

## **The Spirit of Adoption Romans 8:14-16**

### **Intro**

Christian clichés are myriad and social media has served to inculcate trite, Christianly sounding, hackneyed, banal half-truths into a proliferation of despicable memes that the unthinking and the easily placated lean on for comfort, hope, and help.

In other words, there are many one-liners floating around that almost sound biblical but are ultimately unhelpful

Matt Smethurst blog article on Christian Clichés that Need to die

**“one-liners aren’t always helpful. Sometimes, in our desire to simplify truth, we can trivialize and even obscure it. And to obscure the truth is to tell a lie.”**

4 examples of one-liners that can trivialize or even obscure the truth

### **When God closes a door, he opens a window**

The idea being that God shutting down one opportunity just means that there is another opportunity that will open up for you.

Sometimes that’s exactly what’s happening BUT Sometimes God just shuts it all down and he leads us into the desert place where a door or window a way out would be most welcome but he will do so as an expression of his love and mercy so that we might be weaned away from placing our hope in the things of this world learn to rely on him alone for our joy and hope.

### **God helps those who help themselves**

Especially reprehensible idea - The epitome of an anti-gospel. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ declares that God stoops to help those who utterly unable to help themselves - that’s what grace IS

In fact, this is every other religion EXCEPT Christianity has this at root. Working our way into God acting on our behalf.

### **God will not give you more than you can handle**

God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear but will provide a way of escape 1 Cor. 10:13

Or...or... how about this - God will sometimes put you in such devastating circumstance that you are left shaking on the floor in tears crying out for mercy

Not as an expression of his wrath, but so that in that place you might find him to be an all-sufficient provider and shepherd.

**[8] For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. [9] Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. (2 Corinthians 1:8-9)**

Sometimes he does not remove us from the terrible circumstances of our lives - rather he meets us and sustains and shows himself full of grace and mercy even in our suffering.

### **We are all children of God**

Nice thing to say to create a sense of unity across ethnic, socio-economic lines and so forth

We are all created by God and therefore his “offspring” (Acts 17:28) but to actually be a child of God is no universal reality - no - to call God Father and to be called his child is the fruit of a miracle of grace accomplished through the Gospel and brought to life by God himself through the Holy Spirit

**[12] But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, [13] who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)**

It is in receiving Christ that adoption is conferred according to the will of God himself

Not gleefully shooting holes in other people’s ideas - Lord knows we have enough caustic, discernment blogging, keyboard warriors, sitting about in their underwear throwing bombs at hapless Christians.

Clarify our terms. Deepen our discernment. Deepen our joy and life in the Spirit the only life that is truly Christian. In our text the Apostle Paul takes us into the realities of what it actually means to be a child of God.

What the experience of adoption looks like through the ministry of the Holy Spirit:

1. Leadership
2. Intimacy
3. Assurance

### **I. Leadership**

#### **A. Continuing explanation and instruction about life in the Spirit**

1. Last week we saw in v. 12-13 that we have an obligation but not to the flesh - a happy obligation to God for his lavish grace that keeps our hearts open to the will of God
2. One, true, unchangeable, essential mark of the Christian is that all Christians, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, put sin to death - we kill sin by the Spirit - we kill the deeds of the body - all within us that rises in opposition to the God who has purchased us and indwelt us by his Spirit
  - a) Not the lifestyle of the “good” Christians - non-negotiable - stark dichotomy without wiggle room - we either live according to the flesh and die or we put sin to death and live - Christians are “cold-blooded” killers when it comes to sin
    - (1) Note Paul has not even mentioned the Devil in all this. We don’t get to the Devil till chapter 16 - the enemy is indwelling sin - it’s in us - don’t need a lot of help when it

comes to temptation and sin

- B. If we have a lifestyle of loving what God loves and hating what he hates, of putting sin to death in our lives than we v. 14 are being led by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwelling in us is directing our steps
  - 1. Lest we mistakenly think of the Spirit as a kind of force we wield against sin - no it is the Spirit who leads us and empowers us into killing sin - our divine General taking us by the hand.
  - 2. Underneath the leadership of the Spirit is a core identity that reveals WHY the Spirit is at work to direct us and guide us into life BECAUSE we are sons of God - first time that Paul drops down into this reality
- C. This the explanation of this Spirit-led lifestyle - this is why the one, true, transcendent, living God is committed to leading us BECAUSE...BECAUSE...he is our Father and we are his children. Why does the Spirit lead us to kill sin - we are sons of God
  - 1. Lest the ladies feel excluded - why not daughter - Paul is connecting the realities of adoption and sonship in ancient times to the doctrine of God's adoption of us
    - a) E.G. When one was adopted in Greco-Roman world it meant that an orphan was elevated out of his abandonment into the Father's family - and into all the rights and privileges of an heir conferred.
- D. The Spirit leads us as the expression of a good Father leading his children away from danger and into blessing

**Illustration:** If you have a small child and they are sprinting for a busy highway you would not think "we'll just let him go and they'll figure it out" while relaxing on Barcalounger with a margarita. Take action - jump up and take by the hand.

- 1. In a similar way The Father by the Spirit leads us away from sin and destruction and down the narrow path which leads to everlasting life.
- E. Lest we take the realities of divine sonship and adoption for granted we do well to remember how it is that we have become sons through adoption

**[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, [4] even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love [5] he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:3-6)**

- 1. Why are we sons? He chose, he predestined, his will, to praise of his grace, we are blessed in the beloved family of God
  - a) So, the Spirit as the expression of God's Fatherly care leads us and guides us into faithfulness - into a lifestyle of obedience - pursuing godliness and putting sin to death
- F. Application
  - 1. Take this verse out of context to make it say all sorts of things about the Spirit's leading but look at the context - the Spirit leads us into faithful lives of war against sin.

- a) Certainly, there are ways that we may experience the subjective leading of God in our lives as we prayerfully depend on him for decisions that need to be made.
  - (1) Let me tell you - one of the more common and concerning experiences I have as a pastor are people coming to me to inform me that God has told them this or that - not with an openness to counsel - understandably if you tell me God told you something then in effect the conversation is over.
  - (2) Sadly, I have seen many people who have informed me that God is leading them in some privatized way walk into foolishness, error, harm
    - (a) Let me encourage you to live in community getting the counsel of others along with your internal sense of divine guidance - we can be wrong folks
  - (3) We may think that the idea of v. 14 is that to be really spiritual is to be led by the Spirit into dramatic manifestations of power - that is where the real godliness lies
    - (a) Listen Matthew 7 - speaks about miracle workers who in the end are rejected by God because - they are workers of lawlessness
- b) I do know this - a fundamental way that we are led by the Spirit is in killing sin - I would love to hear that more
- 2. Conviction about our sin is God's gracious hand guiding you - directing your steps away from sin and death as a loving Father
- 3. Spark? Give yourself to God. Do not despise his direction and discipline. Embrace as a grateful child.
  - a) Take hold of means of war - confess sin and receive grace, take up the Word.
  - b) What is God leading me to do? No mystery! Kill your sin. And where we see sin being put to death rest assured, we are witnessing the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit

**Illustration:** Woman in our CG sharing the Gospel - that's the Spirit! That's what God works in his children

## II. Intimacy

- A. v. 15 We are led by the Spirit as sons of God but our lives of obedience to God are not through "the spirit of slavery" and of fear. We don't obey God because we live in anxious, hand-wringing terror that the other shoe is gonna drop at any moment. That is connected to our old existence and it never worked any way.

**Illustration:** Do you think North Koreans love their government? Oh, there is compliance but it is under the threat of violence from the communists. I guarantee there is no love or affection rising in the hearts of those oppressed people. If you try to live a good life because you are afraid of God hurting you, then you may get a ways down the road, but you will not love him.

**Illustration:** Doesn't work - Walking to a party thinking God was going to kill me

- B. Rather through God adopting us in Christ and through our experience of that adoption in the Spirit we live in freedom from slavery and death - obligation to the flesh - condemnation and wrath we so richly deserve NOW we live in the good of adoption
  - 1. Right fear of God that is his due - reverence, humility, awe - and the beginning of wisdom - it is not the terrifying fear of his wrath for that has been absorbed in his own dear Son's death at Calvary

- a) We find in the cross of Christ - him acting on our behalf so that now we may be declared sons of God and enjoy the warmth of relationship with God as Father:
- b)

**[4] But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. [6] And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" [7] So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (Galatians 4:4-7)**

- C. Consider the heart of God in adopting us as his children. He didn't choose the well-behaved, the ones of outstanding quality - he comes to us in our desolation as orphans - willful, opposed, wallowing in sin - that one, that one, I want that one.
- D. The liberating grace of Jesus is manifested to us through the Spirit in being united to Christ and a whole new relationship with God - by the Spirit we now cry and call God "Abba! Father!".
  - 1. Abba - Aramaic - warm, familiar, family name of a child with their Father - dear Father - venture even something like Dad
  - 2. Note - we CRY - heartfelt address - children cry out to fathers - and here - our adopted right - we come as children to God and call him dear Father.

**Illustration:** Ellen - Daddy what are we going to do today, daddy can I have chocolate for breakfast, daddy when are we going to Disney world, - she loves to say it and I love to hear it. Intimacy.

- E. Application
  - 1. Oh, the sweetness, the relational nearness, the intimacy we have with God our Father

**If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. (J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 201)**

- 2. Same name Jesus uses of God in Mark 14:36. Live in the good of the privilege of intimacy
  - a) Prayer life - Jesus taught us to begin with "Our Father" - intimacy invited into - are you neglecting the privilege of communion with your Father who loves you and invites you to come before him with every care, joy, grief, and praise?
  - b) Let this divine perspective comfort you in suffering - Your God is your loving Father - your Abba - your dear Father - do not be afraid of his will for you - he is near and caring for you

### **III. Assurance**

- A. Leadership, intimacy, and more assurance. Assurance by God of his love is of the sweetest treasures - not to be taken for granted for not all know.

**....each one, when he regards himself, and his own weakness and indisposition, may have fear and apprehension touching his own grace; seeing that no one can know with a certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God....(Council of Trent)**

- B. No one can know by certainty of faith - But that is not how God the Father would have us live - so much so that he has commissioned his Spirit to testify to our spirits of his Fatherly care.
  - 1. Not anxious, worried, unsure of his heart toward us - no he sends his Spirit to bear witness that we are his

**Illustrations:** When Satan and our sins rise to accuse us and our own hearts seem to condemn us. The Spirit takes the stand and gently but firmly declares that you are a child of God in Christ.

**Q. What is your only comfort in life and death?**

**A. That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation. Therefore, by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for Him. (Heidelberg Catechism)**

- C. God intends that you be comforted and confident - to declare to you in the deepest part of who you are - you are my child.
  - 1. How? By the Holy Spirit's testimony - this is an experiential, mystical reality described. To ask yourself in your doubts and fears:
    - a) Have you trusted Christ?
    - b) Is there an inclination to please God and kill sin?
    - c) Is there a heart within you that cries to God as Father?
      - (a) THE SPIRIT BEARS WITNESS - maybe you are experiencing in this moment
      - (b) PRAY FOR IT
- D. Application
  - 1. How do I know I'm a Christian? The confession of my faith in Christ alone set ablaze by the Spirit's internal witness
  - 2. Oh, you of sensitive conscience - take hold of your Father and ask him for this testimony until he give it - oh trust him to give you that testimony that you are a child of God
  - 3. The revelation of God's adoption and our experience as his children certainly informs the practical realities of adopting children in need
  - 4. WORD ABOUT ADOPTION
    - a) TO PARENTS - oh how sweet a reflection your dear Father you have the privilege of communicating to your children - hard, overwhelming, many tears - lean into your dear Father - he will provide, he will sustain
    - b) TO THOSE ADOPTED - a number of you - maybe your heart aches when you think about your life
      - (1) Oh receive your parents love as an expression of God's love for you
      - (2) Look above your earthly Father and Mother and see there an everlasting Father with a mighty heart of love for you and entrust to him your doubts, sorrows, and loss - let him assure you of his steadfast love and faithfulness

**Close**

Oh, to be a child of God - no higher privilege

Direction, Intimacy, Assurance - all experienced by the one Spirit indwelling us all

Praise him for his grace.

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