

This devotional is the 16th in a series as the ministry is in this time of transition. Be blessed as you support this ministry during this critical time of change. Here's an important new change. Rev Greg Moser has created a "digital" version that you can listen to online. If you want us to automatically send you the link to the digital version to your iPhone or computer e-mail address, e-mail your request to enews@mykairos.org Here's the link to the digital edition: <http://www.MyKairos.org/docs/pr/devotional16.m4a> Here's this week's devotional:

Romans 8: 12-17

Charles Simpson of Mobile, Alabama tells about meeting a young man who dives for exotic fish for aquariums. This adventurous young man said that one of the most popular aquarium fish is the shark. He explained that if you catch a small shark and confine it, it will stay at a size proportionate to its aquarium. Sharks can be six inches long and yet be fully matured. But if you turn them loose in the ocean, they grow to their normal length of eight feet.

It's amazing. How does the shark know that it could outgrow its surroundings, I wonder, and by what mechanism does it quit growing?

Years ago Dr. James Dobson told about an interesting experiment that was conducted with wall-eyed pike, a fish commonly found in the northern U.S and Canada. A pike was placed in a fish-tank with minnows (a food which wall-eyed pike dearly love). A pane of glass was inserted across the middle of the tank between the minnows and the pike. At first, the pike would bang into the glass time and time again trying to reach the minnows. Finally it gave up.

Here is what is interesting, however. When the glass was completely removed, the wall-eye pike still did not chase after the minnows. In fact, the minnows could swim around the pike, even bumping him on the mouth, and the pike would not try to eat them. What the researchers discovered was that, once conditioned, wall-eyed pike will starve to death without ever bothering to try to catch one of those minnows. You see, in its mind it's been taught it can't get to them!

It's a theme that you see time after time in nature.

A writer named Clarence Harvey tells about an experience he had as a boy. One summer he was packing to spend three months with relatives at a lake which was up north from where they lived. His dad said for him to take his pet goldfish with him. His father said he didn't want to take care of a fish all summer.

So, one day after they got up to the lake, young Clarence decided to become a liberator. He went down to the dock with his fish bowl and gave his fish a

little talk. "I'm going to throw you in this lake," he said. "You will be free. You can eat well here and grow up to be a big fish."

However, when Clarence put the goldfish in the water at the end of the dock, it stayed right there. He backed off, thinking, perhaps, that the fish was attached to his shadow. But when he moved back to be sure it was gone, it was still right there. He even threw a stone into the water to scare it away, but that gold fish just swam around the stone.

When he came back after lunch, the goldfish was still there, swimming in the same spot. Clarence sat down and thought, "That fish should be free. It's got the whole lake to swim in." Suddenly he saw in the water a huge ripple. Whop! A big bass swallowed his little goldfish.

Later in life someone told him that a gold-fish, "once it has lived in a circumference of a certain size, has been conditioned to think small. It will stay there until it dies swimming around in that small circle."

That's fascinating to me. Psychological conditioning can be powerful stuff, if you can call it that when speaking of sharks, wall-eyed pike and goldfish.

Now what does our lesson for the day from Paul's letter to the Romans have to do with these creatures of the sea? Just this: Paul is writing to believers to tell them that they don't have to give in to the fear-induced limitations of their old lives any longer. They no longer need to be enslaved by petty thoughts and meaningless dreams. Christ has come so that they can be free. The Holy Spirit has come to take off the chains from their hearts and their minds so that they may soar as they have never soared before. This is the Father's will for us, Paul declares to them, that we shall live in faith, not fear.

Listen to his words: "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

Do you hear what St. Paul is saying to us? He's saying that some of us are letting our circumstances and not our faith dictate how we feel about life. We are letting our fears and our doubts enslave us. God's purpose is that we may not give in to our circumstances but that we might overcome them, that we might break loose from the bonds that keep us from being all God created us to be.

It is sad to see anyone who has been broken by life. Some people have bumped into obstacles for so long that they have quit trying. Life has been so painful for them that they have built a fence around themselves with the sole purpose of ensuring that they are never hurt again. They have been conditioned to accept limitations that may exist only in their own minds.

Dr. Walter Larimore says that one time he and his wife Barb were visiting friends whose neighbor had a young golden retriever which was confined to the yard by an electronic fence. The fence had a buried cable that would cause a probe in the dog's collar to lightly shock the dog if she got too close to the underground wire. So she stayed in the yard. Safe, never straying, but always looking longingly at the edge of the bay that lapped up next to the property.

The Larimores and their friends were sitting on the back porch one day when some people came down the beach with a set of puppies. Exuberant in their energy, the puppies were chasing sticks being thrown into the water.

Larimore watched the golden retriever's ears cock forward and her tail wag ferociously as she watched the pups frolicking in the surf. She slowly crept up to the buried wire of the invisible electric fence. The retriever knew where she was called to be, and it was not within the safety of the yard. Her heart longed to join the puppies in the water she loved the waves where she was meant to play.

Larimore wondered if she would risk the momentary shock. Was the memory of the pain she had experienced in the past too scary? As the family slowly moved down the beach, the dog stayed in the yard. When the playful puppies were out of view, the retriever sunk down, Larimore declares, and literally moaned.

The next morning while out for a walk Dr. Larimore met the dog's owner and shared his observations from the evening before. The owner laughed. "You know," he said, "we've had that wire turned off for several weeks now."

Larimore says he felt a pang of sadness. It was the pain of the retriever's past that was keeping that dog imprisoned. If she had only known, she could have been free to be who she was created to be.

That is sad. But it doesn't just happen to golden retrievers. It happens to *Homo Sapiens* as well. How many painful experiences can a person have before they just quit trying? How many rejections? How many failures?

Many people today without jobs are learning how cruel the world can be to you if you don't have the right connections, don't have an income, don't have a way of making your mortgage payment or providing for your family's basic needs.

Other people have had their hearts broken in relationships enough times that they have concluded that they are unworthy to be loved. It's sad to see anyone who has been broken by life, who is enslaved by negative emotions, who has given in to a spirit of fear and self-loathing. That is one of the reasons Christ came into the world. He came to deliver us from desperate, meaningless lives. He came to give us hope and a sense of well-being. How does that happen? Paul tells us in this passage from Romans.

First of all, he reminds us who we are. Listen again to his words, "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children . . ."

You and I are God's children. Do you understand what that means? We have an innate dignity, a reason for being that should allow us to live with heads held high, knowing we are loved. It is a sad thing when a person loses sight of who he or she is.

Annette Simmons in her book *The Story Factor* tells a wonderful story about Tipper Gore, the ex-wife of former Vice-President Al Gore. I suspect that most people were saddened to learn that Al and Tipper Gore divorced sometime back. Tipper was an asset to our country when Al was Vice President.

In those days Tipper volunteered regularly to aid the homeless around the Lafayette Park area of Washington, D.C. She helped to provide food, shelter, and other services. Annette Simmons tells about one particular homeless woman that Tipper helped. Her name was Mary. Mary was always in or around Lafayette Park.

The volunteers' goal one particular day was to transport the homeless people in the Lafayette Park area to a shelter for a healthy lunch. Mary would not leave the park. Why would she not leave? It was because she was convinced in her own mind that she was married to the president of the United States, Bill Clinton. And for this reason no amount of pressure would convince her to leave the Lafayette Park area.

Tipper came up with an idea. She asked Mary if she would accompany her to the guardhouse next to the White House. As they approached, the guard immediately recognized Tipper. As the guard watched, Tipper stood behind Mary and shook her head, “no” to the guard. The guard looked puzzled but knew something was up so he followed her lead.

Tipper said to the guard, “I have Mrs. Clinton here.” After the briefest pause, he nodded in deference. “Mrs. Clinton wants to come with us,” Tipper continued, “to have some lunch. Could you give us a pen and paper and see that President Clinton gets our message that she is with us. We don’t want him to worry.”

The guard snapped to attention and said, “I most certainly will.” Mary wrote her “husband” Bill a note and was then happy to leave the park and go to the shelter for lunch. This was a turning point for Mary. Ultimately, reports Annette Simmons, Mary was reunited with her family, given medication, and now has a full-time job and a home.

Now obviously Mary was delusional. Still Tipper Gore’s compassion made it possible for Mary to regain a sense of her own identity. Christ came, St. Paul tells us, and he sent his Holy Spirit to us, to help us know who we are: we are God’s adopted children.

When Steve Jobs died a lot was made out of the fact that he had been deserted as a child and then adopted. One of the reasons it was suggested that he accomplished so much was that his adoptive parents emphasized to him that the fact of his adoption made him a special child. He was so special that they chose him out of all the rest of the children to be their son.

We’re told by Bible scholars that St. Paul’s words carried that same idea. To be adopted in the Roman world was to be specially selected to be a part of a household in order to carry on the family’s name and to inherit their property. To be adopted was considered a great privilege.

Do you understand that you are God’s adopted child specially selected to be part of His family and heir to life eternal? Don’t ever get to the point that you get down on yourself and give up because of the hurt and pain you have experienced to this point in your life.

God’s will is for you to overcome your circumstances, whatever they may be, by trusting in His love. Paul writes, “The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship . . . The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”

Comedian Charlie Chaplin once said that the greatest gift that his mother gave to him was a large view of life. When his mother was eighteen, she eloped with a middle-aged man and they went to live in Africa.

The marriage was a failure, so she returned to London and married a struggling artist who fathered Charlie, but then died at thirty-seven. Chaplin's mother, once a singer, lost her voice; she lived on the edge of poverty, but nevertheless entrusted to her son a precious gift the belief he could adjust to any situation. Chaplin said: "Mother was always able to stand outside her environment."

That's what we must do sometimes by the grace of God, live outside our environment. Someone asks us how we are doing and we reply, "Oh, all right, under the circumstances."

God's will is for us to get on top of our circumstances, not under them. Don't let life break you down. You are God's own child. You have not been given a spirit of fear but a spirit of sonship . . . or of daughtership, if I may coin a word. Take the chains off of your brain and your heart. You are free free to be everything God created you to be.

You are created to be in a family. Don't let your circumstances keep you from it! Don't let your Homo Sapien legacy keep you from your royal family. Bruce Larson once put it this way: God has better things for us. Unfortunately, much of the time we're like the caterpillar, who watches a butterfly fly by and says to himself, 'You'll never get me up in one of those things.' God has a better dream for us than we can imagine. If we can shed our prison, our cocoon, we may even fly."

Are you ready to fly family?

Amen.