

EPIC COMMUNITY CHURCH

Romans 8:14-17

By Shane Lankford

Story of my adoption:

- In foster care for 4 months, known as Baby Robert.
- Birthparents were young, 16, drug users.
- Placed through Catholic Charities. Came to my adoptive parents with the adoptive salute (defensive position some babies who have endured trauma have with arms raised to “protect”
- Blond haired blue-eyed kid adopted into a family of Italians and native American decent
- Never felt like I fit. Challenges with attachment. Was independent and self-reliant.
- Always felt like a disappointment. My younger brother, who was biological, seemed to be everything my parents wanted both in appearance and temperament.
- Spent life looking for love in all the wrong places, to fill my need to belong. Found glimpses in the church.
- Make point that physical adoption isn't the ideal, but it is necessary because of the brokenness of the world and the sin of our parents. Spiritual adoption is the best, because it was designed by God before the foundation of the world.

Romans 8:14-17 English Standard Version (ESV)

¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons^[a] of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—

heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

In Tim Keller's commentary on Romans he shares these truths on adoption and this background for why Paul spoke of and knew of adoption so well...this is what he shares...

“Adoption was a much more customary legal procedure in Roman society than it was in Hebrew or Near Eastern culture. Paul, as a Roman citizen, would have been familiar with it. Adoption usually occurred when a wealthy adult had no heir for his estate. He would then adopt someone as heir—it could be a child, a youth, or an adult. The moment adoption occurred, several things were immediately true of the new son.

1. The sons old debts and legal obligations were paid
2. The adoptee received a new name and was instantly made heir of all the father had
3. The new father became instantly liable for all the sons actions (his debts, and crimes, and etc...)
4. The new son also had new obligations to honor and please his father

Let's dive into the passage and see how we can answer the questions, who are the sons of God, and what are the privileges we have as Sons of God?

1. Who are the sons of God?

- Let's first establish “Who God's children are?” vs. 14 & 15 vs. 14 says “those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God”. A very basic, but powerful statement that can summed up in this:
 - Everyone with the Spirit is adopted by the Father, and no one adopted by the Father will fail to have or be “led

by” the Holy Spirit. The Spirit leads us to hate the things He hates (sin) and love the One He loves (Christ). When we start seeing that in our lives and acting on that we know we are being “led by the Spirit” This is one way that we are set apart as children.

- The fact we receive this adoption also points to the fact there was a time when we did not have a true relationship with the Father...a time when we were lost...a time when we were not naturally God’s children. Originally, because of Adams original sin we were spiritual orphans & slaves. Our adoption by God is ALL brought about based on a legal act by the Father...He chose us! You don’t “win” a dad, or “negotiate” for a parent. The cost to adopt only falls on the Father, all the son does is receive...no earning or winning that relationship

2. What are the privileges we can claim as Sons of God?

A little side note, ladies, you are daughters of the King for sure, but being called a Son is something you should embrace. At that time, inheritance was only conveyed on sons. Because we can claim the inheritance of the firstborn Son, Jesus, we are all “sons”. This was so unique in the religions of the time. Other religions counted women as second-hand citizens. Jesus was different, even revealing himself first to women and counting them as valuable. Christianity was the only faith that placed women and men on equal ground in regard to salvation.

So, now on to proclaiming (for this is Great news!) our privilege of sonship!

Focusing on vs. 15-17 we see 7 awesome privileges that believers possess as adopted sons of God. I’ll do my best to go through these

quickly:

1. Security: we are NOT to fear, but enjoy sonship. Think of how an employee or servant might obey or perform their duties...mostly out of fear of punishment, loss of job, pay, loss of whatever relationship is there...BUT a parent-child relationship is not characterized by a fear of losing the relationship. Give example of what love looks like in our relationship to our kids (even Ry). Even though our kids make mistakes, we still love them, they don't fear a loss of our love.
2. Authority: In homes where there were servants or slaves, no authority was given to them. Children, on the other hand, had authority in the home. So, in God's kingdom, we are given authority over sin & the devil. We are to move about in this world with confidence knowing that this world belongs to our Father. Children have the honor of the family name...a wonderful new status given to us.
3. Intimacy: "by him we cry, "Abba". "Abba" was an Aramaic term which is best described as "Daddy"—a term of the greatest intimacy. When we call for our "dads", we usually don't use the term "Father...", but use a term that will show his loving, trusting familiarity with our father, such as "dad", or "papa", or "daddy". The amazing thing about this is...we can approach the Creator of the Universe in this term "Abba" or modernized "daddy".
4. Assurance: "the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" vs. 16. When we cry out to God as "daddy", the Spirit of God comes alongside us & testifies to our identity, giving us assurance that we truly are in God's family.
5. Inheritance: "now if we are children then we are heirs" vs. 17.

Think about receiving an inheritance from the Giver of all Good Things...God your Father! Our future is incredible!!! The miracle is, that even though ALL Christians are “heirs of God”, and that our future is so grand & glorious, that we all will feel as though we each had alone gotten the most of the glory of God.

6. Discipline: “now if we are children, then we are heirs...if indeed we share in his sufferings” vs. 17. Fathers always discipline their children. We use milder forms of pain (not always physical) to teach a child away from behavior that will lead to far greater pain later. A good father lovingly disciplines. A good father does not use his authority to feel powerful or in control. A good father also isn't so needy for his child's love & approval that he never does what is hard or difficult. Being loved by the Father of the Universe also is sometimes a hard (and painful) privilege when discipline is needed.

7. Family Likeness: “we share in His sufferings” vs. 17. Since Christ faced sufferings, such as rejection from His own people and many other emotional, physical, and spiritual pains...we will suffer as well. See this as an honor and opportunity to grow in our likeness of Him! Vs. 29 states that “in these sufferings & circumstances we are being conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers”. As sons of God, we grow more and more into the likeness of the Son of God. This is how a Christian can look at persecution and count it as a privilege.

So, our application to these wonderful truths, can look like this:

1. First ask yourself, are you a child of God? (if you don't know the answer to that...please see myself or one of the leaders at EPIC)
2. If you are, do you live as one? The main example here in Romans 8 is confidence/assurance/peace in the midst of trials because you know that you are a child of God and that God is

using the difficulties of life for good. Dad's give good things to their children and he is the ultimate dad! Remember... Identity is another way that adoption has tremendous power to change us. We are kids of God and approved by Him so it matters less when criticism comes, it matters less when others don't approve of us, it even matters less what we think of ourselves because we have the love and approval of the one that matters.

3. So, some ways we demonstrate God's adopting love in a broken world is by caring for the most broken & vulnerable in our world (James 1:27). Some great examples of this is adoption, foster care, helping families adopt or foster, support those doing that. Lightshine in Mexico or even sponsoring a kid there. Looking around you for the vulnerable people and by blessing them with spending time with them or providing a need for them.

Wendy and I went through a difficult time in our early marriage because of the baggage I still carried because of my hurt as I struggled with who I really was. I made some major mistakes but I wanted to write music that spoke to my struggle to see myself the way God sees me, as son. He looks down and sees me in the robe He has given me. Here are the lyrics to a song I wrote "See What He Sees":

Looking through your eyes
The world is growing clear
I can see the glow around my feet
That sets my paths
Slowly learning to see what you see

CHORUS:

You say you see a son when you look at me!
So I try to see myself like you see me
I'm still learning to trust your eyes
I believe You see your Son,
I believe You see a son

VERSE 2:

I'm still tripping
On every pebble in my way
While hills and mountains rise before me

And surround me
So I fix my eyes on the horizon
Toward my home

VERSE 3:

I'm reflecting
on coat you've wrapped around me
I recall what I've become,
but I don't know what to do
There's so much I need to see like you see