



# ROMANS Part 67

Chapter 8:11-17

## No more fear.

**N**ow if the spirit of Him Who rouses Jesus from among the dead is making its home in you, He Who rouses Christ Jesus from among the dead will also be vivifying your mortal bodies because of His spirit making its home in you. 12 Consequently, then, brethren, debtors are we, not to the flesh, to be living in accord with flesh, 13 for if you are living in accord with flesh, you are about to be dying. Yet if, in spirit, you are putting the practices of the body to death, you will be living. 14 For whoever are being led by God's spirit, these are sons of God.

15 For you did not get slavery's spirit to fear again, but you got the spirit of sonship, in which we are crying, "Abba, Father!" 16 The spirit itself is testifying

together with our spirit that we are children of God.

17 Yet if children, enjoyers also of an allotment, enjoyers, indeed, of an allotment from God, yet joint enjoyers of Christ's allotment, if so be that we are suffering together, that we should be glorified together also.

**A**re you being led by God's spirit? Then you are His. How do you know that you are led by God's spirit? Because you understand truth and reject lies. This is the spirit of wisdom and revelation. I know that you used to think you understood truth and rejected lies, but back then you reversed the lies and the truth. You called lies truth, and vice-versa. Then the light dawned and now you appreciate the depth of the deception you once lived in. People ask me, "How can I be sure that I'm currently correct and that I was wrong before?" My simple answer is: *Which of your viewpoints takes glory away from humanity and gives it to God? Which viewpoint makes God more and you less?*

*Which viewpoint makes/made you afraid?*

**For you did not get slavery's spirit to fear again, but you got the spirit of sonship, in which we are crying, "Abba, Father!" (Romans 8:15).**

Your days of religion brought fear. Fear is slavery. To fear god is to suffer perpetual anxiety. Many religionists profess confidence in God and in their own salvation, but if the many trips to the altar or to the riverbanks for baptism speak of anything, it is a complete lack of assuredness in this department. The god of the altar call expects you to mind details: pray right, walk right, talk right. He has said that he won't torment those who do everything right, but what if he changes his mind? He is the capricious sort.

Mark Twain has written of how, as a child, thunderstorms terrified him—especially those that rolled into Hannibal, Missouri at night. Young Sam Clemens





Mark Twain's grave;  
Elmira, NY, 2004

quaked beneath his bed sheets at what he perceived to be God's anger—probably aimed at him. The boy knew nothing of the conciliation of the world to God, through Christ. He only knew the “turn and burn” threats of his breeding, and he considered it far too easy to run afoul of these. According to his religious instructors, there were hundreds of ways to offend this god whose “bad side” was wider than the Mississippi at Cape Girardeau. The next lightning bolt could be for poor Sam; the thunder surely spoke of this god's irritation. Twain eventually shrugged off this fear by rejecting the god of his forebears. Good for him. To my knowledge, he never did find truth. He may have suspected it, but never found it. I wish he could have read, *How to Quit Church Without Quitting God*. I think he would have liked it. I would have traded him one of those for an early copy of *Huckleberry Finn*—or at least a good cigar.

#### A CALM, SATISFIED DEITY

The nations to whom Paul wrote worshiped many false and terrifying gods. These gods were uber-powerful, but sulky. Fearing these gods was a full-time job and a

24-hour-a-day phobia. The chains of such slavery didn't come off a forge but were no less debilitating. Worry has killed more people than war. This is why Paul said to the nations, “You did not get slavery's spirit to fear *again*.” The nations had already known fear; their false gods inspired it. There were hundreds of ways to offend whatever celestial tyrant these nations took up with. So who was this new God and what could possibly have inspired His agreeable mood? Paul spends the first eight chapters of Romans assuring the nations that the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is a calm, satisfied Deity. Nothing can ruffle Him. This was weird, because nothing could shock the ex-heathens more than hearing about a God bent on peace instead of war. This new Deity wanted to calm them, not kill them; how strange. Paul made sure they knew that such divine stability could only be founded upon the perfect performance of God's own Son, Jesus Christ.

#### THE WORST GOD OF THE BUNCH

What could be more contrastive to the Romans' previous experience than the shocking phrase, “You got the spirit of sonship, in which we are crying, ‘Abba, Father!’”? No other god in the pantheon—from beginning to end, near or far—advertised even the possibility of such a paternal bond. These gods were too mean and power-hungry to invite their devotees onto their laps. They no doubt imagined that such familiarity would eventually breed contempt—not to mention a coup. Thus, the small “g” gods used fear to keep their disciples at a distance and in dread. They flexed their muscles, demanded sacrifices, hurled threats, hid themselves behind spooky curtains, and worked holidays. They never seemed satisfied, and they weren't.

The Christian god is no different. He's another false deity except he's worse because he's *so* false that he takes the name of the true God. Talk about cheating. No other false god is so audacious. Whoever this god is, I can't stand him. He has a name, and one day we will know it. One day he will be unmasked and those who spent the whole of their lives worshiping him will weep and gnash their teeth at the grand mistake. Because really, what mistake could be grander?

#### HENDRIX GOD

The one true God is unique in the annals of celestial and human history; why shouldn't He be—He created both realms. He relies neither on intimidation nor imitation. He

is Jimi Hendrix. (This is a metaphor.) This Seattle-born electric guitar virtuoso never copied anyone; other guitarists copied him. Musicians heard him play and gave up. Hendrix was a one-off; a prodigy. At the coming of Jimi, all molds before him went by the wayside. In the face of the true God, we're to behave likewise. We're to quit trying to be small "g" gods and let Him do His virtuoso



thing. The true God inspires this right kind of awe. The false gods don't know any better. They demand imitators, both human and divine. They know they are inimitable, but this just proves how mean they are. They make their devotees jump through flaming hoops of futility. Everyone dumb enough to obey these demands eventually dies of fear—or at least joins a church.

For even if so be that there are those being termed gods, whether in heaven or on earth, even as there are many gods and many lords, nevertheless for us there is one God, the Father, out of Whom all is, and we for Him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom all is, and we through Him. —1 Corinthians 8:5-6

#### LAY YOUR WEARY HEAD TO REST

One of the most touching scenes in the Greek Scriptures is when the disciple John rests his head on Jesus' bosom at the last supper. Jesus had told Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). If Jesus wants His chest rested upon, then God wants His chest rested upon. Jesus did exactly what God wanted and acted the way God truly was. What other god has thought of getting his bosom rested upon? (It's a rhetorical question.) All other gods want power and fear. They may crush you with their bosom, but they sure don't want it rested upon. They

want power *based* on fear. Not so the true God. He wants a relationship. This is how secure He is. And not just any relationship, but a familial tie such as that enjoyed by fathers and sons. Talk about a secure Being—my God.

"Abba" is a nice little Aramaic word used by children of their gentle daddies. It is the equivalent of our "Papa," or "Daddy." No false god would ever tolerate such a title; it would be way too familiar. It's not even a title, really—it's a term of endearment. The false gods refuse to fraternize. They want us all quaking, crying, and jumping out windows like the Cowardly Lion of Oz. This is how we know that ours is the true God: He doesn't scare us. No cookie-cutter duplicate from the god factory, this One, otherwise we'd be scared to death. When we cry, He wants us to cry out, "Daddy!"

#### WHO'S YOUR DADDY?

On some days, this "Abba" thing is too intimate for me. I can't work it up. It's not that I don't share intimacies with God, it's just that I can't always unburden myself of the hardness of life. I can easily call him "God" at such times, but not so easily "Papa," even less so, "Daddy" or "Dad." I must admit that when I hear Him called "Dad," or "Daddy" in everyday discussion, it rubs me the wrong way. To me, He's too almighty for this title in the midst of common discourse. I'm speaking now of my average day, when I'm whistling along in an average state of mere unhappiness. I'm not saying I'm correct in this. I have my own brand of intimacy that

**"It's hard for me to call Him  
"Daddy" in the midst of  
common discourse."**

has me venting everything to Him, but again, as "God." During these times, I refer to Him as God because I feel His subjection. ("God" means "Subjector.") This is my favorite title for Him. I don't really mind His subjection; it's better than anything the world offers. I can only call him "Daddy" when I am nearly completely broken. I have to get "down there" to do it. I'm glad it's there when I need it, but I can't do it when I'm "in myself," sorry. I've pretty much got to be destroyed to cry out the Abba title.

I think there may be something to Paul saying, "... in which we are *crying* 'Abba, Father.'" I take this crying literally. I think that a person ought to be cry-

ing before they can properly exercise this endearment. In my opinion, it's too familiar for anything but tears. I may be wrong. I may be missing something. This is my instinct talking, perhaps even my personal preference.

No one can even cry "Abba" until they have come up through the previous chapters of Romans. One has to have come up through the justification of chapters three and four and the conciliation of chapters five through



## “The false gods are all on ego trips.”

eight before one can call the Almighty God—even while broken in bed—“Abba.” This is why Paul waits until the end of chapter 8 to unveil it. So here are two more things that no false, wannabe god ever dreamed of: justification and conciliation. What false god wants his devotees thinking of themselves as right and beyond sight of condemnation? That would be the consummation of the false god ego trip, and they're *all* on ego trips, especially the monster that I call the Christian god.

The true God is different. He says, “I'll make it so that my children can't sin their way out of My favor, and then I'll make it so that they become My best friends.” Only when we realize that we're justified and conciliated can we “take the chance” of jumping into this God's lap and rubbing cheeks with Him. Only then can we cry out, “Papa!”

BON JOHN

Even though it's a Circumcision letter, John 1:12-13 speaks well to this topic of sonship—

Yet whoever obtained Him, to them He gives the right to become children of God, to those who are

believing in His name, who were begotten, not of bloods, neither of the will of the flesh, neither of the will of a man, but of God.

I like the word “obtained” here, as it agrees with Paul's use of the same word in 1 Corinthians 4:7—

Now what have you which you did not obtain? Now if you obtained it also, why are you boasting as though not obtaining?

A common denominator of the Circumcision and Uncircumcision gospels is the knowledge that the gift of belief must come from without. We do not choose to be God's sons but, rather, He chooses us. What makes a true son? A true son is someone who looks up at his Father and says, “I believe you.”

I loved it when I was little and my dad was big. Look at this photo of my family in 1965. Look how tall my dad stands. Look how he towers over me. He was such a good father to me; he protected me. I could jump onto his lap at any time and say, “I believe you, Dad. I trust you. I love you.” I guess it is quite unusual for God to be believed and trusted. We see how little of it goes on even in the camps of those professing His name. The campers here flat-out disbelieve Him, preferring the traditions of humans (Mark 7:8). These traditions come to humans via the false god that I most especially hate and who I refuse to mention again. Belief in God—true belief in God—is so rare that those believing in His name “are begotten, not of bloods, neither of the will of the flesh, neither of the will of a man, but of God.” God must beget the very belief it takes to believe Him. He doesn't mind doing it; He knows it's the only way such a thing can happen. He will one day give this belief to all, but for now He avoids crowds. He likes intimate fellowship. He likes only a few of us jumping on His lap now. It suits Him for now, so let's let it suit us.



**“The spirit itself is testifying together with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:16).**

Paul returns full circle here at the end of verse 16 to help us know that we know that we know that we are children of God. The slavery to fear in Christianity comes

from not knowing for certain whether one is really chosen, or whether God truly loves one unconditionally. There is always doubt. Doubt comes from lack of spirit. Christians barely have enough spirit to stand on their two feet and embrace the traditions of humans, let alone to believe God. These primitive apprehensions require a little spirit, but not much. Even Hitler had this much spirit. It takes much more spirit (*much* more) to profess God as one's Father and, even more, to believe that He is the Fatherly type and the eventual Justifier of all. No "Fatherly type" could ever torment a single being forever. He may not be the Father of all yet, but He is our Father now and He is the Fatherly *type*. He is still everyone's God.

### "OUR SPIRIT"

**"The spirit itself is testifying together with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16).**

Why the difference here between our spirit and God's spirit? The phrase "our spirit" is a relative phrase. All spirit, absolutely, comes from God; God is the source of all spirit. This spirit is only called "our spirit" to differentiate it from (or relate it to) the spirits of others. No one has ever been able to manufacture spirit. Or livers produce bile and our endocrine systems produce various hormones, but there is no gland inside us that produces spirit. No laboratory has managed it. All spirit is a gift. I have told you that every single human being ever created has the spirit of God in measure, for it takes the spirit of God to merely live. Adolph Hitler had the spirit of God, but only enough to stand on his two Nazi feet. It is the measure of spirit that determines the difference between an unbeliever and a believer. "Our spirit" is that basic spirit of life given us at birth. Again, God differentiates it from the spirit inside other people by calling it "our spirit."

### JUST MORE OF IT

"The spirit itself is testifying together with our spirit," is a figure of speech in which Paul personifies the spirit of God. This is the extra measure of spirit invading us from above, causing us to believe the testimony of God, through Paul. The basic spirit that we already have, along with this extra dose of spirit arriving later, "testify together." It is almost as though Paul were saying, "The spirit testifies together with the spirit that we are children of God." What knows spirit better than spirit? There is the basic spirit-dose that makes us alive, and then there is the greater application that kick-starts and deepens our revelation of God. Paul makes these two comings of spirit a double witness. A parallel passage

would be Psalm 42:7— "Deep calls to deep."

Does deep call to itself? Not really, but it does call to other deep things. Twins separated at birth share many traits, though the realization awaits their eventual reunion. Picture God injecting the basic spirit-dose into your mother's uterus at conception, then garden-hosing it down your throat later (as He did with Saul on the road to Damascus), making you grasp the evangel of the grace of God, through Paul. It's all spirit. The spirit that God *sends* exclaims to the spirit He long-ago *sent*, "I know you!" Of course. It's the same spirit, just more of it.



By this comes the realization that He Who has begun a good work in you will complete it (Philippians 1:6). The good work begun in you was an ushering of your embryo into the world. He will complete this work with more and more doses of the power that animates all life (spirit), culminating in the ultimate application that will one day make you immortal. Now look around. Every single human being houses a flicker of divine animation. Only thus could they stand and breathe. God has therefore also begun a good work in them. For you, He is completing this work now. For them, the completion comes later. But it certainly does come.

God never fails to finish His grand undertakings. It's kind of a habit He has developed. —MZ