

One of the most profound truths revealed in the New Testament is that God does not merely desire children who belong to Him—He desires sons who can be led. The Greek language reflects this progression clearly within the New Testament, especially as it moves from teknon (child by identity) to huios (mature sonship and representation).

Paul writes in **Romans 8:14**, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” The Greek word translated “sons” here is huios. This is an extremely important verse as we begin discussing the next phase of development, **Strong’s 5207 – υἱός (huios)**.

We often read this verse simply as being led by the Holy Spirit, but in context Paul is actually describing the mature son as one who is being led by his spirit, which is born of God. I understand this may seem confusing at first, but the context here matters greatly, so let us take a closer look at the surrounding verses. **Romans 8:12-13**

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Notice in **verse 12** Paul says, “we are debtors—not to the flesh.” Beginning earlier in the chapter, especially from **verse 1** onward, Paul is drawing a contrast between flesh and spirit. In these verses he is emphasizing not the Holy Spirit, but our spirit born of God. We see an important clarification earlier in **verse 9**.

9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

Notice here we are told that we “are not in the flesh but in the Spirit”. Next, Paul says, “the Spirit of God dwells in you,” and finally, “if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”

I am highlighting this verse because I want you to notice something: these references are not referring to the Holy Spirit directly, but our spirit now born again and connected to God. As the verse says, we have the Spirit of Christ—not that we become Christ Himself, but that our spirit is now born into union and fellowship with God. Just as Jesus’ human spirit existed in complete unity with the Godhead, our spirit is now restored into fellowship with God through the new birth.

The difference, of course, is that Jesus was God incarnate and we are not God. Yet we do possess a spirit now connected to God through Jesus Christ. This is why Paul later writes in **Romans 8** that Jesus was “the firstborn among many brethren” (**Romans 8:29**).

Perhaps this is part of what makes these verses difficult at times—we see references to our spirit, the Spirit of Christ, and the Holy Spirit throughout the chapter. Let us now return to **verse 14** and continue.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption...

I want to pause here for a moment regarding the word translated as “adoption.” In the Greek, the meaning carries even greater weight. It literally refers to “the placing of a son,” carrying the implication of being fully brought into the Father’s family and inheritance. Continuing with verse 15:

15b...by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Again in **verse 15** we encounter an example where the English translators inserted a capital “S.” I believe the context is clarified more fully in **verse 16**, where we see the first and clearest direct reference to the Holy Spirit: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit...” Here we see the Holy Spirit bearing witness with our born-again spirit that we are children of God. This matters greatly as we approach this subject because, as we have emphasized throughout this series, we are discussing spiritual growth and how that growth expresses itself over time and under pressure.

At this stage we are now discussing adult sons—those who have been under tutors and governors, learned the lessons of life, and are becoming prepared to lead independent of those tutors and governors. In both Jewish and Greek culture, thirty years of age often marked the transition into mature sonship and responsibility. What are some characteristics of this stage?

- Those who demonstrate the nature and character of their heavenly Father, walking in a growing measure of the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control.
- Those who have developed intimate fellowship with God and are able to prioritize His voice within their lives.

Let us consider what it means to have a prioritized voice in our lives. At this stage certain foundational areas have become settled and faithfulness has developed consistency.

- Our location and mentors are established and centered around the Word of God. Meaning we are not prone to moving off of sound doctrine.
- We understand the work of the Holy Spirit and the distinction between outward works and the inward work of transformation.
- The baptism of the Holy Spirit and the purpose of praying in tongues are not only understood, but prayer life and spiritual commitment have become established.
- Church government and local church involvement are fully understood.
- Stewardship, including helps and finances, is brought into order.
- The renewing of the mind and transformation through the Word are actively taking place.
- Personal life, family life, and lifestyle choices are increasingly aligned with the Word of God.
- Time has been invested in strengthening relationships and developing a faithful witness.
- Calling and purpose begin to come into focus and are developed over time.
- Finally, entrance into the fullness of ministry calling begins to emerge.

What distinguishes the huiois stage from the teknon stage is extremely important to understand. At this point we are discussing someone who can increasingly be trusted to function independently from the level of oversight still required in the teknon stage.

When I started this series of letters back in February—which itself was really a continuation of my letters from October, November, and January—I used Paul’s exhortation to Timothy as a foundation for how we must approach spiritual development and growth.

Here is what I wrote in the November 2025 newsletter:

When Paul writes in **verse 6**, “stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands,” he goes straight to the heart of the solution. The phrase “stir up” (*Greek: ἀναζωπυρέω - anazōpureó*) literally means to rekindle a flame—as one would stir the embers of a campfire to revive its fire. In **verse 7**, Paul continues, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear [a mind out of control], but of power and of love and of a sound mind [a mind under control].”

The message to Timothy was unmistakable: If you are going to lead others into spiritual living, you yourself must first live spiritually. Why is this so vital? It should be obvious to anyone called by God to lead, as Timothy was—you cannot give what you do not have, and you cannot lead where you are unwilling to go.

Now notice something very important from **1 and 2 Timothy**. Paul begins both letters by addressing Timothy as: “To Timothy, a true son in the faith,” and “To Timothy, a beloved son.”

In both cases Paul uses the Greek word **teknon**, meaning in addressing Timothy, Paul recognized he still required spiritual fathering and continued development.

Let this encourage you. The Apostle Paul positioned Timothy even while Timothy himself was still developing. Perhaps God has also placed you somewhere to serve or lead, yet you feel unqualified, out of place, overwhelmed, or even tempted to quit altogether.

Spiritual development is a process. Even faithful believers—those who have genuinely matured through stages of growth—can still experience seasons where they feel overwhelmed and in need of help.

This is why we must remember what Paul said to Timothy and it bears repeating no matter where we are in the process. **2 Timothy 1:6-7**

6 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Next month we will conclude this series by discussing the final stage mentioned in the New Testament: **Strong’s 3962 - πατήρ (patēr)**, meaning **Father**.

God bless,

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