

Romans 8:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;
but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry,
Abba, Father.

Analysis

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear (ou elabete pneuma douleias palin eis phobon)—Pneuma douleias ("spirit of bondage") likely refers to the Mosaic economy which couldn't liberate from sin's power and produced fear through curse-threats (Galatians 3:10; Hebrews 2:15). Palin ("again") suggests returning to pre-Christian slavery, whether Jewish legalism or Gentile paganism. Believers didn't receive a spirit of fear but of power, love, and sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).

But ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father (elabete pneuma huiiothesias, en hō krazomen, Abba ho patēr)—Huiiothesia is Roman legal adoption, conferring full inheritance rights on those not natural-born sons. The Spirit enables krazō ("cry out")—not formal prayer but spontaneous, intimate address. Abba (Aramaic) and ho patēr (Greek) both mean Father; Jesus used Abba (Mark 14:36), teaching disciples this intimate address (Luke 11:2). The Spirit testifies to our adoption by enabling heart-cry only children can make.

Historical Context

Roman adoption (adoptio) was irrevocable, making adopted sons legal equals with natural-born sons. Emperor Augustus used adoption to secure succession. Paul's readers would understand: believers are permanently, legally, affectionately made God's children through sovereign choice, not natural descent (John 1:12-13).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What fears characterize a "spirit of bondage"—how do Christians still fall into this mindset?
2. How does understanding adoption (chosen, permanent, with full rights) deepen assurance of salvation?
3. What does "Abba, Father" reveal about the intimacy believers enjoy with God—how does this shape prayer?

Interlinear Text

οὐ γὰρ ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα δουλείας πάλιν εἰς φόβον
not For received the Spirit of bondage again to fear
G3756 G1063 G2983 G4151 G1397 G3825 G1519 G5401

ἀλλ' ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα υἱοθεσίας ἐν ᾧ κρίζομεν
but received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry
G235 G2983 G4151 G5206 G1722 G3739 G2896

Αββα ὁ πατήρ
Abba Father
G5 G3588 G3962

Additional Cross-References

2 Timothy 1:7 (Spirit): For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

1 Corinthians 2:12 (Spirit): Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

Romans 8:16 (Spirit): The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

Hebrews 2:15 (Parallel theme): And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Ephesians 1:5 (Parallel theme): Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

1 John 4:18 (Parallel theme): There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

Mark 14:36 (Parallel theme): And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

Jeremiah 3:19 (Parallel theme): But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.

Isaiah 56:5 (Parallel theme): Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

Luke 11:2 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.