

We call out, "Abba, Father."

v. 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.

God says that if you live according to the flesh, you will die. When we see that this verse is not talking to unbelievers, but to Roman Christians, it means even though we can be Christians and still live according to the flesh.

For a long time, I lived my life of faith by my own sincerity, earnestness, and effort rather than by the help of the Holy Spirit. But now I realized through the study of Romans that this is what it means to live according to the flesh. After many years of living a life of faith according to the flesh, the grace I had initially believed in faded away, and my soul gradually withered away. And my heart felt empty and void. This emptiness was different from that I experienced before I met Jesus. I realized that emptiness caused by not being filled with the Holy Spirit. This experience was like my spirit dying.

Look at verse 14. "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God."

We live according to the Holy Spirit and are led by the Spirit. However, we may not put that much emphasis on living led by God. We might think that I am led by the Holy Spirit until we are baptized and then we live by myself. Now that I think about it, I think it might be because different denominations teach differently about the Holy Spirit.

However, if you don't learn to live your life by the Holy Spirit properly, you will become an ordinary religious person. Religion trains you to become a good person. You work hard by yourself. Christianity is only a religion if you understand it in this way. But the Christian life is guided by the Holy Spirit. The life of faith is not guided by our will, but by God's guidance and His will. This is great grace. We are saved by grace and we live by grace.

Jesus teaches us this. Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Our life of faith is not a life of striving alone. It is a life of walking with the help of the Holy Spirit.

One of these graces is that we become 'the children of God'. We are all led by the Holy Spirit to confess Jesus as Lord and become God's children. This change of status is an amazing one. You have become children of the Almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

What do you think of when you think of "God's children"? For example, when you think

of "children of the president," you think, 'This child will behave like the president'. In this way, children resemble their parents. Who in the world is the person who resembles you the most? Your own children. Since we have become God's children in this way, we are the most like God in the world. The reality is not yet, but it is God's desire and our hope to be in His likeness. The goal of our sanctification is to grow up to the likeness of Jesus Christ. The law teaches us not to murder, but Jesus teaches us that we have already killed a man just by hating him. This is a life of holiness on God's level that we as human beings cannot achieve, but God wants us to be more perfect than the law.

Verse 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."

Here we compare the "spirit of slavery" with the Holy Spirit. Before we believed in Jesus Christ, we were under the spirit of slavery to sin. The characteristic of this slave spirit is "fear. However, we received "the spirit of God's child, God's adopted son" by believing in Jesus Christ.

Let's think about the characteristic of **the spirit of a slave. That is fear.** In Genesis 3:10, Adam and Eve sinned and hid in fear of God. When our relationship with God is broken by sin, the first thing we do is to fear and be afraid. From **Matthew 25:14** comes the famous parable of the talents. The man who received five talents from his master and the man who received two talents from his master were praised by God for increasing his talents. However, the man who received one talent buried it in the ground. The reason for this is what he says in verses 24-25. **"Master, I knew that You are hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So, I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground."** This servant says that he was afraid of God because of His harshness. This servant is being ruled by the spirit of slavery. Fear we experienced enough during the three years of the pandemic. Even though I believe in God, I still had a sense of fear, now I confess it. Also, Japanese young people are not getting married these days. They are afraid to get married, especially when they see their unhappy parents' marriage. Even if they do get married, they do not have children. They are afraid of the huge cost of education. People are always afraid.

On the contrary, we have received **the Spirit of the sonship, the Holy Spirit,** by believing in Jesus, and we have become God's children. And we can call God "**Abba Father**". Israel used to call God "Yafeh, Adonai" because it was impolite to call Him directly. But Jesus the Son called God "Father" in His public life and taught us to call Him "Our Father in heaven" in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9).

For clarity, let us imagine the difference between a "slave" and a "child. Let's say you have a pottery in your house worth 10,000 dollars. What if a slave or other servant breaks this? In the past and still today, that slave would have to be punished or pay full compensation. But let's consider that a child of the family broke that. This is completely different from how slaves and servants are treated. Instead of paying for the damage, the parents would be worried that the child might be injured.

We also make various mistakes and sins while believing in God. Some of you may have married someone you thought was a good, but it didn't work out and you got divorced. We may have entered a workplace that we thought was the best, but have struggled with human relations. We face a variety of circumstances, such as having to struggle because of strict parents and also having a hard time raising our children. When we experience these sufferings, it is easy to forget our identity as a child of God. But we should be aware that we are also God's children at this time. God recognizes us as His children and loves us regardless of our failures and unreasonable circumstances. God is our father. Our heavenly father is the Almighty God. Human being fails and lose a lot, but God fixes, heals, and restores. We are not afraid of this world because we have this father.

I met my father again last year for the first time in 18 years. I thought at this time I understood my father's weakness. My father was never a good father to me. But then, my father had never grown up with the love of an immediate family father either. There are many fathers like my father in Korea, Japan and Canada. We all need a Heavenly Father.

v.16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

The Holy Spirit testifies that we are God's children. This testimony is not just once. He cries out to us over and over again, throughout our lives, that we are God's children. The point to note here is that the Holy Spirit does not testify alone, but with our spirit. For example, the Holy Spirit testifies, "Miwako is God's child!" And Miwako san also testifies, "I am God's child!" This is like a chorus of two crying out to the world.

In Luke 15, there is a parable of the prodigal son. To atone for his failure, the son says in verse 19, "I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants." But the father of the prodigal son forgave him for his wrong past, put a ring on his finger, dressed him in beautiful clothes, and gave him a big banquet to welcome him. Our Father God is such a loving and generous God. This parable shows us that God says to us, "You are my son and daughter," even when we ourselves are too miserable to recognize ourselves as God's children.

Here we may wonder. "I don't remember speaking of the Holy Spirit and myself as

God's children. I have no such experience. The Holy Spirit alone must be bearing witness to me." **But the Bible says that the Holy Spirit is working with our spirit.** But we are not aware of this spiritual thing. But if our spirits were awakened, we would know what the Holy Spirit is testifying about. If our spirit is depressed or something, we are not aware of the Holy Spirit's work and guidance. The disciples who went down to Emmaus were so blinded by their grief over the loss of Jesus that they did not see that the risen Jesus was right beside them. In this way, when we are overwhelmed in our own problems and spiritually asleep, we are unaware of the Holy Spirit's work and lose our identity as God's children. **Therefore, we should always be spiritually awake and pay attention to the Holy Spirit's leading.** We should always keep our spirits awake by devoting ourselves to worship, praise, Bible reading, Bible study, and personal prayer. And our spirit should be renewed and growing every day.

v. 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.

We have already read Romans 4:13, "It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith." We are promised that as God's children we will inherit the same inheritance and world as Abraham. Abraham was blessed with all the blessings that God gave him, including spiritual blessings, wealth, and health, which are necessary for life in this world. We have received the blessings of Abraham, too. Galatians 3:14 says that we receive the blessing of Abraham through the Holy Spirit. This was a review.

Today, I would like to focus on the fact that there are "sufferings" within the inheritance from God. There were hardships in Abraham's life. It was that at the age of 99, he had no children of his own. And Jesus also experienced sufferings. In Matthew 4:1, "Then Jesus was by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." Fasting for 40 days meant that he was experiencing death. In fact, there is an example of a pastor in Korea who fasted for 40 days and died. Jesus also experienced these trials. However, it is surprising that the Bible says that the trials of the devil that Jesus the Son underwent were led by the Holy Spirit. **I am sure that the tribulations of our Christian lives are also guided by the Holy Spirit.**

v.18 "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

Jesus experienced many hardships during His public life as the Son of God. And finally, he experienced the suffering of the cross. But after this crucifixion, the glory of resurrection awaited him. Through the resurrection, Jesus, the Son of God, received glory as the Savior of

all human being. In the Bible, there are many predecessors of faith who received glory after completing a life of suffering like Jesus.

So did Joseph in Genesis, Moses, and King David. The Apostle Peter says. 1 Peter 4:12-13 "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But, rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed." The trials we are undergoing now will become great joy when the glory of Christ appears in the future. When we go through our sufferings and we can inherit the glory of Jesus. Our sufferings are essential to inherit the Kingdom of God with the son of God, Jesus.

I would like to tell you the testimony of a friend of mine. I have a friend of mine who is about 80 years old and a Christian. This is her parenting experience. Her son was in his second grade of high school. At that time, around 1985, there were many crimes of young people hunting for adult men, and the police were cracking down strictly about the crime. One night, her son who had a judo license, got involved with a drunken middle-aged man and her son gave him seriously injured. She consulted a lawyer and was told her son would be sentenced to a minimum of 8 years. She found that the lawyer was not willing to help her son in this situation, so her husband himself finally stood up in court and started defending his son. To his father's enthusiastic defense for his own son, to his surprise, his son was able to return to high school after serving his 3-month sentence and successfully graduated, went on to college, and is now an adult who teaches high school. I am always moved by her wonderful testimony. During this trial, my friend went to church for the first time and prayed. Since then, she has been a Christian for over 30 years now. Her husband is not a Christian yet, so she is praying for him.

Our Father God also keeps saying that we are His children like the father of my friend's son. Our Father God sent His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for us. He died in our place. Thank you for this love. Now, let's pray together.

Let's pray together. Loving Heavenly Father! We thank you for the love of our Father who gave Jesus Christ for us. We can call you Abba Father. We thank you for this grace. The Holy Spirit guides us so that we may walk in gratitude for this grace all the days of our lives. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

