



HOLY SPIRIT - ROMANS 8:16

Part 8

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¹⁶**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,**

We want to look primarily at [Romans 8:16](#), but at the same time initially just introduce [Romans 8:17-26](#) and the continuing ministry of the Holy Spirit in those verses. In all of this it is important to not lose sight of what Paul is doing in this chapter. One of the primary objectives of [Romans 8](#) is to continually clarify and reinforce what Paul said in [Romans 8:1a](#).

¹**There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus....**

[Romans 8:1](#) is without question one of the greatest and most encouraging verses in all of Scripture. In [Romans 7](#) Paul clearly described the experience of every Christian. It is that experience of wanting to do one thing, but then doing another, and of knowing what is right and then choosing to do what is wrong. In studying that chapter it becomes quite clear how frustrating and perplexing the situation that Paul was describing actually was. So, in [Romans 8:1](#), he wants his readers to fully understand that there will be “**no condemnation**” for believers – even when they do fail. They will not be judged for their sins. We previously and consistently have called it a **no condemnation status**. It is the believer’s legal and judicial standing before God and their **actual** spiritual condition. It is that statement by Paul that gives the believer eternal security – the “**no condemnation**” status. If someone will never be condemned by God, then they possess eternal security. The word “**therefore**” in [Romans 8:1](#) connects [Romans 8](#) back to [Romans 7:13-25](#). Paul is just simply trying to reinforce that no matter how bad a believer may fail, the work of Christ on their behalf has secured this “**no condemnation**” status for them.

So [Romans 8](#) is all about the Holy Spirit and how He continuously works to confirm, validate, and authenticate this incredible spiritual status that believers possess with God. To make it even better, Paul ends with [Romans 8:31-39](#) which has to be the most glorious benediction of praise anywhere in Scripture where he states that nothing can separate the Christian from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. It is all about eternal security and assurance.

We have seen how the Holy Spirit frees the believer from the law of sin and death in v2. We have seen how He enables them to fulfill the law in v4. We have seen how He changed the believer’s nature. We have seen in v12-13 how He helps the believer to put to death the deeds of the body. We have seen in v14 how He leads the believer. We have seen in v15 how He has adopted believers into God’s family and we will see in v16 how He bears witness with the believer’s spirit that they are indeed God’s children. Then we will come to the final portion of the Holy Spirit’s work in [Romans 8:17-26](#) and how He confirms this “**no condemnation**” status in [Romans 8:1](#) by finally bringing every believer to glory, or what is called “glorification”.

Now, a very simple statement that should be exceedingly encouraging to each believer is that **salvation guarantees glorification**. I.e., once a believer has salvation, their glorification is guaranteed by God. Being glorified is the climax, the culmination, and the target of salvation. [Romans 8:30](#) says,



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³⁰Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Now, it is important to understand how Paul actually introduces this subject. In [Romans 8:14-16](#), Paul has given assurance that believers are God's children because they have been adopted into His family. Paul then states that one of the primary ways that they know that they are one of God's children is because they are continuously being "**led by the Spirit of God**". In fact, the relationship there is so rich and so meaningful that they simply cry out "**Abba, Father**". This becomes very personal and very intimate. Rather than having a fear of God, the believer recognizes that they are truly a part of God's family and one of His children. Then in [Romans 8:16](#), Paul states that the Holy Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirits that we are in fact a part of God's family. The end result of being a part of God's family is that God will bring every believer to a place of glory. Look once again at v16-18,

¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. ¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

The Holy Spirit **confirms** and "**bears witness with our spirit**" in v16 that "**we are children of God**". I.e., He is ever present in the believer and is always confirming within them that they are in fact one of God's children. Just think of the different times in your life when you truly had fellowship with God, or when you were reading the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit just opened up a portion of the Scriptures to your mind and to your heart. It is one of the ways that He testifies to your inner person that you are one of God's children. The lost man, for instance, never senses this - this illumination, this enlightenment, this explanation of spiritual truth, and this unseen spiritual fellowship. They are content to live without God, but the believer is not. To the contrary, they are discontent and restless when they know that they are not having quality time with God, or when they just sense that they have been avoiding Him in some way. There is sense a discomfort and a kind of subjective spiritual uneasiness. It could almost be called a kind of "spiritual anxiety" that the Holy Spirit produces in the believer – and it is a good thing, something that every believer should readily welcome and accept into their life.

However, it is important to be clear that this "**bearing witness with our spirit**" is not just some kind of mystical voice that a believer hears on the inside. In fact, I would encourage you **NOT** to be looking for that kind of subjective experience. Rather, it is the Holy Spirit producing His fruit in a believer's life, producing the character of Christ in their life, or strengthening them for some kind of spiritual service or ministry. Because of that, this witnessing to the believer becomes a very objective and recognizable element in their life and very apparent and discernible spiritual fruit that God has produced within them. The more subjective that one makes this "**bearing witness**", then the more likely they will be deceived relative to their true spiritual condition. One of the fallacies of the current church age is that it has developed an "entertainment" mentality within the local church where people often go to church for the "spiritual entertainment" that they receive, but then walk away completely unchanged and unaffected by the truth – which may not even have been clearly presented. The current



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church age is very adept at substituting many things for true biblical preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Keep in mind that the term “**bears witness**” means to provide credible supporting evidence to one's case by giving testimony or by testifying.

Let me give you a personal example of how some of this works. I was reading a book related to the kingdom of heaven, and I have great, great respect for the author of the book. He was the founding President of Dallas Theological Seminary – Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer. However, as I read this one particular section of the book, I was just uneasy, almost troubled about some of the things that I read. That is not a criticism of Dr. Chafer or his writings at all. He was a very excellent Bible scholar and a wonderful Christian, but I was just not comfortable with what I was reading and I was not relaxed with his direction. What that uneasiness did for me was to just encourage me more deeply to keep grinding away on the subject until I believed that I had reached a place where my understanding of the term was clear. For me, just a normal moment of academic uneasiness like this really is a personal confirmation of the Holy Spirit leading me and nurturing me and helping me in areas in which I lack understanding – and it is a great thing. It is not that someone else is wrong and I am right, but it is His actual helping me to understand something, His teaching me, and His not letting me just accept something that I read or hear.

Have you ever just felt a great love for God, just a moment in time when you knew so deeply that God was real and that you really loved Him? I submit to you that that moment was given to you by the Holy Spirit as just one of many confirmations of your having been adopted into God's family. It may have been a deep sense of remorse and repentance over something that was in your life that did not need to be there. I am always encouraged when people are deeply troubled about some sin in their life. It means that the Holy Spirit is at work in them. My heart is much more concerned about that person who does not have any real regret or repentance over known sin in their life.

Do you believe that you have grown in your discernment between truth and error and that you understand much more about Scripture now than you did five years ago? Do you believe that you have grown in Christlikeness in your Christian life? Do you feel like the Holy Spirit is continuing to draw you into the deeper things of God? Well, all of those attributes are the testimony and “**witness**” of the Holy Spirit to your spirit that you are one of God's children. Every occasion may not be some kind of spectacular spiritual event in your life, but it is something that the Holy Spirit consistently uses to confirm your adoption.

The point here is simple. The Holy Spirit bearing “**witness**” is not just some mystical, quiet, inner voice that the believer hears that says “*You are one of God's children*”. In all honesty, the devil could do that. That is not where genuine assurance necessarily comes from, even though it can. Rather, it is the Holy Spirit doing things in the believer's life that reflects God, that reflects Christ, and that reflects the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit in their life. It comes in His comforting the believer, in His stirring them to prayer, in His reproof of their sins, and in His drawing them into works of love and sacrifice for other people, and similar things. This is what needs to be understood relative to how the Holy Spirit bears witness with the believer's spirit. They genuinely see the work of God in their life.



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There is one area of the Roman adoption process that was not previously mentioned when studying the issue of “adoption”, but one that is a very important point in this discussion of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are God’s children. The Roman adoption ceremony was carried out in the presence of seven specific witnesses, and it was done so for a very specific reason. It was done so in case something later on happened to the adopting father. Let us suppose that the child that was being adopted was only two years old, and when he was four years old that the father actually died and ensuing in that was some dispute about the right of the adopted son to inherit his rightful part of his adopted father’s estate. If and when that happened, then one or more of the seven witnesses would step forward and be called on to swear that the adoption was genuine and the inheritance was legitimately to be given to the adopted son. Their witness was judicially binding on behalf of the adopted son. Thus the right of the adopted person was guaranteed and he entered into his inheritance. That is probably one reason that immediately following v16, Paul says in v17,

¹⁷and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,

Please notice that three times in one verse Paul reiterates the issue of the believer’s inheritance. I.e., in [Romans 8:17](#) he is confirming the believer’s inheritance as one of God’s children three different times. Even though we do not have seven witnesses of our salvation experience, we do have a greater witness in the Holy Spirit who is constantly giving testimony by His work in our lives that we are indeed one of God’s children.

There is a very interesting spiritual addendum to this area of discussion relative to the Holy Spirit dealing with the believer personally, and it occurs in the area of how He convicts them when they sin against Him. The Holy Spirit will not just allow a believer to live in sin without bringing about a corresponding conviction relative to what they may be doing. By design, the Holy Spirit is not inclined to let a believer just “get away” with sin – not at all. To the contrary, He both **convicts** and **disciplines** accordingly. No one knows exactly what the discipline may be and it is generally very diverse and varied. Whatever the Holy Spirit has to do to get a believer’s attention and to make them uncomfortable with that sin, then that is what He will do. [Hebrews 12:7-8](#) speaks to this when it says,

⁷If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

The whole point of this passage is very simple. If someone can just continue in sin without chastening and without spiritual discipline, then it means that “**you are illegitimate and not sons**”. Those are very strong words, but as a Christian they should be incredibly encouraging. We all know people who profess to be Christians, but who live in continuous sin, and there appears to be no real conviction whatsoever related to that sin, and even more importantly, **no related chastening for that sin**. The understanding of this passage is that that individual is simply not saved. No one knows exactly when or how the Holy Spirit brings this chastening into someone’s life, but if they are a Christian, the chastening is unavoidable unless they repent of that sin and turn back to Christ. I.e., if someone is truly a Christian, then the **convicting work** of the Holy Spirit will always take place prior to



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the **chastening work** of the Holy Spirit. If a believer does not respond to the Holy Spirit's convicting work, then as a believer He will introduce His chastening work into their lives. He always provides opportunities to respond to His conviction before imposing His chastening.

So, let us just suppose that a believer has done something wrong, that the Holy Spirit has convicted them, and that they have responded positively to His correction. Do you know what that should do for that believer? It should give them great encouragement that they are not illegitimate and that they are in fact an adopted son or daughter in God's family. On the other hand, however, what if they do not respond to the Holy Spirit's conviction when they do something that they know is wrong before God, and the Holy Spirit inflicts His chastening on their life? In His sovereign care and providence over the believer's life, He brings about situations that lead them into very discomforting distress, trouble, and anguish. What that should do for the believer is give great encouragement that they are not "illegitimate" and that they are in fact an adopted son or daughter in God's family. [Hebrews 12:11](#) says,

¹¹Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

A very critical truth to appreciate is that God only disciplines **His** children. I can never remember one time in my life when I physically disciplined someone else's child. There were certainly times when I wanted to, but I never did. Why? It is because they were not my children. God's discipline in the believer's life should be a great encouragement to them. We never discipline our children for practice. We only discipline them when they disobey at a certain level, and for the most part, we want the discipline to reflect the disobedience. The same is true with God's discipline as well. He is not going to over discipline a believer and He is not going to discipline a believer everytime that they stumble. God does not have a "quick trigger finger". God will give each believer room to fail and allow them to grow in the grace and knowledge that He provides so abundantly because believers learn much more through their failures than through their successes.