**Lesson 15**

**The Spirit Assuring**

In lesson 13 we examined Romans 8:13 and how the Holy Spirit **cleanses** us from sin by giving us the ability to **mortify** sin.

In lesson 14 we examined Romans 8:14 and how the Holy Spirit **leads** us.

In this lesson we will examine Romans 8:15. The purpose of this lesson is to narrowly examine the subject of how the Holy Spirit inspires the Christian with the sense and knowledge of his adoption into the divine family of God.

***Romans 8:13-15— 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 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!"***

While Romans 8:13 is a **warning** to those who continue to live ***according to the flesh***, Romans 8:14 is an **affirmation** that those who are ***led by the Spirit of God*** are truly ***sons of God***.

Now, in Romans 8:15, Paul both amplifies and confirms what he had said in verse 14.

* In v. 14 Paul states the reality of our relationship with God which our regeneration makes manifest—our obedient subjection to Him as His children.
* In v. 15 Paul brings before us further proof of our divine sonship—deliverance from a servile fear, the exercise of a filial (the relation of a child to a parent) confidence or assurance.

**A reminder of what we have been freed from**

In v. 15 the apostle Paul begins by reminding us what we have been saved from . . . ***for you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again.*** We have previously learned that as believers our focus is not to be on the fear of God’s wrath, but on the desire to be obedient to and be with our Savior.

* “When a soul has received life and light from the Spirit of God, so that he perceives the infinite enormity and filthiness of sin and the total depravity and corruption of every faculty of his soul and body, that spirit of legality which is in all men by nature, is at once stirred up and alarmed, so that the mind is possessed with secret doubts and suspicions of God’s mercy in Christ to save. Thereby the soul is brought into a state of legal bondage and fear.”

What is the purpose of the regenerated soul being “stirred up and alarmed”?

* “When a soul is first awakened by the Holy Spirit, it is subject to a variety of fears; yet it does not follow from thence that He works those fears or is the Author of them, rather are they to be ascribed unto our own unbelief.”
* “When the Spirit is pleased to convict of sin and gives the conscience to feel the guilt of it, **it is to show him his need of Christ, and not to drive him to despair.**”

**Adoption vs. Regeneration**

Having assured his readers that they ***have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again***, in Romans 8:15 Paul states the reality of our position before God . . . ***but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"***

Pink then makes a significant observation regarding this verse— “It is to be carefully noted that God’s elect are spoken of as “***children***” **prior to**the Holy Spirit’s being sent into their hearts.” This is clearly stated in a parallel passage . . . Galatians 4:6

***Galatians 4:6— Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"***

* We are not made children by the new birth. We were “***children of God***” before Christ died for us. As evidence of this truth, we examine John 11:49-52.

***John 11:49-52— 49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." 51 Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.***

* In John 11:49-50 we learn of the prophecy of Caiaphas regarding the need for the death of Jesus.
* In John 11:51-52 we are then told ***he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.***
* Those who are ***children of God*** are not, then, made children by what Christ did for them. **They were “*children*” before the Lord Jesus became incarnate**. Note Hebrews 2:14 . . .

***Hebrews 2:14— Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil***

* Thus it is a great mistake to confound adoption and regeneration: they are two distinct things.
* The latter being both the effect and evidence of the former.
* Our election and adoption as children was by an act of God’s will in eternity past. Our regeneration is by the work of His grace in time.

Had there been no adoption, there would be no regeneration. Yet, the former is not complete without the latter.

* By adoption the elect were put into the **relation**of children
* By regeneration they are given a **nature**suited to that relation.
* So high is the honor of being taken into the family of God, and so wondrous is the privilege of having God for our Father, that some extraordinary benefit is needed by us to assure our hearts of the same. This we have when we receive the Spirit of adoption.

Wondrous and blessed is the fact that God manifests His love to the members of His Church in precisely the same way that He evidenced His love unto its Head when He became incarnate, namely, by the transcendent gift of His Spirit.

* The Spirit came upon Jesus Christ as the proof of God’s love to Him and also as the visible demonstration of His Sonship. The Spirit of God descended like a dove and abode upon Him, and then the Father’s voice was heard saying, “***This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased***” (Luke 3:22; John 3:34-35).
* In fulfillment of Christ’s prayer in John 17:26, Jesus states, “***I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.***” The Spirit is given to His redeemed to signify the sameness of the Father’s love unto His Son and unto His sons. Thus, the inhabitation of the Spirit in the Christian is both the surest sign of God’s fatherly love and the proof of his adoption.

**Inclining hearts to love God**

“Because they had been eternally predestined unto the adoption of sons (Eph 1:4-5), because they were actually given to Christ under that character in the Everlasting Covenant (Joh 17:2; Heb. 2:13), at God’s appointed time the Holy Spirit is sent unto their hearts to give them a knowledge of the wondrous fact that they have a place in the very family of God and that God is their Father. This it is that inclines their hearts to love Him, delight in Him, and place all their dependence on Him. The great design of the gospel is to reveal the love of God to His people, and thereby recover their love to God, that they may love Him again Who first loved them.”

**Question:** When Pink states that “the great design of the gospel is to reveal the love of God to His people, and thereby recover their love to God,” what does it mean to “recover our love to God”?

**Reply:** “It is by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit that the elect are recovered from the flesh and the world unto God.

* By nature they love themselves and the world above God; but the Holy Spirit imparts to them a new nature and Himself indwells them, so that they now love God and live to Him.
* The effects of the Spirit’s entering as the Spirit of adoption are liberty, confidence, and holy delight.
* As they had “received” from the first Adam “the spirit of bondage,” a legalistic spirit that produced “fear,” their receiving the Spirit of adoption is all the more grateful . . . **liberty being the sweeter because of the former captivity.**
* The Law having done its work in the conscience, they can now appreciate the glad tidings of the gospel.”

**Observation:** Though we have been set apart from eternity past, by predestination and election, to be children of God, because we are born sons of Adam and have inherited Adam’s sin, we are born with a nature that is in bondage to sin and loves sin. So, when the Holy Spirit comes into us, there is much resistance to His work because the power of sin in our flesh is powerful.

**A filial spirit**

As the Spirit of adoption, the Holy Spirit bestows upon the quickened soul a filial spirit: He acts in unison with the Son and gives a sense of our relationship as sons. Emancipating from that bondage and fear which the application of the Law stirred up within us, He brings us into the joyous liberty that the reception of the gospel bestows in several ways.

* **First**, by a holy *reverence* for God our Father, as the natural child should honor or reverence his human parent.
* **Second**, by *confidence* in God our Father, as the natural child trusts in and relies upon his earthly parent.
* **Third**, by *love* for our Father, as the natural child has an affectionate regard for his parent.
* **Fourth**, by *subjection* to God our Father, as the natural child obeys his parent.

“The Spirit of adoption is the Spirit of God, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and Who is sent by Them to shed abroad the love of God in the heart, to give a real enjoyment of it, and to fill the soul with joy and peace in believing. He comes to testify of Christ.”

**Respective of care**

Pink addresses a significant issue regarding assurance: disobedience to the leading of the Spirit. “This filial spirit is subject to the state and place in which the Christian yet is. The Spirit, then, does not grant the believer assurance irrespective of his own carefulness and diligence. On earth, He indwells our hearts like a flickering flame; never to be extinguished, but not always bright, and needing to be guarded from rude blasts—or why bid us “***do not quench the Spirit***”?” In the New Testament we are commanded, ***do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God (Eph. 4:30)*** and ***do not quench the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19)***.

**Question:** What does it mean to ***grieve*** (*lupeō*—#3076) the Spirit? How is this done?

**Reply:** The Greek word for ***grieve*** means “to make sorrowful or cause grief.” It is a word that describes the reaction of bitter disappointment or sorrow that results from disobedience, as a parent would be sorrowful over a terrible sin or crime committed by a child that brings great reproach upon the parent and great harm to the child. Understand, though, that since God ordains all things, this concept of ***grieving the Holy Spirit*** is an anthropopathic statement to give us an idea of the Spirit’s reaction to our disobedience.

“The Christian is not always in the enjoyment of a child-like confidence. And why? because he is often guilty of “grieving” the Spirit, and then He withholds much of His comfort. Hereby we may ascertain our communion with God and when it is interrupted, when He be pleased or displeased with us.”

**Question:** What does it mean to ***quench*** (*sbennumi*—#4570) the Spirit? Are we able to ***quench*** the Holy Spirit in us?

**Reply:** The term ***quench*** means “to extinguish, suppress or stifle.” While we have the blessed promise that God will never leave us nor forsake us, it is possible to live in such a way that the flame of the Spirit is so barely lit as to be imperceptible in us. **In other words**, we may be living in such a way that the presence of the Holy Spirit may only be the barest flicker of light until we repent of our sins and return to Him.

**Question:** Regarding the assurance of the Spirit, Pink warns that “empty professors are fatally deluded by a ***false* *confidence***, a complacent taking for granted that they are real Christians when they have never been born again.” What is it that can cause an “empty professor” to have such false confidence?

**Reply:** The empty professor is fatally deluded because everything that he has learned and everything that he does is by his own power and not by the power of the Holy Spirit. And because an empty professor has never had the Holy Spirit, he doesn’t have the ability to recognize the absence of the Spirit. Despite his or her own “feelings” of well-being and self-satisfaction for works they do, they don’t have the capacity to know that the Spirit doesn’t reside in them. They are self-deceived.

**Question:** On the other hand, “many true possessors are plagued by a *false diffidence* [*lack of confidence in oneself, marked by a hesitancy to assert oneself*], a doubting whether they be Christians at all.” What is it that causes true believers to lack assurance and to doubt their salvation?

**Reply:** “In all genuine Christians, there is a co-mingling of real confidence and false diffidence, because as long as they remain on this earth there is in them the root of faith and the root of doubt. Hence their prayer is “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). In some Christians *faith* prevails more than it does in others; in some *unbelief* is more active than in others. Therefore some have a stronger and steadier assurance than others. The presence of the indwelling Spirit is largely evidenced by our frequent recourse to the Father in prayer—often with sighs, sobs, and groans. The consciousness of the Spirit of adoption within us is largely regulated by the extent to which we yield ourselves unto His government.”