

Romans 8:14 says, "For as many as are led by the spirit (meaning the Holy Spirit) of God they are the sons of God." The great English preacher, F. B. Myer, says it should be translated like this: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they and they only are the sons of God." There are three things I want us to note in this text:

I. In the first place, Romans 8:14 sets forth the mark of a true child of God. Already Paul has reminded us of the great New Testament truth in Romans 8:9, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." When the truth of Romans 8:9 is added to the truth set forth in Romans 8:14, we have a two-fold description of the child of God.

(1) First of all, he is that individual who is indwelt by the life-giving power and presence of the Holy Spirit because he has been born of God, of the Holy Spirit. No man is a Christian who has not been born of the Holy Spirit and is therefore indwelt by Him.

(2) That same individual is led by the Holy Spirit, led by God. The Christian man is led by the Holy Spirit. "As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Within the last 100 years the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God has emerged. It teaches that all men are saved or that all men are the sons of God. It is not strange to me that Satan would have invented this doctrine because if men believe this (and this is taught in churches) they will never accept Christ. A man must realize his lost condition without Christ before he will repent and believe the Gospel. So, one of the greatest curses in the twentieth century has been this doctrine that all men are the sons of God, that all men are saved, and that man is a child of God simply because he is a human being. People who teach this use Acts 17 as their proof text. It is true that in this passage Paul says, "We are all the offsprings of God" (Acts 17:28), but in so stating he <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ not saying that every man is a child of God and that every man has eternal life and is on his way to heaven.

Paul was simply telling the idolatrous Athenians that every man is created by the one true and living God and is a creature of God. But Paul was not preaching the damnable heresy that all men are sons of God. In Galatians 3:26 he says, "For ye are ALL the sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ." But the curse of the theological world, the sadness of much preaching and much teaching today, is that everyone is a son of God. People in churches all over this country hear preachers preaching that everyone is a son of God - everyone is saved. Do you not see why Satan invented this doctrine? It has deluded thousands of people, and people are going to hell believing that they do not even need to be saved or regenerated.

The best refutation I have ever read of the universal fatherhood of God was a story from the mission field by Dr. Barnhouse. A certain missionary had preached a message that no one can be a child of God except through the experience of the new birth. After he had preached, a man walked up to challenge him saying, "You would admit, would you not, that all men descended from Adam." The missionary replied, "Certainly." Then the man said, "You would agree, would you not, that Adam was made by God." The missionary said, "Yes." "Well, you must admit then that all people are children of God or the sons of God." The missionary pointed to a bench in the little chapel and said, "Who made this bench?" The man said, "The carpenter." He said, "Would you call this bench the son of the carpenter?" The man replied, "Certainly not." The missionary asked, "Why would you not call this bench the son of the carpenter?" The man replied, "The bench does not have the life of the carpenter in it." Then with great directness the missionary looked this man in the eye and asked him, "Do you have the life of God in you? I do not mean physical life or mere animal existence, but do you have the spiritual life of God in you?" The man had no answer to that.

A person who is a child of God has the spiritual life of God in him, but he does not enter the world that way. John 1:12 says, "As many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God." A man would not need to become something he already is. "Ye

must be born again." This is clearly implied in Romans 8:14. Are you a child of God? If so, you have come into this relationship through the new birth. If you have not had a new birth you are not God's child no matter how good you are or what your intentions may be. You are a creature of God but you are not a child of God. Romans 8:9 sets forth the great truth that the true mark of the Christian is the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life. However, not only the presence, but also the leadership of the Holy Spirit in his life (Romans 8:14).

II. Romans 8:14 also declares that the Son of God is led by the Spirit of God. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they, and they alone, are the sons of God." God does not simply save us and leave us in darkness. I realize that we all wrestle regarding God's will for us, but Jesus says himself in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life."

I have had a real struggle in my heart at times in knowing God's will. Ninety percent of knowing God's will consists of being willing to do His will before we really know it. If we really want to know that will, and if we are willing to pay the cost even before that will is revealed, I guarantee that God will reveal it. Young people, you are wondering what God wants you to do with your life? God will supernaturally reveal his will to the person who is willing to follow it before he knows the will and before he knows its cost.

I wandered around for six years in college - I had chosen my own career. I could have known God's will as a teenager. I could have known God's will many years before, but I did not know it because I did not WANT to know it. I chose my career and I did not even ask God. I did not want to know His will. When I got ready to know God's great will He revealed it to me. The Holy Spirit leads His children. "As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

III. But there is a third thing in the text. Romans 8:14 sets forth the splendor and the grandeur of being a child of God. There is no state in all the world that compares with it. "As many as are led by the spirit of God they are the sons of God," Paul says. To be a son of God is infinitely more precious than to be a creature of God. To be a son of God is infinitely more precious than to be a mere believer, or even to be a Christian. The highest scriptural term describing the child of grace is this term "son." When we hear it we immediately think of Jesus. In the highest sense He is the Son of God. He is the monogenes (unique) Son of God. He is the only begotten, which means the only Son of His kind. Jesus stands in a category by himself. But the New Testament writers come along and call us the sons of God and joint heirs with our elder brother, Jesus Christ.

To be called a son of God amazed the apostles. The apostle John, who was as close to the heart of Jesus as any man who has ever lived, was overwhelmed by the fact that God would make us His sons and give us that name. He says in I John 3:1, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children or the sons of God." Phillips translates that to read, "Consider how incredible it is that the Father would allow us to be called His sons."

Now, what does it mean to be a son of God? It means everything that is in the Christian life in its highest sense. It means that the Christian bears the very name of the Father and the very name of God. It also means that a son of God is heir to everything that God is, everything that God has. The next verse following says, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear but ye have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba Father." We walk around like paupers - we are spiritual millionaires if we are sons of God. All things are ours, Paul says in I Corinthians 3:21-23. We are rich now in the things of God. We will be richer in eternity. The best is yet to be because we are sons of God.

But not only this - to be a son of God means that we sustain to the eternal Father the sweetest and most intimate relationship. It is so intimate until Paul reverted back to his native tongue and said, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Whereby we cry "my Daddy." Why? Because the relationship is so intimate, so personal and so wonderful until we come to the Father with every problem we have. The communion is wonderful. There is nothing that we cannot bring; He does not turn us away. This "Abba Father" relationship is the privilege of God's son through the Holy Spirit.

And then, to be a son of God means that we will reflect the character of God. The Bible <sup>in</sup> says that Ephesians 5:1 says, "Be ye followers, mimitai, be ye imitators." That is what the word is in the original. "Be ye ~~followers~~ imitators of God as dear children." Phillips translates it to read, "As children copy their fathers, even so you should copy your heavenly Father." My standard should be nothing less than the standard of God. God calls upon you and me to live like Him, to live like Jesus lived in the world. You do not ask what your neighbor does about a certain situation. You are not even to ask what your denomination's position is. You are to ask the question, "What would God do? What would Jesus of Nazareth do?" Today some of our best minds are saying that we are not going to win people basically through preaching, that people must be won today by righteous living - people who have God in their lives until others can see that it is real.

From knowing your life, do people come to God? When they see your life, does it make them want Christ? Does it make them want God? If you are a son of God you should live like a son of God. Some years ago I was 12 miles from the place I was brought up. I walked into a barber shop, and the barber said, "I have never seen you before in my life but I believe I know who you are. Aren't you the Son of S. L. Bennett?" I said, "Yes, I am. <sup>(1)</sup> How did you know?" He replied, "You are the 'spit and image' of him. I know him and I can see him in you." We use this expression "spit 'n image" - it came into our language about 100 years ago, I understand. But it was not that way when it came into

our language. It is colloquialism now. It was originally "spirit and image." Spirit and image of the father. Now we call it "spit 'n image." What the barber was saying was that I was the spirit and image of my father. The Bible says that the child of God is to be the spirit and image of the Father who is in heaven.

The great preacher, Bushnell, was having a great revival in his church. Someone asked him, "How do you do it? What kind of sermons do you preach?" The great preacher said, "It is not my preaching. I preach twice on Sunday and other times but I have 400 people in my congregation who go out each week and preach the Gospel by their lives." The greatest power in a church is the man or woman that is the son of God not just in name but in reality. The greatest hindrance I have is the person who is a member of the church who goes out to live like the devil. That undoes more than I can ever do in my preaching.

I read that there was a soldier in the army of Alexander the Great whose name was Alexander. He committed a serious crime and was hailed before the great General. As he sat down, the General said, "And what is your name?" The man replied, "My name is Alexander." The great General said, "Do you spell your name just as I spell mine?" The man said, "Yes." The General said, "If your name is Alexander there is one thing I want to say to you. Change your name or change your conduct."

There are a lot of people who should do that. They should not say they are sons of God and live like they live. I respect the man anywhere who is a lost sinner - a reprobate who does not claim to be a thing on earth. I respect him more than I do the person who comes to church and lives an ungodly life. I think God will honor him. Are you a son of God? If you are, live like a son through the power of God. If you are not a son of God, it is your privilege to become God's son.

Thank God for the privilege of being a son of God. "As many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). Have you received Him?