

Some aspects of the love of God the Father

by Jan Willem Bakker, 11-3-07

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Introduction

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I. Introduction

The spirit of sonship

Our adoption by God as His sons through Christ is central and fundamental to our identity as Christians. This adoption applies to both men and women (Rom. 8; Gal. 3:28,29). We belong now to God's family and are supposed to enjoy and carry all the rights, duties and dignity as sons of God. This sonship implies an intimate relationship with God and includes the concept of an inheritance. The most important part of our inheritance is eternal. After Christ's return our bodies will be glorified like the body of Christ; we will see God from face to face in all eternity, and we will rule with Christ over the new earth. During our lives we are entitled to enjoy God's guidance, protection and care, and answered prayer when we pray according to His will. Furthermore, as sons of God it is our assignment to collaborate with Him in achieving breakthrough in His kingdom on

earth, and in making nations and individuals of nations into disciples.

The Holy Spirit makes it possible to experience this sonship in our daily lives, and to carry out our tasks as sons effectively. That is why He is called the pledge or down payment of our inheritance (Eph 1:14). The Holy Spirit helps us, amongst other things, to really feel, think and act as sons of God.

In this article I will elaborate on various important aspects of God's Fatherhood and our sonship. To begin with, I will discuss how important it is for this principle of sonship to land in our hearts. Subsequently, I will discuss various aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit as the pledge of our inheritance. Finally, I will focus on important factors that may inhibit us in the understanding of our identity and in our walk as sons of God.

II. God the Father as the source of our identity

God the Father and human fatherhood

The apostle Paul articulates the role of God the Father in all of creation very powerfully in Ephesians 3:14,15. He states that every creature derives its name from the Father. In the Bible giving names implies the shaping and affirmation of identity. Everything in creation derives who or what he or it is from God the Father. A duck is a duck because the Father meant it that way, an elephant is an elephant for the very same reason, etc. The whole creation and individual creatures are good the way God has designed and created them, even though the devil and mankind have brought incisive damage. This principle applies to man as well. We derive our identity as men and women from God the Father. He is the source of who we are, and of our understanding of this identity.

In God's order of creation the importance of a father in a family reflects this role of God the Father in creation as a whole. In a functional family the children ultimately derive their identities from the father. Of course the mother has an important role as well. But a child's understanding of who he or she is, as well as its acceptance, primarily depends on the affirmation of the father. A child will develop identity problems when it senses that the father does not accept him or her the way he or she is. This principle holds true for both boys and girls. Not only the identity of boys but also of girls ultimately depends on the affirmation from the father. Self-evidently girls need female role models in order to know how to develop and behave as women.

Many personal and social problems are caused or reinforced by lack of fatherly affirmation. This lack of affirmation results from the absence of fathers or from fathers who do not function properly as such. It is also possible that the father is by no means absent but imposes expectations on his children that do not match their talents and temperament. He may have expectations that are too high or misguided, or he may challenge and stimulate his children's development too little. Rebellion, criminal behavior, hunger for power, insecurity, sexual immorality, female dominance, spiritual or sexual confusions, and excessive ambition may result from fatherlessness or lack of fatherly affirmation. Through His Fatherly love God can of course always provide care, restoration, healing and necessary affirmation which could take the place of absent or dysfunctional fathers.

God the Father is the source of our Christian identity

Knowing God as Father is even more important for our identity as Christians. If we do not know God as our Father we cannot know who we are as sons either. The inadequate knowledge of God as

Father often results from a wrong perception of fatherhood due to bad experiences with human fathers. It may also be caused by a religious spirit from our social background which has pictured God as a cold hearted, strict, demanding and judgmental person. Many Christians know in their head that God is a Father, but this knowledge is mere theology. They do not know Him personally as Father, whereas for some Christians the idea of God the Father has no meaning at all. In Romans 8:15 the word Paul uses for Father, Abba, is very intimate. God is a daddy, truly a loving and affirming Father. Only when we know God in such an intimate way can we truly walk in God's blessings for our lives. For that reason the devil diligently tries to keep us from a real understanding of God as a loving Father, by feeding our minds with distorted images of His Fatherhood. In the last sections of this article we will deal with the blockages the enemy uses to keep us from enjoying our this inheritance of God's Fatherhood.

We are not only God's children. God has always wanted us as His children (Ephesians 1: 4 en 5). He has chosen us to be His children already before the foundation of the world. God has always desired us long before we were born. We all know that an unwanted child becomes insecure which may lead to other problems. But in our case the Lord has always wanted us, already before any creation existed. This is what the terms election and elected mean that Paul talks about in Romans 8. When Paul speaks about the concept of election he is not articulating mental doctrine. In Romans 8 the heart of God the Father is talking through Paul. From his heart the Father is saying to us that He has already wanted us as children even before the world was founded. These biblical passages about election are an extremely powerful and deep affirmation of our identity as children of God. When this deep and powerful affirmation from the heart of God really lands in our own hearts, any insecurity about the love of the Father for us will surely vanish once and for all.

Affirmation of the spirit of sonship precedes service

The understanding of being truly wanted and continuous affirmation has a positive influence on the behavior and personality development of a child. Likewise the understanding that we are God's elected children will also have a strong impact on our behavior and even our deepest emotions. This deep understanding is of vital importance for our service to the Lord and the body of Christ as well. Before we jump into all sorts of Christian ministry and service we need to develop a profound understanding of this sonship of God first. Without such understanding we will not experience God as our Father, but as our director or even slave driver. This is an extremely important principle which is illustrated powerfully by Jesus' life and ministry. God the Father affirmed Him very powerfully as His beloved son at the beginning of His ministry, when He was baptized by Johan the Baptist (Matthew 3:13-17). During His ministry He walked in the spirit of His sonship continuously. Therefore He only did what He saw the Father doing (John. 5:19,20), and did not take burdens on Himself that the Father had not given Him.

God has the same design for our lives as He had for Christ's. He wants to affirm us powerfully in our hearts as His beloved children first. Based on this affirmation the Holy Spirit will guide us concretely in the spirit of sonship day by day (Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:6). Consequently we will learn to discern what the Lord does and does not require from us. As a result we will bear much fruit (John. 15: 5), and at the same time will experience that God's yoke is easy and His burden light (Matthew. 11:30). Unfortunately we often miss this divine design for our lives, even in the midst of diligent service and ministry to God. In such cases we may receive power from the Holy Ghost, but nevertheless still do not walk fully in the spirit of sonship.

III. Aspects of the spirit of sonship

Anointing, gifts and fruit of the Spirit

I already mentioned that Paul calls the Holy Spirit the down payment of our inheritance which we will fully receive after Christ's return (Eph. 1:13,14). This down payment has three major aspects. Firstly, there is the aspect of anointing, power and gifts. The Holy Spirit enables us to accomplish supernatural tasks. These include, amongst other things, evangelism with supernatural persuasion and confidence, physical and emotional healing, deliverance, other miracles, break through prayer, supernatural knowledge and wisdom. The bible teaches that God the Father will always give us the Holy Spirit when we ask from Him intensively (Matthew 7:7-11; Luke 11:5-13). He will always answer such prayer because the anointing and gifts of the Holy Spirit are our inheritance as His children. On the other the Holy Spirit Himself determines to whom of His children He will give a particular gift to a greater extent (1 Cor. 12:4-11). This implies that we need one another in the body of Christ in order to function in the entire scope of the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Kor. 12:12-31).

A second aspect is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. God loves us the way we are, but He intends to transform us radically nonetheless. God want His children to reflect His character in both their external conduct and their inner attitudes. As his heirs we are His representatives on earth. Therefore He expects us to represent Him in our behavior and attitudes as well. For this purpose He intends to transform those attitudes and behavioral patterns that are unworthy for a son of God. In the letter to Galatians Paul calls the outcome of this transformation process the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23). It is important to emphasize that the fruit of the Spirit does not merely include new patterns of external conduct. The Holy Spirit changes us also from within. He reforms the motivations of our heart and the way we think and feel about ourselves, the world and one another. As a result we do not only behave in a worthier manner, but also experience that the grip of pride or sense of inferiority on us begins to weaken; not only do we refrain from stealing, but we experience that the pull of greed or anxiety in our souls gradually weaken; etc. God's values, norms, attitudes and character traits become increasingly part and parcel of our own personality. This is what the bible means by the phrase 'I will put My law within them (the believers), and on their heart I will write it' (Jer. 31:33; Hebr. 10:15-17).

Walking in the Spirit

The work of the Holy Spirit as down payment of our inheritance has a third and final aspect. This aspect concerns walking in, or according to, or being led by, the Spirit. Romans 8:14 says that those who are continuously lead by the Spirit are sons of God. This implies that we do not function as sons of God yet until this third aspect of the work in the Holy Spirit is getting shape in us. In Romans 7 and 8 Paul argues that walking in, or according to, the Spirit is the opposite of living according to the law in our own strength. Life according to the law in our own strength merely result in one defeat after the other. Such life continually confronts us with our own sinful nature that cannot and will not cooperate in our attempts to obey God. This life according to the law is like rowing against the powerful currents of our old self. The harder we try to make progress the more we experience the opposition of the currents, and the more frustrated and exhausted we become.

Walking in the Spirit implies that we follow a living guide. When we are attentive to the Holy Spirit who lives within us, He will continually give us clues about what to do and what not, which feelings are worthy and which ones are not, etc. He will inspire us further with a healthy fear of the Lord which encourages us to behave in a worthy manner and challenges us not to give in to the sinful patterns that are present in our nature. He will also give us strength for such worthy

behavior, affirms us in the progress that we are making, and impresses gentle but firm correction in our hearts when we fall back into old patterns. Moreover, He gives us practical wisdom about how to behave in various situations. And He shows us with both love and determination which issues in our lives are still in need of further transformation and how this needs to be accomplished. The more we walk in the Spirit the more the will of the Father is formed in our life and personality. The Holy Spirit also comforts us – after all He is the Comforter -, arouses love and passion for Jesus within us, prays according to God’s will in and through us (Rom. 8:27), and reminds us of and affirms us in the love of the Father and our sense of identity as sons of God. However, it requires a living and intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit for this to become real in the experience of our daily lives. Walking in or according to the Spirit therefore implies walking with the Holy Spirit as well.

Walking in the Spirit is also important with regards to the anointing and gifts of the Spirit. When we walk in the Spirit we will use the anointing and gifts of the Holy Spirit responsibly and effectively. Only God will get the glory, not us. When we walk in the Spirit we will only do the works the Father shows us through the Holy Spirit, the spirit of sonship, as Jesus has modelled to us. (John 5:19). Walking in the Spirit is also crucial for the growth of the fruit of the Spirit. The closer and more intensively we walk in and with the Spirit, the more our character will reflect the life of Christ. Any emphasis on the fruit of the Spirit will inevitably deteriorate into legalism or external piety if there is no intimate walk with the Holy Spirit who empowers and changes us (2 Cor. 3:6,18).

Walking in the Spirit means a life in total dependence on and obedience of the Father. The need for such dependence and obedience not merely applies to the seasons in which we are not yet spiritually mature. Mature Christians need to be totally dependent and obedient as well, as Jesus’ life has illustrated. Contrary to the perception in modern western society growth in spiritual maturity does not include increasing independence from our father, nor making our own decisions apart from him. Growth in spiritual maturity means that we become more and more like Jesus. Growth implies that we change more and more into God’s likeness and become increasingly focused on the will of the father, and subject ourselves to Him even more than before. Growth in spiritual maturity further means that God can trust us with increasing responsibility and greater challenges.

Maturity and purification

God the Father is very eager to change us into Christ’s likeness as soon and profoundly as possible. He wants mature children who reflect the dignity of genuine Royal children. Such mature Christians show the world who He is. He can trust them His blessings and kingdom mysteries with confidence. Apart from that, such mature children will not easily misuse His anointing. These worthy and mature believers form God’s key for the break through of His kingdom on earth. However, God does not passively sit and wait until our spiritual childhood may finally come to an end. The Holy Spirit, the spirit of sonship, actively forms and uses the circumstances in our lives to make us mature. This way He also prepares us for our future role as rulers with Christ. The bible compares this process to the purification of gold (1 Petr. 4:12-14). Like refined and purified gold the final product is magnificent, but the process of purification may be nonetheless very painful. This refinement process exposes brings to the surface deeply rooted sins, bondages and weakness, in order to remove them subsequently. Through this process He also trains us in character traits like courage, patience and persevering faith. These traits are important conditions for further spiritual break through, and are also signs of spiritual maturity.

The passage in the bible that speaks most emphatically about this process of refinement is Hebrews 12:5-11. Hebrews compares this process with the education from a good human father. A loving father is not too soft on his children. He provides for and protects His children, but He does not spoil them. He will also attempt to challenge and correct them in order to see their potential maximized, even if this requires struggle and sacrifice on the part of the children. Such discipline is a sign of love, and God's love for us implies similar discipline, as this bible passage indicates. The objective of God's discipline is to transform us into mature and resilient people who can cope successfully with life's challenges. Through the Holy Spirit God the Father shapes and uses our circumstances in such a way that we are turned into the sort of sons He has always had in mind when He called us. He can safely entrust His blessing to people like that. In this refinement process God the Father of course does not make the same mistakes that human fathers make!

The discipline that God subjects us to may be pretty tough. We may compare this dimension of the love of God the Father for us with the care of a coach who prepares an athlete for an important championship. In such cases a good coach may be demanding and strict which the athlete will not always like. But the purpose of this discipline is to stretch the physical and mental boundaries of the athlete in order to make him champion. If the coach is too soft and too easy on his trainee, the athlete will never win the championship. This principle applies to God's discipline as well. He wants to stretch our personal boundaries in order to make us more like Jesus and more useful for His higher purposes.

Purification and opposition

God uses particularly uses persecution, slander and other forms of opposition for the benefit of our purification and spiritual growth. In many countries this includes imprisonment, physical maltreatment and even death. At this particular time such a threat is less imminent in modern western society, though this picture may change. But we frequently experience other forms of opposition, such as mocking, deliberate offense, false accusation, ostracizing, slander, discrimination, misunderstanding, opposition in practical or legal matters, nagging and cursing which may be painful and difficult as well. Times of crisis or judgment are often instruments of God's deep purification as well. Rather than to complain it is better to collaborate actively with this divine discipline in order 'to receive an imperishable wreath' (1 Kor. 9:25). The Lord may further take away things from us in order for the sake of spiritual growth. John 15:2 says that the Father prunes, or cleanses, us when we bear fruit, 'that it may bear more fruit'. A branch that is being pruned loses part of itself. This part that we lose may be a friendship, a career perspective, a position in the church, etc. Such a loss can be very painful too. But it challenges us to get the maximum out of our potential, and it helps us to really trust on Him alone rather than to rely partly on people or on our own capabilities and human sources of security.

God Himself knows and respects the limits of our carrying capacity in this process of refinement. He will get the optimal best out of us during the purification process, and stretches our boundaries, but He will not lead us in situations that we cannot handle. He gives us the power and wisdom to cope with a challenging situation successfully. Or He shows us a safe exit out of the situation. Or He simply prevents situations that He knows we cannot yet cope with. (1 Cor. 10:13). As a loving Father and intelligent coach the Lord knows exactly how far He can go, what He can expect and require from us and what we cannot take yet. Once again the life of Jesus provides the ultimate illustration of this principle. During his prayer in Gethsemane Jesus prepared for His to heavy assignment: to die on the cross to save mankind. For a moment this assignment seemed to heavy even for Him. Jesus' carrying capacity was stretched to the very limit. But God gave Him an extra power boost, which enabled Him to finish this assignment with full conviction and confidence (Lukas 22:39-46).

IV. Hindrances to a break through of our identity as sons

The spirit of slavery

Our lives may be influenced by various spirits and spiritual attitudes that contradict the spirit of sonship. These spirits and attitudes inhibit a break through of the spirit of sonship in us. To begin with there is the spirit of slavery. This is a legalistic spirit that drives us as if we were slaves (Gal. 4:7). This spirit convinces us that God's joy over us depends on what we do for Him. Even when we believe in our minds that our Faith rather than our works form the basis of our salvation, this spirit still makes us feel and behave as if God is only contented about us when we continually strive and suffer for Him. This spirit of slavery may also be rooted in a fear of judgment or rejection that is deeply hidden in, much as a slave fears the judgment of a cruel master (1 John 5:18). The influence of this spirit explains why some believers feel the urge to hop from one conference, training course or campaign to the next. Or they may feel a neurotic drive to fast and pray all the time and to impose all kinds of sacrifices upon themselves though the Holy Spirit Himself does not lead them into these things. One finds such a spirit of slavery amongst charismatic Christians too. Some of them may serve in the power of the Holy Spirit, but are still ultimately inspired by a spirit of slavery. Such Christians tend to be very vulnerable to ministry burnout.

It is also possible to impose a spirit of slavery upon fellow believers. We could do so by urging them strongly to participate in various Christian activities or campaigns even though the Lord has not called them to be involved. Some churches or groups pressurize their members to partake in a great number of different activities. This pressure may be so intensive that the believers have hardly any time, energy and attention left for their work, study, and sometimes, even their families. Paul emphatically warns us not to accept a new yoke of slavery (Gal. 5:1). We can safely assume that this also implies that we should not put a new yoke of slavery upon one another.

A spirit of slavery is often rooted in generational bondages. Believers with a legalistic background usually suffer from such a spirit to various degrees, even if the original opening goes back many past generations. Deep in their heads and hearts these believers still sense shades of a legalistic yoke. These shades often have physical manifestations. Especially the neck, shoulders and back may display problems, because these are the body parts that are normally used to carry heavy burdens. The spiritual overload thus manifests itself in physical overload. Chronic fatigue may also have roots in the legalistic yokes and spirits of slavery from the ancestry.

Fatherlessness, rejection and abandonment

A well known cluster of demonic bondages consists of fatherlessness, rejection and abandonment. Fatherlessness implies a lack of fatherly affirmation and correction, either because there were no fathers in the first place or because the fathers were dysfunctional. A situation of fatherlessness provides an opening for a spirit of fatherlessness. Dead religion or dominant or abusive leadership may cause an opening for a spirit of fatherlessness. A spirit of fatherlessness manifests in deep identity confusion, insecurity, fear, and strict adherence to false sources of security, such as legalistic rules or material possessions. But it may also manifest in rebellion, lawlessness, criminality, idolatry and sexual immorality.

A spirit of rejection is another hindrance to a true acceptance of the spirit of sonship. Such a spirit makes it difficult for us to believe in our hearts that the Father really accepts us and wants to bless us. Such a spirit also impedes faith in answers to prayer. Rejection causes deep insecurities. Moreover, a person with a spirit of rejection attracts fresh rejection like a magnet. Self rejection and

fear of rejection are usually intrinsically connected to rejection.

A spirit of abandonment is connected to a fear of abandonment. Believers who suffer from such a predicament find it very difficult to appropriate in their hearts the truth that God will not 'leave them nor forsake them'. Abandonment and fear of abandonment may inspire people to minimize their dealings with others. These people behave like lonely wolves in deserted territories. On the other hand they may strenuously demand much of the time, attention and affection of some people as if they want to avoid a new experience of abandonment at all possible. Abandonment may originate in traumatic experiences in which someone felt abandoned by everybody else. The spirit may also originate in a traumatic experience in which the person felt abandoned by God. Subsequently the person did not recover from the trauma which developed into a spiritual stronghold in the soul. Such traumas and spirits of abandonment are transferred through the generations as well.

An orphan spirit

An orphan spirit is a radical variant of rejection and abandonment. This spirit inhibits us from accepting deep in our hearts the truth that God has adopted us as we are. Consequently we still feel in the depths of our heart like orphans rather than like inheriting sons. Our confidence that God really cares for and about us is also hindered by this orphan spirit. This spirit manifest in deep insecurity, anxiety, rejection and fear of abandonment by God (Rom. 8:15). A believer with an orphan spirit feels like the girl with the matches from the fairy tale of Hans Christian Andersen. This girl had no family or anybody else who took care of her. She did not have any home or possessions, and nothing to eat and drink. She tried to earn a little money by selling matches but nobody was really interested to buy. On an ice cold Christmas Eve, when all families ate their Christmas meal in their warm home, she was still out on the street all by herself. She froze to death there and then.

Believers with an orphan spirit may feel like strangers on this earth all the time, as if they never really belong anywhere. They may further be very suspicious of other, including of fellow believers. They seem to be constantly anticipating foul play, like street children who are always on their guard against possible theft, deceit or other forms of abuse. Gelovigen met een dergelijke geest kunnen ook zeer wantrouwend zijn naar andere mensen toe, ook naar andere gelovigen. An orphan spirit may draw believers into intensive spiritual activity and artificial piety by which they hope to be accepted by God the Father after all. This spirit may also inspire believers to prove themselves to other people through successful ministry. But deep on the inside they are still vulnerable and insecure. For this reason an orphan spirit also produces spiritual and physical fatigue, and may result in burnout in ministry.

An orphan spirit often enters because of distorted ideas of God the Father or because of painful spiritual or natural experiences. This spirit and the openings for it can also be inherited from the ancestors. In our observation believers from a Christian background with an extreme version of the doctrine of election or predestination run a great risk of suffering from an orphan spirit. In this extreme version election is not the affirmation of the love of the Father for us, but it is distorted into a harsh doctrine. This version of election pictures God incorrectly as a distant and unpredictable being. You may never know if God will accept you or eternally reject you, even when you desperately want to be accepted by Him. The spiritual agony that this extreme doctrine produces opens the door for an orphan spirit. Consequently the believer is not able to accept in his heart that God the Father loves us, cares for us, protects us, never leaves or forsakes us, never deceives us, and wants to give us a bright and prosperous future.

Confusion in our relationship with the Holy Spirit

Many Christians feel inhibited in building a relationship with the Holy Spirit for doctrinal reasons. They are afraid to give too much honor to the Spirit and not enough honor to Christ and the Father as a consequence. In this context they argue that the Holy Spirit does draw attention to Himself but is focused on glorifying Christ and the Father. On the one hand what they say is certainly true (John 14,16). On the other hand, however, we can only maintain a living relationship with the Father and with Christ because of the Holy Spirit's presence (Rom. 8:14-17). He represents the Father and Christ in and amongst us. It is difficult to have a living relationship with the Father and with Christ without a living relationship with His representative amongst us as well. This inhibition regarding the Holy Spirit is often caused or reinforced by spirits of religion, such as dogmatism and traditionalism. (See the article *The Spirit of Religion* on this website).

Such dogmatic inhibitions regarding the Holy Spirit cause us to undervalue Him and to keep us from actively developing an intimate relationship with Him. This creates a serious hindrance in our walk in the Spirit of sonship, and therefore in our relationship with Christ and the Father as well. The book of Acts show that the first Christians were very well aware of the continuing presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. They spoke boldly about, with and on behalf of Him.

Charismatic rebellion and independence

In other articles on this website we have already discussed the possibility to misuse the anointing of God, like *The spirit of religion, Pitfalls: pride and self elevation, en Deception and Discernment in the Christian church*. Most of the causes of abuse of God's anointing are caused by deep roots of rebellion, obstinacy, ambition and lack of true surrender which the believer has not adequately repented of. In the framework of the issue of sonship we still want to raise a few additional points.

Throughout church history there have been people with a powerful anointing whose characters absolutely failed to reflect Jesus, or who drew all attention and honor for themselves rather than gave God all the glory. In some cases such people even live or have lived in gross sin, while their ministry appeared to remain very powerful and effective. Despite a powerful anointing people may still be rebellious and disobedient, and may use their anointing independently from the Lord and according to their own ideas and will. This phenomenon may bring much confusion because fellow believers wonder why the Lord entrusts so much of His anointing to people whose behavior is so unholy and unworthy.

The reason is that believers have a legitimate claim on the anointing and gifts of the Holy Spirit, simply because they are heirs after all. Therefore God honors our desire to receive the anointing even if we do not show particular interest in the fruit of the Spirit and in the walk according to the Spirit. The bible says that the Father causes His sun to rise in the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous (Matthew 5:45). In a similar fashion the Lord gives His anointing and gifts to all believers, whether they use these responsibly or not.

The Lord does not take away this anointing and gifts immediately away from us either when our lives does not manifest the fruit of the Holy Spirit of a holy walk. A clear case in point is the old prophet in Bethel during the reign of king Jeroboam of Israel. He abused his status as a prophet by lies and deception. Yet the Lord still used him to pass on a genuine prophecy (1 Kings 13:11 ff.). Another example is Ahitophel, the counselor of David. He had received from God an extraordinary gift of wisdom (2 Sam. 16:23). However, he supported Absalom's rebellion and abused his gift of wisdom in his strategy to kill David as quickly as possible (2 Sam. 15-17). The story of the prodigal son further shows that the Father gave the younger son his part of the inheritance, even though he had announced to leave his father and subsequently squandered his inheritance (Luke 15:11-13).

Likewise, the Lord does not keep His anointing which is part of our inheritance away from us, even when we start to use it in a wrong way and for the wrong purpose.

So God does not take away the anointing of the Holy Spirit immediately when we start abusing it. Such abuse, however, will have negative consequences in the end. A Christian who resists being led and changed by God can never function as a true son, even though he uses a part of his inheritance. A believer who is only interested in the spiritual treasures of the Father but not in Himself, nor in His will and moral values, dishonors Him as Father. In the end such dishonoring will cause his disqualification as a son. That is why Jesus says that on judgment day there will be people who will say that they have prophesied, cast out demons performed many miracles in His name, but He has never known them (Matthew 7:21-23). He further warns against false prophets who may have anointing but who bear bad fruits rather than the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Matth. 7:15-20). In this context Paul says that a strong anointing and many gifts will profit us nothing if their use does not go together with love which is a major characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit (1 Cor. 13: 1,2; Gal. 5:22), and which reflects God's character more than any other character trait (1 John 4:16).

V. Finally

Summary

Our conscious awareness of the truth that we are sons of God is central to our identity as believers. As sons we inherit from the Lord, both men and women. Most of our inheritance we will experience only in the future when we will rule with Christ in a glorified body. But being a son also implies that we allow our personalities to be transformed into the holiness and dignity of Christ. Furthermore, as sons we have the responsibility to advance His kingdom on earth with power. This awareness of our identity is fundamental to our Christian life on earth.

The Holy Spirit is the main down payment to our inheritance. As the third person of the Godhead He marks and affirms our identity as sons. The Holy Spirit is therefore the spirit of sonship. He equips us for God's work by giving us anointing and gifts. Next, He Works out the fruit of the Spirit in us which will make us reflect God's character increasingly. Furthermore, He wants to guide us daily in order so that we can live as conquerors over sin, use His anointing to God's glory and to accomplish the tasks that He gives us according to His wisdom and understanding. He also functions actively as our coach in order to train us to become spiritually mature. In this process He often uses fierce opposition against us.

There are various hindrances that inhibit the flow of the spirit of sonship in the lives of the believers. These hindrance are, amongst others, a spirit of slavery and legalism, fatherlessness, rejection, abandonment and an orphan spirit, inadequate emphasis on the importance of the Holy Spirit, charismatic rebellion and independence.

It is time for a break through of the spirit of sonship

During the last decennium the fatherhood of God has become an important focus of the church. Regretfully, many believers have very limited experience of their status as sons. Some parts of them still feel like a slave, orphan or rebel, and consequently these believers behave that way. This predicament applies not only to young believers but also to many of those who have been Christians for already quite some time, including to Christian leaders. This inadequate experience of our

sonship robs us from much joy and peace. It is also a main reason for burn out of Christian workers. The Lord desires us to experience and trust Him completely as their Father. He wants every part of our lives to be dominated by the Spirit of sonship. It is high time to break every chain that keeps us from appropriating our sonship. It is also high time for a substantial break through of our identity as sons of God in each part of our personality, as Jesus has modeled to us. And now it is high time to become mature as sons and face the challenges that the Lord brings our way with joy, boldness and confidence.

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