

Hand in Glove

The War Within – Part VIII

Romans 8:12-15

Introduction

Thus far, in our study of Romans, chapter 8, we have discovered:

- a new pardon from the King;
- a new friend in the Holy Spirit;
- a new obsession by means of a new mindset.

We are about to discover that, because of the Spirit of God in our lives, there are many more new things to experience.

I brought along something that I am not sure I am ever going to need this winter – my pair of gloves. Usually by late November, I have worn them at least two or three times – but not this November. We are having temperatures in the low 70's and are enjoying sunshine and beautiful, utility free days! Isn't that great? You do not need air conditioning or heat.

The utility companies must view these days with an entirely different perspective. We think we are in the millennial kingdom, and they think we are in the great tribulation!

The only thing I do not like is that my grass is still growing – it thinks it is still summer.

Well, if it ever does get below 60 degrees, I will pull out these gloves and put them on. They are wonderful and can do amazing things. My gloves can:

- point;
- roll down a window;
- throw a stick for my dog (only to have her look at me like I am out of my mind to think

she would ever run after it, but if I threw a piece of meat, that would be different);

- shake hands;
- wave goodbye to a friend;
- applaud an amazing last minute win by the North Carolina State University Wolfpack – if they ever get one;
- smack someone for saying that (!);
- pat someone on the back;
- make the sign for “I love you.”

My gloves are amazing things, right?!

Of course not. My gloves are entirely useless unless my hands are inside them. What gloves do is directly related to what is inside them, right?

You could say it this way, “Whatever possesses the gloves, determines what the gloves perform,” or “Whoever activates the gloves, determines the activity of the gloves.”

It could also be put another way (I had entirely too much time to think about this illustration), “The occupation of the gloves depends entirely upon the gloves being occupied.”

For without me, these gloves can do
nothing!

Does that sound familiar?

Jesus Christ said, as recorded in John, chapter 15, verse 5,

... ***for apart from Me you can do nothing.***

The apostle Paul has already informed us in Romans, chapter 8, verse 11, that the believer is

indwelt by the Holy Spirit. So, the believer is occupied . . . inhabited . . . energized . . . by the Holy Spirit.

Christianity is nothing less than *a hand in glove experience*. It is impossible to live it on our own – we are merely the willing gloves and God’s Spirit is the omnipotent hands.

The Believer’s Life – Gloves on the Hands of God’s Spirit

Because the hands of God are occupying us, there are several new things that occur in the believer’s life.

A believer is able to follow Someone new!

1. First, a believer is able to follow Someone new!

Let us rejoin our study in Romans, chapter 8. Look at verses 12 through 14.

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – 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. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

So, what is the new thing in a believer’s life? It is divine leadership.

Paul first speaks in general terms – reviewing what he has already taught in the previous verses of this chapter. If you live for the flesh, you are going to die.

Now, this is not one of those, “I can lose my salvation,” verses. Paul is teaching in a way that is similar to the way you would teach your child. You might say, “Listen, if you walk out in the street without looking, you’re going to get hit by a car,” or “If you put your hand on the hot oven, you’re going to get burned,” or “If you put the cat in the microwave – you’re going to have to explain that to your mother.”

These are painful thoughts. In the same way, if you live according to your fleshly desires and pursue only those things that appeal to your pride and your flesh and your way and your own desires, you are going to make a mess of your life and then live a horrible existence in hell.

Paul is simply reiterating general truth. He is not implying that a believer can somehow not live good enough and thus lose his salvation.

Then Paul makes the wonderful statement, in verse 11, that those who are indwelt by the Spirit have the privilege of being led by the Spirit.

What does it mean to be led by the Spirit?

What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? There are numerous answers floating around.

Some believe Spirit leadership comes through mystical experiences, or special intimations, or unusual feelings, or even divine revelation.

The latest fad coming down the evangelical pipe, I believe, is what will be viewed as Spirit induced dreams. In other words, dreams from God that will now direct the believer and reveal God’s will.

You will have to learn how to interpret these dreams and, since the New Testament says nothing about it, numerous authors will fill in the blanks and put their speculations into print. Believers will only be distracted by one more gimmick which takes their minds off the revealed truth of God.

As far back as the days of Jeremiah, false teachers stood and said they had dreams from God. In chapter 23, verses 21 and 25 through 32, we read,

“I did not send these prophets, but they ran. I did not speak to them, but they prophesied. . . .

“I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy falsely in My name, saying, ‘I had a dream, I had a dream!’

“. . . Is there anything in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsehood, even these prophets of the deception of their own heart,

“who intend to make My people forget My name by their dreams which they relate to one another . . .

“The prophet who has a dream may relate his dream, but let him who has My word speak My word in truth. . . .

“Is not My word like fire?” declares the Lord, “and like a hammer which shatters a rock? . . .

“Behold, I am against the prophets,” declares the Lord, “who use their tongues and declare, ‘The Lord declares.’

“Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams,” declares the Lord, “and related them and led My people astray by their falsehoods . . . yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit,” declares the Lord.

Remember that when you see a book about some leader’s dreams and visions.

The enemy knows that if he can get you to believe that the scriptures are not sufficient for everything you need for godly living, he has won a major victory. Like Eve in the garden, he wants you to believe the word of God is no longer final.

So today, the Bible is no longer the settled word of God; for now, the church needs to vote its feelings and its opinions and its own feelings to determine which way to live.

That is how a faction within the Episcopalian church can vote a practicing homosexual into office as an official representative of Jesus Christ on earth to speak for God.

Oh that God would give us the passion of the Psalmist who cried, in chapter 119, verse 133,

Establish my footsteps in Your word, and do not let any iniquity have dominion over me.

Or again, in verse 35,

Make me to walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it.

To be led by the Spirit is to be led into the word of God

Since one of the key roles of the Holy Spirit is to illumine the scriptures to the mind of the true believer, being led by the Spirit is to be led into the word of God.

Jesus promised His disciples, as recorded in John, chapter 14, verse 26, that the Holy Spirit would come,

. . . whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

This promise had special significance for the apostles, who would become Christ’s uniquely authoritative witnesses to His truth after Christ ascended to heaven. But the promise also applies in a general way to all believers after Pentecost. From that time on, every believer has been indwelt by Christ’s own Holy Spirit, whose ministry to us

includes that of shedding divine light on scriptural truths so that we can understand them.¹

Paul wrote in I Corinthians, chapter 2, verses 14 through 16,

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things . . . But we have the mind of Christ.

Being led by the Spirit is to be led into the study of the word.

To be led by the Spirit is to be led into obedience to the word of God

Furthermore, being led by the Spirit is to be led into obedience to the word of God.

Paul wrote, in Galatians, chapter 5, verse 16,

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Or as Paul encouraged Timothy by reminding him, in II Timothy, chapter 3, verses 16 and 17,

All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Are you being led by the Spirit? We could ask it this way:

- Are you in the word of God?
- Are you obeying the word of God?

The Greek verb for “led” (“ago”) has a number of different nuances that reveal wonderful truths. These include:

- Are you attended by the word of God?
- Are you accompanied by the word of God?
- Are you driven by the word of God?
- Are you pulled, tugged, hauled, and moved by the word of God?
- Are you escorted, conducted, directed, and piloted by the word of God?

The word “led” also appears around two hundred times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

The first time it appears in scripture is that breathtaking moment when Adam is roused from his deep sleep and God leads Eve to him. He “brought

her” – and there is the verb – or He “led her” to Adam.

Donald Grey Barnhouse wrote,

*I could not help but look down through the years to that moment when the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon our Lord Jesus Christ, and there, upon the cross of Calvary, He opened up the side of the Lord and from that suffering and death He would create the church of His redeemed people – yes the very bride of Christ.*ⁱⁱ

For those indwelt by the Holy Spirit, you are able to have the incredible privilege of following Someone new – divine leadership!

A believer is able to belong to Someone new!

2. Secondly, Paul goes on to say that a believer is able to belong to Someone new!

What is this new privilege? It is not only divine leadership, it is a divine relationship.

Look at verses 14 and 15a of Romans, chapter 8.

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons . . .

What does it mean to be an adopted son of God?

I can tell you ahead of time that it is one of the most beautiful and moving nuances of our redemption. We are no longer enslaved to the fear of not measuring up to the requirements of the law; we are freely accepted into the beloved as adopted sons of God. What does he mean?

The word “adoption” is seldom used in the Bible. In fact, it never appears in the Old Testament. The reason it does not appear in the Old Testament is because the Jews did not practice adoption; they had other measures in place to care for orphans and the legal issues of inheritance.

The word “adoption” only appears five times in the entire New Testament. Three of the references are found in the book of Romans.

We tend to think of adoption in terms of transferring a child from one family into another. However, it also referred to a special ceremony whereby the Roman father would adopt his own son. It was a ceremony that inducted the boy into manhood. The ceremony of adoption literally

bestowed on the young man the full rights of his Roman citizenship.

In the same way, adoption into God’s family, in this sense, means that we have been inducted into the full rights of heaven’s citizenship. We have the right to inherit our Father’s fortune. This is what Paul refers to in verse 17, when he calls us the fellow heirs of Christ. Imagine that – we will inherit our Father’s fortune!

However, there is also the use of this word “adoption” for the transference of one child into another. A Roman adoption, in this sense, did three things:

- The adopted person lost all rights in his old family and gained all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family. In the most binding legal way, he literally got a new father.
- By law, the old life of the adopted person was completely wiped out; for instance, all of his debts were cancelled.
- In this ceremony, the adopted son received the right to carry on the name of his new family as well as share in the family’s inheritance.

One incident in Roman history provides an outstanding example of how binding and complete this ceremony was.

The Emperor Claudius adopted Nero in order that he might succeed him on the throne – they were not in any way related by blood. Claudius already had a biological daughter, Octavia. Nero would later want to marry Octavia in order to strengthen his hold on the throne. Even though Nero and Octavia were not related by blood as brother and sister, before they could marry, the Roman senate had to pass special legislation allowing it. Why? Because Roman law considered them brother and sister. Even though they were not related by blood, since Nero had been adopted, it was as if he had been the biological son of Claudius.

We have been adopted by God the Father.

In the mind of Paul, we have entered into the very family of God. We did nothing to deserve it; God, in His amazing love and mercy, has chosen lost, helpless, poverty-stricken, debt-laden sinners and adopted us into His own family. In so doing, our debts are cancelled and the inheritance of heaven is our own.

Because the Spirit of God is the hand inside our glove, we are able to follow Someone new and we are able to belong to Someone new. We will look at one more new thing for us as believers today.

A believer is able to speak to Someone new!

3. Thirdly, a believer is able to speak to Someone new!

Not only do we follow divine leadership and have a divine relationship, but now, we can experience divine worship.

Notice verse 15b.

. . . you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

If you want to talk about something new – this is it! No Jew ever addressed God as "Father".

Even the names of God were more and more withheld from public speech and prayers.ⁱⁱⁱ

Even in writing the names of God, the scribe would first set his quill down, wash his hands, pick up a special quill, write the name of God, then set the quill aside and continue writing.

The wonderful part of this was their reverence for God. The sad part was their distance from God.

The Spirit of God would change all of that. Because of Christ's atoning death and the Spirit's creation of spiritual life in those who trust Christ's work alone, the Christian can now call God, "Father".

It is fascinating to discover that Jesus Christ always spoke of God as His Father and He also used this address in all of His prayers. He never prayed to "God"; He always prayed to His Father.

There was one exception, however. That was Jesus' cry from the cross, as recorded in Matthew, chapter 27, verse 46b, when He cried out,

. . . "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

This only enforces the point. Christ's prayer on the cross came from His lips at the moment in which He was made sin for us and in which the relationship He had with His Father was temporarily broken.^{iv}

Our Lord taught His disciples to pray like He did – and His model prayer began with the words, "Our Father".

What exactly does "Abba" mean? It is simply the Aramaic word for "Father" as well.

The only difference was the fact that "abba" was the address of small children to their fathers. Jewish commentary confirms that when a child was weaned, they learned to say "abba" and "imma"; that is, "Daddy" and "Mommy."^v

This is radically new stuff. Not only would a Jew never consider addressing God as his Father, he would consider it presumptuous to enter God's presence and call Him "Papa" or "Daddy".

Jesus combined the two names together when He prayed in the garden. When put together, they show both intimacy as well as trust and respect.

To put it in contemporary English, you would say, "My dear heavenly Father . . ."

This is saying something entirely new to God. And by what right?! The indwelling, occupying, enabling person of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

This winter, if it ever comes, every time you put on a pair of gloves, I trust you will be reminded of the principle of God's Spirit indwelling us, activating in us these wonderful truths.

And by the way, if these gloves could talk, they would never think of saying, "I'll go it alone today . . . I can do this by myself."

They would never grit their teeth, if they had any, or complain that they have to get out of the warm closet and go out into the cold. They simply surrender to the hand that indwells them.

By yielding to the indwelling movement and direction of the Holy Spirit, like a glove yields to the hand, we are empowered by Him; enabled by Him; secured by Him; directed by Him.

Christianity is simply "hand in glove".

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ⁱ John MacArthur, Romans: Volume One (Moody Press, 1991), p. 432.

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- ⁱⁱ Donald Grey Barnhouse, Romans: Volume III (Eerdmans Publishing, 1959), p. 85.
- ⁱⁱⁱ James Boice, Romans: Volume 2 (Baker Books, 1992), p. 841.
- ^{iv} Ibid., p. 842.
- ^v Ibid., p. 842.