

Sons and Inheritance

Romans 8:12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—

Romans 8:13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die (believer dies “operationally – cannot produce divine righteous deeds); but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Romans 8:14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons (adult sons) of God.

Led. From Biblehub.com¹

“Strong’s Greek 71 (ἄγω, with cognates such as ἀγαγεῖν, ἀχθῆναι, ἄγωμεν, etc.) threads through the New Testament as the vocabulary of movement under authority. Whether people, animals, or events are being escorted, compelled, or graciously guided, every occurrence draws attention to the One who ultimately directs history and discipleship.”

Guidance by the Holy Spirit

“The term shifts from physical to spiritual leadership in Pauline theology.

- “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Romans 8:14).
- “If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law” (Galatians 5:18). “

¹ <https://biblehub.com/greek/71.htm>

Sons and Inheritance
Romans 8:11-17

“The contrast appears in 1 Corinthians 12:2 where former idolaters “were being led astray,” illustrating the decisive change of master that conversion entails.”

Romans 8:15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”

Adoption. This is a reference to Greek and Roman traditions of adoption which differ from adoption in today’s world. More to come on this below.

Sons. This is a word meaning “adult son.” This is not a baby or young child.

Romans 8:16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

Children. The second word for child. It means child. There are other words that translate as new born or baby. This is more of a generic term. Not new born and not adult.

Romans 8:17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

Heirs. In the time of Paul and especially in the Old Testament, the term inheritance refers to “possession.”

When studying the Bible, one must be cognizant (i.e. aware) of words that have different meanings in different contexts. This understanding can lead to lists of categories that illustrate different doctrines.

Sons and Inheritance

Romans 8:11-17

Take for instance, the word “death.” There are seven different uses of the word death in the Bible. I mention this briefly since you should be well aware of these categories from previous studies. One type of death is found in our passage in Romans 8:13. This is just a short review.

1. **Spiritual death.** The unbeliever is spiritually dead. The unbeliever has no human spirit and hence cannot understand spiritual information.
2. **Second death.** The unbeliever that dies without believing in Jesus Christ as Savior, goes to the Lake of Fire forever. That is called the second death.
3. **Physical death.** The human body, at some point, ceases to function. There is no breathing. There is no heartbeat. Most important is that the human soul leaves the body.
4. **Positional death.** Romans chapter 6 describes the situation at the point of faith in Christ. The believer is placed logically on the cross with Jesus and “dies.” This leads to positional truth, a position in Christ.
5. **Operational/Temporal death.** When a believer operates on the sin nature instead of the Holy Spirit, that person no longer is operational in the spiritual realm. The person is in active hostility toward God.
6. **Dead Works.** This is the result of the believer out of fellowship depending upon the sin nature to produce human righteousness. The believer in fellowship produces the fruit of the Spirit. But the believer outside of the fellowship produces wood, hay and stubble that is burned at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
7. **Sexual Death.** This is the situation in which the ability to have children is not operational. Both the man and woman can have sexual death.

Sons and Inheritance
Romans 8:11-17

There are two lists of categories we will deal with in this portion of Romans: children/adult sons, and inheritance.

There are different words for son and child in the New Testament. These relate to the level of spiritual growth of the believer.

1. Infant (*brephos*). Peter uses a word for new born baby.

1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,

1 Peter 2:2 like newborn babies (βρέφη), long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

1 Peter 2:3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

2. Baby (*nipios*). We know from previous study that a new believer is a “baby” believer. Remember Paul’s criticism of the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants (νηπίοις) in Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able,

1 Corinthians 3:3 for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

Sons and Inheritance
Romans 8:11-17

Robby Dean says that most churches in the US are “nurseries” for baby believers. Often Bible teaching is watered down with emotion and loud music. How can new believers grow if there are no answers to spiritual questions faithfully provided? We begin to see that there are levels of growth associated with learning and applying Bible answers in faith. (Hebrews 4:1-2)

3. Child (*tekna*). Both Paul and John use another word for children.

Romans 8:6 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children (τέκνα) of God,

Romans 8:17 and if children, (τέκνα) heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

1 John 2:1 My little children (τέκνα), I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

4. Adult son (*huios*). There is yet another word, which is the word we want to focus on.

Romans 8:14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons (υἱός) of God.

5. Mature person (*teleios*). Then there is the mature adult.

Colossians 1:28 He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all

Sons and Inheritance
Romans 8:11-17

**wisdom, so that we may present everyone
fully mature (τέλειος) in Christ.**

All this does is to present the growth of the Christian as a journey from new born baby to fully mature Christian. These categories are important because they relate to spiritual growth. As Paul said, he had to deal with the Corinthians as baby believers because they had little understanding of their status and relationship to God. Peter exhorted the believers he addressed to be like infants in their desire for the Word (Bible Doctrine) with the purpose that they grow and mature. Paul in Colossians 1:28 says it is his purpose that everyone become fully mature. This is our goal. Maturity.

According to Robby Dean there are two categories or two aspects of spiritual inheritance. Every believer inherits at the point of salvation. It is not based upon merit. But there is an aspect of inheritance that does depend upon work. But this work is based only upon faith dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Before delving into the topic of inheritance, let us look at the concept of adoption. According to Robby Dean, there were two different systems of adoption that influenced Paul in his description of the believer. There was the Romans system of adoption. There was a Greek system of adoption.

R. B. Thieme Jr. gives a good description of Roman adoption².

“It refers not to the adoption of a baby, which is born to other parents, but to the Roman custom of adoption. In the Roman world when the child, the male heir became an adult, in the Republic this was 14, it varied after that, anywhere from 14-16 and in rare cases even 17, but at an age at least beginning at 14 the son of the family went through a ceremony called adoption, υιοθεσία.”

² Taken from notes on Thieme's Romans Tape 77 lesson 1

Sons and Inheritance Romans 8:11-17

“The son came in before the entire family as they were assembled and he wore the toga of childhood, and this was removed and he was given a new robe, this would be one of the most beautiful robes he would ever receive. If he came from an old patrician family, an old aristocratic family, the toga would be a very beautiful white robe with gold border, etc. If he was the son of a senator it would be similar. If it was a son of an army officer, a man who had distinguished himself in the military it would be white with a crimson type of border. The Roman army’s uniform’s color was predominately crimson. And if he were in some other field it would be some other color, but this would be one of the most beautiful robes or togas that he would ever have and in this ceremony the toga was presented by the father and there would be a ceremony and he would say "I hereby adopt thee as my son and heir and grant thereto to thee rights of citizenship, the privileges of military service, marriage, business, politics", whatever it was. And this is what actually happens, this is what is meant here when it says "but you have received the spirit of adoption."”

Robby Dean concerning the ancient Greek concept of adoption.

“When you look at adoption it's a metaphor, not everything related to either Greek or Roman adoption would apply, just certain features of Greek or Roman adoption would apply. In Greek adoption, the practice of adoption emphasized the family relationship. A man during his life or by a will after his death [isn't that interesting?] could adopt any male citizen into the privileges of his family. So a male could adopt someone at the time of his death. You'd never even know them actually. They may already be dead but according to the terms of the will you're adopted into his family which gives you all of the privileges that pertain to that particular family.³”

3 <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/romans-menuitem/message/2010-romans-086b/read>

Sons and Inheritance

Romans 8:11-17

“I pointed out that in Greek adoption the focus was on family relationship and emphasized the one who was adopted coming into the family and accepting all the legal obligations and religious duties of a genuine son in the family. So Paul used these aspects of Greek adoption when he's emphasizing the fellowship and family responsibilities of the believer.⁴”

Robby Dean provides two sets of passages that seem to be contradictory. One set says essentially that inheritance is received at the point of salvation based upon grace, no works. The other set says that we must suffer with Christ. In other words, there are works involved apart from the point of salvation.

Let us investigate the Biblical concept of inheritance. I am borrowing much from Robby Dean. I have reorganized and included information from Lexicons as well.

1. Meaning of the Greek word for inheritance. The basic meaning is “property.” Let me quote Robby Dean as an authority on this.

“ As part of adoption and being a member of the family, this leads to another important aspect of our spiritual life which is inheritance. If you are a child, then you are usually considered to be in a position where you can inherit property from your parents. In our understanding of inheritance someone has to die and then whatever they owned is passed on to the next generation. That is not the main idea in the Jewish Old Testament concept of inheritance. I've gone through lengthy studies of that and basically the core meaning of the word inheritance is possession. Someone can have an allotment of land in the promised land and it is their inheritance. They own it but no one died and left it to them. That is their possession.⁵”

4 <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/romans-menuitem/message/2010-romans-087b/read>

5 <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/romans-menuitem/message/2010-romans-087b/read>

Sons and Inheritance
Romans 8:11-17

One lexicon cites two Biblical passages among others as illustrations of inheritance as being property. The Acts passage is from Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin.

Acts 7:2 And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,

Acts 7:3 and said to him, 'LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.'

Acts 7:4 Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living.

Acts 7:5 But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and yet, even when he had no child, He promised that HE WOULD GIVE IT TO HIM AS A POSSESSION, AND TO HIS DESCENDANTS AFTER HIM.

...

Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.

An inheritance was property that was given and received. There is an illustration of this in the narrative of the prodigal son. The word

Sons and Inheritance
Romans 8:11-17

for inheritance is never said, but the concept is embedded in what the son said, 'Father, give me the share of the estate (property) that falls to me.' (Luke 15:12) He didn't want to wait to receive what was "his."

2. Salvation is not by works. It is the result of faith alone in Christ alone. This is an important point. If there is something that is given based upon works in the Christian life, like rewards, then it is not part of the salvation package.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

Ephesians 2:9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

...

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

Titus 3:6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

Titus 3:7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.

3. Rewards are based upon works. These are not part of the salvation package. God has a storehouse of rewards waiting for the believer. But, if the believer refuses to walk by faith, then rewards are "lost."

Sons and Inheritance
Romans 8:11-17

1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

1 Corinthians 9:25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

But remember that our spiritual “work” is based upon empowerment from God as Paul says:

1 Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

Herman taught about the Judgment Seat of Christ in the Colossians series lessons 64-70. Rewards are given at that judgment to believers.

4. Inheritance as a reward.

“Now remember. We’ve talked about this many, many times. There are two categories of inheritance for the Church Age believer. There’s that category of inheritance that refers to what we all have—heirs of God—that’s true for every single believer. Those are

Sons and Inheritance
Romans 8:11-17

possessions that are ours. By virtue of our position in Christ, we are given eternal life, we are united with Christ, we are going to be raised at the Rapture from the dead or we are going to be transformed at the Rapture and go to be with the Lord in the air. We are going to be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. For those who have been obedient and grown spiritually ...⁶”

Galatians 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

Galatians 5:19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,

Galatians 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,

Galatians 5:21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Galatians 5:23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

⁶ <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/1st-peter-menuitem/message/80-how-to-inherit-a-blessing/read>

Galatians 5:24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

...

1 Peter 3:8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;

1 Peter 3:9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

That you might inherit. Subjunctive mood, third class condition—maybe you will, maybe you won't.

“That’s the picture here, and Peter is making this very clear that this is talking about rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is not talking about what every believer has in common. I want to remind you of a passage in Colossians 3:23 that says, “And whatever you do [whatever you think, whatever you say, whatever you do, whatever you are involved in], do it heartily [do it fully], as to the Lord and not to men.” We are doing this to serve the Lord and to respond to our Lord, who paid for us, who bought us, and who gave us this great salvation. “Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the [the what?] reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” We ought to wake up every morning thinking, “Today I’m serving the Lord. I may be going off to work for this company or that company. I may be working for myself. I may be a father. I may be a mother. I may be a child. I may be a student. I may be a teacher. But I’m doing whatever it is I’m doing to serve the Lord.”

Sons and Inheritance
Romans 8:11-17

If I serve the Lord, then at the Judgment Seat of Christ I will receive the reward of the inheritance. That's not a gift; a reward is not a gift. Salvation is a gift, but rewards are earned through obedience. So this command to return blessing and good for that which is evil is related to serving the Lord in this life and being a visible testimony of His grace and His goodness and the reality of the hope that is within us.⁷”

7 <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/1st-peter-menuitem/message/80-how-to-inherit-a-blessing/read>

Sons and Inheritance
Romans 8:11-17

This leads us to Romans 8:16-17

Romans 8:16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

Romans 8:17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

“We can look at Romans 8:17, and put a comma after also and after Christ. That punctuation combines the terms, "heirs of God" and "fellow-heirs with Christ" as the same thing. However. If we move a comma so that we place it after God ..." If children, heirs also of God ..." Then "joint-heirs with Christ if we indeed suffer with Him." So that being an heir of God is related to being a child of God and that is part of the grace package received at the instant of salvation. But to be considered a joint-heir with Christ in which there is additional reward on the basis of suffering. That would be a second category.⁸”

8 <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/romans-menuitem/message/2010-romans-087b/read>