



Growth Group Curriculum
Week 2 – April 25, 2021 – Romans 8:12-17

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. In this time of the virus and social distancing, please meet safely outside or online. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at connect@ljpres.org. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

As the apostle Paul transitions to talking about being children of God, he reiterates the importance of living according to the Spirit and not the flesh. In Paul's mind, all of us who have given our lives to Jesus have a responsibility to turn away from the things of this world (the flesh) and live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are able to live by the Spirit of God because we are children of God. We don't need to live in fear or with anxiety because the Spirit has set us free. In this section of Scripture, the apostle Paul introduces the theme of adoption. He is the only New Testament author who uses the overarching theme of adoption when it comes to talking about belonging to the family of God. Jesus had promised in John 14 that he would not leave us as orphans, and Paul now builds on that by saying we have received "adoption to sonship."

This term "adoption to sonship" is a technical and legal term. In the Roman world a wealthy man who had no children might adopt a young boy in order to pass on his estate. This "adoption" would make the new son the "heir" of the estate. Paul writes that in God's economy each one of us who is adopted receives the benefits of being the first-born son. We are heirs and co-heirs with Jesus Christ. J.I. Packer says, "adoption is the highest privilege that the gospel offers: higher even than justification." God not only forgives sinners, God adopts them into his family.

This adoption brings us freedom and hope. We are able to call God Abba, Father. We have an intimacy with God. The Spirit of God also helps us to know how to approach God and how to pray to God. We truly have nothing to fear. When we cry out to God as "Abba," the Spirit of God somehow comes alongside us and gives us assurance that we are truly in God's family.



Along with adoption being a privilege, there is also a responsibility that comes with it. As the apostle Paul says there will be suffering that accompanies following Jesus. If we are being faithful to Jesus and taking on the work that he calls us to do, we can expect to suffer. If Jesus had to suffer, we should expect nothing different. We will be persecuted and we will not always be understood and the calling on our lives is to see these moments of suffering and persecution as a privilege and part of what it means to follow Jesus.

Exploring the Text

Romans 8:12-17

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba, Father.*” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) Share about a family member who made a difference in your life.
- 2) What is the obligation that the apostle Paul mentions in verse 12?
- 3) Explain our role and the role of the Spirit in putting sin to death (Romans 8:13). What does it look like practically to put “sin to death?”
- 4) What does it look like to be led by the Spirit? Can you think of a time when you knew the Spirit of God was leading you?
- 5) In our text for today, as well as in Galatians 4:5 and Ephesians 1:4-6, the apostle Paul uses the imagery of adoption. Why do you think he uses this image and do you find it helpful when it comes to talking about being a part of the family of God?
- 6) What does it mean for believers to be “heirs of God” and “co-heirs with Christ?” How is this connected to the themes of suffering and glory mentioned in verse 17?
- 7) Pastor Paul talked about our inheritance being both a privilege and a responsibility. We get a seat at the table, as well as a call to deny ourselves and live fully for Jesus. Do you find yourself resonating more with our inheritance being a privilege, or a responsibility?
- 8) The apostle Paul makes it clear that becoming children of God frees us from fear. What are some of the things happening in your life that are causing you fear, or anxiety, or stress? How can your growth group be praying for you?

