

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children 《Ro 8:13-17》

Introduction: We are shaped by relationships, and we need relationship the most. When a man hears the affirmation and voices from this relationship in all moments, only then can he be blissful and happy. Even in the greatest suffering, only this relationship can protect and strengthen us. Actually, we all have relationships, and we experience the strength these relationships give us. For example: The love and concerns given unto us through our parents' love, the love given to us through spousal relationship, the respectable love given to us through our relationship with children. We all know that these relationships are what money and materials cannot buy. But try asking, what is the relationship most needed by man? That is the relationship with our Creator (the source of life). What kind of relationship is this? The bible tells us that this is a Father-son relationship, and by him we cry "Abba, Father". This is a mutual relationship formed through Christ, not just an one-sided love of God towards us. If we have no assurance in His love, or if we do not love Him, we cannot be blissful. In fact, since the fall of man, he is under the bondage and suppression of sin, causing him to have many needs (health, wealth, love, reputations etc), but this relationship with God is what he needs only, and he needs this the most. Only this relationship can completely satisfy and protect his spirit, enables him to have peace in this world that is full of sin and evil, to the extent of having hope daily despite living in the sinful body that is attacked by temptations. Besides, we need to know that this relationship does not only bring forth a "liberative" effect, it brings the effect of "cleansing" simultaneously. This relationship is so intimate that it does not allow the factor that will pollute it – sin. Hence, when we enter into this relationship, we enjoy the sweetness and protection in this relationship, this relationship will also help us to put to death the misdeeds of our body. This relationship helps us to constantly seek how Holy Spirit is interceding for us so that we can do the will of God. Furthermore, this relationship has the power to "strengthen", for it brings the same destiny and wish of two persons (Christ and us). Hence, how Christ suffered for His people, we who are loved by God will also be gradually strengthened and willingly suffer with Lord, in order that we may join Him in His glory. But in this, we need to ask a fundamental question. As we know the nature of this relationship, does this relationship give out such voice to us? Is this relationship always giving us affirming voices, enabling us to be released from fear, heal us from weaknesses, and enables us to love God more and more as day goes by, to the extent of carrying our own Cross willingly and follow the Lord? Does this relationship give us the standard and power in our living and dealing of matters? If not, this relationship is mere knowledge to us; we rarely communicate with God under the foundation of this relationship, and we fall short of living in this identity of child of God in our practical living. Our prayers are majorly asking for blessings and we're afraid that God may not grant them. After asking, we cannot confirm how God is answering our prayers; sometimes our prayers become a form of ritual as we still rely on our hard work in our living. Such is a state of one who merely knows he is child of God as theory, for he still keep a heart of slavery. Therefore, God gives us the Holy Spirit, whose most basic work is to testify with our spirit that we are God's children. This testifying work is grounded on the Cross of Christ, but it is also the seal we will receive as we repeatedly call upon Lord with the heart of child everyday, and as we live in this identity of child of God.

1. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God 《8:14》

1) Only children of God can experience 【God's leading】

* Firstly, the verse here gives us a key understanding – "relationship" and "leading" are mentioned together. If a person firmly knows that he is the child of God, he ought to ask: Do I indeed know and experience the leading of God? Actually to many believers today, aside from asking God for some peace and help, they have not seriously thought through and confirmed how God is leading him. Also, another tragedy we see today is that many believers want to experience the coincidental and emergent leading, eg, "Oh, amazing things happened today"; "the work is busy today, may God give me some temporary help" etc, and they treat these as God's guidance. If we're to look through the top and bottom part of the scriptures, we will realize that God's leading is not too objective, in another word, it has deeper meaning. This verse put the genuine yet unchanging relationship with God in God's leading. This leading contains the heart and all love a father bears towards His son. Actually, this leading is absolute, and will be executed on us through our lifetime by our eternal Father. In this leading, there's unchanging love of Father God, the guidance that works all things for the good of His children, His intercession, help, discipline, so that we share in His holiness and glory, know Him and love Him even more. Therefore, this leading contains the love of the eternal Father, and it's totally different from the mere coincidental or emergent leading that people generally hope for.

2) How does Holy Spirit lead God's children?

① **Safeguarding the grace in our lives** (or in another word: the faith of born again), so that we will not lose faith because of the attacks, temptations and wickedness of the enemy <Lk 21:31-32> <Ro 8:1, 38-39>, thereafter, Lord will surely guide us into seeing His work in this area. Hence, only when we constantly confirm how Lord is loving, protecting and helping us can we see His leading in clarity.

② **Lead us into a holy living**, cause us to have no choice but to put to death the misdeeds of our body in order to enjoy peace <Ro 8:13>. Although we suffer many burdens and sin that easily entangles at times, the guidance of Holy Spirit prevent us from entering into a state of being accustomed to the feeling of sinning, and He doesn't allow us to remain in tiredness and disappointment because of our weaknesses; instead, through the Word, Holy Spirit is always exhorting us. In particular, when we are weak, the Holy Spirit grieves so that we will grieve <Ep 4:30>, or groans and causes us to be broken <Ro 8:26>, so that our conscience will be cleansed, our will be strengthened, and we can throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.

③ **Lead us to join Lord in His suffering, so that we also share in His glory.** With this, we will not remain in comfort zone or a spiritual state of complacency; instead, we will love Lord even more radically, and walk the path of Cross with Lord more practically. Hence, the more we discover and experience the deep relationship with Lord, it will produce in our hearts a type of "Divine violence". This is a heart of no other way but to race towards the goal. In particular, as the sounding of trumpet gets prominent in the end days, the heart of wanting to spread this heavenly gospel to the ends of the earth is greatly aroused, so much so that the elect will endure everything and preach the gospel in season and out of season.

2. You received the Spirit of Sonship, and by Him we cry "Abba, Father!" 《Ro 8:15》

1) One of the greatest revelation given to us, the saints, through Christ' gospel is that we can cry to God as "Abba, Father!"

* In <Mk 14:36>, it said Lord Jesus called God [Abba, Father], this is an unique address. Actually, apart from bearing the sins of men on the Cross and became the object of God's wrath, the Holy Son was always addressing God this way. Here it embraces very important meanings: ① [Abba, Father] is a commonly used term, a prudent and homely term, just like how we often greet our dear father at home. People who are stuck in legalism and ritualism will not dare to use such a term, yet it was the most natural, common

and deep calling towards Father God that Lord Jesus used in His incarnation. Actually, this is one of the greatest revelation brought forth by the love of Cross, for we who are born in sin are living in punishment – inherently, we have a barrier with God; ② This term [Abba] is Aramaic; [Father] is Greek. Here, we know that probably, for this term, the bible unites the Jews and Greeks, because they have the same father in Christ. To go a step further, perhaps for the gospel to preach to the ends of the world, it needs the oneness of these two tribes (Jews and Gentiles) in this relationship; ③ The “cry” here does not necessarily mean to call out loudly, uncontrollably and passionately. Rather, it is about one facing the Father no matter where he is – in public or in his inner place, in various circumstances or in crowd. He acknowledges, calls and relies on this Father God. From understanding the truth objectively, we need to be brought into this subjective faith living; ④ Finally, the nature of this relationship will absolutely replace fear with freedom. The root cause of men’s fear comes not from the circumstances, the threat of men or the sins committed in weakness, rather, it is one losing the relationship of Father God and children, the relationship that maintains God absolutely loves me. The main essence of <Ro 8> is to tell us clearly that God is our Father, He is surely standing on our side; hence, no matter what danger, persecution, or consequences we encounter, Father God will never leave us, and He will surely lead us with loving kindness.

2) Train: Receive all answers from confirming our relationship with Father God

① **Absolutely see the bible as the promise our Father God wrote to us (the children of God).** We ought to know that the bible is the revelation under the foundation of relationship, it’s not a scripture for debate or rationalization. For example: when the bible mentions about certain teachings on holiness, or curses a group of people, we should not be made fearful. Rather, we see God’s protection and revere His holiness. Even to those who have sinned, they are willing to repent because they believe God will surely be merciful, and thus turn away from evil doings. Hence, to children of God, the bible is surely “letter of loving kindness” from God, it is to attract God’s children into running to Him and follow Him. In fact, no matter how classic the theology can be derived from the bible, if it cannot lead one into understanding God’s love, that is a theory that loses the heartbeat, or rather, words devoid of the core essence.

② **Our prayers need to reach the throne of God in the context of total faith in Father’s love.** The Lord’s prayer has clearly told us with the first sentence “Our Father in Heaven” – here it shows that for a prayer to be answered, it does not depend on how long the prayer is, how beautiful is the word used, or the richness of the emotions being put it; instead, the relationship of Father-son is the foundation of all testing and approving, asking, confessions and intercessions. Actually, we need to genuinely call upon “Father” in our prayers that we commonly pray, or in critical situations, until we can restore an affirmed faith and continue to hear the instruction from the Holy Spirit on what we ought to pray about.

③ **We continue to pursue to enter practically into a living motion loved by Father.** Holy Spirit is the spirit of Sonship dwelling in our body. Hence, he will surely manifest the life of Son through our body. Actually, the actions of our living is a reflection of the deepest state of our spirit, revealing how much we actually enjoy this Father-son relationship. We can ask ourselves some questions, eg: are we always being calculative with people in our living? Are we afraid of being shortchanged? Do we always live before man? Do we always rely on human’s methods? We should not continue thinking that these are nature of old self, thus they are difficult to change. Actually, God has given us the Spirit of Sonship, if we always depend on this spirit of child to think, discern, decide, speak or handle things etc, we will surely experience the great healing power from the Holy Spirit.

3. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children 《Ro 8:16-17》

1) The surety of Holy Spirit testifying

* We see a very strange connection of God and men. It seems like we cry [Abba, Father!], but it is the Holy Spirit who testifies. Actually, through the salvation grace done on the Cross by Christ, when we discover in our spirit that God is our Father, Holy Spirit will add on the sureness and affirmation at that moment, so that we will be assured in our hearts. This assurance is completely rested on the finished work of Christ, and it is also the ceaseless affirming work done by Holy Spirit in the hearts of saints. Today, various positive thinking teachings in church always ask people to believe that God will give them health, wealth, peace, success, smooth-sailing things without foundation. They specifically proclaim themselves to be children of God through the gains of flesh they receive from God. They also display confidence and assurance in these. But the faith brought by such teachings cannot stand the test, because as the circumstances change, as they encounter failures or trials in life, they will lose the original confidence and assurance immediately. However, the bible tells us an evidence that is more genuine than the evidence that can get on the outside, and that is when we are truly calling upon Father, Holy Spirit will personally testify with us in our spirit strongly and powerfully. All believers have to confirm this spiritual experience repeatedly as they walk with God. In fact, there is no greater help than the help of the Holy Spirit; there’s no greater affirmation than that brought by the Holy Spirit.

2) As Holy Spirit testifies with our spirit, we confirm our heavenly inheritance at the same time

* The bible mentions that we are heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ. Clearly, we the saints do not only become God’s children by name, instead, we will surely inherit the eternal heavenly inheritance rightfully received by heirs. This inheritance is God Himself (God is our blessing), but it is also the crown we will receive with Him after we are united with Christ. Surely, it is related to how we run for the kingdom today as we are still living on earth. Hence, we need to understand the days on earth are to fight the wars, run, and sow. As children of God who clearly have God’s heart, they will never seek for earthly satisfaction, for they yearn for the eternal home in their hearts. Hence, in this life, they will surely be diligent in earning the crown that they will receive as they return home. Here, we ought to examine clearly our mentality as children of God.

3) Join Lord in His suffering in order that we may also join in His glory

* Today, church believers do not like to hear the word “suffering”. The messages of churches also teach less about the spirit and glory of suffering. Actually, no normal man loves suffering, if one is willing to suffer, surely there must be a reason far greater than the suffering. If that reason is sufficient, the heart of willing to suffer will be more pressing, just like how a mother is willing to go through the laboring pain to give birth to the child. Similarly, when Christ left His most dignified throne and came to live among human, He had carried with Him the willingness to suffer for He was to enter a world that is full of sin and evil, and He needs to save God’s people from sin. Similarly, in the process of Paul preaching the gospel, he knew it was a fierce battle. Not only was he waging wars with the demons, he was to save God’s people from sin and evil. Sin and evil is our spiritual enemy, and they will never compromise. Therefore Paul said, for the sake of church, he filled up in his flesh what was still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions. Then, was there lack in Christ’ suffering? Actually, the suffering and finished work on the Cross by Christ was perfect, without lack. But for this redemptive news to be spread to the ends of the earth, it took the pain of many saints, to the extent of shedding blood. These are the co-workers God wants, the greatest mystery of Christ receiving crowns with saints. When we understand this principle, yet we continue to care about the gains of this life, we are hogging space on earth and in our hearts, we will always lose the power brought by our relationship with God and be overwhelmed by various burdens or temptations of sin that easily entangle. As the end days of the end time draw near, he will be greatly rebuked in his spirit and reduce to lamenting in helplessness. But to the believers who are awakened by the truth (self-identity and belonging), he will fight for the chance to live for

Lord with this once-off life on earth. Although he will encounter hardships, sufferings, persecutions, famine, nakedness, danger, sword, he will surely experience the great support from the Holy Spirit, all the more he will testify for the Lord in all things and be more than conqueror. Such life is utterly glorious in the eyes of angels, saints and God.