

Sons of God

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Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev Murdo Alex Macleod

[0 : 0 0] Consider the version of passage you read in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, chapter 8, and you take as a connecting link verse 14.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Amen.

And the two main thoughts in connection with these words, in the light of the context in which the verse is set, we consider the sons of God with reference to sin of the flesh, and secondly the sons of God with reference to their leading, or to their being led by the Spirit of God.

First of all then, the sons of God with reference in the light of the context to sin or to the flesh.

But as you read this passage, you will notice that the Apostle draws a very distinct contrast between the influence of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual and the influence of the flesh in the life of an individual.

[1 : 5 3] I think that certainly in the first 14 verses of this chapter, the terms that are of most importance here and used most frequently are these, the flesh and the Holy Spirit.

And to understand what the Apostle is talking about, and to understand the contrast that is being drawn, we must look at the meaning of this term, the flesh.

Notice how often he uses it. In verse 1, there are some who walk after the flesh. In verse 4, again the same thing, there are some who walk after the flesh.

In verse 5, there are some who mind the things of the flesh, who are after the flesh.

In verse 9, there are again, he mentions that, people who are in the flesh. In verse 12, there are people who live after the flesh.

[3 : 0 9] And the same term again, in verse 13, living after the flesh. Now, what exactly does this term mean?

The flesh, living after the flesh, and being in the flesh, and minding the things of the flesh. Well, you probably know that this is a word which is used to, with various shades of meaning in the New Testament, but in this particular context, it is obvious that Paul is speaking about a fallen, sinful human nature.

The unsanctified human nature, which thinks and which acts in a particular way.

Human nature corrupted. Human nature defiled. And human nature directed and controlled by sin.

That's the way that the Bible speaks of the basic moral condition of the unbeliever, the non-Christian.

[4 : 2 3] The person who is, as he calls it here, the person who is without the Holy Spirit. Now, we are told that that person walks in sin.

That person lives in sin. That person is in sin. And that person's mind is directed and controlled by sin.

The native influence, which works in that person, always directs him in a course of sin.

His lifestyle, who is governed by the flesh, governed by his unsanctified human nature.

His desires are directed and governed and motivated by his sinful self.

[5 : 37] He is preoccupied with these sinful demands. He is taken up in all his life with what he can see and what he can hear and what he can get in this life of sin.

And this person's life can be largely dominated. And he is not, can be, but he is largely dominated, preoccupied with the various avenues that are used through which sin presents itself in all its native attractiveness to the sinful nature of man.

Hence, for example, the influence, and the profound influence that, for example, the rain day television may have in this person's life.

The profound influence, rather, that newspapers may have in this life. The example of the reading material that is made available to it.

This kind of lifestyle shows itself in the programs that he wants and the programs that he watches, the books that he acquires, the kind of newspaper that he may even read.

[7 : 20] And it certainly shows itself as this passage tells us. He minds the things of the flesh. He is after the things of the flesh. He lives for the things of the flesh.

He lives in the things of the flesh. This passage tells us that this person's life is really dominated and controlled by all these sinful influences.

And therefore, there is produced in him, in verse 6, a mind that is calmer and consequently a life that is lived.

Do you want to use the word in the other commas? In the sphere of death. And in that context, he is alienated and separated from what he goes on to speak about from the life of the Spirit.

His life, we read in verse 7, is one which is at enmity against God. There is hostility between himself and God. There is a state of war between him.

[8 : 40] and God. When the Bible speaks of a person being at enmity with God, that doesn't mean to say that every kind of individual is profligate.

That that kind of individual is irreligious and unprincipled. And that sin reigns in an unbreden way in his life. It can degenerate to that kind of life.

But it doesn't mean to. At the same time, there is this wrath, or this enmity, this hostility. If you want to put it negatively, there is lack of peace.

Is that person, in other words, who is a stranger to the peace of God in his own heart? God. And as you know, to know the peace of God in your own mind doesn't necessarily mean that your life is one tranquil life from dawn to dusk without any ripple in the water or any conflict, any problems or difficulties in your own life.

That isn't what the peace of God means at all. It doesn't mean that you feel great and you feel wonderful and that you feel peace.

[10 : 01] It can be that and there are times when it is that. But basically, the peace of God burning in a person's heart, or rather, put it the other way, the person who has peace with God, who is at peace with God, and in his heart the peace of God is a person who essentially is fully reconciled to God's way of peace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Take a classic example of that person just in the Old Testament. Job. Now, no one would ever say that that man's life was tranquil from dawn to dusk.

No man, no person could possibly say reading the history of Job, but he had it easy. Far from it. He had problems almost every day of his life.

He was afflicted as you know yourself, in his own body. He had problems in his own family. He had tremendous problems to deal with.

And yet, look at the way the peace of God per the world in his heart when he said, though he's slain, he, yet, I will trust him. Now, the person who is at enmity with God is a stranger to that.

- [11 : 23] He doesn't know what it is to put his trust and his hope in God in the face of the most awful difficulties and problems in his life. God.

And, Father Moore, we are told that this man is rebellious against God. He has a life which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

He rebels against the authority of God and he finds fault with the providence of God, with the way in which God orders things. This is the kind of man that Paul is speaking about.

He is a man whose depravity is total. He says here that he is not subject to the law of God. And not only is his depravity total, but his inability is also total.

Now, indeed, he says, can he be subject to the law of God? He cannot in his own unrated way come to give himself unreservedly to the Lord.

- [12 : 32] Now, Paul measures as it were on this kind of life just to show this, just to prove what he's saying in the first four verses, that God has saved his sons from that kind of life.

There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. We are not in the flesh, he says, but in the Spirit.

It is from this kind of life that the Lord has delivered, saved, rescued, redeemed his own people and his own sons in this world.

And then the emphasis shifts, you see, in this chapter, to the contrast, to the other side of the contrast. That's one side of life, that's one type of individual.

This person whose life is dominated by things, who walks in the flesh, who lives after the flesh, whose mind is controlled by the things of the flesh, whose steps are directed by the things of the flesh, the kind of person who lives in this particular way, who goes to this particular place, who reads this particular thing, who looks at this particular thing.

- [13 : 54] That's that kind of passion, but when, he says, are you not like that? How then are you? It's a question that is asked, what kind of passion is this Son of God of whom verse 14 speaks?

Well, he is, first of all, indwelt by the Spirit. He walks in the Spirit. He lives in the Spirit. He is in the Spirit.

He knows the things of the Spirit. So that just as the flesh governs the lifestyle of the non-Christian, so the Holy Spirit governs the lifestyle of the Christian.

And just as the native influence which makes one person live is the flesh, so the influence as someone has called it, the intruded power, which makes another person live for righteousness or live differently, is the Holy Spirit.

This is what happens in conversion, together with many other things. The Holy Spirit takes up as a bird in life of the convert.

- [15 : 25] How does Paul put it here? If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is one of his. The Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of God, the Spirit of him that raised Jesus in the dead, all these are terms that he used to speak of the Holy Spirit.

And whatever us a Christian is, he is a person who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. And as he put it here in verse 6, who is now spiritually minded, that is, his mind is controlled by the Holy Spirit, so that he walks in a particular way.

He walks in the way of life. He is controlled by the Spirit so that he lives in the Spirit. So his mind is fixed upon spiritual things.

So he gives himself to the things in which the Spirit, or to which rather the Spirit leads him. As I said earlier, just as the flesh dominates the life of the non-Christian, so the Holy Spirit regulates, governs the life of the Christian.

Just as the non-Christian is preoccupied, as he puts it here, with the things of the flesh, so the Christian is preoccupied with the things of the Spirit.

[17 : 03] And this raises a question. What are the things of the Spirit? It's important for us to answer that question.

What are the things of the Spirit? Well, take the contrast. The things of the flesh are these things in life which are produced by the fallen, sinful nature of man, which is under dominion of sin.

And that is why you get, for example, so much of life today which is governed by sin and by the flesh, as I mentioned earlier, through the various channels, through the media, television, newspapers, through books, and so on, the pursuits that are laid on, the kind of attractions and amusements that are laid on for people.

And at the very heart of these things is this fresh man's sinful nature wanting to govern and direct and dominate the lives and the thinking of other people.

And then you have the cry going up when people protest against that thing. Take, for example, if I may just use this as an example. Take us on a program on television that is full of suggestiveness and full of expletives, full of bad language.

[18 : 55] and there are many people produce all these programs saying when you protest against it, but that is life being portrayed.

That is ordinary life, that is what the ordinary person in the inner city is like. person is like.

Even if that were the case, the other side of the coin is this. That kind of language and that kind of lifestyle, these are the very things that the ordinary person, without at all speaking about the convert, that an ordinary person, highly principled with high moral principles. That's the kind of lifestyle that the ordinary person is trying to direct the form of spring away from.

Any parent worthy of the name will never teach his child to use expletives.

No parent worthy of the name will ever do it. And it's tragic to say the least that when parents try to bring up their children to use ordinary language in which to express themselves, it's tragic. When these parents are then told by people who seemingly think that they know best, that this language that is being poured into their ears through the medium of television is the ordinary, language of the street. It's tragic when people use that argument to get away with it.

[21 : 09] Instead of accepting, and this is one way in which they show that, as he says, as he puts it here, that the carnal mind is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God which tells you, as he says, how to live. The carnal mind is not subject to that law. And the carnal mind cannot be subject to that law. It will not accept what God says. And one way in which it shows it's not acceptance of God's way is that it pays scant regard to the existence of law at all. As far as he's concerned, it doesn't exist. So what does he do? He lives beyond the bounds of law. And liberty has become license. And God doesn't matter at all.

These are the things of the flesh. The flesh is beyond the bounds of law. And this is what the flesh will always try to do. It will always try to get you to go beyond the bounds of law. Live outside the boundary lines. Do what you like, when you like, as you like, with whom you like. That's the things of the flesh. Now then, can we ask the question, what are the things of the Spirit? What are the things of the Spirit? They that are after the flesh, remind the things of the flesh.

The day that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. Is it possible to answer that question? Of course. Let's look at one or two other things of the Spirit. Where did the Bible come from?

It is the product of the Holy Spirit. Men, we read in the New Testament, Peter tells us, holy men of God, who are moved by the Holy Spirit, and so they wrote. That's the Bible.

There's one way in which you see, in which you can understand, the love of the Spirit. Look at the love that the Spirit has. For people speak about the love of God, and giving His Son. The love of the Son, and giving Himself.

[23 : 30] What about the love of the Spirit? Well, this is the love of the Spirit. The Spirit, sure it is love. For men and women, boys and girls, in that He communicated the Word of God to us in writing.

It's the Spirit that has given to us the Bible. And what is it? What does a Christian do? What are the things of the Spirit that the Christian has his mind on? The Bible.

Oh, says the Psalmist, I love I thy law. It is my study, day and night. If you're a Christian today, you love the Bible. You want to know more of the teachings of the Bible.

You read the Bible. You come to hear the Bible being explained, expounded. Some people tell you I can be a Christian, and I don't need to come to church. There's no such thing in the Bible.

As a person who is indwelt by the Spirit, who doesn't love the things of the Spirit. His mind is on the things of the Spirit, and one of them is the Bible.

[24 : 35] What else is the Spirit? Can you think of another thing which is the thing of the Spirit, or the product of the Spirit? What this chapter tells us? Prayer. Prayer is the product of the Spirit.

We don't know, says Paul, how to pray for, but the Spirit intercedes. The Spirit is the Spirit of prayer. He teaches us to pray. That's another thing which is the thing of the Spirit. Prayer. Do you pray?

Do you want to pray more? Would you like to pray better, deeper, to be more prevailing, more consistent, and even indeed more insistent in prayer? That's where your mind is.

What else is a thing of the Spirit in the world? The Christian himself is a product of the Spirit in the hand, is a product of the world in the hand of the Spirit. There's no such thing as a believer who hasn't come to believe through the Spirit blessing to him the world.

That's what makes a Christian. A Christian. He is entwashed by the Spirit. The Spirit takes up his abode inside him. And places the truth to him. And therefore other Christians mind other Christians. They love other Christians.

[25 : 55] Remember, to have your mind on things, to have your mind governed by and directed by and motivated by and controlled by. So, this is the Christian. The world controls. Prayer directs. Other Christians draw into their fellowship.

He wants, as we said earlier, the peace of God to reign in his heart. That is, to live in accord with the truth. These are the things that interest the Christian.

And this is what Paul says. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. The sons of God are people whose minds are directed by these things.

This is something else, and I'm not going to keep this here much longer. Just to say this. If it is true, as it is, of course, according to this chapter, in this verse, that such people are led by the Spirit, does that not mean then that, well, here's how person lives a sort of easy-going life?

I haven't mentioned this word for some time, but it's one of my own pet themes, so you'll forgive me for raising it again. This is the kind of victorious kind of Christian living that we hear so much about, that is lived in life without much conflict.

[27 : 24] Well, of course, let's not forget that it is a victorious life indeed. The end of this chapter tells us we are more than conquerors through him that loves us, but it is victory earned or gained in the field of conflict.

We are not, the Son of God is not lifted, spiritually speaking, in the experience of his heart above the problems and the difficulties and the conflicts of life.

Oh no! Far from it! Therefore, brethren, says Paul here in this context, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh, for if ye live after the flesh ye shall die.

But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. Oh, this isn't easy. Mortifying the deeds of the flesh.

What does mortify mean? It means putting a thing to death. And that is an attitude which is to be constantly and unremittingly maintained in the life of the Christian.

[28 : 39] It means the pain and the agony and the anguish of crucifying the flesh. It means the ruthless rejection of all practices and all pursuits and all thoughts and all the ways that are wrong.

And that's not easy. It means that Jesus tends on the sun on the mountain. It means if my right eye offends me, I have to plug it out.

It means that if my right hand offends me, I am to cut it off. And you know in what way Jesus was speaking there? He was illustrating this great teaching that we have again enunciated in Romans chapter 8 and in many other passages in the New Testament.

That whatever it is that comes between us and a life of commitment and a life of service and a life of obedience to the revealed will of God, we've got to give it up.

We've got to jettison it and we've got to put it to one side and we've got to leave it behind. It means denying by mortifying the desires on the wants and the likes and the appetites of the flesh.

[30 : 14] It means starving the desires in life that you know full well that you should not be thwarting for.

And that's not easy. It means turning away from the things that are not in accordance with the mind and the will of God.

It means answering in this way the people say, Unless I watch these things I will not know what's going on on the other side of the fence.

It means answering that observation with this, in this way. That there was one person in this world who was perfectly holy.

And that was the Lord Jesus Christ. And growing up as a boy, right into adulthood, he had no reason to enrich his life by going beyond the bounds of the permissible to himself.

[31 : 18] It's a fallacious argument that says that life is enriched and the horizons widened by going and doing things which are not in accordance with the law.

The answer is no. The answer is mortification. The answer is crucifixion. The answer is dying daily.

The answer is self-denial. The answer is cross-bearing. The answer is suffering. The answer is suffering. The answer is suffering. The struggle and the agony of it all.

As we live in this way. But remember we are not living unaided. We are led by the Spirit of God.

Their whole dependence is thrown upon the enabling power of the Spirit. And this is the thrust of the passage that we have the Spirit to help us live like that.

[32 : 27] We have the Spirit to lead us in that way. And in no way is it possible to argue on the base of this text that the person who is led by the Spirit is a person whose life is lifted above these problems and these difficulties and these agonies.

No way. No way. It is a complete misrepresentation of what the Word of God says to even suggest that there is a leading of the Spirit available to some, to all Christians if they would only let go and let God take over.

That's a nonsense. And a complete misapplication and misrepresentation of what the Word of God says.

The whole meaning of the leading of the Spirit is understood within a context of the awful conflict and battle that the Christian has to live and to wage in life.

For the flesh that wants to dominate his thinking is living and is walking.

[33 : 52] And the only way he can keep out of that kind of environment is by following the leading of the Spirit.

There isn't a passage in the Word of God that would even suggest to you that it is possible for you from a particular moment of your Christian living to be directed away from these influences and lifted above and beyond these influences.

So that you live on a particular plane to which you have been brought by the Spirit and you can look down and you can see underneath these poor struggling Christians.

And then you can see underneath them. And then you yearn for their company and you say, oh, if only they would do what I did. If only they would allow the Spirit of God to lead them.

They too could live on this super spiritual plane with myself. And they wouldn't have any of these problems to deal with anymore.

[35 : 15] What a nonsense that makes of the Word of God. We are led by the Spirit governed, regulated. We follow His direction as we are controlled by Him.

We follow Him and He tells us what to do and we are to do it. But it is the Spirit who enables us to do.

We are not born alone as a mother would carry a child maybe in her arms so that the child doesn't feel the roughness of the way over which the mother is carrying him.

That's not the idea at all. The idea is that we are led by the Spirit. It is our feet that do the walking.

We are not lifted above this idea of walking at all. Remember, we walk in the Spirit.

[36 : 20] And when you walk, your feet touch the surface. And unfortunately, as the Lord told Peter in John chapter 13, Unfortunately, the surface that your feet and my feet will touch as we walk day by day, As a surface which is contaminated by sin.

Soiled by sin. And you and I have to walk along there. And we have to see to it that we are not taken aside.

Aside that. By the flesh. We are constrained by the Spirit to abandon that lifestyle.

And constrained by the Spirit to love and to embrace and to follow. The things that the Spirit himself has given to direct us.

Let us pray. Our Lord, we would ask thee for thy presence today. To thou and thy mercy help us to put our trust in thee and forgive us. Oh, forgive us.

[37 : 38] How often we have to pray for forgiveness and for cleansing along the way. We thank thee that thine ear is open to the cry of thy poor beleaguered people.

As they cry with Paul, O wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

We beseech thee to lead us. Give us grace to follow thy leading. Grace to do thy bidding. Grace to resist the evil influence of sin.

And grace with Christ. To love righteousness. And to hate iniquity. For his sake. Amen.