

TEXT: Romans 8:14-17

THEME: We Are Children of the Triune God

1. Who's Your Dad?
2. How Can You Be Sure?

Dear Fellow Children of the Triune God,

WHO'S YOUR DAD?

Sometimes little boys brag about their fathers, saying, "My dad can beat up your dad"—that sort of thing. Such bragging can result in some uncomfortable situations once in a while, mostly because some dads are little more than just big boys and feel they must defend their honor by living up to their son's boast. We Christians have a Father who is not just a wee bit stronger than other people's fathers; we have a Father who is almighty! No one is stronger than he is. The mightiest one of all guards and protects us. No one can pluck us out of his hand. We can pray to him, and he'll give us whatever we ask for, as long as it is good for us.

Paul says in our text: **By him we cry, "Abba, Father."** *Abba* is the Aramaic word for "father." It was the word used by children in Jesus' day to express closeness and love for their father. It was much like the word *Dada* that toddlers use today, *Daddy* used by those slightly older, or *Dad* we use when we mature. There is love in that word *Abba*, along with trust, confidence, and acceptance.

Paul points out that we can call God *Abba* or Dad because the Holy Spirit enables us to address him in that fashion. God truly is our dad. Because of the faith the Spirit gives us, we know that God is our loving Father and we are his loving children.

Many believe there's a God, but they do not dare to call him Father. To those without faith in Jesus, God is a stern lawgiver who makes demands no one can satisfy. He sits on his judge's seat, threatening to punish them if they don't measure up to his standard of perfection. He stands in their way, forbidding them to do the things they want to do. The unbeliever judges God to be selfish, just as he or she is. The unbeliever reasons that surely God must be interested only in himself.

But that's not at all what God is like. Just as a good earthly father loves his children, feeds them, clothes them, and cares for them, so our heavenly Father has done all of that for us and so much more. He also saved us through the life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ.

While our earthly fathers hoped that someday we would leave home and be on our own, our heavenly Father never tires of us. The love he has for us is unconditional love. It will never grow cold or fade away. At this moment, he is preparing a home for us in heaven so that he can have fellowship with us and take care of us for all eternity.

Knowing all this, is there anyone else you would rather have as your dad?

Yet HOW CAN YOU BE SURE? How can you be sure that God the Father really is your Father? Did you ever wonder whether or not you really were the child of your parents? I remember there was a time when I was little when I was pretty convinced I was adopted.

It was probably a time when my parents were not giving me something that I wanted. I should have just looked at my dad and then in the mirror and I would have known I was not adopted. As we get older, we may wonder if something sinister may have happened. Maybe your identification bracelet was switched with that of another infant in the hospital. Maybe some nurse, eager to do mischief, decided to play a practical joke on people who would never know the difference. Consequently, here you are trapped in one kind of life when you may have had an entirely different and much better life...it's *a/ways* a much better life we imagine.

With today's technology, it wouldn't be hard to determine whether or not you're in the right family. With the help of a genes or DNA study, you might quickly swap your ride in a Ford for a cruise in a Cadillac.

Much more common than doubts about your earthly lineage may be nagging uncertainties about your spiritual identity. Your failure to live as God's child may lead you to wonder whether or not you really are God's child. Serious health problems or other troubles may cause you to doubt if God claims you as his own.

How can you know for sure, with all your bumbling and stumbling, that you haven't fallen away? What assurance do you have that you are still a child of God?

Paul answers that question in our text: **The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.** Consider this: do you *want* to be God's child? Do you *want* God to claim you and your Savior to save you? If your answer is yes, you are giving evidence of your faith. The Holy Spirit lives within you. The faith he has given you testifies that you want to remain in God's family and do not want to deny him. If you weren't a child of God, you wouldn't even care.

The Spirit gives other testimony that you are God's child. Time and time again he tells you in Scripture that God loves you and forgives you in Christ. He says, "**God so loved the world [you included!] that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life**" (John 3:16). The Holy Spirit also says, "**Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God [is God's child]**" (1 John 5:1). Inspired by the Holy Spirit, John wrote the reassuring words, "**Dear friends, now we are children of God**" (1 John 3:2).

Though on occasion you may abandon God, the Spirit assures you that God will never abandon you. Though you may sometimes feel unlovable, he says that God will always love you. You can be sure that you are God's child. The Spirit says that you are. Listen to his testimony and believe!

The Father created and loved you. The Son loved you and redeemed you. The Holy Spirit loved you and gave you saving faith. That means WE ARE CHILDREN OF THE TRIUNE GOD. Amen.