

Secured
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Romans 8 (select verses)

Opening: As your children have grown have you noticed not only physical family resemblance but also literally the same facial expressions as Mom and Dad? There's a scientific reason for this. A process called "attunement" happens when the parent reacts to situations with facial expressions (glad, sad, mad, excited) and the child learns which facial expression is appropriate. A by-product of that process is often the child's facial expressions begin to resemble those of the parent. Sometimes this even leads to adoptive children resembling the parents.ⁱ

In a sense this section of Romans is about family resemblance in God's family.

Beginning in Romans chapter six Paul wrote that those who are "in Christ" are liberated from slavery to our human tendency to sin and, because of His Spirit living in us, can grow to behave more like Jesus. We call that "sanctification."

Chapter six said we no longer have to be slaves to sin. Chapter seven acknowledged that even after we trust Christ as Savior and Lord our human nature still tries to pull us back into our old sinful ways. Now, chapter eight shows us that God's Holy Spirit living in us assures us we CAN defeat our sin nature and confirms the security of our place as "heirs" in God's family.

Big Idea: Followers of Christ can have assurance of our place in His family and the confidence that we can grow to become more like Him.

- Chapter eight begins with a much-memorized verse. It's a key "brick" on the famous "Roman's road" to salvation: Romans 8:1 (ESV) There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- **What does it mean to be "in Christ?"**
- Galatians 3:26–27 (ESV) ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized

into Christ have put on Christ. [That refers the spiritual baptism as discussed last week]

- I want us to deal with a couple of big questions:
 1. How can I know Romans 8:1 applies to me; that I am “in Christ?”
 2. If I am “in Christ” how can I grow to be more like Him?
- Verse five says, ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.
What is “the flesh?”
- Verse eight: ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
- “In the flesh” means those who haven’t trusted Christ as Savior and Lord.
- Paul was writing primarily to those who HAD trusted Christ. Verse nine: ⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. **Notice that big “IF?” What confirms that we’re “in Christ” and not “in the flesh?”**
- Remember last week on Resurrection Sunday I quoted verse eleven: ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.
- That verse speaks to both eternal life after death AND spiritual life now.
- Verse twelve: ¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.
- The NLT renders this: “*you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges.*”ⁱⁱ With terms like “debtors” and “obligation” think of our old sinful tendencies like a vicious “loan shark” who is holding our debt over our heads because we can’t pay the price. In movies and TV we see characters with gambling debts in fear of their lives and doing whatever the “loan shark” says. When we trusted Christ our sin debt was cancelled!

- Verse one says there's "no condemnation" if I am "in Christ." In verse nine we saw that God's Spirit living in us is evidence that we are "in Christ."
- Again, we ask, how can I be sure that applies to me? How can I know if I have Christ's Spirit living in me? Answer: SPIRITUAL family resemblance!
- Verse 14: ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For 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!"
- If I've trusted Jesus, He not only paid my sin debt and removed all my guilt; He adopted me into God's family as a beloved child.
- We see the intimacy of our relationship with our Heavenly Father by the name "Abba." Like "Daddy," it "connotes a sense of tenderness."ⁱⁱⁱ
- We might call verse 14 our spiritual birth certificate as God's child: "...all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."
- That word "led" can mean forcibly led away like a prisoner. It can mean led like an animal being led on a rope. In verse 14 it means to be guided by someone else on an ongoing basis. (Illustration: Ronnie Milsap on stage)
- First, to clarify, when this verse speaks of being led by the Spirit of God, it doesn't refer to being led by the Holy Spirit on whether to marry someone or take a certain job. There is nothing wrong with asking God for direction in decisions, but this speaks to the Spirit's leading in how we live out our life as a Christ-follower and grow to become more like Him in holiness.
- Let's talk about what being "led" by the Holy Spirit looks like in daily life. **How can I know the "leading" is the Holy Spirit and not me or Satan?**
- Illustration: Ever go to a foreign country where you don't really speak the language and you carry around one of those translation books? As they say things you have to keep referring to the book. Then you begin to memorize some words and phrases. If you keep it up you won't need to look things up. A statement: The voice of the Holy Spirit's leading comes through the truth of God's word. It's not a hunch or a feeling it's truth.

- Through God's word we'll KNOW how His Spirit would lead.
- Here's an example of how He DOESN'T LEAD: *"I feel the Holy Spirit is leading me to leave my spouse and marry this other person, or cheat on my taxes, or steal from my company."*
- That's not the voice of the Holy Spirit because He doesn't speak that language! That's from the pit of hell and smells like smoke!
- The Spirit of God won't lead us to violate the commands of scripture. He won't encourage us to have fits of rage, unbridled lust, greed, etc.
- Are we saying good behavior is evidence of salvation? **What if I lead an exemplary life but don't really have any interest in the things of God?**
- 1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV) The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.
- If God's Spirit lives in me I will desire the things of God.
- **So, what if I sometimes "pull against the rope" and resist the Holy Spirit's leading. Does that mean I'm not saved? Why/why not?**
- Ephesians 4:30 (ESV) ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
- That means it's possible to be saved and yet "grieve" the Spirit.
- Resisting the Spirit doesn't mean you're not saved, it means you're not perfect and in this life none of us are. An important question is if we feel "conviction" when we resist the Spirit's leading?
- Steven Lawson describes conviction: *"When we fail to follow His leading into personal holiness, the Spirit convicts us and puts His finger on the live nerve within our soul. There is a haunting sense that we have strayed from the path. The Spirit of God is like a sharp knife poking in our side to make things right with our fellow man and with God."* [That is why] *"We must continually confess our sins to God on an ongoing basis."*^{iv}
- Verse sixteen is the real key: ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and 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.
[Suffer = persecution for Christ]

- The Holy Spirit confirms through God's word that I'm an "heir" with Jesus in God's family with an inheritance kept for me in heaven. (1 Peter 1:4)
- R.C. Sproul writes, "*The Spirit does not come and whisper into our ear when we are driving down the highway, 'Relax, you are one of mine.' ...when the Spirit communicates to God's people [it is] by the Word, with the Word, through the Word, and never against the Word.*"^v
- So, how does this work? Let me just give my personal testimony on this verse. I know myself well and I'm so sinful by nature, if I do anything remotely Christ-like, I KNOW it would have to be His Spirit living in me. Here's another thing, publically claiming Christ as Lord isn't exactly cool. Most people think you're judgmental at worst or at least a little weird. The fact that I publically claim Christ as Lord at the risk of ridicule would have to be His Spirit living in me. My natural fear of rejection by people wouldn't allow me to brag on Jesus otherwise.
- So, being led by the Spirit is evidence in my own heart that I've been regenerated (born again) into my place as an heir in God's family.
- The Spirit's presence is evidence, but it's not the real reason we can have assurance. What? Am I contradicting this whole part of chapter eight?
- Our real assurance of salvation hinges on the last three words Jesus said on the cross, "*It is finished.*" (John 19:30) He didn't say, "*You have to finish bringing about your own salvation.*" He said HE finished it for all mankind.
- My real assurance that I'm a child and an heir in God's family is whether in my heart I have really trusted in and believe that Jesus died for my sin and rose from the grave to give me eternal life with Him.
- I have to acknowledge sorrow for my sin and ask Him to forgive me. It's not about anything I have to do or could do to earn His forgiveness, I simply have to accept what HE did – what He FINISHED on the cross.

- What about our other question: Can I really grow to be more like Jesus?
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3 (ESV) says sanctification is God's will for believers. If it is His will then He will equip us by His Spirit to be able to carry it out.
- More proof we are to grow like Christ in Romans 8:29-30: ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. ^{vi}
- Romans chapters 6-8 affirm the fact that I can grow to be more like Christ if I submit to being led by the Holy Spirit. I'll never be perfect in this life, but the more I follow His leading my desires will change and my behavior will show the difference Christ makes in a life.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Romans chapter eight is RICH with many important truths: our current suffering is nothing compared to God's future glory for us (v 18); His Spirit helps us when we don't know how to pray (v 26); all things work for our good if we belong to God (v 28); if God is for us who can be against us? (v 31); nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (v 35, 38); we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. So much here!
- We've focused on the truth in this chapter about the assurance of our place in His family (salvation) and the confidence that we can grow to become more like Jesus (sanctification.)
- Verse one promises there is no condemnation because of sin if we are "in Christ" --- if we've trusted Him as Savior and Lord.
- Verse six says letting our old sinful nature control our minds leads to spiritual death but allowing the Holy Spirit control our minds leads to life and peace. That means when we are saved, we are no longer obligated to obey what our sinful nature tells us to do, we can surrender to the "leading" of God's Holy Spirit guiding us by the truth of scripture.
- The assurance of our place in the family is having sincerely trusted that Jesus finished paying our penalty for sin.

- The evidence of His Spirit within us is our ability to obey His commands.
- Our confidence that we can grow more Christ-like comes from knowing we CAN be led by His Spirit.

ⁱ <https://www.americanadoptions.com/blog/why-do-adopted-children-look-like-their-parents/>

ⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ro 8:12). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

ⁱⁱⁱ THE MACARTHUR BIBLE COMMENTARY Copyright © 2005 by John MacArthur

^{iv} <http://www.onepassionministries.org/transcripts/2019/10/22/the-spirit-at-work-romans-814-16>

^v R.C. Sproul – St. Andrews Expository Commentary on Romans – c.2009

^{vi} *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Ro 8:29–30). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.