**Romans 8:12-17**

I. Jesus’ role in securing our status as God’s children (See Galatians 3:23-4:7)

A. Our situation before faith: prisoners

Gal 3:26 Word picture

a. We were in a jail cell, the walls are were all God’s commandments

b. Our experience was one of guilt and fear of judgment.

B. God sends his one and only Son

Gal 4:4

a. Jesus perfectly fulfills all those laws

b. Jesus perfectly pays the penalty we deserved

C. Through faith in Christ, we are adopted into God’s family

God gives us all the love, favor, and privilege he gives Jesus

II. Holy Spirit’s role in helping us experience what it means to be God’s children (Ro 8:14-16)

A. A Spirit of Adoption (v. 15)

1. God doesn’t put a spirit that brings us back to that old place where we’re constantly ruled by fear of punishment

2. Instead he gives us the Spirit of adoption who confirms that we’re God’s kids

B. The Spirit testifies with our spirit (v. 16)

1. Our spirit = our deepest, innermost core

2. The Spirit speaks to our deepest core and convinces us that we are loved by a heavenly Father and there is no condemnation

3. Ro 5:5: “God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

C. This experience of love is more than just a rational understanding

We “cry” Abba (v. 15)

a. We don’t just state it, or argue it, or explain it

b. cry = “a truth deeply felt and intensely experienced.”

III. This is an experience of knowing God as “Abba Father” (v. 15)

A. Meaning of “Abba”

1. Abba is Aramaic for “daddy” or “papa”

a. “Abba” expresses intimacy, nearness, trust, security, affection, love

b. The Spirit works in us so that we experience the all-powerful God of the universe as our Abba who loves us unconditionally and is for us

1) This does not mean we have a completely casual relationship with God

We still experience him as awesome, holy, worthy of respect

2) But it does mean we are no longer afraid that he is always going to punish us (1 John 4:18)

2. Jesus invites us to compare our relationship with God to our own relationship with own children (Mt 7:9-11)

Picture how you feel about your own children.

3. Many of us struggle to experience God as our loving Abba

a. We think he simply puts up with us

b. We think he is quick to judge us, and we are always trying to perform for Him

c. We think he’s secretly out to get us

d. When we sin we think we have to do penance or distance ourselves from God for a time

e. We often view God through the lens of our own imperfect human parents

f. We often view God through the lens of painful events in our lives

g. Satan loves to accuse us in this area and insert distrust and doubt in our relationship with God

4. How can we grow in this area of our faith?

a. Pray that God would work in our hearts in fresh ways

b. Find ways to slow down in life so we can be still enough to hear God’s loving voice in our lives

c. Remind ourselves that we are “in Christ”

B. Abba is the specific word Jesus used to refer to God

1. Jesus had this amazingly intimate experience of God where he knew in his core that he was loved by his heavenly father

2. His security in his Father’s love allowed him to live a radically courageous and loving life. It provided the security to face all of life’s challenges

3. The Spirit’s role is to take Jesus’ own experience of God as Abba and make it real in our own lives, so that we realize that the Father loves us the way he loves Jesus

(John 17:23)

4. This is so important because while we may doubt God’s love for us sometimes, we never doubt God’s love for Jesus

5. So when we doubt God’s love for us, rather than look inward and try to convince ourselves that we are lovable, we should look outward to Christ and remind ourselves that we are now “in Christ” and God therefore loves us as he loves Christ

**Discussion Questions**

1. Many of us are familiar with the idea of God being our Abba Father. What about Sunday’s discussion was new to you? Or, how did Sunday help you appreciate familiar truths in a new or deeper way?

2. Explain in your own role the Holy Spirit’s key role in our status as God’s children.

3. As you think about some of the voices we hear in our own hearts causing us to distrust God’s love (see the examples in section III, A, 3), which do you specifically deal with?

4. If a long-time churchgoer told you, “I still experience a lot of fear and guilt in my relationship with God; what should I do?” What questions would you ask him/her? What would you counsel him/her to do?