

# THE HOLY SPIRIT

Dana was at Cassandra's house exchanging presents. The two women, who had lived on the same block for seven years, had been too busy this holiday season to exchange their gifts before Christmas.

After unwrapping and expressing thanks, Dana suggested the two go out for lunch. But Cassandra said she couldn't because today was her "Gotcha Day."

"It's the day my parents adopted me," Cassandra explained. "Every year, my family and I have a celebratory meal and time together."

"Oh no problem! That is nice. I really like that," responded Dana. "Do you mind my asking, what is it like to be adopted?"

"I was adopted at the age of two, and my parents are all I can remember," said Cassandra. "They have provided for me, taken good care of me and loved me unconditionally."

Dana thought to herself that Cassandra had hit the jackpot with her parents. She knew Mr. and Mrs. Davis to be well off. She had guessed that was how Cassandra, a single woman, had been able to buy her home in this expensive subdivision. Dana and her husband had quite a way to go on their mortgage.

Dana found herself feeling a little envious of Cassandra's parents, and wondered what it would be like to be adopted into such a picture-perfect family.

But Dana also knew that she had been adopted—she was a child of God! She was a part of the family of believers who have been saved by Christ.

**1 Can you remember a moment of being chosen to be part of a team or a project? How did that feel?**

**2 Do you know anyone who was adopted? What are some ways families could make adopted children feel welcomed?**



<sup>12</sup> Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. <sup>13</sup> For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

<sup>14</sup> For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

<sup>15</sup> For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

<sup>16</sup> The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: <sup>17</sup> And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. <sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup> 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.” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. <sup>17</sup> 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.

## Led by the Spirit

Paul reminds the Roman churches that they have an “obligation,” but not to blindly follow sinful natures—which Paul simply calls “the flesh” (Rom. 8:12). Receiving salvation alters how we must evaluate desires. The “flesh” is “hostile” and incapable of obeying God (v. 7), and following it means death. But those in Christ have an obligation to live “by the Spirit,” who enables freedom and even helps to bring death or figuratively kill those activities which would naturally lead to death (v. 13). Paul wants believers to recognize sin as lifeless and empty, not what leads to a full and wholesome life.

He describes relating to God with the metaphor of *adoption*. Just like today, the Roman world of the first century had a legal category for adoption, which is when a parent accepts a child to become a part of the family. An adopted son would carry on the adopted father’s name and be eligible to inherit his estate. An adopted son had precisely the same status and responsibilities as a biological son.



According to Paul, those led by the Spirit are already children of God (v. 14). There is no extra step or supplementary action for them to do. They have joined the household of God, not as mere servants or slaves, but as children and heirs (v. 15).

Just like biological children, the adopted children of God can have intimacy with the Father, calling God “Abba” in their prayers, exactly as Jesus did (Mark 14:36). This reflects a deep and abiding relationship with the heavenly Father, a relationship marked by trust instead of fear. Just like Jesus submitted to the Father’s wishes in His prayer at Gethsemane, God’s adopted children can submit their desires to God and know that His plan is best.

The Spirit plays a role in this adoption, testifying or bearing witness to this new reality (v. 16). God’s own Spirit agrees with the prayer, and the Spirit grants a powerful inward assurance of adopted status: *we can be children in God’s family*. Just like in earthly families, where an adopted child becomes an heir and receives things from the parents, the children of God have a right to an inheritance. Paul calls them “co-heirs with Christ” (v. 17). But Paul adds important context, saying they may experience suffering in the present, even while looking forward to eternal glory (see also 2 Cor. 4:16–18).

**1 What kind of “obligation” must believers follow (v. 12)? What obligation has come to an end?**

**2 Do you find it easy or challenging to think of yourself as “co-heir” with Jesus? Why?**

**3 How does the Spirit help believers in their relationship with the Father?**



<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. <sup>27</sup> And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

<sup>26</sup> In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. <sup>27</sup> And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

## The Spirit's Intercession

The story of redemption isn't just about us as individuals; it is part of God's plan to end the corruptions of sin and death. These two powers have held all of creation captive until now (Rom. 8:19–22). We know it in our bones that something in the world is not as it should be. The ache of creation will not end until our adoption and redemption are final (Rom. 8:23).

But believers have the Spirit to aid them, even here and now (v. 26). The Spirit gives courage and strength, despite any present weakness. Some understand this reference to "weakness" to be a general limitation of human nature—like the tendency to sin—but the second part of verse 26 shows that Paul has a specific weakness in mind: our prayers.

We do not always know how best to pray, says Paul (v. 26). By saying "we," he acknowledges his own limitation. Flaws of the fallen creation and aches of a disordered world can be so intrusive that we find ourselves at a loss for words. We might know with our heads that Jesus is king; but still we face the death of loved ones, the suffering of innocent people, or persecution for doing what is good.

Praying about these may be difficult, and our prayers may feel inadequate, but believers "ought" to pray. This is because speaking with God is necessary for a healthy relationship; He is our heavenly Father, after all! At the same time, the Spirit can intercede, or step in, to help us. The Spirit pleads with God on our behalf. Sometimes, this takes the form of "wordless groans," when no words would be



adequate. These groans or sighs express our deepest longings and hopes, those which cannot easily be vocalized. The Spirit takes these ideas and makes them meaningful for God; God can understand inarticulate prayers.

In verse 27, Paul describes “he who searches our hearts.” Paul means the Father, who searches and knows what is in our hearts, thoughts, and motives (see Ps. 7:9; Prov. 17:3; Acts 1:24; 1 Thess. 2:4). His knowledge of our inner lives is direct, not dependent on our ability to communicate.

Since God knows our hearts, He also knows the mind of the Spirit in us. This is the only place where God is described as knowing the mind of the Spirit; but elsewhere Paul describes the inverse, that the *Spirit* knows the mind of God (1 Cor. 2:10–11). From these texts it is clear that Father and Spirit share a mutual understanding. The Father knows what the Spirit is doing; and the Spirit intercedes for believers, to support God’s will. In particular, the Spirit intercedes for “saints” (KJV) or “God’s people” (NIV). The Greek of verse 27 literally says “holy ones,” meaning those who are consecrated or dedicated to God in this way.

Believers can find comfort and encouragement, even amidst difficulties in prayer. The Spirit is a powerful intercessor, capable of praying on our behalf and directing our thoughts toward God’s will. In Gethsemane, Jesus called out “Abba, Father” in the midst of His suffering; and at the same time He submitted to the Father’s will (Mark 14:36). Like Jesus, God’s children can endure suffering (Rom. 8:18–25). There will be those times when we do not know how to pray; but the Spirit, who knows God’s will, is with us.

**1 What kinds of groans or longings might we experience in the world, as it is right now?**

**2 How can the Spirit help us? What role does the Spirit play?**

**3 How can we pray at all, if we lack the words?**



## Eager Heirs

Recently my family has been having conversations about future inheritance, as we determine which family heirlooms will go to each child. Grandpa's guitar will go to one family member, and Grandma's china to another. But one heirloom has proven especially challenging to assign: the German schrank.

A schrank, in case your family is not blessed with one, is a massive, freestanding closet of sorts. Wherever it sits, it fills the room from wall to wall, floor to ceiling. Even though it has been in our family for generations, finding someone willing to inherit it has been difficult. No one wants to be burdened with this heavy piece of furniture for the rest of their life.

Like me, you may someday be the reluctant heir to something large and cumbersome. But we can all look forward to an inheritance that is far more enduring and valuable than anything our families may pass down.

God has adopted us as part of His family. As His children, we are even His heirs. We have an inheritance that will never perish, spoil, or fade (1 Peter 1:4). Unlike family heirlooms that can lose value, be damaged, or become burdensome, God's inheritance lasts forever.

If we are God's children, we have received the Holy Spirit as a down payment of our eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:13). The Spirit empowers us to live in freedom from fear, sin, and death. We are free to pursue a life of righteousness, and to experience a deep, intimate relationship with our Father—even though our world remains full of disordered and troublesome things.

Our inheritance, guaranteed by the Spirit, is more than a future promise. It is a present reality that shapes our lives as God's sons and daughters. If our days are troubled and our prayers feel halting, God is with us. He knows what we need.

**1 How does adoption into God's family bring you comfort and security?**

**2 How can knowing you're free, not a slave, change your daily life?**

**3 How might you live by the Spirit, rather than the flesh?**



## Freedom from Fear

Fear can enslave us, hindering us from fully experiencing the abundant life promised to us. But Romans 8 assures us that, through the Spirit, we are no longer slaves to fear but children of God, able to approach our Father confidently and find peace in His care.

**What fears trouble you? Write down some specific fears you may be facing, and then ask God to show you how to pray.**

### Key Text

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.  
—Romans 8:16 KJV

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.  
—Romans 8:16 NIV

### Quiet Hour® and Cross Daily Bible Readings

#### Week of December 29 through January 3

- Mon.** Genesis 3:1–13—The Man and the Woman Sin.
- Tue.** Genesis 3:14–24—God Pronounces Judgment.
- Wed.** Romans 1:18–25—God's Wrath Is Revealed.
- Thu.** Mark 7:14–23—Jesus Warns against Defilement.
- Fri.** Psalm 51:1–12—A Prayer for God's Mercy.
- Sat.** Micah 6:1–8—God Demands Right Living.

**Next Week:** 1 John 1:5–2:6

*We will look at God's way of life for those who "walk in the light." Take an opportunity to view any remaining Christmas light displays in your area.*