

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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BLESSINGS
OF SONSHIP

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Living Stream Ministry

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Scripture Reading: [Romans 8:14-39](#)

[Romans 8:14-39](#) covers the matter of glorification. The goal of glorification is the full sonship of the children of God. Condemnation requires justification; justification is for sanctification; sanctification is for glorification; and glorification is for the full sonship of the children of God.

THE BLESSINGS OF SONSHIP

Before [Romans 8:14](#) the terms “children of God” and “sons of God” have not been used in the book of Romans. Starting with [8:14](#) Paul begins to speak about the sons of God and the children of God. However, the ultimate concept of the section on glorification ([8:14-39](#)) does not concern the children or the sons, but the heirs. We may be a child of God without the growth of a son of God, or a son of God without the qualification of an heir.

[Romans 8:14](#) says, “For as many as are led by

the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” This verse is a continuation of the foregoing portion in which Paul tells us that we must walk according to spirit ([v. 4](#)). In a sense, to walk according to spirit is to be under the leading of the Holy Spirit. By means of this short sentence Paul turns the whole concept from that of the sanctified ones to that of the sons of God. At the end of [verse 13](#) the thought was on the sanctified ones, the ones who were condemned, justified, reconciled, identified, and eventually sanctified. With [verse 14](#) Paul introduces the concept of the sons of God. How are we sanctified? By walking according to spirit. In a sense, walking according to spirit means to be led by the Spirit of God, and “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” In this way Paul turns us from sanctification to sonship.

The Spirit of Sonship

“For you have not received a spirit of slavery to fear again, but you have received a spirit of sonship in which we cry, Abba, Father.” How did we receive this spirit of sonship? By the Spirit of the Son of God coming into our spirit. [Galatians 4:6](#), a sister verse to [Romans 8:15](#), says, “And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of

His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father!” Romans says that we “have received a spirit of sonship”; Galatians says that “God sent forth the Spirit of His Son” into us. Because the Spirit of the Son of God enters into our spirit, our spirit becomes a spirit of sonship. Furthermore, [verse 15](#) mentions “a spirit of sonship in which we cry, Abba, Father”; but in [Galatians 4:6](#) it says that “the Spirit of His Son” cries “Abba, Father.” Whether we cry or He cries, we both cry together. When we cry, He cries in our crying. When He cries, we cry with Him. The subject of crying in [verse 15](#) is “we,” but in [Galatians 4:6](#) the subject of crying is “the Spirit.” These two verses prove that we and He, our spirit and the Spirit, are one. When we cry, “Abba, Father,” He joins with us in our crying. The Spirit cries in our crying because the Spirit of the Son of God indwells our spirit. Hence, there is no fear, only a sweet crying of “Abba, Father.”

“Abba” is an Aramaic word which also means father. When these two terms “Abba” and “Father” are put together, the result is a deep, sweet sense that is exquisitely intimate. “Abba, Father” is sweetness intensified. When you say, “Abba, Father,” do you have a sweet, intimate sensation within you? If you do, it proves that

you are a son of God and that you have a spirit of sonship.

The Witnessing of the Spirit

“The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God.” In [verse 14](#) we see the “sons of God” and in [verse 15](#) the “spirit of sonship.” Why in [verse 16](#) does Paul suddenly mention the “children”? Because the Spirit witnesses to our primary or initial relationship with God. As I have already mentioned, we may be children without the growth of a son, and we may be sons without the qualification of an heir. For the Holy Spirit to witness that we are all heirs of God would be premature. Most of us are not mature enough for such a witness. Thus, the Spirit witnesses to the most basic and elementary relationship—that of being the children of God. He witnesses with our spirit that we are God’s children. Therefore, the witnessing of the Holy Spirit starts with the youngest age, even from our spiritual birth. Regardless of how young or new you may be, if you are a child of God, the Spirit of God witnesses with your spirit. When our spirit witnesses, that is also the witnessing of the Spirit, because the two spirits have been mingled together as one.

The Leading of the Spirit

Many Christians have a mistaken, natural concept regarding the leading of the Spirit. People invariably think that the leading of the Spirit comes suddenly from the third heaven or elsewhere. Some ask the Lord for a sign or an indicator.

Have you noticed the first word in [verse 14](#) regarding the Lord's leading is "For," a word which refers us back to what Paul has mentioned previously and which indicates that [verse 14](#) is a continuation of that matter. The main point of the previous verses is to walk according to the spirit that we might fulfill the righteous requirement of the law of God. We may have the leading of the Spirit by walking according to the spirit.

The leading of the Spirit does not derive from nor depend upon outward things. The leading of the Spirit is an issue of the inner life. I would say that it comes from the sense of life, from the consciousness of the divine life within us. The word life is mentioned at least five times in [Romans 8](#). Hence, the leading of the Spirit is a matter of life, a matter of the sense and consciousness of life. The mind set upon the spirit is life ([v. 6](#)). How can we know that life? Not by

outward things, but by the inward sense and consciousness of life. There is an inward sense which comes from setting the mind upon the spirit. If our mind is set upon our spirit, we are immediately strengthened and satisfied inwardly. We also are watered and refreshed. By that sense and consciousness we can know the life within us, and by this sense of life we can know that we are under the leading of the Spirit. The divine life within us leads us constantly, not by signs or indicators, but by giving us an inward sense, feeling, or consciousness. Thus, Paul says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." If you are led by outward things, it does not prove that you are a son of God. However, if you are led by the inward sense of the divine life, it indicates that you are a son of God. We are the sons of God because we have the life of God. Why are worldly people not the sons of God? Because they lack the life of God.

When you are about to go to a department store, although everything may be clear outwardly, you need to obey the inner sense of life. As you approach the entrance of the store, you do not hear an audible word, but you have the sense of darkness, weakness, and dryness. Since you are a son of God, you have such an indicator

from the inward life. You have something that people in the world do not have. Because you have the life of God, you have the leading which issues from that life. This leading indicates that you are a son of God.

Where is the leading that Paul mentions in [verse 14](#)? It is in [verses 4](#) and [6](#). The leading of the Spirit comes as you walk according to the spirit and set your mind on the spirit. If you walk according to the spirit and set your mind on the spirit, you will find that you have the leading of the Spirit. You will have the consciousness that you are walking, behaving, and living according to the spirit. You should not violate this inner sense or disobey this inward consciousness, for it is truly the leading of the Spirit. When you have this sense within, it means that you are being led by the Spirit. To set your mind upon the spirit is to be placed under the leading of the Spirit. The inward life gives you the sense, even in small things, of whether or not you are under the Lord's leading. We are led of the Spirit by walking according to spirit and by setting our mind upon the spirit. The leading of the Spirit mentioned in [verse 14](#) is not derived from the outward environment, but from the inward sense and consciousness of the divine life.

How do we know that we are the sons of God? We know by the leading of the Spirit, for the leading of the Spirit puts a mark upon us. The inward life constantly gives us a sensation or consciousness that we should not behave ourselves as worldly people do. We must be different from our relatives, friends, classmates, and neighbors. As we obey the inward sense of life, we spontaneously display a mark which tells people that we are different from the Devil's children, that we have the life of God within us which makes us sons of God. This is the leading of the Spirit. Do not consider the leading of the Spirit mentioned in [verse 14](#) as an outward matter. It is absolutely an inward sense which comes from the divine life in our spirit.

If we do not live and walk according to this leading of the Spirit, we may be the children of God concerning which the Spirit witnesses with our spirit in crying, "Abba, Father," but we do not have the mark that designates us as the sons of God. We may be God's children, but we do not have the growth which comes by living and walking according to the leading of the Spirit in life. The leading of the Spirit marks us out as being the sons of God in the growth of life.

We need to realize the difference between the

children of God in [verse 16](#) and the sons of God in [verse 14](#). The children of God are in the initial stage of the divine life, the stage which mainly concerns the birth, while the sons of God are in a more advanced stage, the stage which concerns the growth in life. In order to be children of God we need the witnessing of the Spirit with our spirit, but in order to be the sons of God we need the leading of the Spirit by the sense of the divine life.

The Firstfruit of the Spirit

[Romans 8:17](#) says, “And if children, heirs also; heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him.” In [verse 17](#) we see that we have progressed from children to heirs. The semicolon in this verse indicates that there is a condition involved in being an heir. We should not say that because we are children we are heirs. This is too hasty. There is no condition imposed for us to be the children of God. As long as the Spirit witnesses with our spirit, we are the children of God. However, for us to progress from children to heirs there is a condition.

The condition for being heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ is that “we suffer with Him

that we may also be glorified with Him.” We may not like suffering, but we need it. Suffering is the incarnation of grace. We should not be distressed by suffering. If we suffer with Him, we will be glorified with Him. The more suffering we pass through, the more our glory will be intensified, for suffering increases the intensity of our glory. In [1 Corinthians 15:41](#) Paul says that “one star differeth from another star in glory,” indicating that some stars shine more brightly than others. We all will shine, and we all will be glorified, but the intensity of our glory will depend on the amount of suffering we are willing to take. Therefore Paul says in [Romans 8:18](#), “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us.” The present suffering means nothing compared with the coming glory.

[Verse 19](#) reads, “For the anxious watching of the creation eagerly expects the revelation of the sons of God.” This revelation denotes the manifestation or the appearing of the sons of God. We all are the sons of God. Today, if we tell people on the street that we are sons of God, they will think that we are crazy. However, the day will come when the sons of God will be manifested. We shall be in glory, designated as sons

of God. There will be no need for us to say anything. We shall be designated by our glorification. The entire creation is waiting for this with watching eyes, for the creation eagerly expects the revelation of the sons of God.

[Verse 20](#) continues, “For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but because of Him Who subjected it.” The entire creation is under vanity. Everything under the sun is vanity. The wise king Solomon said, “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity” ([Eccl. 1:2](#)).

Then [verse 21](#) says, “In hope that the creation itself will also be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” In the entire universe there is nothing except vanity and corruption. This corruption is a kind of bondage, a slavery, that binds the whole creation. Creation has been made subject to vanity in the hope that it will be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. One day the children of God will be glorified, brought into glory. With that glory there will be freedom, and that freedom will be a kingdom, sphere, or realm. When we are brought into that freedom or kingdom of glory, creation will be delivered from vanity, corruption, and slavery.

This is the reason that the entire creation is awaiting that time. We have very much to do with the creation, for the future destiny of the creation rests upon us.

Verse 22 says, “For we know that the whole creation groans together and travails in pain together until now.” It seems that one star groans to another and that the moon groans to the planets. They all groan together. Not only does the creation groan together, it also travails as in the pangs of childbirth.

Verse 23 follows, “And not only so, but we ourselves also, having the firstfruit of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan in ourselves, eagerly expecting sonship, the redemption of our body.” Although we have been born through regeneration as the sons of God and have the Spirit as the firstfruit, we also groan because we are still in the body which is linked to the old creation. Since our body belongs to the old creation and has not yet been redeemed, we are groaning in it as the creation does. However, while we are groaning we have the firstfruit of the Spirit for our enjoyment; it is a foretaste of the coming harvest. This firstfruit is the Holy Spirit as a sampling of the full taste of God as our enjoyment. God is so much to us. The full taste will

come in the day of glory. Nevertheless, before the full taste comes, God has given us a foretaste today.

While we are groaning and enjoying the firstfruit of the Spirit, we are expecting sonship. Here sonship means full sonship. Although we have sonship within us, this sonship has not yet become full. In that day we will know full sonship. What is full sonship? It is the redemption of our body. We have sonship in our spirit through regeneration, and we may also have sonship in our soul through transformation, but we do not as yet have sonship in our body through transfiguration. In the coming day we will also have sonship in our body. This is full sonship, our longing expectation.

While we are waiting we need to grow. Many among us are too young, too immature. We all must grow and be matured. The time of the coming of that glorious day depends upon our growth in life. The faster we grow, the sooner that day will come.

In [verse 24](#) Paul says, “For we have been saved in hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what anyone sees, why does he also hope?” We have been saved in the hope that some day we will enter into glory. The thing for which we hope

will be wonderful because we have never seen it. Hence, it is a real hope.

Verse 25 continues, “But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly expect it through endurance.” So many expectant saints have asked, “Lord, how long? Another ten years? Another generation? How long, Lord?” This is a test to our endurance.

The Helping of the Spirit

“And in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness; for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” What does the phrase “in like manner” mean? I believe that it has an all-inclusive meaning. “In like manner” includes all the points of the foregoing verses—expecting, eagerness, groaning, endurance, hope, and so forth. While we are groaning, the Holy Spirit also is groaning. While we are expecting, He is expecting. While we are hoping and enduring, He is hoping and enduring. Whatever we are, He is also the same. “In like manner” the Spirit joins in to help us. What a comfort this is! If we are weak, He apparently is weak also, although actually He is not. He appears to be weak for the sake

of our weakness that He might participate in it. In whatever way we pray, He also prays. In whatever way we are, He also is. If we pray quickly, rejoicingly, and shoutingly, He also prays in this manner. Our manner is His manner. Do not think that the Holy Spirit is so different from us that when we receive the Holy Spirit we will be extraordinary people. [Romans 8](#) reveals that the Holy Spirit is in our manner.

Paul also says that the Spirit joins in to help us. He participates in our weakness in order to help us. The Spirit does not ask us to join in with Him; He joins in with us. The Spirit does not say, “Come up to the highest standard to join Me.” None of us can do this. The Spirit joins in in our manner. If your manner is quick, He will also be quick. If you are slow, He will be slow. Whether you pray strongly or weakly, loudly or softly, it does not matter to Him. If you pray, He will pray in you “in like manner.” “In like manner” He will join in to help you.

On the day of resurrection, the Lord Jesus came to two disciples who were on the way to Emmaus ([Luke 24:13-33](#)). The Lord joined them absolutely in their manner. While they were talking, the Lord Jesus pretended not to know anything. The Lord Jesus neither rebuked them

nor revealed Himself to them. He kept Himself in their manner, walking with them until they came near to the village. They asked Him to abide with them and He did. As they were seated in the room, the Lord took bread and broke it. Only then were their eyes opened to see that it was the Lord. In the church life the older brothers and sisters need to help the younger ones in their manner. Instead of being too big or too high, they need to join in to help in their weaknesses.

The Interceding of the Spirit

Paul continues to say, “for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” The Spirit intercedes for us with groanings in our manner. This groaning apparently is our groaning, but in our groaning is the groaning of the Spirit. This is the best prayer we can have for the growth in life. Most of our prayers are very utterable with clear words, but they may not be out of our spirit. But when we have a real burden to pray yet we do not know how to utter it, then spontaneously we just groan with that burden without any utterable word. This kind of unutterable prayer is primarily for

the growth in life. Concerning our material needs and business affairs we are clear and do have the utterance to pray about these things, but concerning the matter of our growth in life we are lacking in both understanding and utterance. However, if we are seeking the Lord regarding the growth in life, oftentimes deep within our spirit we will be burdened with some prayer about which we have no clear understanding and for which we have no utterance. So, spontaneously we are forced to groan. While we are groaning from deep within our spirit, the Spirit who dwells in our spirit automatically joins in with our groaning, interceding for us that we may have the transformation in life for growth into the maturity of sonship.

Verse 27 says that “He who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He intercedes for the saints according to God.” The interceding Spirit prays for us according to God that we may be conformed to the image of His Son.

The Full Sonship

In this portion of the Word three significant terms are used—children, sons, and heirs. These three words correspond to the three stages of

sonship. The life of God works in three stages to make us sons of God. The life of God regenerates us in our spirit, transforms us in our soul, and transfigures our body. These together give us full sonship. As the result of these three steps the sons are fully matured.

In this portion of Romans we are told that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God (v. 16). In [verse 16](#) it does not say sons or heirs, for in the first stage of sonship we are simply little children who have been regenerated by the life of God. Then [verse 14](#) says that “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.” In [verse 14](#) we are no longer babes or children, but sons. When we are capable of being led by the Spirit, it means that we have attained a certain growth in life. This means that we are in the second stage, the stage of transformation. Ultimately, we will become heirs. According to ancient law, heirs had to be of age and declared the legal heirs that they might claim the inheritance. In this portion of Romans we have children by regeneration, sons by transformation, and heirs by transfiguration or glorification. We were born the children of God, we are growing up as the sons of God, and we are waiting for the time when we

will be fully matured and legally declared to be the rightful heirs of God. The procedure which makes us legal heirs is the transfiguration of our body, that is, the redemption of our body, the full redemption (v. 23). The transfiguration of our body will qualify us to be the heirs of the divine inheritance. This transfiguration will be accomplished by glorification. How marvelous that we are the sons of God enjoying the blessings of sonship!

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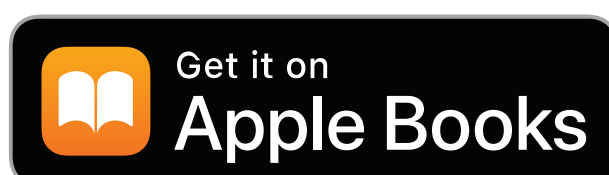
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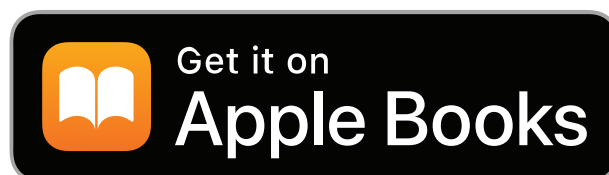
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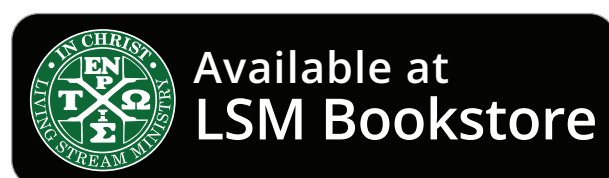
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