

Knowing God Is Our Father
Romans 8:15
#30 in a Series on Paul's Letter to the Romans
Faith Community Church – May 28, 2006

Objective: *To identify the work of the Spirit in the Christian's life, and to encourage believers with the security that God has provided through Christ.*

Introduction – Please turn to Romans 8.

1. Review of Romans 8 so far:
 - a. Two themes in Romans 8
 - i. The role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer (1-17)
 - ii. The assurance that a believer has (14-39)
 - b. Verses 14-17 deal with both of these themes, as we look at ways in which the Holy Spirit brings us assurance of our salvation.
2. In our last study in Romans, we looked at two main ideas from this section (14-17):
 - a. Everyone who is led by (or controlled by) the Spirit is considered a child of God.
 - b. We are children of God because God has adopted us as sons.
 - i. Two points about adoption
 1. Similar to our understanding of taking someone who is not a part of the family and making them a part of the family.
 2. Different in that Paul draws his idea from a custom in which Roman people would purposefully adopt a son to serve as an heir (sometimes giving rights that superseded natural children).
 - ii. Verses 15-17 indicate three implications of this concept of being a son of God.
 1. We can enjoy an *intimate relationship* with God as Father.
 2. We are given *inner assurance* that we are truly God's child.
 3. We look forward to a future *inheritance*.

Knowing God Is Our Father

Let me tell you a story. Back when I was in the middle of my high school years, I was sitting with my friend in his car in the town in which I grew up. A person pulled in next to us on my side, and because I had my arm hanging out the window, I raised it back in. The other driver, a man in his twenties, took great exception to that movement, and accused me of shaking my fist at him. My friend backed out of the parking spot and started driving away. Problem: the other driver, clearly intent on proving his masculinity to the girl that was with him, started following us, tailing us closely and shouting threats.

The town in which I lived was somewhat like Hatboro, so it was made up mostly of a small business area surrounded by residences. My friend Bob kept driving – it seemed

like we drove everywhere – and the other guy kept after us. Finally I said to Bob, “Drive to the police station.”

We drove into the parking lot in right in front of the police station, pulled into a parking space, and I got out of the car. The other driver sped in behind us, flung his door open, and began walking toward our car, still shouting at me. A big mistake for him.

The door of the police station shot open, and a tall man in uniform began walking toward us. And he called out, “Do you have a problem with my son?” Suddenly the other guy’s macho sprung a leak. He just looked at my father, and I don’t remember him saying a word of protest or accusation against me. After a moment my dad said, “Get back in your car and get out of here.” I watched him turn and slink back to his car – by now his girlfriend was sitting with her head down – and drive slowly away.

Victory!

Knowing that police officer was my father had an impact on at least two people that day – on me as his son, and on my accuser. In a similar way Paul talks about what it means for us to have God as our father.

1. Knowing that God is your Father means you don’t have to fear.
 - a. Note Paul’s contrast in the first part of verse 15.
 - b. What don’t we have to fear? Let me suggest two things:
 - i. We don’t have to fear death – Hebrews 2:14-15. We do so much to make death more acceptable, almost to the point of denial.
 - ii. We don’t have to fear condemnation.
 1. Anyone here perfect? What are you going to do with your sin?
 2. We are able to know God as our father only because Jesus has paid the penalty for our sins. 1 John 4:9-10, 16-17.
2. Knowing that God is your Father means that you can act like his child.
 - a. The last half of verse 15 tells us that through the Spirit we cry, “Abba! Father!”
 - b. What does this mean?
 - i. During the New Testament era, the people in Palestine spoke Aramaic. The word “Abba” is an Aramaic word for father. We might read this “Abba! which means Father!”
 - ii. It apparently was a term of familiarity – much like “dad” or “daddy.” Small children would call their fathers, Abba! Daddy!
 - iii. Referring to God in this kind of way is not intended to give us the license to be flippant or casual in the way we address God. It is rather intended to help us to understand the fact that we are God’s children, not people God holds at a distance.
 - c. When do God’s children cry?

- i. Note that Paul does not write, “. . . you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we *say* ‘Abba! Father!’” He says, “. . . by whom we *cry* ‘Abba! Father!’” There is intensity here.
- ii. So when do God’s children cry out in this way? I can think of two situations:
 1. One is delight.
 - a. One of the special things in my life is when Christy and her family are at our house. When I come in the door, no matter what she’s doing, this little blonde haired girl will come running to me and cry, “Grandpa!”
 - b. When it comes to emotions, we are all constructed differently. Some of us are given to a greater expression than others. But when we consider what God has done for us, it seems very appropriate for us to look in to the face of heaven and say, “Father! Thank you!”
 2. The other is trouble.
 - a. Look at Mark’s Gospel, chapter 14:32ff. Jesus uses the very same phrase “Abba! Father!” here, and it is the only other place (aside from a parallel to Romans 8 found in Galatians) where that phrase is found in the NT.
 - b. In the midst of the greatest trial of his life, Jesus calls out to the only one who can help him. And I think Paul is clearly saying that in the extreme moments of our lives, we can call out to a God who is our father, not a distant, aloof, disinterested deity.

Conclusion

The creator of the universe. The one who sets up kingdoms and brings them down. The one who holds the earth in his hand. The one who sustains everything by his word. He wants you and me to call him Father. Why? The simple answer is that this great God loves you more than you can imagine. And he wants you to know that – to delight in that, to draw on that.

Paul writes: *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*¹

¹*The Holy Bible : English standard version.* 2001 (Eph 3:14-19). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.