

The Blessedness Of God's Children.

Text: Rom 8:12-17

Suggested Hymns:

504, 299, 260, 323, 132

1) They Are Led By The Spirit Of God

2) They Are Made Sure In Their Hope Of Eternal Life

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Romans 8:12-17, ¹² *Therefore, brethren, 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.* ¹⁴ *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.* ¹⁵ *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”*

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 joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

“Sons of God,” “children of God” — these are the expressions which St. Paul uses in our text. Who are the sons of God and the children of God? This question is answered by the Apostle in his Epistle to the Galatians, where he says, ²⁶ *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.* ²⁷ *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”*¹

A child of God is a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and such faith has its origin in Baptism. When we were baptised into Christ, we were regenerated by the water and the Spirit, we were born again, we were made the children of God by the faith which at that time was kindled in our souls, and as long as we retain the faith, we remain in full possession of all those great things which have been applied to us in Baptism, - the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

We are sons of God, children of God, and God is pleased with us because we have put on Christ and have appropriated to ourselves the spotless righteousness of the eternal Son of God.

Many fall into sin after Baptism, and lose their baptismal grace, and cast away their heavenly inheritance. By rank unbelief they cease to be the children of God. And many refuse to return to their baptismal grace by a true repentance and to re-enter the ranks of God's children because they think they are much better off if they cast their lot with the unbelieving children of this world.

They fear lest they might have to bid farewell to all earthly joy if they are God's children. They have an idea that a child of God must be a most miserable, creature, without happiness and joy. What a delusion!

It is true, that the joys of God's children are of an altogether different character from the joys and pleasures of the unbelieving children of this world. But the fact remains that God's children are the happiest beings on God's earth. Let us consider, therefore, *The Blessedness Of God's Children*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. *The Blessedness Of God's Children* They Are Led By The Spirit Of God.

The children of God are in a blessed state because, in the first place, they are led by the Spirit of God. The Apostle says, "¹² *Therefore, brethren, 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.* ¹⁴ *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*"

Behold, the sons of God, the children of God, are led by the Spirit of God. And whereto does the Spirit lead them? He leads them to the victory in the struggle against sin, against the sin which is within them, and against their own sinful flesh.

There is an enemy of our eternal welfare who dwells in us all, and the name which the Bible applies to that enemy is "flesh." The flesh is a disposition, an inclination, a force, a power which is within our mortal body and which makes us averse to that which is good, and prone to that which is evil.

Have you not often felt the power of the flesh? Have you not often been tempted to speak evil against those who spoke evil against you, to lie against those who lied against you, to take part in some sinful enjoyment, to refuse to give to the poor or for the support of God's kingdom, to stay at home, and not go to church, from sheer laziness or for pleasure's sake, — in short, have you not often been tempted to do wrong or to neglect your Christian duty?

Behold, all these suggestions to do wrong, or to neglect to do right, come from your sinful flesh. But what does God's Holy Spirit effect in the Christian? God's Spirit leads him to the victory over his own sinful flesh. God's Spirit reveals to him that he is not a debtor to the flesh to live after the flesh, and that he must not obey those evil suggestions of his own sinful heart.

God's Spirit reveals to him that he must mortify the deeds of the body, that he must stifle and subdue those evil emotions and thoughts which crop forth upon the soil of his sinful heart, and not let them grow into acts and deeds.

God's spirit discloses to him that he will lose his spiritual life and die in his sins if he obeys the voice of his own flesh. And thus the Spirit will lead the children of God to the victory in their struggle against sin, disclosing to them the source of sin, their own flesh, and endowing them with power and strength to overcome sin.

Secondly, fearlessness is the next thing to where the Spirit leads God's children. The Apostle says, “¹⁵ *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”*”

The spirit of bondage to which the Apostle refers here is the state and condition in which the children of God found themselves during the time of the Old Testament, when the Law had dominion over them, when they were bound by the Law so that they could hardly move without fear lest they transgress some divine command.

The Apostle is telling us, O what a blessed state in which you Christians have been placed for the time of the New Testament! You are no longer under the Law. No longer must you fear. No longer are you bound by hundreds of rules and regulations as to meat, and drink, and certain holy days, and new moons, and Sabbath days. You are free from the burden of the Law.

You have received the Spirit of adoption. You know that God has adopted you for His dear children, and that you may and should look up to your God with the same fearlessness with which a child looks up to his kind father.

The Spirit leads you so that you can cry: ***“Abba, Father!”*** — that you can say to your God: *“O my heavenly Father, how kind and good You are to me! You have not dealt with me after my sin, nor do You reward me according to my iniquity. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him.² You have forgiven me all my sins for the sake of Your beloved Son Jesus Christ who bled and died on the cross that He might atone for my transgressions. You guide me with Your eyes. You hear all my prayers for the sake of Your dear Son in whom I believe.”*

Thirdly, the blessedness of God’s children is apparent from the fact that the Spirit of God bears witness with their spirit. The Apostle says, ***“¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”***

If the Spirit of God dwells in our hearts, He will surely not be idle and inactive. He will not only lead us in our struggle against our own sinful flesh and to fearlessness in our attitude towards God, but He will also lead us to a joyful conviction that we are God’s dear children who may expect all good things from their heavenly Father.

Here we must be careful, my friends, lest we separate the Spirit of God from the divine Word, as some do. There are people of a sensational attitude of the mind who have a great deal to say about the Spirit within them, and when they are shown that their acts and assertions are wrong and stand in direct opposition to the clear Word of God, they still insist on the correctness of their acts and assertions.

They separate the Holy Spirit from the divine Word, and labour under the delusion that the ideas which they form in their own minds, their feelings and imaginations, are the Spirit of God.

No; the Spirit of God is always connected with the written Word of God, and it is by Scripture, and not in any other way, that He bears witness with our spirit, and convinces us of the fact that we are God’s children.

2. The Blessedness Of God’s Children They Are Made Sure In Their Hope Of Eternal Life.

The blessedness of God's children may also be seen from another point of view. They are made sure in their hope of eternal life.

If a person is a child of God, he will not be in a state of doubt and uncertainty as to his salvation. He will not live in a state of fear lest he might be lost and condemned. At times he may be assailed by doubts and fears, when his faith dwindles down to a smoking flax. But this is only transient, and is not the normal state of a child of God.

In his normal state the true Christian is able to say with St. Paul as written in 2 Timothy 1:12, *I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*

And in He is able to exclaim with the same Apostle, written in Romans 8:38–39, ³⁸ *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

From where does a child of God derive such certainty? By what is a child of God made so sure that heaven shall be his eternal inheritance? The answer is: Not by his own deeds and righteousness.

Why is it that so many people who bear the Christian name are never made sure in their hope of eternal life? Why is it that they consider it an impossibility of a person's being fully assured that he will obtain heaven? It is because they have an idea that man obtains eternal life by his own efforts, by his deeds and righteousness.

And this is a fact which cannot be disputed, that nobody can be made sure of heaven as long as he endeavours to reach heaven by his own deeds. For even if he has done ever so much good, he can never be sure that he has done enough, and has merited heaven by his own deeds. On the contrary, must he not admit that he is a sinner, and that he has done many wrongs?

The only way to be made sure in the hope of eternal life is by the testimony of the Spirit who bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

The Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts, and testifies to us that we are the children of God, that God will not cast us away from His presence, but that He is pleased with us for the sake of His dear Son in whom we believe.

And not only does the Holy Spirit testify to us that we are the children of God, but also that we are heirs of eternal life, as the Apostle says, *“¹⁷ and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”*

God’s children must suffer with Christ in this world, that is, they must suffer as Christ has suffered, they must suffer innocently, they must pass through tribulations of various kinds, they must endure hatred and persecution on the part of the world.

But these sufferings of the Christians in this life are not an indication that God is displeased with them. They are not punishments for their sins. Why should God punish them for their sins when Christ has already borne their punishment, and when God has forgiven them all their transgressions for Christ’s sake? No; these sufferings are wholesome chastisements to keep them in the narrow way so that they might remain God’s dear children, and keep the faith, and not be damned with the unbelieving world.

These sufferings bring them into closer connection with Christ. They are an indication to them that, as He was glorified after His suffering, so shall they be glorified after their suffering. They are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. They shall be with Him in eternal happiness, and the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in them.³

Are not the children of God in a truly blessed state, then? Can any one be happier on this earth than he who is led by the Holy Spirit, and is made sure in the hope of eternal life, to whom the Spirit of God bears witness that he is a child of God and an heir of heaven?

Have you this witness with you, my friends? Are you sure of it that you will reach heaven when you must die? If not, then make haste to make your calling and election sure. Make haste to have your eyes opened by the Law of God, and to see the dreadful abyss which is threatening those who are not the children of God and not heirs of eternal life.

Make haste to learn from the Gospel that Christ has died for your sins, and that by His vicarious suffering and death you have been redeemed from all sin. Make haste to believe in your blessed Redeemer, who alone is the Way and the Life, and by faith you will be made a child of God, happy in this life, and forever blessed in that world which is to come. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Galatians 3:26–27

² Psalm 103:13

³ Romans 8:18