***Children of God, No.6
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This morning, we continue with Children of God, segment 6, as we have been considering Romans 8:14-17.

The Bible, as we have reiterated many times, is the Christian's basic guide to what is the will of God in any situation in his life. And Romans 8:14 has declared to us that those who are led by God the Holy Spirit are led because they are the sons of God. They are members of God's family. And, because they are members of God's family, they do have divine leading. That divine leading is to be found fundamentally, primarily, in what is found within the context of scripture. So, it makes it very clear that knowing God's will begins with knowing what is within the doctrines of the Word of God in the Bible.

The Bible, of course, as you know, contains explicit statements of what God desires us to be and what He desires us to do. And that much is clearly the will of God. Bible principles of righteousness are the believer's guide to what pleases God in the details of daily living. The Christian, of course, exercises his volition moment by moment within the sovereign decree of God making all the decisions relative to what God has revealed as His will within scripture.

Furthermore, God the Holy Spirit who indwells every Christian gives the spiritual believer the enlightenment that he needs to apply the word of God to personal decisions which are not covered in the Bible, where the Word of God is not and could not be explicit. Whom should I marry? Should I buy this house? Should I get a new car? What kind of job should I engage in for the rest of my life? All those daily details - short-range, long-range - that the Bible does not cover, but which principles of scripture give us guidance to make decisions on and which God the Holy Spirit leads us to explicit application. The mature Christian seeks the Spirit's guidance as decisions are made day by day. He seeks through prayer the guidance of the Spirit of God and how to apply principle of scripture to a decision he has to make. In a variety of ways, God the Holy Spirit moves the yielded believer to the decisions which are the choices and the pleasures of the Father.

No decision is made, of course, by anybody which is not included in the sovereign will of God, good or bad. It's all in the eternal decree. Bad decisions by the believer, however, are provided are provided with a corrective solution in God's decree, which he may arrive at the leading of the Holy Spirit. Actually, today, our lives as Christians are a matter of making moment-by-moment decisions on the basis of the spiritual wisdom which we have accumulated from the Word of God.

We're not hearing voices. We're not getting visions. We're not having a feeling of some kind. All of that is dangerous ground or ground that God no longer uses. We are making decisions on the best spiritual wisdom that we have accumulated up to that point in time. And our openness to the will of God will enable the Christian to make the necessary corrections as they become that the evident decisions we have made have been somewhat out of line with what God's thinking is in the matter for us. Making spiritually wise decisions is what constitutes the will of God. And those kinds of decisions preserve us from self-imposed suffering, from failures, from wasted lives, and from sinning.

Satan, of course, wants to hinder our performance in doing God's will by leading us into carnality so that we are not responsive to the Word of God so that it is a matter of indifference whether we are in church or not in church, whether we're learning it, whether we're constant restoking our memories through the instruction in the local ministry or whether we are in guidance of the Holy Spirit. Satan wants to cut us down at the point that he knows we will be rolling back his kingdom. The Christian who is doing the will of God is the Christian who is storing treasures in heaven, and that is the Christian who is under maximum blessing and who is under maximum attack by Satan.

The daily routine of a Christian is to exercise his spiritual judgment in hundreds of decisions but all of them with the attitude of subject to the will of God. So, we don't want to give you the impression that you can sit down and close your eyes and suddenly get a feeling and say, "God has led me to do this." That is not the way He works. God does, indeed, guide. He does open doors. He brings about circumstances. He brings information to your mind. He gives you directions that propel you in ways that sometimes we are not even away of. But the Christian who says, "I want the will of God" is the Christian that the Spirit of God is going to take by the hand and lead down the road.

**Guidance Through Prayer**

One of the great examples of God the Spirit leading a person to execute the book of God is in the book of Acts 11, which, if you'll turn to, we'll begin at verse 5, with the experience of Peter as Peter relates how it was that he made a decision which stuck in his throat like a broken chicken bone to take the Gospel to the dogs known as Gentiles. Up to this time, some seven years after Pentecost, they had spoken to nobody but Jews. It was only Jews who were being invited to be a part of the body of Christ. Gentiles were still viewed as on the outside, and to Peter, a Gentile was just about as dirty a pig as you could imagine. And he wouldn't touch it with a 10-foot pole. Now the will of God was for Peter to do exactly that. And so, Peter had to have a very definitive leading to do that which was the will of God which by every natural inclination and every religious attitude that he had ever been taught and that had been developed in him he could not bring himself to do.

Acts 11:5, Peter says, "I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel descending, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me." So, first thing in this series of divine leadings -techniques for divine guidance is what we're talking about - is guidance through prayer. The Apostle Peter was praying: a major, number one way of finding the will of God.

This particular aspect is illuminated a little further for us in Acts 10:9-16 where have the original account. There, it says, "On the next day, as they went on their journey, and drew near unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: and he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending upon him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: in which were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, 'Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.' But Peter said, 'Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.' And the voice spoke unto him again the second time, 'What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.' This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven."

So here's Peter out there on the top of the building, these flat-roof buildings, and he's in prayer. He's in the city of Joppa, and he is praying in what Romans 8:26-27 call, "in the Spirit." He is praying, God is guiding him in his prayer. The implication here is that Peter was waiting on the Lord for guidance in his ministry. Peter was in prayer for seeking what God wanted him to do next in his personal life. Guidance concerned an issue which had not, as a matter of fact, already been covered relative to scripture. What Peter was doing was practicing the principle that you find in Hebrews 4:16. Hebrews 4:16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." So, Peter, in his time of need, was in prayer seeking the will of God.

In the early days of the New Testament church, before the New Testament scriptures were written, God guided people through visions as he did here with Peter. Peter actually with his "mind's eye," so to speak, saw this. This actually was in front of his eyes. But God does not lead with visions today. That was necessary while the New Testament communication was still being given.

Prayer for any object, of course, I must remind you again, must be conditioned on the will of God. You may decide on the basis of your spiritual discernment, on the basis of your understanding of the Word of God, on the basis of what is in your heart that you would like to do something. Perhaps it's an area of Christian service, and you take it to the Lord. Perhaps it's a business move. Perhaps it's a family move. Perhaps it's a job move, a school move, something that you believe this is what you should do. And as a Christian, you're making the decision within the context of the will of God, and you pray about it with that contingency.

James 4:15 says, "For ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we should live and do this or that." Of course, as James points out, whatever you ask the Lord to lead you in will be contingent on your having the life to do it. So, first of all, you understand that the very life that you have to do anything, the very capacity is something that God has to give you. So yes, I'll do this, providing God gives me the physical capacity and the life itself to do it.

In Acts 18:21, we read, "But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem [Paul telling these believers who he is leading in order to go to Jerusalem, but they regret to see him go, but he says,]: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And so he sailed from Ephesus." And Paul made his plan. It seemed to him that he should return. It was a judgment that he made as a Christian, and it was based upon good spiritual grounds - that's the way God leads us. And he made the decision, and he said, "This will be subject to the will of God; if he revises this in some way, then I will not do it, but this is the plan."

1 Corinthians 4:19, "But I will come to you shortly, [Paul says] if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power." Here is dealing with people who are challenging his apostolic authority in the church at Corinth because they were a very carnal crowd, and Paul says, "I will come, and I will come to the authority of Almighty God, and I will deal with the arrogant ones who are puffed up who are riding high and wide and my absence." But even that, he says, is if God lets me do it.

One more, Hebrews 6:3, says, "And this will we do, if God permit." The writer to the Hebrews says, "Here's what we're going to do, if God permits." And that sums it all up. So, the first stage of Christian guidance is prayer.

**Guidance Through the Mind**

The second thing, getting back to Acts 11, is in verse 6, where we read, "Upon which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air." "Upon which I had fastened mine eyes" is an expression of mental consideration. There is secondly the guidance through the mind. That is, you think, and God guides in that thinking. It's just as simple as that.

Acts 10, again, giving the full story, beginning at verse 17, "Now while Peter was perplexed what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, and called, and asked whether Simon, who was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision [mentally considering what this was that he had seen], the Spirit said unto him, 'Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them."

So that the mental guidance to the will of God is here via considering what God has revealed. Considering what the Word of God has said, considering what information God brings us. It's the information that God brings us. It's the circumstances that God sets together that cause us to stop and think this thing over.

It is not some eastern, mystical technique of emptying the mind and letting go of your reason. Eastern mysticism, as you remember, says you approach the universal mind by wiping your mind clean, just making yourself empty of thoughts and letting yourself an open vessel that can be filled. Well, you know who's standing ready fill that kind of an open mentality. In the mystical religions of the east, Satan and the demons do it all the time. And indeed, people sit there, they wipe their minds clear, the demon spirits take over, and they have great experiences, and they have an amazing time with what they consider a supernatural relationship with God. It is a very dangerous thing to give you mind to anybody or to any thing. Be very careful of that kind of advice.

The Bible says we are possessed an indwelt by God the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit speaks in terms of the content of the mind of Christ. It is information based upon the truth of the Word of God. Our minds are not empty vessels to be filled by anything that comes along.

So, Peter here was not emptying his mind. He had some information brought to him, and he considered it. While he's praying about it, his mind is active on his information that he has at that point. Peter mentally reviews what he has seen, and he does think back on the Old Testament dietary laws, and he says, "I've got a problem. God is saying, 'Eat this pig,'" and, he said, "I have never eating pig - feet, hide, back, head, nose, anything! I just don't eat pig meat. I can't believe you're asking me to do that!" But, he was thinking this over. How could this be? What is God asking me to do? And, he was waiting for that guidance. The Holy Spirit is going to make that connection for him. He's going to lead him to the right, divine viewpoint conclusion. That's what He does for us.

**Guidance Through the Word of God**

Then, at the same time, the next thing that you'll notice is that indeed he is seeking guidance the Word of God. In Acts 11, beginning at verse 7, "And I heard a voice saying unto me, 'Arise, Peter; slay and eat.' But I said, 'Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.' But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.' And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven."

The Bible, as you know, is the recorded Word of God. What the Bible says is God's thoughts, is God's mind, and it is therefore true. Before the New Testament scriptures were written, God had to speak to people in different ways, among which were these audible ways which Peter was experiencing. So, Peter was guided to the will of God by the Word of God. Today, you and I function on the same way. We are guided to the Word of God, we are guided to the will of God by the recorded Word of God.

In 2 Timothy 2:15, therefore, we are told, "Study to show thyself approved unto God [study the Bible], a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." The Bible is inerrant. That means it's without mistakes, and it must be treated therefore as the very voice of God guiding us in life. It is, therefore, not subject to human reason for approval by men. You do not subject what the Bible says to your thinking to see if you agree with it or not. It doesn't matter whether you agree with it or not; it is the mind of God, and it is recorded without error, and therefore, it is the truth.

And so, we have that summary statement made in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God [that is, it is God-breathed], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." It is the Word of God that leads you to the will of God that enables you to perform the divine good works that God has in His plan for you.

**Guidance Through Providential Circumstances**

So, Peter went from prayer to thinking it over to the Word of God, which in his case was given to him audibly to the next point which was providential circumstances. Providential circumstances. In verse 11 of Acts 11, "And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me." And if you compare that with Acts 10:21-22, we read, "Then Peter went down to the men who were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, 'Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?' And they said, 'Cornelius the centurion, a righteous man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.'"

So, here are circumstances that God has put together. Peter sees this vision. Peter sees these unclean animals. Peter is told to eat of them, which is God's symbolic way of saying, "I want you now to relate yourself to something which up 'til now you have considered unclean: the Gentiles. But they are not unclean with me. All that has changed. Now, I want you to go down, and I want you to communication with them."

Now, the confirmation that is indeed what God wanted him to do is immediately evident by the fact that here were three men who had come from this Gentile, a Roman officer, a centurion in the Roman army, who was a godly man who had pursued the God of the Jews and who was a believer in terms of the Old Testament ground but whom God had said, "Now the time has come to step you up from the lower plateau of Judaism to the high ground of Christianity." And so, God arranged for these three men to come across the path of Peter here in Joppa. These men had traveled for the explicit purpose of meeting with Peter. God had coordinated the physical movements of these three men and of Peter so they crossed at the right point and the right place in time.

God opens and closes doors, in other words, as evidence of his plans for us in specific matters. We must not press any of these things too far. There are some times when doors appear to be closed when it is simply a testing of our faith and we need to pursue a little more seriously. There are times when doors are opened that are also a testing of our faith because they are not of God; they are Satan putting something in our path to draw us in, to trick us into following a course that we should recognize that God is not leading us in this circumstance. The open doors are something we should consider, but we should not simply decide that our desires are the indication that a door is open. If something violates scripture, it is not an open door.

Just because one of you ladies finds a handsome devil that you want to marry and he is an unbeliever and that's just what he is - he is a handsome devil - the Bible does not tell you that, "Here, you've been looking for just this kind for so long. He's got one blue eye, one brown eye. You love that because he's so different. He's so distinctive. And so, there you go." But the Bible says, "No, you must not marry someone who is not a Christian since you are a Christian.

And so, the guidance of your desires is not providential circumstance. That's your own circumstance. Very dangerous game indeed to ignore the open door and to try to kick down one that is closed, and you can do that too. But here, Peter saw that things had been brought together that confirmed what thus far he had gotten from the Word of God.

**Guidance by the Holy Spirit**

Then, in the next step came a very important element, and that is guidance by the Holy Spirit. Guidance by the Holy Spirit. Verse 12 in Acts 11, "And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered in the man's house." So [Peter] said, "I went with these three men, and I took six of my friends with me as witnesses to what was going on here." And these men then appeared, God the Holy Spirit directed through the mind of Peter that he was to go with them. He was to accept their invitation. He was to follow these three emissaries from Caesarea.

And that's how God the Holy Spirit does lead. Indeed, He gives us that direction. He gives us a certain peace. He gives us a certain indication that this is a direction with our minds that we should go, and that again is something that we should wait upon the Lord that these impressions and these ideas are not something that we have created but indeed that we may go slowly before the Lord and get His confirmation. But he does give us that confirming sense when He does move in a certain direction. Now, of course, the Holy Spirit can only lead a spiritual Christian, and this is where a lot of Christians get into problems.

Ephesians 5:17-18 says, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Well, how am I going to be wise and understand what the will of the Lord is? Well, verse 18 tells you, "And be not drunk with wine, in which is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." So, in those two verses, the will of the Lord, you're going to know it; it's not going to be secured by some high that you create with wine or with alcohol or something that you create with an emotional drag as the charismatics do. You're never going to find the will of God with that.

You're going to find it with God the Holy Spirit controls you as a result of your confession of known sin so that you are in temporal fellowship with Him. This is the believer who is not grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit as Ephesians 4:30 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19 caution us that we are not to do. The believer who as Galatians 5:16 says is walking in dependence on the Holy Spirit, that kind of a Christian can expect that the Spirit of God is going to be directing him and guiding him in ways that are not even conscious that He is doing it.

**Guidance by the Frame of Reference**

Then, there was a sixth element to guide Peter, and that's what we call the frame of reference, which here was very important. In Acts 11:13, "And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words, whereby which thou and all thy house shall be saved.'" So that these Gentiles were not born again; they needed the Gospel message. God had now arranged for that to happen.

Verse 15, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us at the beginning." At the beginning when? Well, as on the day of Pentecost. Peter had a frame of reference. He knew the Word of God. He knew Christian experience. He knew how God works. And he said, "Aha! I've got something to match up to these people by what happened to us seven years ago in Jerusalem on Pentecost."

"Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, 'John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" So, the Holy Spirit here fell on these people. Acts 10:1-8 and Acts 10:23-33 explains this in greater detail to us of what Peter experienced here as he talked to these people. You may read that for yourself; it's the further details of how God directed Cornelius to send them in and how indeed when they got there, Peter goes to Caesarea and he meets these people. And when they hear the Gospel, they believe it.

In Acts 10:23, "Then called he them in, and lodged them. [Peter called these men.] And on the next day Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. [He had gathered the congregation together.] And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him."

"But Peter took him up, saying, 'Stand up; I myself also am a man.' And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he said unto them, 'Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation [that is, unto a Gentile]; but God hath shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean [so, Peter had learned his doctrine]. Therefore came I unto you without objection, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? [If I had not had the leading of the Word of God, I would not be here talking to the Gentiles.]"

"Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing [that is, an angelic being], and said, 'Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God [we remember your kindness with your money]. Send therefore to Joppa, and call here Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.' Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

Boy, what a congregation! Here we are. We're all waiting. We're eager. Tell us. What is the Word of God? How do we make it? How do we solve this problem of sin? How do we go to heaven? So this is the condition that Peter walked into. He listens to the claims of Cornelius. He recognizes that this was indeed a command from God and that this is compatible with what Peter knows about God and what God has already shown him, so Peter then explains the Gospel, and the listeners go positive and then Peter's frame of reference comes into play because, as Acts 10, beginning at verse 34, indicates to us, he suddenly saw the same thing happening to Gentiles - wonder of wonders - that had happened to the Jews on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 10:34, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) that word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.'"

"'And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: [and now he gets to the heart of the Gospel] Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He that was ordained by God to be the Judge of the living and dead. To Him give all the prophets witness, [and through his name and then he tells them what to do with the Gospel he's just given them] and through his name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.'"

And then, a marvelous thing took place. Verse 44, "While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them who heard the Word [now, mind you, these are Gentiles]. And they of the circumcision who believed were astonished [the Jews couldn't believe their eyes or their ears], as many as came with Peter, because on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues [known languages], and magnify God."

"Then answered Peter, 'Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?' And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then asked they him to tarry certain days."

What a marvelous experience that was. Guidance through the frame of reference enabled Peter to recognize that indeed the Gentiles were also to be part of the body of Christ. Jew and Gentile now united into a new flock.

And finally, as you notice, there was, as we read, the guidance of Peter of the recall of scripture which is back to square one in divine guidance. In Acts 11:16, we read, "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how He said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

And you may compare that with Acts 10:47-48 that we just read. Peter and the other Jews remembered what Jesus had said to them. That was the Word of God that they recalled, and they recognized that it was the same baptism they had received on the day of Pentecost. Peter recalled the words of Jesus of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was the mark of regeneration. It was the mark of being placed into the body of Christ as in Acts 1:5. Peter had the Word of God in his memory, and therefore, he was guided into the right conclusion about the Gentile participation in it.

So, guidance through the Word of God, sometimes, indeed, we must confess, we just wish we had a number that we dial directly to heaven and say, "I'd like to speak to the Lord or the business or the department of wives or the department of marriage or the department of summer camp. I got some questions and get some direct information." But we are not as helplessly left without guidance as it might seem. You do have to develop a little maturity. You do have to grow up in the Lord a little bit to get that kind of guidance.

But through the steps that basically Peter received, we too have that same guidance: prayer; meditating upon what we're going from a divine viewpoint frame of reference; what the Word of God has taught us; the providential circumstances that we observe (you know, if a door closes - if it closes consistently, you should have the sense to suspect that maybe you shouldn't be trying to go through it); that God the Holy Spirit moves us even unknown to ourselves and directs our thinking when we are open to that thinking.

We have the frame of reference to compare in our Christian experience to what we have seen in the past. Therefore, we do not make moves when we ignore the frame of reference. If you have had the frame of reference where you grew up in a home where your father had a temper and you see your mother abused, then you have a frame of reference for not getting yourself engaged in a marriage to a man who also demonstrates these characteristics of violence because you ought to have a frame of reference to know what's going to happen. And then, ultimately, the recall of scripture to see what God was doing.

**Freedom From Fear**

Indeed, as Romans 8:14 says, "We who are led by the Spirit of God are led because we are indeed the sons of God." And this, then leads us to verse 15 which has an even more dramatic explanation of our capacity to be led of God and the context which we're led because Paul says, "For ye hath not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." The word "for" is the Greek word "gar." It introduces an explanation of verse 14. Those who the Holy Spirit guides, says verse 14, are being so directed because they're children of God. The Holy Spirit has made those He guides the children of God, so God is their Father. And, we therefore have received.

The word "received" there is the Greek word "lambano." This word means to come into possession of something. Here, it refers to receiving the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is in this aorist tense in the Greek, which tells us at a point in the past when we trusted Jesus Christ as the Savior, we received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is active in its voice; it is personal and a permanent possession by the Christian himself. God the Holy Spirit indwells; He never leaves. It's indicative; it's a statement of fact.

This verb, however, is negated by the strong Greek negative "ou," the Greek particle "ou," so that it is saying something that is definitely not true. We Christians have absolutely not come into the possession of the Spirit, and that's the Greek word "pneuma," which here refers to God the Holy Spirit. It refers to what verse 14 has been talking about, God the Holy Spirit, what He does, so it says, we are referring back here to verse 14, "We have not received the Holy Spirit." And in the Greek Bible, ordinarily, it would say "the" Holy Spirit, but here it doesn't, because it's stressing a certain quality about Him, and that is a quality which is described by the word "bondage."

"Douleia." Douleia: this means a condition of bondage or slavery, enslavement to doing evil and to fear facing a holy God at death so that here, Paul says, we Christians who have the leading of the Holy Spirit are also people who have not received a Holy Spirit who is a Spirit of bondage so that we are in a position to fear.

Hebrews 2:14-15 put it this way, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He [that is, Jesus] also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." If there's anything that is characteristic of unsaved people, whether they want to admit it or not, they are afraid to die. That's a gnawing fear upon the, because they're not sure, in spite of all their bravado, what's on the other side and what they're going to find out there.

Now, the Christian, we are told, has been explicitly freed from this kind of fear, the bondage of being in fear of coming into the presence of a holy God. We've already had that pointed out to us previously in Romans 6:16-17, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin nature unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that whereas ye were the slaves of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Verse 20 says, "For when ye were the slaves of sin, ye were free from righteousness."

When you're a slave of sin, you're not a slave of righteousness. So we remember that contrast, and we fear the condition. But Paul says we have not received the Holy Spirit of bondage, of enslavement, again. The word "again" is this word "palin." The word refers to a time element, and it connects up here to the word "fear." It doesn't connect to "receive." We have not again been brought into fear. You tie the word "again" back to the word "fear." We have not been brought to a spirit of bondage again to, the word "eis" means it's a result, that is, to cause you to fear, which is the word "fovos."

"Fovos" refers to what may cause one to flee because you are scared. In other words, we have not received a Holy Spirit who causes us to shrink in dread from the thought of someday dying and coming into the presence of an absolutely holy God from whose decisions there is no appeal - the one who decides who goes to heaven and who goes to hell. Now, the unbeliever is in mortal fear of facing that kind of a God. But the Spirit we have received in the person of God the Holy Spirit is not a Spirit who creates that kind of uneasy dread in us unless you are a very young Christian.

2 Corinthians 7:1 says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." We do consider and concern our respect for God, because He is a God who demands holiness. And for that He should be feared if you do not have that holiness, and a Christian, of course, has it imputed to him.

1 Peter 1:17 says, "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." It is wise to respect that Holy God, even as a Christian. And 1 Peter 3:15 says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." The fear of God lurks in the heart of every unregenerate sinner.

So, we translate the first part of Romans 8:15 like this, "For you have not received a Spirit who enslaves to fear again." God the Holy Spirit who indwells the church-age believer does not create a condition of fear of God. 2 Timothy 1:7 explicitly tells us that we have not been called to that spirit of fear. The Holy Spirit places a believer in Christ so the person is no longer in Adam, the place of death, but he's in Christ, the place of life. It is characteristic of a slave to live in the status of fear of their masters in a potential punishment. Born-again people no longer fear God's justice against them, so they do not live in a spirit of fear.

**Adoption**

Now, let's go to the other side. Paul says, "No, you have not received a Holy Spirit who makes you afraid to face God." "But," and this is the Greek word "alla." There's another Greek word for "but;" it's "de," and interestingly enough, this is a stronger one. Paul says, "but - I want to make this contrast very strong." And again, he uses the same word "lambano" for "received," same verb used again as he did in the first part of the verse to emphasize to be given something at the point of salvation as a personal possession, and again, he uses, we have not been given the "spirit," again, "pneuma," referring again to God the Holy Spirit. And there is no "the," because it's going to stress a quality. The first quality stressed was the quality of fear. Now, here a different quality, and a very dramatic word: the quality of adoption.

"Wuhiothesia." "Wuhiothesia" comes from the words in the Greek: "uihos," which means "son," and "tithémi," which means, "to place." So, literally, this word means, "a son placing." It does not mean what "adoption" means in English. This is one of the most glorious, dramatic words on the pages of the New Testament. In the ancient world, it was the custom to adopt a son into the family for the explicit purpose of that person becoming the heir of all the possession and of everything that that man had. A man would decide to take a person, take a young man, that he had a particular affection for and that he wanted to place in full possession of all that he possessed upon his death, so that he adopted this man to become his inheritor. And so, when the person was adopted, he came into the family with full claims legally with full privileges of an adult son.

When we use the word "adoption," we're thinking about some little kid. And when we think about some child, he, of course, has no privileges. He has no rights. He is under authority. But in the ancient world, when they use this world, "adopt," and they executed the legal procedure of adoption, this person came into the family with full privileges. It means, you see, this word means much more than the English word. Those adopted into the family came as adult sons, and they came in as those that had the right to all that that family possessed.

They did not come in as slaves. Slaves always feared their master. It is inherent in a slave to live in fear. But that we who are no longer, as Christians, in enslavement to the sin nature, we have in effect been adopted into God's family to a position where we do not fear. And that's what Paul means in the first part of verse 15, "We Christians have not received a Holy Spirit who has brought us into a bondage, into an enslavement of fear." That's how we were when we were outside of the family. Now that we are in the family of God, we have the full rights and privileges that belong to that family.

You know what that includes? We shall get to it shortly if you'll drop your eye down to Romans 8:17, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and [wonder of wonders] joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Now that is fantastic. To be joint heirs with Jesus Christ, which means that everybody sitting in this room this morning who is a Christian has every possession and every privilege and every claim that Jesus Christ has upon Almighty God. And it'll take you the rest of the month to stagger under that thought and to comprehend it.

**Abba, Father**

And the fullness of our adult, privileged standing in the family of God is indicated, he says, that we feel free to use, as Christians, "whereby," means "by whom," referring to the Holy Spirit. "Whereby, we are able to cry." "Krazo:" the word means to call out. It is in the present tense, which tells us that we continually call this out. It is active - we personally as Christians feel free to do this. It is indicative, a statement of fact. We feel free to cry out, "Abba, Father."

The Greek word "abba" looks like this. It is simply a transliteration from an Aramaic word which comes from a Hebrew word. The Aramaic word looks like this, "abba," and the Greek letters are typically transliterating these Hebrew letters one by one. This is the word for "God." I should say, this is the word for "father." And it has a certain tenderness about it. It is the word that, to try to put it into English, it would come closest to what we say, "Our dear heavenly Father." It is a word of enormous endearment. It is not a word that a slave, who, in cringing fear, stands in the face of a master who may punish him. This is the word of somebody who feels totally at ease in the presence of an almighty, sovereign, holy God who will never punish Him and in whose blessing he stands with the full privileges of an adult son.

This is the way Jesus addresses His Father. We have an example of that in Mark 14:[35-]36, here in Gethsemane, "And he [Jesus] went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." Here, He is praying in His humanity, and He uses this tender expression: "Abba, Father."

Now, in the Greek, we have the word following "abba," we have the Greek word, "pater," which also is simply the Greek word for "father." And this was probably done as a means of explaining to the Gentiles, to whom this book was written, what the word "abba" meant, because as Gentiles, they wouldn't understand that Aramaic word. So, the word "abba pater," as the way it is in the Greek, came to be put together, and it came down, actually, it became kind of an expression in the New Testament church and came down through the centuries as a tender expression of endearment toward our heavenly father to call Him, "Abba Father."

Christians, they are not in mortal fear. They are the sons and daughters of God with full adult adoption privileges. God is our Father. He has nothing but blessing and love to bestow on us. We respect Him, but we do not fear Him in terror. The marvelous position of the privilege that is ours in the family of God.

And I love this scripture in Galatians 4:4-7 that says, "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. [And now you know what that means, to be adopted as a son.] And because ye are sons." See, it says "sons," not just children. There's a different word for "children." This is "sons." This is full-standing, standing right, tall in the saddle, full privileges.

"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts [God the Holy Spirit], crying, 'Abba, Father.' Wherefore thou art no more a servant [you're no longer a slave], but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Now, that is something. I love it. Salvation Only Through Jesus I watched a Donahue program the other day, in closing. He had on two representatives from the Southern Baptist Convention: Judge Pressler, who is a noted fundamentalist in the convention circle; and a professor from Southern Seminary, the outstanding seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention of Louisville, Kentucky. The professor was a liberal. Donahue led them out to discuss what the issue was, what the battle was at the Southern Baptist Convention.

And the professor, Judge Pressler, knew his stuff; he's smart. And he pressed the professor to tell what he meant, and the professor says, "Of course, I believe the Bible. I believe the Bible is the Word of God." He goes, "Do you believe that the first eleven chapters are history?" And I couldn't believe it, there on national television, this professor hitched. Because if he says yes, then Adam and Eve actually lived, sin actually came, God actually created the world. Evolution, in fact, he says, evolution seems to be the best way that everything came into being. He's a professor in the Southern Baptist Seminary. And so, they pressed back and forth on Judge Pressler pressed that this was indeed the Word of God, and it was therefore inerrant. God had supervised it.

Now, you could see the concern beginning to grow on Donahue's face, the blood beginning to drain from his face. And finally, he leaned over as he does, and he says, "But Judge, do you realize," something to this fact, he said "Do you realize what you're saying? That if the Bible is without mistake - it is absolutely true, it is the voice of God - then what about all these religious groups like the Jews that don't accept Jesus Christ? The Muslims: what's going to happen to them?"

And the judge came right back and said, "This is what the Bible says concerning salvation. This is what the Bible has laid out for going to heaven." Well, you can imagine the turmoil in the audience, because what he said was, "Yes." He didn't come out and say that (the judge was a little more finesse, he wasn't my style), it says, "Yes, they're going to end up in the lake of fire. And that's what the Bible teaches, and that's the implication." He says what the Bible teaches, and he says you make your decision.

Well, one Muslim stood up and said, "Well, I believe in God, and I cannot believe that I am not a child of God." And he addressed it to the professor. And the professor says, "Yes, God has many children in many groups." What a deceit. Can you imagine men sitting in his classes being trained for the ministry?

And finally, this went back and forth, people expressing their outrage over such a thought that the Bible was without mistake. If it was without mistake, there was only one way to go to heaven: you had to be born again. Finally, one lady who was a Jew stood up, and with great confidence and with great aplomb said, "I am a Jew, and I'm going to heaven." And I thought, I could not help from responding, "No, madam, you are not going to heaven for the simple reason that God is not your father. You cannot address Him as Abba Father for the simple reason that the only way you could do that is through Jesus Christ, whom you have rejected.

John 14:6, "Jesus saith unto him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.'" There's no misunderstanding that. There's no need to interpret. The professor from the seminary kept saying, "Yes, but you have to interpret the Bible, you have to interpret the Bible," which meant you have to twist it out of what it means literally.

1 Timothy 2:5 says, 1 Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." There's only one person to go between you and God. It's not Mohammad. It's not the Pope. It's not John Smith. It's only one person. It's not Joseph Smith. It's only one person, and that is Jesus Christ.

[Acts] 4:12, see, these are the verses that disturbed them, when they heard things like this. [Acts] 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

And finally, Galatians 3:26, "For ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus." For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ [by the Holy Spirit, that is] have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ [as far as salvation goes]. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

And I had to say, "No, madam, you are not going to heaven because you are not even a Jew as you claim. Because the Word of God tells us that only they are true seed of Abraham who have received Christ as personal Savior." And later, we shall find that Paul, in the book of Romans, says not all they of Israel are true Israelites - only those who have received Christ.

So, we are dealing with a very dramatic scripture when we are told that we Christians have not received a bondage of fear again, of facing a holy God as we once had, but that we stand in complete ease in the presence of that holy God, and we say to Him, "Our dear heavenly Father." Only through Christ Jesus is that possible. That's what the Bible says, and that's what is the truth.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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