

## We Are Sons of God

**Rom 8:14** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15\* For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16\* The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

A profound moment in my life was when I realized the significance of the pronouncement in verse 16, “We are the children of God.” This passage and another passage in John turned on the light for me. When in John 3:6 Jesus tells Nicodemus, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

Our human bodies and our souls are products of human generation. Among other things, our appearance and much of our intellect and natural talents come from our birth parents not to mention the sin nature (but that is a lesson for another time).

What is born of the Spirit is spirit. The two words translated “born again” in this John passage are more accurately translated “born from above” because that is what the two words actually say in the Greek, and “above” is the source of the birth. The human spirit, which is that part of us that is able to have communion with God is a product of divine generation. You may argue it is a new creation or a regeneration of something dead. In a sense both are correct, but I believe, concerning the fallen man, that no human spirit exists until the Spirit of God generates one at the moment of salvation. Thus, I believe John 3:6 is to be taken quite literally. What did not exist before, a human spirit, now exists in the born again believer by the process of divine generation or creation.

The “father” of this new creation is God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, **in the most literal sense** the new believer is a son or daughter of God. Think for a moment what that fact means regarding your eternal relationship with Him. Just as your fleshly father can never deny you because of DNA, your

heavenly Father can also never deny you because of spiritual DNA. Your earthly father may become so angry with your actions that he takes you out of his will, BUT you will always remain undeniably his child. The same applies to your heavenly Father. Your stupid rebellious behavior after salvation may cost you rewards in heaven, but you will always be His child!

Of course you realize this status as a literal child of God is one guarantee of your eternal security?

Moving along ...

This term “Sons of God” when used in the OT is always used in connection with a created being. We see that in Genesis 6 when the term “sons of God” refers to angelic beings and in Job angelic beings are also called sons of God. In the New Testament the term is mainly used in the singular, “Son of God” and refers to Jesus.

Here in Romans 8:14 it collectively refers to the regenerate, born again believers (Ro 8:19, Luke 20:30, Gal 3:26). We can conclude it is appropriate to say that the term “sons of God” always refers to a created being, be it angelic or born again believer.

Back to Ro 8:14 “For as many are led by the spirit they are the sons of God”

“As are led” is in the present tense and means “are being led”. It should not be viewed as a qualification for the title but a **quality of the title holder**.

Many Bible students see no difference between the word translated “sons” in verse 14 and “children” in verse 16, but there is a significant difference.

**Verse 16** “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit , that we are the children of God”

The Greek word in verse 16 translated as children is *teknon*, which means offspring or children or literally “born ones” and refers to the “new birth” of regeneration. It is often used in the NT to describe pupils or disciples as children of their teachers because the latter, by their instruction, nourish the

minds of their pupils and mould their characters much like a parent should do.

“Sons” in verse 14 is *huios* {hwee-os'} and this word has an entirely different meaning. It means “adult son” and implies a level of maturity not associated with the word “children” in verse 16. What this passage is saying is you are a son with all the adult responsibilities associated with such a title. Let’s examine this a little further...

**Gal 3:24-27** Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. 26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Schoolmaster is *paidagogos* {pahee-dag-o-gos'}, meaning a teacher, custodian, or guardian. The schoolmaster or “pedagogue” served to teach the children of the Roman and Greek family until they reached maturity. They were generally educated slaves that were a combination nanny and teacher, caring for the children of the household and teaching them what they would need to know as adults. This would include customs, manners, and any basic cultural skills they would need.

At maturity the child was expected to take on adult responsibilities. They may still have a trade to learn such as horticulture or law or father’s trade, but even though further professional development may be required, they were expected to conduct themselves as adults from then on. They were even given a special toga to signify their new status as adults.

The Law was like a pedagogue, not “to bring to” or “to lead to” Christ as some Bibles translate it, but to be a tutor, custodian, schoolmaster, and the correct translation should be “until” Christ came.

This translation “to bring” comes from a study of the word *paidagogos*. *Ped* means feet and *agos* means to lead or to bring, literally “feet leading to”. The Law was indeed supposed to point to the need for a savior, but the Law was a caretaker or teacher—pedagogue—and intended to be

temporary. It was to be dispensational in nature to prepare the Age of Israel believer for life in the Kingdom.

Through the Law we come to understand the perfect righteousness of God and the sin He rejects. When Christ came in the flesh and test drove the new spiritual life and left it for us to use, we are to put aside the old things, the old life, the concept of the Law as a system of living.

Paul says we are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. This status comes by faith. As children we are to “put on Christ,” and I think Paul is using the metaphorical “put on” terminology as a reference to the special toga symbolic of reaching maturity that was given to children under the old Greco-Roman pedagogue system. His readers would have understood that. Like those graduating “Pedagogue High” that put on this graduation toga, we are to put on Christ, symbolically and in reality, representing our new status as believers.

The spiritual life, a superior system, replaced the Law. The Spirit-filled, walking believer, by the Fruit of the Spirit produced in him (Galatians 5:22-23) and out through him, is fulfilling all aspects of the Law. That is why the Galatians 5:22-23 passage ends with the statement “against such there is no Law”. Or more accurately, “the law cannot compare.”

We don’t fulfill the Law by our own effort. Churches all over this world today are teaching their congregations that you must be moral to be spiritual. They have it backwards!

**YOU MUST BE SPIRITUAL FIRST IN ORDER TO BE MORAL!**

And the Holy Spirit produces that morality in you—Fruit of the Spirit. You do not! A true child of God is a spiritual child.

Back to **Romans 8:15** “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

Adoption is huiotesia {hwee-oth-es-ee'-ah}. It is a compound Greek word from huos and tithemi {tith'-ay-mee}. Tithemi means to lay, put, make,

appoint. The literal translation might be “make sons” or “appoint as sons” or “placing as a son” thus the translation “adoption”.

“The Spirit of adoption” refers to the Holy Spirit and makes reference to His regenerative action of the “new birth” producing the human spirit and the Father/son reality that resulted from the “birth from above”.

There are two different adoptions in scripture. Israel’s kinship to God is said to be through adoption

**Romans 9:3-4** For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup> They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

Here Paul describes the great burden he has for Israel, most of whom have rejected Messiah. This adoption is the covenant relationship God has with all of Israel (believer and unbeliever alike) under the Law of Moses. This adoption is akin to that practiced by man, in which a legal father and son relationship is created as a substitute for a father and son reality. Unlike the Church, Israel is not seen as literal sons of God, but rather as adopted sons.

There is also an adoption experienced by Christian believers and it is different from that mentioned in Romans 9:4. It has no relationship to the adoption practiced by man, whereby a legal father and son relationship is created as a substitute for a father and son reality. This adoption implies a father and son reality—not just a legal change in relationship as experienced by Israel through the Law but the true father and son relationship resulting from the birth from above.

**Ephesians 1:4-5** According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: <sup>5</sup>\* Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will

This adoption is a divine act, resulting from the actual birth from above by the Holy Spirit, what we call regeneration. It means to be placed into a

position of privilege and responsibility. Being born of God, and therefore the legitimate offspring of God, the believer is advanced in relationship and responsibility to a position of an adult son.

Back to the Romans 8:15 passage where we need to look at two terms...

**Rom 8:15** For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

We are no longer bound or held captive and in fear by our sin natures because we have the Holy Spirit and His power to resist sin.

We have the “Spirit of adoption whereby we can cry Abba, Father.” These terms “Abba” and “Father” are very interesting. Abba is a Syriac or Chaldee word and is found three times in the New Testament (Mr 14:36, Ro 8:15, Ga 4:6) and in each case is followed by its Greek equivalent, *pater*, which is translated "father." Father—*pater* (pat-ayr’) means generator or male ancestor. Abba has no perfect equivalent in the English language. It is a term expressing warm affection and father/son relationship confidence. The closest we might come in English is “Daddy,” but most consider that too informal to use with God. It has passed into European languages as an ecclesiastical term “abbot.”

What we see in the use of these two terms together are specific references to both the physical relationship we have with God as our generating father—*Pater*—and the intimate spiritual relationship that is possible through the Holy Spirit—*Abba*. We have a unique and very special relationship with God that we should take very seriously. We are, in the most literal sense, sons (and daughters) of God and a member of a Heavenly Family.

**Rom 8:16** The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God

According to this, the Spirit’s indwelling presence attests to the believer’s physical birth relationship with the Father. Indwelt by the Spirit is proof of the existence of the “new creature”. I believe this refers to testimony in

Heaven or Heavenly proof we are God's children and not necessarily an earthly testimony to men.

**Rom 8:14** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15\* For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16\* The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Looking back at verse 14 the word translated as son is *huiiothesias* and means "placing as a son" and is frequently translated "adoption". The Holy Spirit's control and direction (led by the spirit) attests to the believer's privileges in God's family as a son, and *huios* means he is to take on adult family privileges and responsibilities. The manifestation of the Christ life in a Spirit-led (walking) believer is proof of his personal and intimate spiritual relationship with the father. We are seeing the adult son taking on the privileges and responsibilities of his position of adoption. I believe this is the believer's testimony before man. It is his "faith that works" that James speaks of over in James 2. The believer's lifestyle, his Christ likeness is a witness to unbelievers.

**Rom 8:17** And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

In many families children inherit their families estates. Each child is an heir, and the children together are co-heirs or joint-heirs. Christians are God's children in the most literal sense, and as such we are His heirs.

**Gal. 4:7** Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Believers are not servants (to the Law) but a son and heirs through our position in Christ, and Christ is the "heir of all things".

**Heb 1:2** Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things

**Col 1:16** For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him

Christ, as Second Person of the Trinity, is the manifest person of the Godhead and executes God's plans. We say that:

- The Father wrote the plan
- Christ executes the plan
- The Holy Spirit reveals the plan

Christ, therefore, is the creator of all things. Such is stated in Colossians 1:16a "for by him all things were created that are in heaven and in earth..."

All things were created by Him, and all things were created for Him—Jesus Christ inherits it all! Church Age believers are not only heirs of God but joint heirs with Christ

**Romans 8:17** And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ

They are recipients of all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3) now, and in the future they will share with the Lord Jesus in all the riches of God's kingdom (John 17:24; 1 Cor. 3:21–23).

Did you realize you stand to inherit a vast estate? As "heirs of God," we stand to inherit all that is promised to Christ, all that was created for Him. In eternity we will share in all that Christ is given in His glory, and we will be glorified with Him.

Sharing with Jesus Christ, however, involves more than anticipating the glories of heaven. For Jesus Christ it involved suffering and abuse and crucifixion; therefore being co-heirs with Christ requires that believers **share in His sufferings** (cf. John 15:20; Col. 1:24; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12). In fact believers do share in His sufferings; **if indeed** translates

*eiper*, which means “if, as is the fact” (Greek first class condition, cf. Rom. 8:9). Then after the suffering they will **share in His glory** (2 Tim. 2:12; 1 Peter 4:13; 5:10).

Believers are also heirs of the "promises" made to Israel.

**Gal 3:29** And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

**Rom 4:13** For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect

Abraham believed and it was imputed to him for righteousness, this we say, in an oversimplified way, “He was looking forward to the cross.” Abraham believed the promises of God. He trusted God with his redemption from sin, and like Church Age believers, God imputed (credited to his account) God’s own righteousness.

The promises were not made through the Law—the Law had not even been given yet. The promises were received through faith. If those of the Law (Israel collectively) are heirs, then faith is void, and the promise is not in effect. The promises of the Law did not depend on faith. They depended on obedience to the Law and being found blameless under the covenant’s provisions. Therefore, the promises to Abraham, concerning Israel, were not made to Israel as a nation—Abraham’s physical seed. The promises to Abraham were specifically made to regenerate Israel, born again Jews, or what we call Abraham’s *spiritual* seed. If we are Christ’s, then we are also Abraham’s spiritual seed and joint heirs with regenerate Israel to all the promises God made to regenerate Israel.

**Believers are heirs of the kingdom.**

**James 2:5** Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

There are two kingdoms in view here: The spiritual kingdom of God we experience as believers through the filling of the Spirit and the literal/physical kingdom promised Israel that we call the Millennium. That makes believers heirs of the spiritual kingdom that we enjoy right now while “walking by means of the Spirit,” and also heirs of the future millennium kingdom.

Only believers enter the millennium—the spiritual seed of Abraham, Jew and Gentile, who are the survivors of the tribulation. At His Coming, Christ separates the goats from the sheep. That would seem unnecessary unless the sheep received one treatment and the goats another. The sheep are born again Jews and Gentiles that physically endured the terrible events of the Tribulation and persevered until its end—the Second Advent. The sheep enter the physical/literal Kingdom (Millennium) that follows.

### **Resurrected Church Age Believers will rule with Christ in His literal kingdom.**

**Rev 20:6** Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

“First resurrection” is the Rapture when believers of the Church Age over whom the “second death” has no power are removed from earth. The OT saints are resurrected at this time, but the “wicked dead” (the lost of all time) are not resurrected until the end of the Millennium (Rev 20:11-15). The “second death” is eternal condemnation at the Last Judgment (White Throne Judgment). “But they (CA believers) shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (The Millennium Kingdom). Some of the Church Age resurrected believers returning to Earth with Christ at the Second Advent will have positions of responsibility and leadership under His rule.

Under the Law the property of a father was divided among the sons of his legitimate wives (Ge 21:10 24:36 25:5) with the eldest son getting a larger portion than the rest. The Mosaic law made specific regulations regarding the transmission of real property, which are given in detail in Deuteronomy 21:17; Numbers 27:8; 36:6; 27:9-11. Succession to property was a matter

of right and not of favor because the law determined who got what. It should be noted that this system was given to Israel by God through the giving of the Law. I believe this system is symbolic or a “type” representing how God will pass to His sons (and daughters) their inheritance. It comes not by favor; that is you don’t get it because you earn it or deserve it. It comes to you by right of your position in Christ. And you get it because God is glorified in giving it.

I need to point out there is a difference between inheritance and blessings. Although the believer’s inheritance is indeed a great blessing, blessings are the product of God bestowing additional rewards and favors on those believers who have glorified Him by their spiritual lives as revealed at the Bema evaluation. What is in view in these passages are those blessings that come to all believers as a result of their very real father/son relationship with God resulting from the “new birth” or the “birth from above”. Also understand that the term “inherit” and its variations means to take possession of something that is rightfully yours and is not limited to death, although it could be claimed that it is facilitated by the death of Christ on the Cross.

**Summing it up:** God has provided enormous spiritual riches for His children both in time and later in a glorified state. As literal children of God, through our position in Christ, resulting from the “birth from above,” they are ours by right of inheritance to be enjoyed and used now in our spiritual walk and later in eternity. We do nothing to deserve this inheritance. It is provided as a result of faith through God’s grace.

We can draw some conclusions:

- This new life is begotten of the Spirit
- Since its generative source is eternal it is also eternal
- This nature is perfect and divine since it comes from a perfect God
- God the Father becomes the Father of the believer in the most literal sense
- Therefore all believers are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ
- If you have received Christ as your personal savior, you are a literal child of God and in His will!

With this understanding of regeneration, it is impossible to imagine a situation whereby this could be reversed. If God created this divine life in the believer, which made the believer His son/daughter, how can He ever deny that family relationship? He can't and He won't. The new human spirit is spiritual DNA evidence of a very real and physical relationship.

Every family usually has at least one dysfunctional family member, someone who just does not “go with the flow” of the family. They go their own way and do their own thing, often to the chagrin of the rest of the family. This kind of rebellious family member is often called a “black sheep”. Even though the “black sheep” of the family generally operates outside the norms and standards of the family, and may, in the process, even be ostracized from the rest of the family either by the personal choice of the “black sheep” himself or by the family’s decision, the “black sheep” is still related to the rest of the family. As much as either side would like to change that, they cannot. It is a hard, cold, unchangeable fact. The “black sheep” is forever related to the family by virtue of birth.

Guess what? The same applies to those brought into God’s family by the process of regeneration—or “born again” if you prefer. It is entirely possible for a member of God’s family to become a “black sheep” and become separated from the rest of the family. The cause of that separation is some form of carnality.

All of us become “black sheep” from time to time, but most of us reject our own sinful rebellion (repent) and seek forgiveness (confession, 1 John 1:9) to rejoin the family relationship once again. But some do not! Some of us stay in that “black sheep” rebellious condition in spite of chastisement and urging to return to fellowship with the Father and the rest of the family. But even those who maintain this rebellion as “black sheep” will always remain related to the Father (and His family), by way of this generative process we call regeneration or being born again. The believer is a child of God in the most literal sense.

That doesn’t mean the “black sheep” will get by with his rebellion. In the human family there are always consequences for being a rebel, and so it is in God’s family. The rebel will always pay a price for his rebellion, and it could eventually cost him his life. God will not ever tolerate extended

rebellion against His will. And we will eventually look at passages that speak about this.

## **Sanctification**

We covered this subjecting some detail earlier, so this will be an expanded review. The word “sanctify” means to set apart and is usually used in the context of separation from sin or to “make holy”. When considering this subject one must not only consider the English word “sanctify” but also the words “holy” and “saint,” for they all come from the same Greek word, *hagios hag'-ee-os*. Some denominations have chosen to attach meanings to the terms “sanctify,” “saint,” and “holy” that go beyond their biblical meaning. In truth, these three words can and do apply to living breathing believers. Let’s see if we can gain an understanding of what is meant by that.

The word “sanctify” is used 106 times in the Old Testament and 31 times in the New Testament. The word “holy” is used some 400 times in the Old Testament and, in reference to believers, 12 times in the New Testament. “Saint” is used about 50 times in the Old Testament, referring to Israel, and in reference to believers in the New Testament some 62 times.

The root word as a verb means to set apart. It is also used as a noun and thus refers to the state of being set apart, therefore it can be either a relationship or a condition. It does not imply personal improvement either in the past or present. It does not necessarily imply a state of sinlessness, as there are many biblical references to people being sanctified, holy, or a saint, and they are in no way sinless.

As we discussed earlier, the believer is said to be sanctified in three different contexts: past tense, present tense, and future tense. First, he is sanctified by his/her relationship to Christ (Acts 20:32; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:11; Heb 10:10; Jude 1:1). This is called “positional sanctification” and is based entirely on the work of Christ on the Cross and the believer’s trust in that. In positional sanctification, God sets the believer apart from the rest of the world as His child. In that process the believer is made “holy” by virtue of

the imputation of the righteousness of Christ (see our study on imputation in this series).

Obviously, the believer though sanctified, made holy, and identified as a saint, he is by no means sinless. The Corinthians were often charged with sinful behavior, but they were twice said to be sanctified and saints (1 Cor 1:2; 6:11). To be positionally sanctified does not mean the believer is perfected and ceases to sin. It means the believer is declared righteous and holy before God forever. It is this positional sanctification that is in view at salvation and is part of what happens to the believer at that point. It is an act of God not of man.

Believers are described as saints in many passages (Acts 9:13; 26:10; Ro 1:7; 15:25-26; 16:2; 15; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; 18; 4:12 to list just a few).

Believers are said to be holy (Ro 11:16; 1 Cor 7:14; 1 Th 5:27; Heb 3:1; 1 Pet 1:15-16).

Sanctified, holy, or saint, all three English words come from the same Greek word, and all three can and do apply to believers. A born again believer is said to be positionally sanctified (saved in the past tense) and identified with Christ.