

FBC Service Sunday September 14, 2025, Romans 8:12-17 The Family of God: Identity, Inheritance, and Intimacy

Intro: Last week, as we walked through Romans 8:5–17, we discovered together that life in Christ brings a total transformation.

Paul showed us that when we belong to Jesus, **we receive a new mind**—one set on the Spirit.

We also saw that God **gives us a new nature**—brought about by His Spirit dwelling in us.

And finally, **we celebrated a new identity**—as born again children of God.

These truths lay the foundation for how we live day by day as God’s people.

Today we’ll continue right where we left off in Romans 8:12–17. Paul doesn’t stop at saying that we are children of God—he goes on to show us what that means for our identity, our inheritance, and our intimacy with our Heavenly Father.

We’ll explore the message:

Slide 1: “The Family of God: Identity, Inheritance, and Intimacy.”

As God’s adopted children, we not only receive a new name and a new family—we also receive the promise of an eternal inheritance.

That means our hope is not tied to this sinful world, but to the glory to come. And because the Spirit of God dwells in us, we can cry out, **“Abba Father”**—a testimony of intimacy and assurance that we are His.

This morning we’ll reflect on what it really means to belong to the family of God, to live with the hope of heaven, and to walk in the security of adoption into God’s family.

Slide 2: Our Need for Identity

One of the great questions of our day is this: Who am I?

We live in a time when identity is everything. People define themselves by careers, causes, relationships, sexuality, politics, personal achievements, and their posts on social media.

Yet beneath all the noise, there’s a deep hunger to belong—to be known, to be loved, and to feel secure

People struggle with insecurity, searching for belonging and meaning. Yet the Bible tells us that the truest, most life-giving identity is this: **those who are children of God and heirs with Christ.**

In a culture that promotes a **“me first”** generation, along with a great sense of entitlement, the Christian says, “I belong to God. I want to live in a way that honours my Heavenly Father.”

Romans 8:12–17 speaks directly to this desire.

It declares that those who are in Christ are not just forgiven—they are adopted.

It declares that those who are in Christ are not just saved—they are sons and daughters of God.

It declares that those who are in Christ are not just redeemed—they are heirs.

What a magnificent passage this is that lifts us out of fear into confidence and assurance.

It tells us what it really means to belong to God and how this truth shapes our lives in today's world.

Over the past few weeks, we've seen how amazing Romans chapter 8 is, a chapter brimming with rich truths about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and living the Christian life.

Its truths are astounding in their breadth! They speak to the very foundations of what we believe.

They tell us that as believers in Christ we are children of God and heirs with Christ. And this is something we come to know through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Last week we talked about living according to the Spirit. When the Spirit of God comes to live in you, you become a new person in Jesus Christ, and your life is never the same again **2 Corinthians 5.**

When you become a Christian, all sorts of things become new in your life. Today's text highlights those things that bring about that change.

You have a new obligation, a new family and a new future.

Slide 3: You have a new obligation (12-13)

12 Therefore brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

The "**obligation**" Paul talks about is the believer's responsibility to live by the Spirit—to resist sin and walk in the new life that God has provided. Actively choosing to walk in obedience to God.

Now as God's children, we have a new obligation, not to the flesh, but to live by the Spirit. Our sinful nature no longer controls us.

Slide 4: The Assurance of Adoption

"So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba Father." Verse 15

Right or wrong, who you are related to makes a big difference in the nature of life and how it is lived. If you are in politics and your name is Carney or Ford, you will have an advantage over others.

If you're related to the owner of a company that is a household word in Canada, you have a sure fired advantage over others at climbing the corporate ladder.

If you are related to someone famous you will have "**name recognition**" which will open a host of doors for you in business, and many other pursuits.

Who you are related to may impact the friendships you have even in small communities like Petrolia.

Certain last names seem to draw some people to you while others make people reluctant to get close to you. **Check this out the next time you tell someone you are a Christian.**

In the passage we're looking at today, Paul wants us to know something about our heritage. As believers in Jesus Christ, we are children of God. But how did this miracle take place?

In verse 15 we are told, God adopted us as His own children.

Slide 5: Adoption Image: Can we really get our heads around that? Almighty God, the great Creator and sustainer of life has adopted us as His own children.

In Roman culture adoption was an elaborate process where several things happened.

First, the person adopted became part of a new family. His old relationship ended, and he became a legitimate son in the new family.

Second, as a member of this family, he became a full heir in the Father's estate.

Third, all his debts from the past were cancelled. He was seen as a new person.

The idea of adoption is a rich picture for believers. Here's the mind-blowing good part.

Through Christ we're made a part of the Father's family; freed from our old sin nature; and the debt of our sinful past is erased. This is an incredible privilege, and it has at least five practical implications.

Slide 6: It Means We Honour the Lord in Our Living (12-14)

The first result of our relationship with God is a change in our behaviour. We're told that we will not live according to the sinful nature because that is not what sons of God do.

Let me give you an illustration. As our children were growing up, we reminded them to be very aware of one fact; they carried our name and the responsibility that came with it.

To make sure they looked and behaved appropriately at school and with their friends.

To understand that their actions in the community would reflect not only on their parents, but their church and its ministry.

In much the same way, the Apostle Paul wants us to understand that with our new position in Christ, there is a new responsibility to honour our Father in Heaven. We carry His name wherever we go.

What we do reflects on Him. If we truly love Him, we will honour Him in the way we live. **Christians are held to a higher standard.**

We are children of the King. **What we do reflects on Him.** When we face a moral or ethical choice it will help us to remember that our actions speak louder than our words.

Slide 7: It Means We Are No Longer Afraid (15)

The second implication of our sonship is that we no longer need to be afraid of what life throws at us.

15 *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship.*

In 2 Tim. 1:7 Paul writes, “*God did not give us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*”

What is it about being a part of the family of God that enables us to live life less fearfully?

We can trust the one who has been through all we are going through and emerged victorious. We don't have to fear.

Our Father is the creator and ruler of the universe.

He has promised that He will never leave us or forsake us.

He has promised that He will supply our needs. He has promised that He will use every situation and circumstance in our lives for our ultimate (which is not the same as immediate) good.

If I'm selling something and a person gives me a certified cheque, I can receive it with confidence that there are sufficient funds to cover the cheque.

God's promises are His way of certifying that we have nothing to fear in this life.

As sons of God, we don't need to fear, only trust.

Slide 8: It Means We Can Relate to God with Intimacy

The third implication of our sonship is intimacy with God. The end of verse 15 tells us that “*by him we cry, “Abba Father.”*”

The “him” of the passage certainly refers to the Holy Spirit. By God's Spirit within us we are able to relate to God with new intimacy.

The word “**abba**” as you have heard many times, is the term for “**dad**” or “**dear father.**” These are terms of endearment and love that are used only by those who have a unique relationship with the person referenced.

Even though I was deeply involved in some important work, if my daughter called and said, “Dad, I need you!”

I would immediately drop what I was doing and be in the car headed to Sarnia. **Why?** Because she is my daughter and that relationship is unique and special.

That's the kind of relationship believers have with God. **It's staggering to think about.**

We have access to Him at any time. We can call upon Him at all hours of the day or night. We have the confidence that He will ALWAYS take our call and respond to our requests.

Praise God, Christians have this special and unique relationship with their Heavenly Father.

Slide 9: The Holy Spirit Will Bring You Assurance of Salvation. (V.16)

The fourth profound benefit of sonship is the assurance of salvation. Paul says, *“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”* (16)

Here Paul lays out one of the great truths of Scripture. It’s clear and concise. To all who doubt and lack such assurance, take these life changing words to heart and embrace them with joy.

“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” It can’t be any clearer than that.

This is not mere positive thinking. The Holy Spirit works within us to give confidence that we truly belong to God.

That’s why we can sing with gusto the hymn, “blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.”

Trooperslane and hills covered with mist.

There’s a story about a boy flying a kite. The kite was so high that it disappeared into the clouds. A man came by and asked, “Why are you holding on to that string.” The boy said, “I’ve got a kite up there.”

The man looked up and said, “I don’t see it.” The boy replied, “Well, I know it’s there because I can feel the tug.”

This is what the Spirit of God does for us. We may not always see the evidence that we are a son of God, but we will feel His tug in our hearts to continually remind us that we belong to Him.

Slide10: It Means We Have a Rich Inheritance (17)

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.

Paul concludes with a breathtaking truth: If we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

We’ll pick up the **“sufferings”** part of this verse in another message, as today we’re focusing that we are “heirs” of God and co-heirs with Christ.

Slide 11: Heirs with Christ: A Future Worth Living For

“...and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...” (17)

To be an heir means:

- You have a future: Eternal life, resurrection, and glory. **A heavenly home** (John. 14:1-3)
- You have a purpose: To reflect Christ and extend His kingdom.
- You have a family: The Church, a global community of grace.

In today's culture, many chase a legacy through wealth, fame, or influence. But Scripture says our inheritance is far greater—God Himself is our portion and reward.

We will be made like Jesus (1 John 3:1-2)

The fact that we have an inheritance in Heaven should have a positive impact on how we live now. Though things on earth don't always go as we would like them to go, we're buoyed by the fact that we have an assurance of victory.

Slide 12: We Should Live with A New Confidence.

Why should we live with heads hung down? We are God's children! **He is our "father"**. Because of this fact we live with assurance and confidence. There's every reason for confidence.

Why should we be weighed down by the trials and concerns of this life? We know that we have a divine inheritance awaiting us. We know that God is on our side, working for us and in us.

It's possible that you are here today and you wonder, "How does one become a part of the family of God? How can I be adopted into God's family?"

In the Gospel of John we are told, *"to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."* (John 1:12,13)

According to the Bible the key to being a child of God is to "receive Him".

Slide 13: Summary. Living as Children and Heirs

Romans 8:12–17 answers the deepest questions of the human heart: Who am I? Where do I belong? What future do I have?

I am a child of God—no longer a slave to fear.

I have a Father in heaven—who loves me and hears me.

I have an inheritance with Christ—a hope that nothing can take away.

In a world searching for identity, we must live out this truth with confidence and humility. Our culture needs to see Christians by the way we speak, the way we talk, the way we write, the way we relate and yes, the way we make decisions.

Do you have the Spirit's witness in your heart? Are you holding onto the hope of your inheritance?

Let us leave here not in fear, but in freedom. Not as orphans, but as children. Not as paupers, but as heirs of Christ.

Slide 14: Conclusion: The Family Table Is Set

Romans 8:12–17 is not just theology—it's an invitation.

In Christ, you are not just accepted—you are adopted.

Not just forgiven—you are family.

Not just saved—you are sealed for glory.

You are transformed: No longer defined by your past, but by your position in Christ

So live like it. Love like it. Hope like it.

Because you are a child of God.