

# Unit I: Our Holy God and the Holy Scriptures

## How Three Make One

DEVOTIONAL READING: Ephesians 3:14-21

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Joel 2:28-29; Luke 11:9-13;  
John 3:5-8; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26-27; 16:7-15; Acts 2:1-21, 32-33;  
Romans 8:1-17, 26-27; 1 Corinthians 12:1-13;  
Ephesians 1:13-14; 3:14-21; 4:1-6, 30

PRINT PASSAGES: Romans 8:12-17, 26-27

### KEY VERSE

**The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.**  
(Romans 8:16, KJV)

.....

**The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.** (Romans 8:16, NIV)

### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Describe the Spirit's work as "advocate" in the life of believers.
- Trust the Spirit's witness about believers' standing before God.
- Reject fear in favor of living confidently as God's Spirit-led children.

### \*Key Terms

**Debtors** (verse 12)—Greek: *opheiletés* (of-i-let'-ace): those who owe, are indebted; sinners; those who "have an obligation" (NIV).

**Flesh** (verse 12)—Greek: *sarx* (sarx): body; human nature; carnal.

**Helps** (verse 26)—Greek: *sunantilambanomai* (soon-an-tee-lam-ban'-om-ahee): takes hold with another (who is laboring); hence, takes a share in; "helpeth" (KJV).

**Led** (verse 14)—Greek: *agó* (ag'-o): brought (forth); carried; impelled.

**Live** (verse 12)—Greek: *zaó* (dzah'-o): be alive; am alive; get a living; be among the living.

**Spirit** (verse 13)—Greek: *pneuma* (pnyoo'-mah): wind; breath; ghost; life.

**\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)**



## The Biblical Context

Paul wrote the book of Romans from Corinth around AD 58 to faithful Christians living in Rome for several strategic reasons, but primarily to provide apostolic instruction, encouragement, and evangelization. Because he had not visited the Roman Empire's centrally located city, Paul desired to introduce himself to this faithful and dedicated group of believers and build a mutual interpersonal relationship with them. Structurally, the book of Romans aligns with Paul's theological method of "doctrine first—application next." In chapters 1–11, Paul explains the doctrines of sin, justification, and God's sovereignty and their application to believers' lives in chapters 12–16. Chapter 8, the broader context for this lesson, concludes his teaching about the doctrine of sanctification. Paul explains the Holy Spirit's role in empowering believers to overcome sin and His continuing transformative power leading believers to ultimate conformity to Christ's image—ultimate sanctification and future glorification (see Romans 8:29–30; Philippians 3:20–21; 1 John 3:2).

## Introduction

Living out the Bible's expectations isn't always easy. Sometimes it may feel like our faith clashes with what we want personally, what the culture around us pushes, or how we see ourselves when we mess up. That can lead to some serious identity questions like, "Who am I, really—spiritually?"

Paul understood this struggle. In his letter to the Romans, he gives solid encouragement for anyone feeling lost or like they don't measure up. He reminds us that our identity in Christ isn't based on being perfect, it's based on grace. God adopted us into His family even when we were still caught up in sin. And now, the Holy Spirit lives in us as proof that we truly belong to Him, forever (Romans 8:15–16). That's who we are—God's children. No identity crisis can change that.

Because God commands Christians to live differently from the world, their lifestyle profile might read as follows: *Christians, you must be transformed, not conformed, and be holy because God is holy* (see Romans 12:2; 1 Peter 1:14–16). You must also resist falling in love with the world because you are called to live as children of light, allowing your light to shine before humanity (see 1 John 2:15–17; Ephesians 5:8–11; Matthew 5:16). Additionally, you must come out from worldly living and be separate so that you can walk in the Spirit rather than the flesh (see 2 Corinthians 6:17; Galatians 5:16–17). You must also strive to keep your conduct honorable so others may

be drawn to Christ (1 Peter 2:11–12). Therefore, do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, preserving godliness as the salt of the earth (see 2 Corinthians 6:14; Matthew 5:13).

## ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### Identity Confirmation (Romans 8:12–16)

KJV

**12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.**

**13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.**

**14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.**

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

**16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:**

**NIV**

**12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it.**

**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.**

**14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.**

**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.”**

**16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.**

Paul begins verse 12 with “so” or “therefore” and looks back to what he taught about the difference between life in the flesh and life in the Spirit. He also explains how believers should live now that they possess spiritual life. He says that because of this gift (the Holy Spirit), believers are obligated to avoid living self-serving, “me first” lifestyles characteristic of those who don’t know or follow Christ. Accepting Christ freed us from sin’s bondage, and we are now free to live for Christ and not according to the flesh. In verse 13, Paul explains that Christians can successfully resist and destroy sin in their lives by relying on the indwelling Holy Spirit’s power. Believers must study and submit to God’s Word to produce Spirit-controlled living. Verses 14-16 reveal how God confirms that believers belong to or are adopted into God’s family. First, Paul says that only God’s children are led by the Spirit if they have genuinely accepted Christ as Savior, even when experiencing periods of doubt about Him. Verse 15 is Paul’s second confirming fact regarding identity as God’s child—freedom from the spirit of slavery to sin and receiving the spirit of adoption—God’s assurance that believers are permanently His, have full rights and privileges to approach Him as our adored Father, and serve as additional evidence of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling. Paul’s concluding assurance confirming the believer’s identity as God’s child is the Holy Spirit’s witness and constant presence in our lives through ongoing sanctification and spiritual insight (verse 16). When challenged by self-doubt and others’ skepticism within the faith community or the world about our spiritual identity, believers can rely on the Holy Spirit’s abiding presence to confirm it and assure us that we are God’s children.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How should recognizing yourself as God's adopted child affect your lifestyle daily?

### Identity Affirmed (*Romans 8:17, 26-27*)

KJV

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

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26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

NIV

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.

.....

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

The affirmation of our adoption into God's family is the spiritual inheritance of all heaven's glories He promises as His heirs and Christ's co-heirs (verse 17). As gracious as the gift of salvation is alone because of God's profound love for His children, God through the Holy Spirit adopted us and granted us full access to every spiritual blessing (see Ephesians 1:3). However, there is a condition attached to this identity-affirming promise: expect to share in Christ's sufferings. The meaning, here, can refer to vicariously experiencing Christ's suffering because of our intimate association with Him through salvation or suffering inevitable persecution on His behalf as God's adopted children. When we experience suffering, Paul asserts that it affirms our identity and ultimately guarantees that He will share His glory. Verses 26-27 provide additional confirmation of our adoption into God's family. Because we are God's children, we are not left alone to fend for ourselves through life's uncertainties, suffering, and groaning.

The Holy Spirit, who assists us in our weaknesses, continues to help us, specifically when we don't know how to pray (verse 26). Paul explains that the Holy Spirit intercedes with unspoken "groanings"—thoughts and feelings we can't express to God by connecting us to Him

and providing the content of our prayers. Verse 27 explains how God receives these prayers, revealing the intimate connection between God and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit forms our unspoken groanings toward God into prayers that conform to God's will, who receives them directly from our hearts. It positions us to approach God freely in prayer without fear of praying the wrong way or of needing a specific formula or words to receive answers. We are affirmed as God's children, never alone, and assured that our inheritance in heaven is not reserved for us in vain.

## **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**How should our knowing that we are co-heirs with Christ influence the way we face life's challenges?**

### **A Closing Thought**

Trying to live the way Christ teaches, dealing with life's struggles, and figuring out how our personal choices fit with our faith can sometimes make us feel confused about who we are spiritually. But Paul's words to the Christians in Rome remind us that the Holy Spirit helps us know and trust that we truly belong to Christ. That truth gives us confidence and encouragement, and because we are adopted into God's family, the Holy Spirit's abiding presence empowers us to resist and overcome sin in our lives. When we yield to His leading, the Holy Spirit gives us access to God, guarantees our spiritual inheritance, intercedes for us, and assures us that we are intimately connected to Him as His adopted children.

### **Your Life**

As Christians, we may sometimes feel unsure about who we are, especially when life gets hard or when society pushes us to go against our beliefs. Paul reminds us that the Holy Spirit has brought us into God's family, and His presence in our lives confirms that we truly belong to God. Our job is to want His help, ask for it, and be willing to let Him change us while trusting what He says about our place with God.

### **Your World!**

The Holy Spirit empowers believers to overcome sin and live righteously, confirms our adoption into God's family as His heirs and co-heirs with Christ, helps us in our weaknesses, and intercedes for us according to God's will. This week, as you express gratitude to God for these blessings of justification, consider how you can assist someone struggling with their spiritual identity by sharing these extraordinary truths with them.

## **Closing Prayer**

Dear God, thank You for the Holy Spirit's transformative presence in our lives, confirming and affirming our identity as Your adopted children. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## Conclusion

## (Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Next week's lesson explores the answer to this question: To whom can we turn and whom can we trust to advocate for us when we sin, face trouble, or need help? Read 1 John 1:5-10; 2:1-6.

## Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, December 29	“The Man and the Woman Sin”	(Genesis 3:1-13)
TUESDAY, December 30	“God Pronounces Judgment”	(Genesis 3:14-24)
WEDNESDAY, December 31	“God’s Wrath Is Revealed”	(Romans 1:18-25)
THURSDAY, January 1	“Jesus Warns against Defilement”	(Mark 7:14-23)
FRIDAY, January 2	“A Prayer for God’s Mercy”	(Psalm 51:1-12)
SATURDAY, January 3	“God Demands Right Living”	(Micah 6:1-8)
SUNDAY, January 4	“Jesus Atones for Our Sins”	(1 John 1:5-10; 2:1-6)

## Note