grant the believer the desires of His heart. They are legitimate.

Read Psalm 37. We won't take time here this morning to read it, but jot it down and read it, and notice how repeatedly that Psalm says that when we have related ourselves to God's control, the desires of our heart are realized. That is a fantastic Psalm. I don't even want to get into it; we wouldn't get beyond it this morning. But read it. He grants you the desires of your heart. Can you imagine what a world that opens up to us? The results of divine guidance so that every desire of our heart is realized? It is not just always hoping and never getting. If we adjust to divine justice, then we come under the capacity of divine blessings.

**The Position of Sonship in God's Family**

In Romans 8:14-17, we have a description of the results of making this adjustment to the divine justice by the subjecting the sin nature to the Word of God, and that's what we mean by adjusting to God's justice. It means compatible to His integrity. We bring the sin nature under control and in line with the Word of God. The joyful results of obedience are recorded for us in these four verses.

So first of all, verse 14: the position of God's family. Paul says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The word "for" is the Greek word "gar;" it looks like this. It refers back to verse 13. It is a statement about life for those through the Holy Spirit subdue the old sin nature. The idea is because he has just finished in verse 13 saying if you put aside the sin nature's capacity to control your body, the result is you'll enjoy life. And along with life comes blessing because, verse 14 gives the basis now, this assurance that a Christian shall live so that death itself holds no fear for him. A spiritually mature Christian understands his relationship to the godhead so that death is not a terror to him as it is to the unbeliever.

"For as many as." This is the word "hosis." The word refers to numerical quantity. It is not all-inclusive. Not everybody is in this "hosis" group; it's only a certain number - "as many as." "Those who." Those who what? Those who are led. The Greek word is "aggo." This word means "to lead, as per guidance." It is in present tense, which means that there is a certain group of human beings who have constant leading of the Holy Spirit. Constant leading of the Holy Spirit, every moment of the day - it never ceases. It is passive voice which indicates that this leading is done for the believer. He is not guiding himself. God has to come in and do this leading. And it's indicative - a statement of fact. Therefore, we translate, "because those who are being led by the Spirit." Our old word, "pneuma," referring here to God the Holy Spirit as the agent and specifically the spirit of "theos," which is the word for "God." Those in verse 13 who put to death the evil deeds sponsored by the sin nature do so because they are being led by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

That's the only reason you put to death what the sin nature wants you to do. That's the only reason that you give a negative answer to the sin nature because God the Holy Spirit leads you to do it. You would never do it on your own. You would never think of doing it. Your inclination is to go with it. You know how often you have to stay on yourself not to cheat. How often you have to stay on yourself not to misrepresent something and tell something that's false. You know how often you have to stay on yourself to keep that mind from indulging in those mental attitude sins, how often you have to stay on yourself not to show forth a little arrogance and all the other things that are the lust patterns of the sin nature. But when God the Holy Spirit comes in, all that is put aside. That's the only way we undermine death.

So, those who are led by the Spirit of God are a certain restricted group of Christians. He is not left to his own in trying to cope with his sin nature. He has a capacity, and because He gives us guidance, because it's presence tense, in this "aggo," he is being led every moment of the day, even if we are not following. It's important to remember. He's doing the leading, and we may be shaking our head and saying, "No!" But he's still going to lead. The leading is always there. It is our response that is the problem. Now, of course, being led by the Holy Spirit does require obedience, and it does make a difference whether we obey or not.

Back in Romans 6:16, we read, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of the sin nature unto death or of obedience unto righteousness [that is, by the Spirit of God]?" It is the Holy Spirit who leads us, and He leads us by means of Bible doctrine, which He brings to our minds to apply as we need it. So, the Holy Spirit never leads a Christian contrary to the external of the Bible. You will never have an inward leading that is contrary to what the Bible says. If the Bible says, "Don't do something," then God the Holy Spirit is never going to tell you to do.

Now, I've had women who have wanted to marry unbelievers. I've had women who've wanted to marry when they didn't have just grounds for getting divorced from the husbands they were married to. And I've had them look me right in the eye and say, after I show them what the scriptures said, say, "God the Holy Spirit has led me to make this decision. He has spoken to me." When I hear that God has spoken to me, I close my book, fold my tent, and I sneak away off into the night. That is the end of all useful conversation. You have then entered the realm of a banana mind, and there is no further value in pursuing it. It is all mushed-up bologna. It is God the Holy Spirit who leads us but through this book. And make no mistake about that. You know this book, you've got the leading. Only the doctrines of scripture - not experience - can preserve us from the satanic illusions that come into our lives which are posing as the voice of the Holy Spirit. And most Christians are running around with delusions and saying, "The Holy Spirit is talking to me and leading me," in spite of the fact that what they're claiming is contrary to the Word of God. It's only the Bible that keeps you from falling to that delusion.

So, the next part of verse 14 says, "For as many as [that limited number] are led [are given divine guidance] by the Spirit of God [are being told what to do in life], they are the sons of God." The word "they" is "houstos." This refers back to the first part of verse 14 which says, "As many as." They are the "they." Who are the "they?" "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, THEY are the sons of God." The word "are" is the Greek word "eimi." This is the word for "status quo." It is present, happily, which means we constantly have the status of being led by the Holy Spirit. Active: it is a personal experience that we have, God's spirit leading us through God's word. Indicative, a statement of fact.

And we who are led are called "whios." The "whios" of God. This is the Greek word for "son," and is the Greek word for "the family relationship of a mature son to his parents." Now, it does apply, of course, to males and females. This word stresses in the family of God as those who possess adult qualities - adult maturity. There is another word, and Paul uses it, you will notice, in verse 16, when he gets that that, and he uses the word "child." This is the word "teknon." "Teknon" denotes minority. "Teknon" denotes a kid who is under the supervision of his parents, but "whios," while you are a child related to a parent, you have now come to the point where you've grown up. You're in maturity. We who have older children treat them with the maturity commensurate with their status of life in contrast with what we treat little, small children who are minors who are under our authority and who are completely under our supervision and direction.

Now, this is an amazing thing. We who are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. So, all of you rinky-tink little children out there spiritually, don't expect to have too much leading of the Spirit of God. And don't be walking around claiming that God is leading you to do this, leading you to do that. It is the sons, the grown-up daughters and sons of God who are being led. Without maturity, you have very little leading from God. It is the person who is born again spiritually who is born into the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ. It is the Christian who has gone on through the Word of God to build maturity in his soul - they are the ones who are being led by the Spirit of God.

Unbelievers are not the children of God, so they have no guidance from the Holy Spirit beyond the guidance of conviction upon them to bring them to the Gospel. Unbelievers, like carnal Christians, are, in fact, being led by the sin nature. They don't like what the Bible says, and they seek to repudiate the Bible and thus the will of God. So, not everyone is a child of God, since we are not all led by God the Holy Spirit. And those who are led by God the Holy Spirit, even the immature have some leading, but the real, major leading, the finest leading comes from those who are in position of grown-up sons and daughters. It is only God's children who go to heaven. The liberals and the cults reveal their lack of sonship to God by their false doctrine of salvation and all of their human good promotion.

So here's the principle of sonship. Some people are sons of God; some people are not. Some people belong to the family of God, and some people do not. In the pagan world, before the time of Jesus Christ, the concept of being a child of God was practically nonexistent. It was an alien thought. After the Tower of Babel, the truth which mankind possessed about God rapidly degenerated into polytheism into monotheism. Consequently, there were many gods that people began worshipping. These gods were the deification of man's fears, of their desires, of what they considered their virtues, things out in nature, the animals - everything became a god in some way. The gods of Greece and Rome, as you study them, were basically evil, filthy creatures made in the image of man's own depravity. And whenever Satan has a hand in producing something, he produces something that is evil and filthy. If you want to read a dirty book, read the Koran, the Bible of Islam. Just read the Koran if you want to read a dirty book, and you will see how the stamp of Satan is upon that piece of literature produced by the sin nature of man.

Romans 1 tells us, of course, how mankind abandoned the truth about God so that God abandoned them to believing lies about Himself and worshipping the false gods of their own making. And this is how God deals with you. You want to ignore Him? You want to reject the Word? You want to pass it by? God says, "Ok, fellow. Go ahead! Fake it. Run." And He opens the door and lets you put yourself through the meat grinder. Romans 1 tell how exact that very thing happened to the human race. And where did they come? They were worshipping four-footed beasts and things that creeped on the ground. The only concept of a child of God in paganism was a child who is produced by the lusts of a pagan God impregnating a mortal woman, but there just was not the concept in paganism that anybody could be the child of deity. Now the Lord Jesus Christ came on the scene, and lo and behold, He brought a dramatically new concept into the human race. It exploded upon the pagan world like a star extinguishing itself into a blaze of glory. The Lord Jesus brought to mankind the marvelous possibility that mortal man could become the child of the living and true God. This is true of those who are, in fact, the children of the devil to begin with and were by nature evil. Those kinds of people could become children of God.

Now, Satan tries very hard to counter this dramatic truth. He does not want people to know that they can become children of the living God, because if you're a child of God, that means you have to go to heaven. There's no place else you can go. To become a child of God brings total peace into the human soul. So Satan comes along with an idea called "The Universal Fatherhood of God," and so we are all supposedly in God's family because God is the Father of us all and so we need nothing. The average unbeliever today assumes that this is true, and that this is the case, and so he is indifferent to the demands of the Word of God to be born again as a means by which we enter the family of God.

One of the places that Satan has based this scripture and which the liberals will point to, I should call to your attention this morning, is Acts 17:24-29. The liberal says, "Here in the Bible, it says that everybody is a child of God. He is our universal Father." Acts 17:24, "God who made the world and all things in it, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, and hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if perhaps they might feel after Him, and find Him, though is not far from every one of us. For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring [the offspring of God]. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like gold of silver, or stone, carved by art and man's device." And the liberal says, "You see, the Bible says we are the offspring of God."

Well, of course, you know that Paul was in the city of Athens when he made this statement, and he was discussing with some very intellectual men, they were the philosophers, the concept of deity. And his jumping-off point was all the idol gods and all these altars they had to these idol gods, particularly one that was said to the unknown god, that they put up in case they missed somebody. And they worshipped the unknown god's altar as well. And Paul is pointing out to them that these images of stone and of other metals cannot possibly be representative of deity and they cannot be deity because God has made us in His image and likeness. That's what Paul means by "offspring." We are thinking creatures different from the animals. We have personalities like the living God. We have been made in His image. We are in three parts: spirit, soul, and body. We have been made in His likeness. We have personalities that have capacity to execute things and to think and to feel. And so, what this verse is simply telling us that we all have been made indeed by one Creator God, but the Bible goes on to make it very clear that to become a child of that God requires something else.

Galatians 3:26. To become a child of that God in terms of spiritual birth is a totally different thing than just the fact that you're a product of His creation. Galatians 3:26 says, "For ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus." And that is what makes the difference. John 8:42-45 tells us that human beings, by natural birth, are the children of Satan. So there is no such thing as the universal fatherhood of God relative to the human race. Satan wants people to think there is such a universal fatherhood, and thus a universal brotherhood, that would include every monster from Cain through Hitler to the antichrist. So that none is outside the divine family just because they are a creature of God, and that is not true. There is no universal fatherhood. There is no universal brotherhood. The Bible, in fact, teaches that there are two distinct fatherhoods in the world: the fatherhood of God and the fatherhood of Satan. That there are two separate brotherhoods in the world: the brotherhood of the unbeliever and the brotherhood of the believers. All were once, we all were once, in the family of death in Adam, but we as believers now are the family of life which is in Christ Jesus.

So happily, Ephesians 2:1-3 applies to us, "And you, hath he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins; in which in times past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience: among whom also we all had our manner of life in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh [that is, the sin nature] and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

That's how it used to be with us. Ephesians 5:8 says, "For ye were once darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord: walk as children of light." So those who are in the family of God are called upon to imitate their heavenly Father and to do His well. And that's what we began with this morning.

Romans 8:14 says, "If you are led by the Spirit of God [and He only gives leading to a certain group of humanity, that is, those who are sons of God]." If you are led by the Spirit of God, that indicates that you are also a child of God. 1 John 3, therefore says, "Act accordingly." 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the children of God, it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear [Jesus Christ], we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

That's what we're headed for. We're all going to be transformed into the absolute perfection of Jesus Christ. And isn't that going to be a marvelous situation. Every one of us in the qualities of the Savior. Every one of us in all those marvelous things recorded in Galatians 5:22 that are the fruit of the spirit. Every one of us acting in all the capacity in all the manliness and in all the humanity of Jesus Christ. All of us absolutely perfect and sinless. And for that reason, Ephesians 5:1 says, "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as dear children." That is what depicts us. Imitators of God fulfilling, therefore, the will of God.

**Divine Guidance**

And now we have come to the crux of the main point this morning: the principle of divine guidance. And the minute we say, "divine guidance," we entered the awesome realm of the great doctrine of the decree of God. And so, all of this this morning has been heading to the direction of this issue of divine guidance which is available to the believer because he is a son of God. And the awesome reality of the fact that God has listed your life in total detail in what is called the decree of God. Since we are out of time, we will pick it up there next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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