

What does God want to say about you?

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we've been looking together today at Romans chapter 8 and verses 14 to 17 which are on the screen and we can read them again.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God, 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.

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God 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.

Now, we've been studying these verses together today over both our services and those of you who weren't here this morning, don't worry because really we're not doing anything overly complicated.

We are simply asking three fairly basic questions in regard to these verses and these questions are as follows. What does God want to do with you?

[1 : 1 5] What does God want to say about you? And what does God want to give you? This morning we looked at the first question, what does God want to do with you?

And at the heart of the answer to that question is the fact that a lot of people have a misunderstanding about God, which makes them think that God would want to make us slaves.

And from the days of I think the Romans, all the way through to our present day, people have had this false perception of God that he is trying to restrict us, he's trying to control us and he's trying to dominate us in the way that a slave master rules and dominates those slaves which are in his possession.

People have this view of God, which is a fairly negative view of God and because they view God negatively, they think that they'd be better off without him.

Somebody thinks that I don't want to be a slave, I don't want to be restricted or controlled, I don't want my life spoiled, so I'm better off doing my own thing. And many, many people push God away because they think God's just trying to make me a slave.

[2 : 3 4] As we said this morning, that manifests itself in our own culture where people will say, well, being a Christian is just a big list of dos and don'ts.

And of course, we have been reminded by Paul that that is totally wrong because God does not, he absolutely does not want us, want to make us slaves in this sense of cold, harsh, rigid treatment.

In fact, God wants to do the very opposite. He wants to make you his own child. You imagine a household in the ancient world, the difference between the status of a slave and a child.

You think of somebody, a noble landowner, who would probably have many, many, many slaves, but in that household, his own son, his own daughter would have a status and a privilege that is totally different to that of the slaves.

And we are being reminded that that's what God wants for us. The goal of the Christian message is that we will be adopted as children of God. That's why God's objective is not simply that you would be forgiven.

[3 : 56] It's not even simply that you'd be justified, not even that you would be redeemed, but that you would be adopted as God's very own, beloved, precious child.

And the reason for that is, which we saw, is because God is not simply the God of truth and the God of life and the God of wisdom and the God of grace and the God of glory.

He's also the God of adoption. At the core of God's being is a father's heart. And that's why we can run to him.

Even if we are crying out in need, we can run to God and say, Abba, Father. So that was what we looked at this morning. What does God want to do with you?

He wants to adopt you as his child. He wants to be your father. But there's a lot more in these verses. And so tonight we're going to look at question number two and question number three.

[4 : 59] What does God want to say about you and what does God want to give you? So what does God want to say about you? That's a really, really interesting question.

You think of God and think of yourself here tonight. What does God want to say about you? What do you think he would want to say?

Or if we made it a bit more official, if we imagined that this was a kind of courtroom setting and if you were the subject of the examination and God was brought in as a witness, if God was the one to bear testimony, which is the kind of language that Paul uses here, what would he say?

What would he want to say? Well, if I look at myself, I can think of many things that God could say, very few of which are positive.

So God could bear witness about me and he could say, this person's a failure because he is a human created to bear my image and he doesn't do it in the way that I want.

[6 : 22] This person is a disappointment because I've set a standard of morality and Thomas is not reaching it. I've set an expectation of conduct.

I have told him things that I would like him to do. I have said things that I don't want him to do and yet he doesn't listen and he doesn't maintain a standard. He's a disappointment.

And so much so, he is a sinner because he's broken my law repeatedly in his life.

God has every reason to say that about me and he wouldn't be bearing false witness and he could bring a lot of evidence to back up what he was saying.

God really has every reason to say those things about me and I'm pretty sure the same is true for you.

[7 : 22] But the amazing thing about verse 16 is that it's telling us that God does not want to bear witness about us and say, this person's a failure.

This person's a disappointment. This person's a sinner. God wants to stand up and say, this person is mine.

This is my child. As what verse 16 says so clearly and beautifully, the Spirit Himself, to the Holy Spirit, God Himself, bear witness with our spirit that we are what?

That we are children of God. That means that if you're a Christian or if you become a Christian, God the Holy Spirit is declaring his testimony about you and he is saying, this is God's child.

Now that is an astonishing truth that is being said before us here and there's many things that we could say but I want to highlight just a couple of things in this area that really said before us some of the wonders of God's goodness to us.

[8 : 43] Two things in particular. First of all, verse 16 is giving legal confirmation of your adoption if you're a Christian.

Let's go all the way back to the Old Testament and look at a verse from Deuteronomy and here we are in Deuteronomy chapter 19 verse 15 where it says, a single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offence that he has committed.

Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. Now you may well be thinking what on earth has that got to do with adoption?

It seems a million miles from Romans chapter 8. Well if you look at that verse, it's setting before us a principle that runs right through the Bible and that principle is the one which states that in order for something to be proved as true there has to be two witnesses.

One witness is not enough. There has to be two in order to confirm that something is the truth and that principle is echoed again in the New Testament and it reminds us that God is always interested in confirming that something is true.

[10 : 06] God does not like gossip. God does not like slander. God does not like sort of vague uncertainty, half truths or anything like that.

God is the God of truth. That's why in terms of how God wants a society to function one witness is not enough. There needs to be a confirmation from a second source.

So this is a general principle in Deuteronomy 19. It applies in a law court. Now I think that in Romans 8 Paul is taking that principle and he's applying it to our adoption and he is saying that when it comes to our faith in Jesus Christ and the fact that through that faith we are united to Jesus and adopted as children of God we do not rely simply on our own testimony.

In other words our status as sons and daughters of God is not grounded simply on what we say.

It is confirmed by the testimony of God the Holy Spirit Himself. As a reminder that when you come to God you're not sort of saying God oh please remember me I'm your child too please remember me please please think of me notice me.

[11 : 38] It's easy to think like that that we almost have to persuade God to remember us and to care for us and to love us not through our sonship our testimony of our sonship is just one witness.

The confirmation comes from God Himself. He testifies to the fact that you are His child.

So that means that if you feel under attack from the devil in terms of the fact that the devil tries to undermine our relationship with God that's something that the devil loves to do to undermine your relationship with God to make you think God would not care for you, God would not love you, God would not want you as his child and the devil constantly tries to fill our minds with these questions constantly tries to get in there and to spoil that relationship.

When that happens when the devil tries to undermine you as a child of God and when the devil tries to call into question your adopted status who can you call on?

You can call on the testimony of God the Holy Spirit Himself. In other words your adopted status has got the backing of heaven.

[13 : 12] God is confirming to us through His own testimony that we are His adopted children if we put our faith in Jesus Christ.

So there's a legal confirmation here and always remember that adoption is a legal concept. If we want to adopt somebody here we have to do it through the law courts.

The same principle applies in scripture. It's confirmed by God's statutes, confirmed by His testimony that we have become His children.

Secondly that testimony that the Holy Spirit gives is the source that we must go to in order to find personal assurance.

Now assurance is a subject that maybe we don't talk enough about at church. Assurance of the fact that you're a Christian.

[14 : 15] I don't think that there's a Christian anywhere who has not struggled with that question at times. So we think yes I'm a Christian, I know I'm a Christian and then maybe not long later we think I'm not sure if I am.

And we struggle with assurance and we think how can I know that I am a Christian? How can I be certain? We all struggle with assurance at different times in their lives. We wonder if God has really saved us.

We think how we really come to faith? Has our change really taken place? Is Jesus really my savior? And is God really my father?

And loads of different things can undermine our assurance. Very often it comes from the fact that we think that we're lacking something that another person has. So we think that somebody else has had such and such an experience and I have not had it.

Or somebody else has got all this knowledge and I don't know what they know. These people seem to get on far better than I do. I keep making mistakes. I keep mucking up.

[15 : 23] And so we compare ourselves to other people. All we can see is that good points, we can't see that on the inside they have exactly the same struggles as we do. And we think I've not got what they've got.

And the result is that we feel anxious. We can even feel uncertain and nervous. And all of that combines to lead us to a lack of assurance.

And that can affect many people. It affects people who have been members of the church for decades. It affects people who have yet to come and profess faith.

People think I don't have the assurance that I need. So if that's you today, what should you do?

Well I think that Romans 8 is giving us the answer, a key answer to this problem. And we are being told first and foremost not to fall back into fear.

[16 : 35] We looked at that this morning. God says do not fall back into fear. We do not want to allow assurance to make us think, oh well I'll just keep my distance.

Maybe it was all a mistake. Maybe I got it all wrong. The last thing we ever want to do is go back. What we need to do is listen to the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Because He is bearing witness with you. And He is bearing witness about you. And He is saying God is your Father and you are His child.

And so it's reminding us that the key point for assurance is not really what we've experienced or what we've done or what we know, it's what God is saying.

And Paul is reminding us that God the Holy Spirit is saying this is God's child. And it's our wonderful reminder that God wants to pour His fatherly assurance into you.

[17 : 39] He wants to assure you. Not through dramatic experiences necessarily. Not through giving you loads of knowledge. Not through making sure that you never make a mistake but He wants to pour His fatherly assurance into you.

Remember the prodigal son? That wonderful parable that Jesus told regarding the son who had wandered off and got into a mess and came back to His Father.

You remember that when He came back to His Father He said I am not worthy to be called your son. Isn't that what He said? What did the Father do after that?

Can you remember? Let's read it together. When He came to Himself He said how many of my Father's higher servants have more than enough bread but I perish here with hunger.

I will arise and go to my Father and I will say to Him Father I've sinned against heaven and before You. I am no longer worthy to be called Your Son, treat me as one of Your hired servants.

[18 : 46] And He arose and came to His Father but while He was still a long way off His Father saw Him and felt compassion and ran and embraced Him and kissed Him and the Son said to Him Father I've sinned against heaven and before You I am no longer worthy to be called Your Son but the Father said to His servants bring quickly the best robe and put it on Him and put a ring on His hand and shoes on His feet and bring the fattened calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate.

Now why did the Father put a ring and robes and shoes on His Son?

Why did He do that? It was to give His beloved child the deepest assurance that He was not a slave, He was a Son.

And that's what God wants you to have, that deep assurance that He is Your Father and You are His precious, precious child.

That's what God, the Holy Spirit, is testifying to you and testifying with you that God is Your Father, the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

[20 : 13] And we must recognize the fact that that is where God wants us to go to find assurance. So the Spirit does not testify about you and say oh this person had a remarkable experience, this person saw a vision, this person saw a miracle, this person had some kind of astonishing event take place in their lives.

Not that I'm saying these things don't happen, they do happen for some but that is not what the testimony of the Holy Spirit is. This testimony of the Holy Spirit is not this person had an incredibly dramatic conversion where a sudden, remarkable, astonishing change take place.

The Holy Spirit does not testify about that and yet we're so often plagued with doubts because we think I haven't had that experience, I haven't had that event in my life, I haven't had a conversion like that, I can't say what somebody else is saying.

But the point is that ultimately what may or may not happen is really irrelevant compared to what this verse is saying because the key place to find assurance is in the cry of your heart which says to God, my Father.

Now Paul I think is telling us that you do not need more than that, you don't need my Father and a massive event, you don't need my Father and a whatever else.

[21 : 46] You need to be able to look to God and know that because of what Jesus has done for you, God is now your Father because it's the Holy Spirit that tells you that.

So often we are weak, so often we stumble, so often we fail but we are irrelevant when it comes to our assurance because our assurance lies in the fact that God looks at you and he says my child and by his spirit working in us we look to God and we say my Father.

And you look at the prodigal son and you think of all the reasons that people could say but, you could look at these two coming together and you can imagine everybody else and say but look at what he did, but look at how he's treated you, but look at what these last few years have been, but look at everything else, but look at this, but look at that, but look at this.

The Father would say clear off because this is my son and I love him and even though he's made a heck of a lot of mistakes, he loves me and he's coming back into our family.

And this is where we see that that assurance of sonship is not confined to the super Christians. How many people think that there's such a thing as super Christians?

[23 : 16] We look at people and we think oh yeah that guy's a real Christian, he's like a super Christian because he seems to be everything that a Christian should be and we think yeah that person would have that assurance, that person would have that testimony from the Holy Spirit.

Let me ask you the question, how many super Christians do you know? How many super Christians do you know? I'll tell you the answer.

None because they don't exist. Every single person who has their faith in Jesus Christ has this testimony from the Holy Spirit.

This testimony which says my son and God wants to give that assurance to the one who comes with a cry of anguish.

The Father and the prodigal son put the ring on the finger of the wreck that was standing in front of him. He put sandals on to feet that had spent the last, who knows how long, in the mud of a pigsty and he took off his clothes that would have stank probably and he put his best robe on him because God wants to assure the weakest of us that we are his children if our faith is in Jesus.

[24 : 39] Now, none of this means that you will never lack assurance because we all lack assurance at times and the Westminster Confession of Faith which is just a brilliant document says that assurance is not of the essence of faith.

What that means is that you can lack assurance but it is not for one minute meaning that you're not saved because assurance is not of the essence of faith.

We do lack assurance at times. Sometimes it's weaker, sometimes our assurance is strong, sometimes it's weaker. But what we are being told here is that when we do lack assurance, this is where we need to go.

We need to go to the fact that God the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. So please, please, please always remember that.

If this week is hard for you, if this week knocks your faith, then please just remember two words, Abba, Father, my Father and go to him because that's where we need to go.

[25 : 56] So what does God want to say about you? With all your failings and mistakes and weaknesses, what does God want to say about you?

He wants to say my child. And if you are not yet a Christian, please, please know that that is what God wants to say about you as well.

That's what God wants to be able to say about you. But until you put your faith in Jesus, God can't say it because it is through faith in Jesus, through trusting in Jesus that all of that is ours.

It's not ours by default. It's not ours automatically. It's not ours because we're born in Lewis and because we're parents for Christians. It's ours if we put a simple... Well, here's where we see the Bible fits together so perfectly.

Here is a deep theological passage talking about the fact that at the heart of theology lies the fact that we are adopted as children of God.

[27 : 01] Now go back two or three books in the Bible and ask yourself, what phrase does Jesus... What phrase does Jesus use to describe the kind of faith that he wants of the person who gets all this?

I think you know the answer. It's a childlike faith. God wants a childlike faith because he wants to look at you and say, my child.

It all fits together so perfectly. What is calling you, he's looking for you, he's waiting for you just as the father in the prodigal son was waiting for his son's return.

What does God want to say about you? He wants to say, my child. And that brings us to our last question.

What does God want to give you? So question one was what does God want to do with you? He wants to adopt you. What does God want to say about you? He wants to say, my child.

[28 : 05] What does God want to give you? Well the answer to that is in verse 17. The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we're children of God and if children then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

Now here Paul is just following a very logical sequence just like he does in Galatians. Well the whole Bible is always very logical. There's no irrationality in it.

It's very, very logical. He is saying, if we put our faith in Jesus then we are united to him.

If we are united to Jesus then we are adopted into God's family. If we are adopted into God's family then we are children of God.

If we are children of God then we are also heirs to all that God wants to give his son. It's beautifully, perfectly logical.

[29 : 14] What does God want to give you? He wants to give you an inheritance. That's what the word heirs is telling us.

So what does that mean and what's Paul talking about? Well really it's very simple because if you think about it inheritance is the means whereby the best of what someone has is shared out among their family.

That's what an inheritance is isn't it? Where somebody takes the best of what they have and they share it out among their family.

If you think about it, if you think about what you would want to pass on to your loved ones you're not going to include the failings of your life. You're going to be passing on the benefits, the assets, the successes of whatever you have achieved in your life.

So if I went along and said I would like to make a will and I want to leave my tax bill to my son. I don't think I would necessarily be able to do it and it certainly wouldn't be very, very fair on poor Tom or John if that was what I was to leave him.

[30 : 32] Because we don't pass on a worst. In terms of inheritance, certainly I think generally speaking we are striving to pass on the best of what we have.

And I think that's part of what we have conveyed to us by this biblical doctrine of inheritance. It's actually a big, big theme running through the Bible and I think we may well look at it next Sunday evening, just this whole theme of inheritance that runs through the pages of scripture.

I just want to touch on it tonight with the general point that God the Father wants to share the very best of everything that he has with his son.

So you think of God the Father and his beloved son Jesus Christ and you think God the Father would want to share everything, the best of everything that he has with his son.

But the astonishing truth of the doctrine of adoption is that God wants to include you in that as well.

[31 : 52] So all the blessings of God's land, God's creation that he has made with all that's brilliant in the universe, all these blessings God wants us to share.

All the security of God's household where we are part of that safe, secure dwelling place.

All the joy of God's family where we have that incredible bond of love as brothers and sisters, children to our Father. All the splendour of God's presence.

You think of God's presence and just the cheer, majesty and beauty and wonder of all that he is. You think of all the glory of God's kingdom.

You think of all the wonder of God's ways, his gentleness, his kindness, his love, his truth, his mercy, all of these things. All of that.

[32 : 50] All of that is your inheritance if you become a Christian.

All of it. There's no kind of layers to it. We all share as fellow heirs with Christ.

So what God wants to give his own son Jesus, he wants to give his own adopted children a share in it as well. Now, it is an absolutely astounding inheritance and that's why the Bible uses a key word to describe it.

It's the word glorification because that's what our inheritance is. A glorious, glorious inheritance.

And that is why even if our status as Christians or even if you becoming a Christian tonight which you can, even if that means that you have to suffer now, which is what Paul talks about there at the end of verse 17, even if you have to suffer now.

[34 : 11] All of that is tiny in comparison to what God has waiting for you. That's why the very next verse, it says this, I forgot to put it on the screen and I should have.

The very next verse Paul says provided that we suffer with him in order that we may be glorified with him for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

So this is a great reminder that God's ultimate goal for you is still something that lies ahead and between now and then there may be suffering, there may be struggles, there may be doubts and often life can bring hardship for followers of Jesus but never ever ever doubt for one moment that it won't be worth it.

Because God's inheritance for you is not even worth comparing with the sufferings that we have here. God's glory will make our sufferings seem tiny.

So what does God want to do with you? He wants to adopt you as his child. What does God want to say about you? He wants to testify that you are his child and that he is your father.

[35 : 39] And what does God want to give you? He wants to give you his best. He wants to give you a share in that inheritance that he has prepared for his own son, Jesus Christ.

Now there's two things I want us to notice as we finish this off. When we are studying these things we really are reaching the heights of theological study.

We are seeing the nature of God himself revealed as the perfect father. You think of how mind blowing that is. You stretch your mind to think of the perfect fatherly instinct of God that he has shown towards his son from all eternity and now that he is showing to us through faith in Jesus Christ.

You think of the astonishing provision that God has made in order to make this happen. We are here in Romans 8 chapter 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 has been emphasising to us the massive amount of work that God has put in to make this possible.

We think about the glorious union that we have with Jesus Christ, the fact that you are united to the Son of God. He is reigning over all the universe, exalted as the risen Savior and you are united to him.

[36 : 56] We are at the top of theological study here. We see the power of the work of the Holy Spirit in dwelling in us, transforming us, testifying to us, testifying with us that we are children of God and we see the glory of our future and all that God has planned for us which is what Paul is going to talk about next.

The wonder and astounding joy and glory of the new creation. We are at the heights of theology here and no matter how much we try to explore it we will only ever stretch the surface.

We are just seeing the astonishing fullness of what God has done for us and will do for us.

But do you know at the very same time as we reach the heights of theological study in these words of Romans 8, at the very same time we are also being taught the most basic truths that lie at the heart of being a Christian.

Because do you know what step one is for you every day as a Christian or if you become one? You know what step one is?

[38 : 17] Step one is to look to God and say, Father. And behind that lies an eternity's worth of theological study.

But that's the first step that we take every day and no matter what this week may bring in your lives just keep running to your Father and keep clinging to Him at every moment.

Do all that Jesus has done. You, you can have God as your Father.

Amen. Let's pray. Dear God, our Father, we thank you so, so much for what your Word teaches us and we pray O God that your Word will be written on your hearts and that we would keep, keep coming back to the truths of these words of the fact that we depend completely on you, the fact that we can come to you in all our weakness knowing that you are our perfect Father, that Jesus is our brother to whom we are united through faith and that your Holy Spirit is testifying with our spirit that we are children of God.

We pray O God that if anybody here is seeking you tonight and if anybody here is longing to know you as Father, to know Jesus as Saviour, we just pray that you would be at work in your midst.

[40 : 17] Amen.