

“We Are the Children of God”
(Romans 8:15-17)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. We’ve been looking at the communion we have with the Spirit. Last week we considered one very precious way: In His revealing God’s love for us.
 - a. It’s one thing to know in our minds that He loves us.
 - (i) Based on our belief of the truth, on our trust in Christ.
 - (ii) Based also on our living a godly life.
 - b. It’s another to know in our hearts that it’s true. The Spirit convinces us.
 - (i) He shows us that God loved us.
 - (a) Before we were conceived and born.
 - (b) Before the world was created.
 - (ii) He shows us the love the Father has for us now.
 - (a) That in Christ, He receives us as Christ.
 - (b) That He loves us as He does His own Son.
 2. We also saw how He reveals this love through the Spirit: From within, not just from without.
 - a. Through making us His temple, through His indwelling us.
 - b. He is the love of God poured out on us.
 - c. When He is in our souls, He convinces us of this love.
 - d. But remember, He does it sovereignly and powerfully.

B. Preview.

1. This morning, we’ll look at another facet of this communion: “He bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.”
 - a. He not only shows us that He loves us.
 - b. He shows us the extent of that love: that we would be His children.
2. We’ll consider two things:
 - a. First, that the Spirit gives us this relationship to God in Christ.
 - b. Second, that the Spirit shows us we have this relationship.

II. Sermon.

A. First, let’s consider that the Spirit gives us this relationship to God in Christ.

1. When we were born, we were the children of Satan. Paul writes, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all

formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest” (Eph. 2:1-3).

- a. We came into the world under the broken Covenant of Works.
 - b. We were under the curse: death.
 - c. We were under God’s wrath: liable to hell.
 - (i) It might not seem like we were, because generally, God is so good to us. Jesus tells us, “He . . . is kind to ungrateful and evil men” (Luke 6:35).
 - (ii) But that doesn’t mean we weren’t under His wrath – He doesn’t necessarily give it to us now; it’s reserved for the future (2 Pet. 2:17).
 - (iii) If the Lord had done nothing, we would have inherited Satan’s judgment: “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels’” (Matt. 25:41).
2. But by God’s grace, we were brought into another relationship: we are no longer the children of the devil, but the children of God.
- a. The Father provided the necessary love: He foreloved us from all eternity and sent His Son to save us.
 - b. The Son provided the meritorious basis: He lived a life pleasing to the Father; He died on the cross to satisfy God’s justice.
 - c. And the Spirit applied that gracious work to us:
 - (i) He made us alive by uniting Himself to us and us to Christ; He gave us faith to look to Christ.
 - (ii) He also made us the children of God, when He took up residence in our hearts.
 - (iii) This is why He’s called the Spirit of adoption (v. 15) – to have Him is to be a child of God; not to have Him is not to be His child.
 - (iv) Again, He takes what the Son earned, and applies it to us: this is our communion with the Holy Spirit.
- B. Second, let’s consider that it’s also the Spirit who shows us we have this new relationship.
1. Being the children of God and knowing we’re the children of God are two different things.
 - a. We can be saved and not be convinced we are saved.
 - b. On the other hand, we can be lost and believe we’re saved.
 - c. The Spirit can show us the truth in either situation.
 2. He can show us that we are true believers.
 - a. Why would He need to do this? Because of our enemies: the world, our flesh, and the devil, don’t want us to know we are the children of God.
 - (i) If we become settled and assured, we’ll be much more dangerous.
 - (ii) And so they come against us, testify against us, hoping to tear us down.
 - (a) They expose all our weaknesses, all our sins.
 - (b) Satan exploits all the flaws he can find in the evidence we have and brings them all into question.

- (1) Are you really trusting in Jesus? Have you really believed on Him?
- (2) Have you really repented, turned from all your sins? Or just those you can no longer get away with?
- (3) Are you doing everything you know is His will? Or just those things that are convenient and don't cost too much?
- (4) Do you really love Him, His Word, His will, His worship? Or have you just convinced yourself that you do?
- (5) Do you really want to go to heaven to be with Christ? Or is it that you really don't want to be in hell?

- (iii) We look to our evidences, but our enemies call them all into question.
- (iv) The struggle between these opposing testimonies makes us wonder whether we really know our hearts well enough to settle the question.
- (v) How can we know which is right? Are we saved or are we lost?

b. This is where the Spirit of adoption can help us.

- (i) The Father has given us His witness to comfort us.
 - (a) He can persuade us that the evidence on our side and take away our fears: "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16).
 - (b) He can strengthen our testimony further by giving us the power to live as children of God from the heart.
 - (c) He can give us the sense that we are God's children, so that we have the confidence to call God our Father, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal. 4:6).
 - (d) And He can do these things powerfully – so that we are convinced of God's love and our adoption into His family.
- (ii) One thing we need to remember: He does this freely, according to sovereign good pleasure.
 - (a) Some true believers struggle with assurance, because the Spirit does this when He wills.
 - (b) Some of us may never be fully convinced for a number of reasons:
 - (1) We may never break free enough from this world.
 - (2) We may never use the means of grace as we should.
 - (3) The Lord may deem it best for us not to have a strong assurance – we may serve Him better this way.
 - (4) He will never leave a true child of God without any assurance, without any comfort; but He may not give full assurance.
 - (c) But when the Spirit withholds assurance, it's always for our good.
 - (1) It will cause us to seek Him more, deny ourselves more, serve Him more.
 - (2) The more we do, the stronger our assurance will be.

- (d) One more note:
 - (1) When our assurance is low because we've fallen into sin or not used the means as we should or because the Lord is teaching us to depend on Him more, we can look to the past when the testimony of our evidences and the Spirit were stronger.
 - (2) That will help, but it's no replacement for the full assurance the Spirit gives through His testimony, which is what we **need to seek**.
 - (3) His voice is able to calm our fears, like Jesus calmed the wind and the waves (Matt. 8:25-27).
 - (4) We must seek for this communion with the Holy Spirit.
- 3. One last thing: the Spirit is also able to show us we're lost when we think we're saved.
 - a. Our enemies not only try to convince us we're not saved when we are, they also try to convince us we're saved when we're not.
 - (i) There are many in many churches who think they're true believers, when they're really still in their sins.
 - (ii) What better way to destroy someone than by making him think he's safe? This is how a good hunter traps his prey.
 - b. How does the Spirit work in this situation?
 - (i) First, He doesn't come as a Spirit of adoption to those who are illegitimate children.
 - (a) There will be no genuine evidence of His love.
 - (b) No doubt-dispelling testimony on His part that the evidence we see is legitimate.
 - (c) And He will give us no confidence to call God our Father.
 - (ii) Rather, when He is pleased to awaken, He will convict and convince of sin.
 - (a) He will show us the things we thought were marks we are converted are false.
 - (b) And He will convince us that we are lost and in danger unless we turn to Christ.
 - (c) Jesus says, "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8).
- 4. What is the Spirit showing you this morning?
 - a. Has He shown you that you're a true believer? Then rejoice and praise Him.
 - b. Has He withheld assurance – then seek Him more earnestly through faith and repentance, the means of grace and Christian service until He reveals it to you.
 - c. Has He shown you that you've deceived yourself? Then repent, turn to Christ, ask Him for His Spirit, and trust in Him. Amen.