

Venture LifeGroups
Eight
Session 3: Blessed Assurance
Romans 8:14-17

Main Point

The Spirit gives us assurance that we are sons and daughters of God and have a rightful inheritance.

Introduction

1. Is anyone in your group adopted? If so, describe what it means to you to be adopted and what your relationship with your adoptive parents is/was like.
2. Has anyone in your group adopted a child? If so, describe what adoption means to you and what your relationship with your child is like.
3. What words or thoughts come to mind when you hear the word “adoption”? How is an adopted child different from a biological child? How are they similar?

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Read Romans 8:14-17.

1. According to these verses, who were we before salvation?
2. How does Paul describe our relationship with God after salvation?
3. In verses 15-17, what additional insight does Paul give us into the Spirit’s work in our lives?
4. Look at verse 17. What does it mean to be an heir of something? If we’re coheirs with Christ, what do we inherit?
5. How do you feel knowing that being in God’s family means experiencing suffering because of that relationship? How have you experienced this truth?
6. Can the Spirit guide us if we’re trying to control the situation? Why? What will the Spirit guide us into if we give control over to Him?

| Read Galatians 4:1-7.

1. How is a child described in these verses? What else do you learn about your relationship with God from this text?
2. What were the Galatians enslaved to?
3. What religious practices threaten to enslave you?
4. How has God intervened to alter human history and adopt us as full heirs (vv. 4-5)?
5. In what ways have you recently been reminded of the Spirit’s presence and power in your life? How can you be more aware of and sensitive to the Spirit’s presence and power?

6. How does the privilege of approaching the living God as “Abba” make a difference in your prayers?

Application

1. What do we inherit with Christ as a result of our adoption as sons and daughters? What part of your inheritance excites you the most? Why?
2. Why is it important that you have confidence in your relationship with Christ? When you are confident in Him, what do you feel motivated and empowered to do?

Commentary

Romans 8:14-17

8:14. We have been adopted into a holy household—because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. There is a better way, Paul is saying, and that way is to enter wholeheartedly into fellowship with the Father who is holy. One senses that Paul could have been writing about many contemporary believers when he makes this transitional statement. How many Christians today—genuine believers in whom the Spirit dwells—are not putting to death the misdeeds of the body? A great many, it would appear. And how many are living on the edge of the family of God, never having taken the steps to move into close fellowship with the Father and his other sons and daughters? Paul’s hint at sonship is now exploded into its full glory by the apostle in the final of his three freedoms: freedom from the fear of separation from God. When one begins to enjoy the role of heir, the insecurities which fed much of our fleshly disposition begin to disappear, and the misdeeds of the body with them.

8:15-16. Paul declares that believers are children of God in whom there should be no fear. What is the fear that Paul says has been removed by the presence of the Spirit of God? The new believer fears a new relationship as a child of God. The void left by the absence of sin will be filled by the Spirit and works of righteousness in time, but there is an initial fear. Instead of a spirit of fear, we have received a spirit of sonship, or adoption. Adoption is a strictly Pauline metaphor, one common to him and his readers in Rome, due to the practice of adoption in the Roman Empire. Paul says in Ephesians 1:5 that adoption is a sovereign act of God, the result of his predestined pleasure and will. In Galatians 4:5-7, he repeats much of what he says in our Romans text, with one important addition: “That we might receive the full rights of sons” (Gal. 4:5). Therein lies the heart of sonship, or adoption. One who was not a natural son is adopted by a father and given every legal right of sonship held by the natural sons. He is made an heir of the father, and given equal standing (often a more privileged standing) with the father’s natural progeny. Jesus Christ is God’s (only) natural Son and believers are adopted into the family of God and made “heirs of God and coheirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17).

As an adoption record in a court of law receives a stamp, seal, or signature verifying its authenticity, and validating the adoptee’s rights from that day forward, so the believer is given a seal by God. The Holy Spirit is given to believers to be a “deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (2 Cor. 1:22). “Having believed,” Paul says, we were “marked in [Christ] with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit” (Eph. 1:13). In Romans Paul says that the Holy Spirit plays a unique role, testifying with the spirit of the believer that we are God’s children. By the presence and power of the Spirit, we call out to God in a personal way—Abba, Father. The Spirit gives us that liberty in our spirits because we know from Him that we are God’s children. Because it is the Spirit of God who is given to believers, the heart of the child is linked with the heart of the Father in permanent intimacy. But the believer is not just a child of God, but an heir of God as well. Being a child means that I have a family now; being an heir means I am included in the family forever.

8:17. No more dramatic validation of our status as coheirs with Christ can be found than that which came through the Son’s own request to the Father. First, Christ told His Father that He had given the disciples the glory that had been given to Him (see John 17:22). The purpose of that was that the unity (solidarity) of believers with Christ might be evident to all the world, and that the Father’s love for believers was the same as His love for the Son (John 17:23). Finally, Christ asked the Father: “I want

those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world” (John 17:24). Christ offers to share His own inheritance, His glory, with those whom the Father has given to Him, meaning the disciples and all who would believe in Him. But there is a “catch.” Coheirs will share in glory only in the same manner in which the heir achieves glory. In the case of Christ, it was through suffering. If suffering is the son’s portion, then it will likewise be the portion of the adopted coheirs. But Paul never shrunk from this inheritance in his own life, and encourages the believers in Rome to view their past, present, and future sufferings for the cause of Christ as part of their sonship. We are called to share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.

galatians 4:1-7

4:1. In verses 1-7 Paul shifted his emphasis from the inheritance to the heir. He based his analogy on the legal practice of guardianship. While still a minor, an heir did not have control over his future inheritance. In fact, he had little more control over his destiny than would a slave. Only when he came of age did the heir begin to enjoy the privileges of his inheritance.

4:2. Guardians and trustees controlled the property or estate in behalf of the heir until he came of age. Although such guardians could be trustworthy stewards, in Paul’s analogy they were sinister custodians as verse 3 indicates.

4:3. The phrase the basic principles refers to essential ingredients or basic components. For example, letters of the alphabet are the basic components or building blocks of words and sentences. Some have suggested that Paul used the phrase the basic principles of the world to refer to a basic set of philosophical or religious ideas. Others have interpreted the phrase as designating the four elemental substances that many ancients believed composed the physical world— earth, water, air, and fire. It was held that warring among these elements would eventually result in the world’s destruction. Most likely Paul used the phrase in the context of verse 3 to designate evil spiritual powers and any expression of these powers in the world. In any case, the Galatian believers were behaving like slaves to these basic principles instead of enjoying the freedom given them in Christ.

4:4. The time appointed by God the Father for redemption represents a divine prerogative that can never be completely understood by the human mind. We might wonder why the Savior was not introduced earlier in history. Yet, with the perspective of perfect knowledge and wisdom, God chose the right moment in time to send His Son. The phrase God sent his Son emphasizes the eternal deity of Christ. However, this Son was born of a woman, a phrase stressing that Christ was fully human as well as fully divine. Further, He was born under law in order to redeem those enslaved by it. Although Christ was under the law, He was without sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

4:5. The benefits of Christ’s atoning work referred to in this verse are those of redemption and adoption. The term redemption may suggest a basically negative connotation—we are redeemed from slavery to sin, from the curse of the law, and from the control of evil spiritual powers. On the other hand, the phrase the full rights of sons addresses the positive aspect of salvation. The expression refers to the giving of sonship status to one who is not a natural child. It reflects the marvelous transformation that occurs in our relationship with God as a result of our faith in Christ who made provision for our redemption.

4:6. The Holy Spirit is the sign and pledge of our adoption as God’s children. His presence in our hearts assures us of our salvation. The most basic indication of our adoption as God’s children is that of an intimate relationship with God. We can address God as Abba [AB buh] an Aramaic expression meaning “father” The term carries connotations of respect and affection.

4:7. In this verse Paul changed from addressing his readers as a group to addressing them individually. In so doing, his application became direct and personal. Christian reader, “You are no longer a slave, but rather a child of God and thereby a joint heir with Christ.”