

# THE JOY OF BEING GROWN UP

by: Ray C. Stedman

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

May I warn you that this is not going to be a sermonette. "Sermonettes are for Christianettes," as someone has said (i.e., for baby Christians).

One of the troubles of the church today is that we are plagued with people who have been babies for a long time. Now, babies are wonderful. We have a new baby in our home, and we think she is the finest thing that was ever made -- the latest model is the best -- but after a baby has been a baby for twenty years, it gets kind of tiresome.

One of the problems with the church is the number of Christians who need to be fed Pabulum when they ought to be eating strong meat (as the writer of Hebrews puts it in the fifth chapter). Unfortunately, the usually prescribed treatment for prolonged adolescence merging into premature senility that plagues many Christians has been for the pastor to stand up and whip people and try to make them grow by telling them to *try harder*.

As we have been seeing in these sections of Romans, this will never work, because you can't grow by trying all the exhortations to try harder, to pray more, to study harder, to try to grow. And all the whippings and beatings that come from pulpits across our land are very ineffective as a cure for this condition.

None of you parents do it that way. When you have a child in your home and you are a little bit concerned about his growth rate, you don't get him up before you, and say:

"Now, what is the matter with you? Why don't you try a little harder to grow? If you would just put your mind to this, and set yourself to do it, you would grow. Now *think about it*, and *try harder!*"

We don't do that in the physical life -- it is obviously quite an impotent way of doing it.

The only way to help someone grow is to help them understand the conditions of growth, and to act upon them. When they do that, then growth takes care of itself. That is what we have been attempting to do in these studies in Romans:

- To understand how it is God wants us to grow,
- To appropriate the new life that he gives us, and
- To act according to the conditions under which it grows.

## **THE JOY OF BEING GROWN UP:**

In this section in Chapter 8, we come to a description of Christian maturity. This is a passage that is rich with suggestiveness. It is sort of like a quick glimpse behind a curtain that intrigues and fascinates you, but never quite explains what is going on. I never read this passage without a sense of the mystery that is involved in it -- it is an intriguing section.

There are two divisions here, two very worthy themes:

Verses 14-17: The Sign of a Son  
Verses 18-25: The Sense of Suffering

### ***The Sign of a Son:***

Let's look at Verses 14-17 and take the first section -- *the sign of a son* :

**For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, "Abba, Father!" it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.**  
{Rom 8:14-17 RSV}

You will notice that the apostle uses two words, "children" and "sons." There is a difference between "children" and "sons" -- between a child of God and a son of God.

### *Children of God:*

All true Christians, as the apostle points out here, are children of God -- born into the family by faith in Jesus Christ. This experience our Lord Jesus himself called being "born of the Spirit," {John 3:8 RSV} -- the new birth, when, by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ upon the cross, we believe God and are born into the family of God. These are the children of God.

Now, the sign of a child of God is that he knows the Father. That is always a sign that you belong to the family -- you know the father. This is set forth here in this expression of "Abba! Father!" "Abba" is the Hebrew (or, more exactly, Aramaic) word for "father" and it is the first sound that a baby makes.

### *Dr. Alan McRae's Son:*

I remember hearing a few years ago of Dr. Alan McRae, the professor of Hebrew at Faith Seminary in Philadelphia, and a well-known expert in the Hebrew language, and of the new baby in his family.

While Dr. McRae was away on a trip the mother set about teaching the baby to say "Daddy" so that he could welcome his father home with that wonderful word. She struggled for a week or so, trying to get the baby to say "Daddy" and finally got him to say the word several times -- so she was confident that, when his father returned, the first thing that he would hear from his baby would be that wonderful word, "Daddy."

The moment arrived, and Dr. McRae stepped through the doorway, and there was the little one ready to greet him. The father held out his hands, and the mother said, "Now, say it!" The baby looked up, and said, "Abba, abba, abba."

Of course, knowing that his father was a well-known Hebrew student, he spoke Hebrew to him!

Well, that is the first word that a baby speaks, and it a sign that we are in the family of God when we have a sense of fatherhood -- that he is our Father.

### *A Dr. Barnhouse Story:*

Dr. Donald Barnhouse related on his radio program some time ago an incident when a girl had received word that her fiance had been suddenly killed in an accident.

She was a new Christian, and, when she got this word, she was tremendously disturbed. She went into her room, and locked the door.

Her mother heard her sobbing, and, after a bit, her mother said to her father, "I think you had better go up and see her. She needs a father right now."

So the father went upstairs, and was about to open the door, when he heard his daughter sobbing. Quietly, he opened the door a crack, and saw that she was kneeling beside the bed, with her head buried in her hands, crying out, "Oh Father! Oh, Father! Father!"

The man just quietly shut the door again, came back downstairs, and said to his wife, "She is in better hands than mine."

She knew her Father!

*The Sign of being a Christian:*

This is the first mark of new life in Jesus Christ, the sign of being a Christian, the sign of being a child of God -- you know the Father.

*Sons of God:*

But the sign of a *son* is somewhat different. The sign of a son of God is that he is an *heir of God* , and has begun to possess and enjoy his inheritance.

I realize that the son and the child are the same person. If you are a child, this also makes you the potential heir -- this is certainly true. But there is a difference between entering into the full possession of your inheritance and simply having it held in abeyance for you until you reach your age of majority. This is what the apostle is talking about here.

In other words, until you begin to live in the fullness of the Spirit of God, you are like a minor child who has not yet entered into his inheritance. For it is those "who are led by the Spirit of God" who "are the sons of God." This is what he is talking about all along. Paul is trying to urge us to enter into our inheritance.

*Roman Custom:*

This picture that he draws comes from the Roman custom of adopting their children. A Roman father, if he had male children, never referred to them as his sons until they were of age. They were his children, but they were not his sons. But, when they became of age (which was about 14 in the Roman system) he took them down to the public forum, and, there, they were publicly adopted by their own father and thereafter regarded as his heirs. They entered into participation in their father's business, and had a share in his inheritance. This is what Paul is referring to here.

As long as we are just *children of God* we know the Father, we are in the family of God, but we never begin to enter into our inheritance until we learn to walk in the Spirit as *sons of God* .

*Nonsense:*

Now, you hear a lot of nonsense these days about the joys of childhood. Every now and then you run across some writer who writes a very descriptive passage about how wonderful it is to be a child. They regard childhood with a great spirit of nostalgia, as being that carefree, happy, ideal time of life.

Well, I don't know how you feel about it, but that has never struck me as being true. I had a happy childhood, but I would never want to go back into it because, as I recall, when I was a boy I couldn't wait to be a man! I found the restrictions of childhood rather irksome and frustrating, and I felt so inadequate and so incompetent, and I was always fearful of failure, and of not being quite able to handle a situation. When I grew up, I gloried in the sense of adequacy and liberty that being grown up gave me.

I do hope, as Christians, we begin to see that salvation never really begins to make sense until we start acting as mature sons of God. This is when our salvation begins to count -- when we enter into the wonderful liberty of the sons of God.

*Heirs of God:*

Now let's see what this inheritance is:

Paul says that those who are led by the Spirit of God are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ," {Rom 8:17b KJV}. An heir is one who *possesses* what he owns.

"Well," you say, "can you own something that you don't possess?" Oh, yes.

I have just been working through my library, and I find that I own a lot of books that I don't possess. I own the books but I don't have them; they are not in my possession. They have been loaned out, and others have them in their libraries.

But, also, as I was going through my library, I found a two-volume set that had been given to me by my uncle some time ago. When I opened the cover I discovered that it was a Christmas gift to my great-grandfather, who was a preacher, given to him by his son on Christmas in 1863 -- almost a hundred years ago. Now I have that book, and, in that sense, I am my great-grandfather's heir -- I own what was once his.

This is what the apostle is talking about when he says that when we begin live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, and are led by the Spirit, we become heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ: What once was his now becomes ours.

### *The Life of Jesus:*

As you read through the record of the life of Jesus, you are struck with that remarkable life that he lived --

- The compelling power of his words,
- The tenderness of his actions,
- The courage and manliness of his deeds,
- His keen insight into human nature,
- The marvelous calm and poise that was his in every circumstance,
- The unforgettable impact that he made upon everyone.

What is the secret of a life like that? Wouldn't you like to discover it? What are the hidden resources of this sinless life, mighty in word and deed? Is it because he was himself the Son of God, God the Son now come into human flesh? Is his deity the reason he had such a wonderful life?

Well, the strange thing is, as you read through the Gospels, you discover that the one thing he kept saying about himself was that *he himself was nothing* :

When they challenged him about his healing of the impotent man, he said, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do," {John 5:19b KJV}.

And when they challenged him on the judgment that he passed, he said, "I can of my own self do nothing," {cf, John 5:30a KJV}. Over and over this was his continual plea -- that, as the Son, he did nothing.

Then, at last, in the Upper Room, as he gathered with his disciples in the very shadow of the cross, with the air tense with anticipation and fear, when he spoke to them about leaving them and going to the Father, they were very disturbed. They said, "Well, where is the Father?" They were thinking in terms of space and time. They thought, "The Son is *here*, the Father is *somewhere up there*." And, you remember, Philip voiced the words of all the disciples when he said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it will be enough for us," {cf, John 14:8}, i.e., "open the heavens and give us one glimpse of God, and then we will be able to face the world with confidence, even though you are gone". Do you remember what he said? He said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," {John 14:9 KJV}. "I and my Father are one," {John 10:30 KJV}.

Now, if that were all that he said, we might think that what he meant was that he and the Father were *the same person*. (There are some people who have taken those words in that sense.) But he didn't stop there; he went on. He said to them, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself but: the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works," {John 14:10 KJV}.

The great secret was out at last. You see, in all that wonderful ministry of his, he was simply living in fellowship with an indwelling Father. He shows us, in his life, that man was intended to be a son of God like that. The true son is one who himself is nothing, but who lives in continual dependence upon an indwelling one within who does everything -- both of them distinct beings, both of them thinking, and feeling, and willing, and acting -- yet one is nothing and the other is all.

And then he said, "As the Father has sent me, even so send I you," {cf, John 20:21 KJV}, i.e. "as the Father lived in the Son, so Christ lives in the believer today". The same wonderful secret that made him mighty in word and deed is the same secret that is available to every believer in Jesus Christ who desires to enter into the full inheritance that we have in him.

I hope that you can see that this is not some pleasing and convenient addition to life which we can take or leave. This is not something optional -- there is no other life than this! Anything else than this is living death. The Bible declares it, and experience confirms it. "Without me," Jesus said, "you can do nothing," {cf, John 15:5 KJV}. This is a fundamental necessity if I am ever to know life, and live it to the full. That is why Paul puts this right in the very center of the book of Romans -- this is *the essential thing!*

### ***Inevitable Suffering:***

Immediately, the shattering revelation is made that, if you and I begin to live this kind of life, it will lead inevitably into some kind of suffering. Did you notice that?

... heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. {Rom 8:17 RSV}

### ***The Sense of Suffering:***

This takes us into the next section, where we consider *the sense of suffering*, Verses 18-25. Paul says:

**I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. {Rom 8:18-25 RSV}**

### ***Why Do the Righteous Suffer?***

One of the thorniest questions that is ever asked a Christian is, "Why do the righteous suffer? Why do Christians suffer? Why does a God of love and power permit his loved ones to go through anguish here on the earth?"

Any of you who have been in the place of pain and suffering, or have watched others go through these times of heartache and anguish, have felt the full force of that question come home. The Apostle Paul felt qualified to answer it. You know the record of his sufferings; it is rather disturbing to us comfortable saints today:

- He was shipwrecked and left afloat on the sea;
- He was beaten with rods many times;
- He was beaten with stripes five times, 39 stripes each;
- He was hounded and hungry;
- He was in prison often;
- He was beset with physical infirmity that bothered him all of his life;

- He was in danger on land and sea:

This is the man who now tells us what suffering is for! What is the reason behind suffering?

Well, the first thing that he says is that suffering is an expression of our union with Christ, i.e., we are to *suffer with him* .

This is very important because just suffering alone is not the thing that accomplishes anything in our life, but it is *suffering with Christ* that does it. There can be a lot of suffering that goes on in your life and mine that is not *with him* , but it is only the suffering that is *with him* that accomplishes anything.

I am sure that, if his life is in us, and expresses itself through us, then we are bound to suffer because his life is love -- and love always suffers in an imperfect world. In fact, the test of true love is willingness to suffer.

I wish that young people would understand that. Some of you young ladies could give your boy friend a little test the next time he vows to you eternal love: Ask him to come over and mow the lawn for you next Saturday and see if he is willing to suffer a little bit -- because, without doubt, the test of true love is its willingness to suffer.

And, if we love Christ, then we find in our hearts a willingness to suffer for his name's sake.

### ***Three Kinds of Suffering:***

There are three kinds of suffering; let me give you these briefly:

First of all, there is that suffering which comes to us as a result of our own folly, our own sin, and this is the most frequent and common, even among Christians. We share this, of course, with all other human beings -- the pain, the heartache and grief, the tears and misery that we just cause ourselves because of our stubbornness, and our selfishness, and our rebellion, and all the evil within us. This kind of suffering, obviously, is *not suffering with him* ; Christ has no part in that.

Second, there is that suffering which comes from circumstances over which we have no control -- what we call accidents -- those congenital deformities with which we are born, the results of other's actions, unforeseen circumstances that come crashing into our lives. This *can be suffering with Christ or not*, depending upon our attitude toward it. If we take it in rebelliousness, and refuse to accept it, and fight against it, or find ourselves becoming bitter and resentful, then this is simply suffering that comes without accomplishing anything for us. It only makes us hard, and bitter, and difficult to live with. If we take these things, however, as from the hand of a God who knows what he is doing and whom we can trust, recognizing that we need these things to accomplish something that he is after in our life -- in love -- then this is suffering with Christ.

Then, third, there is that suffering which comes from involving ourselves deliberately and willing in the problems and heartaches of others -- shared suffering -- when we deliberately get ourselves involved in somebody else's need and suffer along with them. This is obviously and *clearly suffering with Christ*; that was what he did when he was here.

### ***Three Things You Can Do:***

There are three things you can do about suffering. In the face of suffering, you can either:

1. Break out,
2. Break down, or
3. Break through --

one of these three.

If you break out, you rebel; you leap over the bounds, you break out of the boundaries; you grow bitter and

hateful and hard.

Or, you can break down; there is much of that happening today -- becoming neurotic, being filled with self-pity, running away from life, withdrawing from society.

Or, by the grace of God, the Christian can break through and touch the hidden springs of the life of Christ within him, and accept the suffering with joy, but gladly counting not our life dear unto ourselves, as the Scripture says {cf, Acts 20:24}, but gladly counting it a privilege to bear suffering for his name's sake. This is what you read about in the Early Church, isn't it? When they were beaten and persecuted, they went home rejoicing that they were counted worthy to bear suffering for his name's sake {Acts 5:41}. Now, that is breaking through -- what a difference!

### ***The Way to Glory:***

Then we read that suffering is not only our union with Christ, but suffering with him is the way to glory. It is the process by which God brings glory into our life. You notice, "provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him," {Rom 8:17 RSV}.

In Second Corinthians 4:17, Paul says, "this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." In other words, it is the sufferings that create the glory; you can't have the glory without the suffering. If you avoid the suffering, you cancel out the glory, because the one is the process of the other. This is what Paul declares all the way through this passage, and he says also that it is achieving a gain that is far beyond the cost.

**I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us [or in us]. {Rom 8:18 RSV}**

When you think of the record of Christian suffering through the centuries --

- All the beds of pain and anguish,
- The years of agony that some have gone through,
- The persecution,
- Being thrown to the lions,
- Burned at the stake,
- All the tremendous past of Christian suffering --

then put that alongside what Paul says here, it is an amazing statement, isn't it. He says, "I consider that all the sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed as a result of it," {cf, Rom 8:18}.

It reminds me of that line from the poet Clough:

For while the tired vainly breaking  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back through creeks and inlets making  
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

That is, down here it doesn't seem like we are getting very far, nothing seems to be accomplished; but over yonder, where we can't see, the great floodtide of suffering is washing in a great wave of glory which shall be revealed in its time.

### ***Releasing Creation:***

Then the apostle also says that suffering results in releasing creation from the bondage to futility: He says that the creation was subjected to futility, the whole world of nature around us (and what an accurate phrase that is) was subjected to futility.

Haven't you discovered, over and over, as you live through life, that

- Something you have felt would return to you wonderful rewards,
- Something that would be the fulfillment of your dreams,
- Something that seemed to be so bright with promise

turned to cobwebs in your hands when, at last, you laid hold of it? It was subjected to futility. It didn't bring you what you wanted. You found that all that you had left was dust and cobwebs.

I think that the dead body of Marilyn Monroe is probably one of the most eloquent and mute testimonies we have today to the truth of this statement -- the futility of life as we know it.

Every archaeologist's spade turns up the dust of silent civilizations of the past, where men and women lived, like you and me, with all the hopes and dreams that they had, but they have all long since crumbled away into the dust of the centuries, and been forgotten.

As I drive down the highway, every cemetery seems to me to be a mute reminder of the hunger of the human heart to want to be remembered for all time. Bertrand Russel, who is, of course, the high priest of atheistic philosophy today, has caught this very note of futility in nature, and, in this thought, he says,

The life of a man is a long march through the night surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, towards a goal that few can hope to reach and where none tarry long. One by one, as we march, our comrades vanish from our sight, seized by the silent orders of omnipotent death. Brief and powerless is man's life; on him all his race, the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day.

That is what life looks like when you don't see it from the standpoint of Jesus Christ!

But Paul says (listen to this!) that the whole world of creation is standing on tiptoe eagerly craning its neck to see the day when God shall show forth the sons that he has been preparing -- the manifestation of the sons of God {cf, Rom 8:19}.

In other words, this present life in which we are living is just a school time that we Christians are going through, and here we have been placed to learn some lessons that are preparing us for the great day yet to come. And one of these days it is going to be graduation day -- the day when the sons of God will shed their humble attire and manifest that they have been princes in disguise all along, indwelt by the same wonderful secret of life that Jesus Christ had when he was here, indwelt by divine life, a man who is the vehicle of the divine life.

### ***The Glorified Body:***

The last thing that the apostle says is that suffering teaches us how to handle the glorified body:

**We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. {Rom 8:22-23 RSV}**

I believe that the resurrection body is to be an instrument of such wonderful responsiveness and power and glory that God doesn't dare give it to us now, until we have learned, in the Spirit, how to become subject to him and obedient to his life within us. Until we learn that, he gives us this kind of frail, old, worn body of ours to learn on. In these, Paul says, we groan. And I have heard the groaning, haven't you? But, as the body deteriorates, the spirit grows stronger, and it is getting us ready for those new bodied to come. As Paul puts it, "the outward man perishes, but the inward man is renewed" {cf, 2 Cor 4:16 KJV} day by day.



### *Daughter's Driving Lesson:*

The other day I gave my oldest daughter a driving lesson, and she wanted to start driving the Oldsmobile because it has an automatic shift. But I said to her, "No, dear, I think it would be better if you would start with the Chevrolet. It has a stick shift, and a clutch, and it is a little bit cranky and hard to operate at times, but if you will learn how to run this car, you'll have no trouble at all with the Oldsmobile."

You know, in a sense, God has done that with us: He has given us these old, cranky, balky, pain ridden bodies of ours, and has told us that, if we learn how to handle these, if we will learn how to make these obey, and present these to him as a living sacrifice, then we will grow ready in spirit to receive those glorious bodies that are now being prepared for us. And Paul says that, with this hope before us, we can patiently wait for God to teach all that we need to know.

### *The Outward Man:*

The "outward man is perishing" {cf, 2 Cor 4:16 KJV}: How true this expression is! It is interesting how, as we grow older:

- The print seems to become smaller,
- Newspapers seem to be farther and farther away,
- Stairways grow steeper and hills grow higher,
- People your own age are so much older than you are, and
- Those that are younger are so much younger than you were when you were their age!

People change, don't they? I saw an old friend the other day and he had changed so much that he didn't even recognize me!

### *The Inward Man:*

As we move toward the end of life, the outward man is perishing, but what is happening to the inward man? That is the great thing that God is after. What is happening inside? Is he learning how to walk in the Spirit? Is he learning how to be obedient to the divine life within? -- how to walk in continual fellowship and dependence upon that risen life dwelling within? It is this that prepares us for those glorious bodies which will someday be ours, which will be responsive to every demand the Spirit makes upon us, and through which God intends to reach the whole of his created universe to establish his kingdom wherever there is matter in the universe.

### *The Future of the Christian:*

The closing word here is one of hope. I like that. Paul says,

**Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. {Rom 8:24b-25 RSV}**

This means that the future for the Christian is as bright as the promises of God. We don't have to subscribe to any philosophy of despair, e.g., those words from Bertrand Russell. The Christian looks forward to a greater hope than he had in the day when he stood as a young man facing life for the first time.

### *Dr. Russell Incident:*

I will never forget, a year or so ago, dear old Dr. Russell was invited to speak to a number of the high school young people at a conference at Mt. Hermon. He stood up before those young people, well over 90 years of age, with that wonderful, glorious shock of white hair and with his face beaming, as he told them about how he first came to know Christ some 80 years before.

They listened with politeness and interest, but I could see, as I watched, that most of these young people were feeling sorry for this dear old man, for, after all, life was almost over for him and all the wonderful

possibilities of life lay before them. All their dreams and their hopes lay unfulfilled in the future, and they were living in a time of great hope, but here was this poor, old man almost ready to drop -- with one foot in the grave -- and they felt sorry for him.

But, as I watched them, I remember thinking, "His hope is greater than their hope" because:

- All they can hope for is just a few years of the experience of the futility and the frustration of life, if that is all they have,
- While he is standing on the edge of the most exciting adventure that man can ever know, and
- Is about ready, having been prepared by the Spirit of God through long years of patient waiting, for that glorious manifestation of the day of God which will open up into eternal, exciting experience beyond the imagination and comprehension of man.

#### *Caleb:*

I thought of old Caleb, back there in the Old Testament, who, after 40 years of marching with the children of Israel in the wilderness, looked at the land from Mt. Hebron, and at the giants, and said to Joshua, at 85 years of age, "Joshua, give me this mountain for I am as strong yet as I was in the day when Moses sent me into the land" {cf, Josh 14:11-12 KJV}. He saw that land 40 years before when Moses sent him in as a spy. He saw the mountain, and he wanted it.

Hebron means "fellowship" and he claimed that mountain as his own, and, for 40 years, as they wandered in the desert, Caleb, by faith, lived in Hebron -- in the place of fellowship. In appropriating faith, he was there already, and, at last, there came the day when he actually entered into it and possessed it -- even though he was 85 years of age.

All through that account we are told the secret of that man's strength, and hope, and faith. It is given in these words: "He wholly followed the Lord his God," {cf, Num 32:12}.

#### *You and Me:*

Doesn't that make you and me feel a bit ashamed? Just such a simple thing -- to wholly follow the Lord our God would bring us through all the encircling years, through all the difficulties and trials, and the heartaches, traps, and tricks of life, to that place where we stand ready to enter into our inheritance -- not only to enter in, but to be **ready** for it -- that God may express through us what it means to be **a son of God!**

#### **Prayer:**

Our Father, these words have been lifting up our hearts and our eyes somewhat, to look beyond this present life. We thank you, Lord, that the Christian hope does not end here, but looks beyond to realms that are beyond our comprehension at the moment, and into exciting and thrilling possibilities that are far greater than we can even dream at this present hour. But we thank you that the secret of attaining these, the secret of entering into our inheritance lies in this simple thing that we have been speaking of all along -- fellowship with our Lord Jesus -- that he dwells in us as thou, the Father, once dwelt within him -- that we have the same possibilities as he had, of life lived to the full. We pray, Father, that we may begin to possess them, that we may begin to enjoy them as being your sons, that we may begin to understand and to see something of the supernatural possibilities of Christian living. We ask it in Christ's name, Amen.

Series: Romans (Series #1)  
Scripture: Romans 8:14-25  
Message No: 14  
Catalog No: 18  
Date: August 12, 1962

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