

Romans 8:14-16 - A Child Of God- 27 Nov 2011

Now this morning I'd like us to consider what it means to be a Child of God. Maybe you'll be familiar with this movie. In 1995, this movie was a blockbuster hit. It's called Toy Story. And this story really revolves around these 2 characters ~ Woody the Cowboy and Buzz Lightyear the space ranger. Now Woody was a little bit upset when the boy brought Buzz Lightyear back home. I mean, Buzz is the new kid in town. Buzz is the hip guy. Buzz is the one with all the gadgets. And so he became the apple of the eye of the owner, Andy. And so Woody was a little bit jealous and so he tried to discourage Buzz. He said, 'Buzz, you think you are a space ranger? But you are just a child's plaything. You are just a toy. You can't even fly.'

Buzz Lightyear, the space ranger, has always thought that he is the special one, that he is really the space ranger. But soon, he realized that he really can't fly and it dawned upon him he is no space ranger. He is just a toy. And he began to have a breakdown. He began to have identity crisis. He began to wonder 'who do I belong to?' or 'where do I belong to?'

And then, at the moment he was about to have a depression, he took a look at his right sole. It may not be very clear here (in the picture on the screen) but he took a look at his right sole and found these four letters of the alphabet 'A-N-D-Y'. His owner's name is imprinted on his sole. And a smile broke out on Buzz's face and a new confidence arose within his soul ~ if he has a soul.

Buzz Lightyear struggled with identity crisis. Where do I belong? Who am I really? I realize this is a world where there are plenty of people today going identity crisis. Who am I? Where do I belong to really? I was on social media yesterday and I saw some of the postings of my friends, or the people who are my friends, on Facebook, and they also ask the same question: Where do I belong? Where do I belong in life? If I were to ask you today 'who are you really?', maybe you'll say 'I am a lawyer', 'I'm a businessman', 'I'm a doctor', 'I'm a teacher'. Is that really what defines you?

Who are we? Who are we? It is in this world where people are struggling with belonging and identity that the word of God is particularly assuring and comforting. In Romans 8 and verses 14 to 16, the bible declares for those who have repented of their sins and believed in Jesus Christ, this is your supreme identity. Not your occupation, not your address, not your experiences but who you are in God's eyes. The bible says if you have truly trusted in Christ as your Saviour, He declares you to be a Child of God. You belong to Him. Just like Buzz - the name of his owner is imprinted on his sole - the name of God is imprinted within your soul. You belong to

God and beautifully, God belongs to you. But you say 'how can I know if I am a Child of God?' What are the marks, what are the distinctive features of a Child of God? Is it that he has a glow on his face? Is it that there's a stamp 'Child of God' chopped on his forehead? What does a child of God look like? Does he have a halo, or wings? Does he wear a necklace with a cross? Does he wear a 'Jesus' T-shirt? What marks a Child of God?

In these verses given by the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, I see 3 distinctive marks of a Christian, of a Child of God. Let's look at them, shall we? First of all, the bible tells us that the Child of God has a distinctive walk. (04:50)

The Walk of God's Child. Let's notice the walk of a Child of God. That refers to his manner of life. That refers to his behaviour. That's the way he walks. It tells you that he is a Child of God. You see in verse 14, the bible says "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." So the bible says the sons of God, the children of God, are led by the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit indwells the Christian and the Holy Spirit leads the Christian. But you say 'lead in what ways?' I don't see the Holy Spirit walking in front of me. I don't see the Holy Spirit in front of any one of you. So how does the Holy Spirit lead me? What does He lead me to?

It's important for us to realize that there is a 'For' there. In other words, there is a connecting verse that is required to understand what is the leadership of the Holy Spirit. In verse 13 the bible says:

"For if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom 8:13, 14)

So let me put it this way. The children of God are led by the Spirit of God to mortify the deeds of the body. The word mortifies means 'to put to death'. So the Child of God is led by the Spirit of God to do what? To kill sin in his life. Now, the Holy Spirit can lead us to make decisions in purchases, in choices, in job options, and so on. He does lead us in those areas but supremely and primarily the leadership of the Holy Spirit is evident to kill sin in our lives. That's how I know I am a Child of God. That sin is decreasing and the life of Christ is increasing. I'm led by the Spirit to kill sin.

Now, let me ask you a question: 'how do you know if a woman is pregnant with a baby?' (A member of the congregation said 'the tummy'). The first thing you think of is the tummy. That's true. I have seen a few today walk in and for some of you; your

tummy is very ripe already. It will burst anytime. Yes, the tummy can be a sign or symptom. What else? (One member said 'the look'). The look? How do you look if you are pregnant? (Pastor contorted his face to express pain, mimicking the look of a pregnant woman having to carry the heavy load in her tummy). So heavy. Backache. Maybe there's a look. I don't know. I'm not a woman. What else besides tummy? (Someone said 'vomiting'). Vomiting, alright. You have morning sickness. Nausea, vomiting. Good. What else? (Someone suggested 'behaviour'). Behaviour? Wah, you guys are stepping on the toes of pregnant women. What do you mean by behaviour? Oh, you mean very unreasonable, is it? (Someone clarified saying 'cravings') Cravings. It's an excuse, isn't it? Ok, cravings. What else? ('depression'). Post-natal depression is more common than pre-natal, I think. What else? ('Moody'). Ok, moody. Mood changes. (Memory loss). Memory loss. Ok, ok. What I am trying to say is you do miss your period, right? It's fundamental. You'll miss a period.

So you have nausea, you miss your period, you have backaches, you have cravings for food. These are signs and symptoms of pregnancy but, do you realize that all these things can be the result of other causes as well? Right? You agree? You have a big tummy maybe because you don't exercise. You've just been eating too much. Nausea, maybe because you have food poisoning. You missed your menses because you may be stressed. You've a lot of reasons. And sometimes all these reasons can be collated and explained by one diagnosis which is food poisoning. You can be so sick you are nauseous. You look painful. You have backache because you have viral infection all over. Your tummy may feel bloated. You missed your period because you are so stressed by this. (09:40

What I am saying is that those are good signs and symptoms but they are not specific enough. So, what other ways can you know if you are pregnant? I do a urine test. So, you do a urine test and it will look something like this (picture of a pregnancy test instrument flashed on screen). If you are pregnant, there will be 2 lines to tell you that there is a particular hormone that is circulating in your body and ultimately filtered into the urine which we can test. Is this good enough for you? (Congregation says 'No'). No? Why not? (Someone said something). 'Wah, we have a medical student who is saying HCG (Human Chorionic Gonadotropin) secreting tumors. Well, it's true. Even if you have a positive urine pregnancy test, it doesn't mean you are pregnant with a child.

There's a strange disease, in my opinion. When I studied medicine, there's a strange disease that equally gives you a positive urine pregnancy test but doesn't result in a baby born. In fact, you are not pregnant with a child. You are pregnant with a bunch of grapes. It looks like this (picture of a womb with clusters of sacs). Your womb is

filled with this bunch of stuff. And we call this 'molar pregnancy'. Strange name. Molar pregnancy. A lot of little grape-like bunches of stuff. And if you were to look at it in real life, it will look like this (picture is flashed on the screen). (Congregation gasps at the repulsive picture on the screen). Ok. Ok. This is the most tame picture I can find. There were much worse pictures than this. But instead of having a baby, you have a bunch of tissue.

And what's worse, it's that sometimes it's not like this. It is cancerous. We have what we call Choriocarcinoma. And these cancers can also secrete hormones which you will pick up in the urine pregnancy test. So, signs and symptoms alone -not the gold standard. Urine or even blood test for hormones - not the gold standard. What do you think is a good test then? Ah, you guys are wisening up. Yes, I think, I am not an O&G specialist, but I think one of the ways to see if you are really pregnant with a child is to do an ultrasound scan serially. In other words, one scan alone is not enough. You agree with me? You have a scan 5 months ago doesn't mean that your child is still all right 5 months later. A serial scan would be a good test. For example, this is what it is in 6 weeks. (A scan is shown on the screen). You probably see nothing except a kind of a void here. I can't describe it. It's a little thing there, 6 weeks. And give it another 6 weeks (another scan is shown) it will look somewhat with a semblance of a little baby. Give it another 6 weeks, (another scan is shown) and you'll see the legs forming over the head and the body. And when it is about term, (another scan is shown on the screen), you could see the face very, very clearly.

Now with this progress, you know you are pregnant with a baby. Serial ultrasounds scan. And it looks a progression as such - from a little sac to a little baby that is forming progressively until you could see its full-form features. How do you know if you are a Child of God? Let me tell you the best gold standard test you can have when there is a progressive scan into your life ~ that there is more and more of Christ in you, when you are growing in holiness, when you are growing in Christlikeness. That's how I know you are a Christian. This is the gold standard.

There are many people today who assume that they are Christians when they are really not. There are signs and symptoms. For example, they say, I come to church, I say grace before my meals, I read my bible, I was born into a Christian home. Does that mean I am a Christian? No. It is same as saying I have nausea, vomiting, no menses but I may be having food poisoning. It is not specific enough. Then you say to me 'Pastor, I was baptized. I was baptized when I was a baby. I was baptized when I was ten years old. I was baptized. I remember I raised my hand and pastor

prayed over me. Doesn't that mean I am a Christian? No. It's like a urine pregnancy test. It may be that you are a Christian but it may be that you have Choriocarcinoma. You were not really saved.

So you say how can I know? Well, you know when there is a progression of holiness, Godliness, righteousness, Christlikeness in your life. Less and less of sin, more and more of Christ. You see that you are more loving, not just in your actions but from your heart. You see that God is giving you a greater sense of humility. You have greater control over your temper. God is working in you so that you are not self-centred. You are not bitter. Not that you are perfect or completely flawless or sinless but you see a progression, you see a maturing because this is what the Holy Spirit does in your life. It kills sin. The Holy Spirit leads the children of God to wage war on sin. I believe if you are a Christian, a truly born-again man or woman, there will be an increasing hatred for sin in your life because that's what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit leads you to wage war on sin and He gives you distaste for sin, not to hate sin simply because of the consequences of sin but you hate sin because it is hateful to God. You are seeing the things God sees. You are seeing it from the divine perspective and that, and that, is a beautiful test if you are truly born again.

I labour this point as we go through the book of Romans because I think one of the scariest verses in the bible is found in Matthew 7, verse 22 where Jesus says many will say unto me 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name?' In other words, preach in your name. 'Didn't we cast out devils?'. 'Didn't we do miracles?'. And then Jesus turned and said unto them, "Depart from me you workers of iniquity (or sin). I never knew you." But you said 'I was born in a Christian home. I come to church every Sunday, you know? I say grace. I was baptized.' But you were never born again. There has never been growth in your Christian life. You know it. Twenty years as a Christian and you are still here (referring to a picture of an embryo on the screen). In fact, you are not even here.

My friends, the scariest word to me in Matthew 7: 22 is the word 'many'. It's not 'any', ok? It's 'many'. Huge crowds of people will come to Jesus on the last day saying 'Lord, we thought we knew you.' Jesus says 'I never knew you.' You had religiosity on the outside. You have tradition on the outside. But your heart - it was never born again. You never truly turned from your sin. You never really believed in what I have done for you on the cross. And you are without excuse because all through your life there has been no Christian growth and you thought you could be a Christian. Your pastor said to you on, what's today's date, remember today, 27 November; I wash my hands clean. The blood is not on my hands.

I warn you, my friends, don't sit on presumption. Examine yourself if there be a growth in your life. Because the horrible reality is, I think, many will face the Lord on the last day and it would be too late. So examine yourself whether ye be in the faith. But this is what the Spirit of God does. This is what a Child of God would be like. A Child of God is led by the Spirit of God to kill sin. Like I said, I don't think it's ever going to be complete or perfect. The Spirit of God leads us to sin less but it doesn't enable us to be sinless. Get what I am trying to say? You'll sin less, but you'll not be sinless in this life. It's only when Jesus comes again will you be totally sanctified and glorified. But you will sin less. And so, if I may, I think this is what it means to be growing as a Christian. This is what it should look like for your life (referring to a chart on the screen) that with the passage of time, there will be less and less of self and more and more of Christ - holiness, Godliness, Christian maturity. (04:55)

A few problems with this chart. I like it but still there are a few problems:

1. It seems to tell you that you can reach a point where there will be no more sin. That's not true as I have already explained.
2. I think the progress of a Christian is not linear - there will be ups and downs. The gradient may change. But, overall, the trend of your life should be less and less of self because the Holy Spirit leads you to kill sin. The Holy Spirit forms Christ within you. (05:25)

So, I think, this is what it means to be a Child of God. There is this distinct mark the way you walk. Haven't you seen that in father and son? A particular father walks in this way (striding along with arms swinging). You look at the son; the son will also walk this way. It's like father, like son. That's the way they walk. And if you are truly a Child of God, more and more you will walk like your father. You'll walk like the Lord Jesus Christ. So this is the distinctive mark number 1. Let's look at number 2 and that's found in Romans 8:15. I think, the second hallmark is that there will be warmth in the Christian's heart. There will be warmth in God's Child. There's a particular affection, tenderness in the Child of God.

Some months ago, I shared with you this picture of a young artist called Shen Hanmo. I was with Shawn and we were at the Esplanade. And before the play started, we went around and looked at some paintings. Many nice paintings but this one (a painting of 2 men) caught my eye particularly. It was drawn well, it's life-like, but what was even more intriguing for me was the emotion, or rather, the lack of emotion, on their faces. This painting is drawn by this young man, Shen Hanmo, and

this is what he wrote by the side. (a description of the painting is flashed on the screen). Don't strain your eyes. I will read it for you:

'Father and Son' is a portrait of my father and I, one which reflects the nature of our relationship.

My father has always been critical of me. For as long as I remember, he has never failed to come up with some form of criticism for nearly everything I do, including this painting.

As much as I understand his positive intentions, there have been times when I have felt frustrated at his comments, which sometimes seem to put me down.

In this portrait, the vacant gazes of the subjects suggest that there exists an emotional distance between them despite their close physical proximity.

There's an emotional distance between them. But let me say this: That is not the Will of God for you with regards to your relationship with Him. No. This is what God does. The bible tells us earlier as we went through Romans. Romans 5:5 '...that the love of God is shed abroad (that is poured out) in our hearts by the Holy Ghost (or Holy Spirit) which is given unto us.' One of the reasons, one of the ministries, for the Holy Spirit in our lives, is that he manifests, reveals, pours out to us the love of God. This is the love of God to us, not our love for Him. This is God's love for us. It's made experiential, it's made real to us by the Holy Spirit. Because, left to ourselves, we will not seek God. Left to ourselves, we are spiritually cold-blooded.

Yesterday I was with my son at HortPark. And we were at the Butterfly Garden. And there he was fascinated with the butterflies. He wanted to bring them home. But I told him I don't know how to feed butterflies. So, leave them there. But as he was amazed at all the butterflies, I took a look at what some of the signs read. I wanted to learn a little bit about the butterflies and I learned something that I didn't know in the past. And it says here, (reading from a sign flashed on the screen) : (09:15)

'Butterflies are cold-blooded insects. Hence, they will obtain and absorb the heat and energy they need by spreading out their wings under the sun. Many butterflies have dark coloured bodies, which are better at conducting heat.'

So, butterflies are cold-blooded in and of themselves, and they need the heat of the sun to help them fly. I thought about it. Isn't that the way I am? I am cold-blooded, in and of myself. I don't appreciate the love of God until the Holy Spirit shines in my

life. That's what the Holy Spirit does. He brings afresh to you the love of God for you. Not only does He do this one-directional ministry, we also respond to God in love because of His ministry. And that's why we come to Romans 8:15:

"For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

So that is the work of the Spirit, again, to bring forth, out of the response of the heart, in love and intimacy and the seeking for God. In the past, you want to duck from God. You don't like to talk about spiritual things. You don't like to hear the name of God. You don't like to engage with Christians. You don't want all these things and it's natural. That's the carnal man. That's the man before he knows God. But, if he knows God, the Holy Spirit works in his heart that he understands the love OF God and gives him a love FOR God.

In the past, you were in the spirit of bondage - bondage to sin, bondage to fears, bondage to guilt - because you never know you are right with God. You never know you can match up to God's requirements and so you duck from God. But once you have repented and trusted in Jesus, the Spirit lives in you and He is the Spirit of adoption. And out of that, He manifests an intimate, personal relationship with God. That's what He does. He enables you to cry, that's a deep emotive word, 'Abba, Father'.

The word 'Abba' is a foreign-language word, an Aramaic word that really is the same as what we'll call 'Papa' or 'Daddy' or 'Dada'. That's what it is. Christians, we can call God, believe it or not, 'Papa', 'Daddy'. Because that's the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. But let me give you balance before you swing to an extreme. When the bible tells us He gives us the Spirit of adoption that we can cry 'Daddy', 'Abba', 'Papa', 'Father', it doesn't mean that we can be presumptuous with God. Neither does it mean that we can be flippant with God, or reverential with God. No. Not at all. Because the same Spirit that gives us the Spirit of adoption enables us to recognise that He is Lord.

1 Cor 12:3 says "... no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, (Sovereign, King, Ruler), but by the Holy Ghost."

I want to say this: we live in a day and age where churches, Christians, preach a kind of a casual, flippant relationship with God. I think that's dangerous. That's presumptuous. That's reverential. They say as a Christian you do not need the fear of God any more. No, I see that frequently in the bible. The bible tells me it is the fear of

God that is the beginning of wisdom. The bible tells me in Acts 9:31, '...that the early church Christians walk in the fear of the Lord', There was a healthy reverence and awe for who God is. 2 Cor 7:1, '...perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' And in Ephesians 5:21, 'Submitting... in the fear of God.' So, let's keep this in balance. Our relationship with God is not as simplistic as just father-son. It's one dimension of it. But the bible equally tells me shepherd-sheep, Lord-servant, king-subject and you've got to take that in its biblical revelation. So it is true that we today have a particular, wonderful, confident, assured, access and intimacy with God. But let it not be presumptuous or flippant.

By the way, you say, Pastor, why do you say 'fear of God' when Romans 8:15 says, 'we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear'? Isn't there a contradiction in the bible? No. You've got to understand what fear this is and what the fear of God is. This is a fear of judgment. This is a fear of condemnation. This is a fear of never able to match up. We don't have that fear anymore in Jesus Christ. I am never going to be condemned. I am not going to be judged by an angry God because of my sins because it's all taken by Jesus in Romans 8:1. But it doesn't mean I lose that natural, healthy reverential fear for God who is my Creator, who is my King, who is my God. So there is, I think, the tension that you need to balance. But let's come back. As a Christian, you have a warmth in your heart. This is tremendous. Because, as a father, I understand what it really means. More, now that I am a daddy.

This is a picture of my cheeky boy, son Shawn (picture of Shawn flashed on screen). And Shawn has a special relationship with me. I mean, he doesn't need to do a lot of things to get my attention. Say, for example, he sleeps in his own room and sometimes in the middle of the night, there will be thunderstorm, lightning and thunder cracking, and he gets scared. So what he does, quite frequently now, is that he climbs down his bed and he brings his bolster, he brings his Mickey Mouse, he brings his blanket and comes to our room. Suppose now he brings all that because he is scared of his own room, being on his own, he comes to the door of our room and suppose Shawn kneels down, puts his hand together and says 'my dear glorious, merciful daddy, oh not daddy, my king. Would you, in your mercy, allow your subject to come into your precious, privileged room that I may perhaps, perchance, climb up and seek that comfort and shelter with you. I ask this humbly. Amen.

Do you think Shawn would ever do that? You know what my son does? He just grabs his Mickey Mouse, the bolster, the blanket and very 'boh chap' (a Hokkien phrase meaning 'couldn't care less'), he just comes to our bed, puts them all onto the bed, he climbs up and when we are in dreamland and we open our eyes and we see Shawn,

he just gives us a cheeky smile and positions himself perpendicular to us. His head is on my wife's tummy and his legs are on me and he sleeps comfortably there. He doesn't have to do a lot of gymnastic routines to be with us. But this privilege is unique only to Shawn. None of you can ever do that. (Laughter). You can't. But as a son, he knows he can have intimacy with his father.

And that's the way God wants us to relate with Him. That we will know we can call him Abba, Papa, Daddy, Father. Do you know that Jesus taught us to pray like this? Jesus taught the disciples to pray 'Our Father which art in heaven..'. Now I think there's a beautiful poise and balance in that address. Father speaks of the nearness, the imminence of God. And in heaven, it speaks of the greatness and transcendence of God. Don't lose that. Don't lose the nearness of God and the greatness of God in your life, in your perspective of God. It's got to be brought into attention. (04:11)

But nevertheless, when Jesus taught the disciples to pray 'Our Father', it is revolutionary. It was cataclysmic. Why? Because for thousands of years, the Jews have never prayed to God, individually, 'Our Father'. In 39 books of the Old Testament, over thousands of years, they address God as Father only 14 times. And each time they address it as a nation, but not as an individual. And so when Jesus prayed, and taught the disciples to pray this is how you address God: 'Our Father in Heaven'. It was mind-blowing. But that's how we are called to pray. Why? Because Jesus prays to God the Father the same way. 21 recorded prayers of the Lord Jesus Christ out of 21 times, 20 of it is addressed to God as 'Father'. The only time it is not is when Jesus was hanging on the cross when He said 'My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken me?' And on the cross, He was not there as a son. But He was there as a sacrifice. But other than that, He addresses God as 'Father'. And because you are in Christ, you address God as 'Father'.

What the practical outflow of this is this ~ when you pray, pray like a child. You can pray like a child. You don't have to have eloquent prayers, you know that? You don't have to have Queen's English when you pray. You don't have to have long elaborate prayers. You don't have to, like what I have said, 'Our dear Gracious, Heavenly, Majestic, Great God Father... lah, lah, lah. Thy servant is so unworthy becauselah, lah, lah.' And you almost sing a song. And you don't get to the point because you feel you got to back it up with all these qualifications. No. My son can come to Jason Lim and he doesn't have to say 'my dear gracious, grand, glorious King of the Lim family. My humble petition to you, henceforth, if thou may lend me your ears, I will be eternally grateful. And I will be a good boy and serve you. If thou may, can I have an

ice-cream, please?' Shawn, just tell me what you want. You don't have to do all those things. I think one of the best prayers in the bible is simply 'Lord, save me!' Just that. The cry of a child to a father. And if you pray like a child, you also don't have to pray repetitively, you know? It's like a son asking a father 'can I have chocolate ice-cream, chocolate ice-cream, please, chocolate ice-cream (repeating request numerous times). If you see my son do that, you will say 'what a horrible father this is'. And this is the weirdest son in the world. And notice how we treat God. We think that He is an idol; we think that He is deaf; we think that He doesn't see, we think He doesn't know, we think He doesn't care. No. He's your Heavenly Father. Pray with that assurance and confidence. And that is the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Some of you have not prayed to God before even though you think you are a Christian. Something is wrong, I think, because it's so natural that the child will cry out to the father. So a mark of a Christian is that there will be a walk that is distinct and there will be particular warmth in his heart that just will bubble up and say 'Daddy, God. Thank you. I love you. Save me. Help me'. (08:18)

Finally, can I end by looking at the witness to God's Child? You know you are God's Child. Why? Because there is a change in your life. There's a beautiful confidence and assurance in your prayer. And the bible tells me that the Spirit witnesses to you. It says in Romans 8:16,

"The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God".

In the Roman times where this part of the bible is written, adoption is a common process. What happens is that a man would want to buy over another child from another family. And when he does so, he does so in the presence of at least 7 witnesses so that it is a done, sealed deal. In case the father dies, these 7 witnesses can say 'Yes, he was adopted and this boy, this son, has full rights to this family's inheritance.' That's the purpose of the witnesses.

The bible tells us that we have a witness in our hearts and that is the work of the Holy Spirit. I think, by now, you would have grasped that from beginning to the end what we are looking at is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He leads us to wage war on sin. He leads us to have a warmth in our hearts. He leads us and gives us that confident witness that we are the children of God. An adoption is a beautiful teaching concept in the bible because it's rooted in the process in Roman times. When a child is adopted, he is taken from his old family and totally immersed into a new one. And what it takes is that the entire history, his past, is all erased. If there is any debt, it is gone. It's gone. The relationship of the old is cut. And now he's fully immersed in the

new and he is entitled to the absolute inheritance of this family. And even if there should be new children that will come along, he has equal rights with the natural-born children. It's hundred percent. He is treated, for all intent and purposes, as the real child of the parents, the adoptive parents. And that's what God is saying ~ it's all of grace that God plucked you from the previous family and immersed you into His family.

What kind of a family did we come from? We came from Adam's family ~ a family of sin, a family that is alien to God, a family that is an enemy to God. And you know what? God took you out of such a mess and placed you into His divine heavenly kingdom and family. It is grace. Unmerited favour. You don't deserve it but He gives it to you.

In the bible, there's a story of a man. A very sad man. Sad because he was lame, is crippled. And in those days if you are handicapped, crippled; you are a nobody. You are a despised man. You are an outcast. And really his name affirms that. His name is called 'the shameful one'. You say 'wow, who in the world will name a son 'shameful one'. So this is the man. His name is 'shameful one'. And he lives in a place called Lo-debar which means 'barren place'. It means no pasture. It means desert, It means wasteland. So, this poor guy, born crippled, a social outcast, despised, called 'shameful one', lives in a barren land with no future, no hope. None whatsoever.

But, one day, a king sought him. A king sought him, not to destroy him, but the king sought him so that he can show the king's favour on him. It's unusual. Why? Because this man's grandfather used to pursue, persecute and wanted to kill this king. But this king, years later, said 'I want to look for the family members of that man who used to persecute me. I want to find them. I want to find his descendants. I want to show mercy to him.' I think, by now, you know who he is.

The name of this man who is called 'shameful one' is Mephibosheth. And the king is David. And King David wanted to look for Mephibosheth and say to Mephibosheth it doesn't matter what your past is, it doesn't matter what you are right now, I want you to come into my kingdom, into my palace. Not as a servant, but sit with me at the table and feast, every day. Wow! You mean you are going to show kindness to your enemy who wanted to kill you? Yes. I wanted to show him favour, grace. And henceforth, Mephibosheth's lameness will be covered at the table and all he will see is not his lameness but the blessings I give unto him. That's the same way God translates us from a sinful, evil, shameful, wasteful family into His divine family.

Let me put it in another way. Suppose there's a child in the streets. He is abused, neglected, rebellious and naughty. A rich, powerful man comes along, sees this young boy and he kneels down right in front of him and says 'son, would you want to come with me? I want to save you from this messed-up life you have. Come, and follow me, and I will supply all your needs for the rest of your life. There will be nothing that you need that will not be provided for you. You will come into a wonderful home. You will have many brothers and sisters who will love you and care for you. I will be your father and all that I have is yours.' The little boy says 'but what do I have to do?' 'Nothing, son. Believe me. Turn from your ways and come into my blessed family.'

You know this is the same way God looks out to you. It's not what you do. It's what Jesus has already done on the cross. And God is looking for those who would turn from their sin and enter His family. Why? So that He may show the greatness of His grace, the riches of His favour upon your life, to change a Mephibosheth, a 'shameful one', into the glorious one ~ the Child of God. Would you come, like Mephibosheth to David, to God? Why did David do this? David did this because of Jonathan. Jonathan is Mephibosheth's father. Why would God save you? Why would God bless you? It's because of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross and because of what He has done; you can be forgiven, loved and accepted.

My friends, this message is not so much about what you will do for God. It's about what God has already done for you. Do you know today you can get out of bed every single morning with great joy in your heart because you are absolutely loved and accepted? You don't have to seek approval from man. You don't have to be discouraged when man says bad things about you because your sense of belonging, your identity, is not wrapped up with what your boss says about you but it's what God sees in you. He sees Christ. He sees you beautifully adopted into His family. That is the power of the gospel. The power of 'Now'. Right now, I am loved. I am accepted. I am God's child. Realize today that you have a new family. Christian living is not Lone Ranger-living. Christian living is communal. Why? Because we are in a family. That's where we live out our Christian's life. This is where we see the love one for another. That's where we serve one another in order to serve God. Realize today you have a new family. My friends, understanding that you are a Child of God changes, ought to change, the way you live.

(04:28)

I close with this illustration. You may not be familiar with this man. He is called Lou Little. He is an American football coach. Years ago, Lou Little coached a team and there was a very special young man. This young man was not spectacular. He was not

a great player in terms of skills or physique. But he saw something in this young man. He had a spirit within him. He has gusto. He has drive. He has passion. And so he said 'well, this guy may not play my games but he can certainly sit on the bench.' And in training and so on, he is a great motivation to the rest of the team. So he kept this young man, somewhat smaller, less skillful in his team.

But, over the process of time, he got to know this young man better. And he noticed something very unusual about this young man. Whenever there is practice, his father would often come and be with him. And this young man would run to his daddy, hold his daddy arm-in-arm and they will walk and they will stroll and they will talk. They will go to the chapel and that's why the coach knows they are Christians. They go to the chapel; they will talk about spiritual things. But the son will spend much time with the daddy walking just around the perimeter of the training ground.

Well, one day, whilst training was going on, Coach Little got a phone call. It was from the family of the father. The family member said 'Coach Little, we are very sorry to say this but could you help us tell the young man, the son, that his father has just passed away.' That news struck. And this young man took time off, took care of the funeral and what has to be done. Several days later, he came back. It was two days before a football match. He came back. And the coach said to this young man 'Son, I am so sorry for what has happened to your dad. Is there something I can do for you?' The young man said to the coach 'Coach, would you let me play the game in two days' time?' The coach struggled within himself because he knows this guy is not up to the mark and he might probably lose the game for them. But he said this is his wish. I will put him on right from the start and after a few minutes, pull him out of the game. And so he said 'yes'.

Well, the game started. Right from the word 'Go', right from the first play, this young man fought and played like a man possessed. He made the first tackle that turned the ball over to the team and subsequently, play after play, he made exceptional plays. And the coach found it impossible to pull him out because this guy was winning the game for the team. After the victory, Coach Little went up to this young man and said 'Son, what got into you today? You played like a man possessed. The little guy said 'Coach, there is a secret that you might not know. You know my dad who comes with me every time I practice? Well, we have a little secret. My dad is blind. He can't see and so I walk with him arm-in-arm. And right now, today, it is the first time he sees me play.' If you realize that your father is watching you today it should change the way you play, should change the way you live your life. It's not out of guilt, not out of fear but because you know He loves you so much and you live for the audience of

one. The Spirit of God brings the love of God to you. The Spirit of God brings the love in your heart to Him. Would you today rejoice, revel and reflect on the reality that you are a Child of God? (08:39)

Let's bow for a word of prayer. It's a tremendous teaching of scripture that the bible tells us, because of what Jesus Christ has done; those who repent and those who believe can be saved, can be translated from Adam's family into the family of God. You say 'how can I be saved? What do I have to do? How can I be a Child of God? Is it about going to church? No. Is it about putting money in the offering bag? No. Is it about raising my hand today? No. What does God say? 'But as many as received Him, to them gave He power (authority) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.'

If you are here today, you do not know Jesus, the bible tells you, you can be God's child if you would turn from your sin, repent of your ways and believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Son of God, became man that He may go to the cross and there suffer and die for all your sins. He rose again the third day because He finished paying for your sins, and if you, with all your heart, turn from sin and believe in Jesus, you shall be saved and God blesses you and brings you into His family, His kingdom ~ forever loved, forever approved, forever accepted. No condemnation. He fills you with grace and He enables the righteousness of God to be lived up in your life. This is the gospel. This is the good news that Jesus came to save us from our sins. Ask God today to so work in your heart that you will find salvation and life in Jesus alone.

And my dear friends, if you are here today and you have already trusted in Jesus, maybe you've been living your life under a whole load of guilt. There's no more condemnation. Maybe you have always been fearful of prayer. There is no need to fear prayer. He's your Daddy. He's your Papa. Friends, look also today in your life. Is there increasing Christlikeness? Oh, I beg you, don't be like one of those in Matthew 7:22 where many will think they are saved, but they are not. Examine yourself and once again, turn to Jesus alone.

"Father, we thank you for your word today. Bless the word to the hearts of your people. May the Spirit of God so draw men and women to Jesus that He will be glorified through our lives. We pray this, humbly, in Jesus' name. Amen. God bless.