

Romans 8:14-17

May 31, 2015 – TRINITY SUNDAY

Led by the Spirit

△ **Adopted children** (vv.14-15)

△ **Co-heirs with Christ** (vv.16-17)

Dear **Adopted children** of the heavenly Father, **Co-heirs with Christ**, **Led by the Spirit**:

All of us come from a broken family. And to a greater or lesser degree all of our families reflect this brokenness. Just as children are not to blame for their parents' dysfunction, so we had nothing to do with the sin and rebellion of our first parents that broke God's family. Sadly, however, we naturally follow in their footsteps. We can't help ourselves. So it's a great relief on this Trinity Sunday to see what our heavenly Father has done along with His Son Jesus, so that we are **Led by the Spirit** as ...

△ **Adopted children** (vv.14-15)

Just as there is no good reason for a bride and groom to stop loving each other, so there was no good reason for Adam and Eve to rebel. Absolutely everything was awesome in the Garden of Eden, including their perfect "10" bodies in a perfect "10" marriage to God and each other. But like families on vacation where happiness and freedom should stretch as far as the western sky, that first couple chose instead to break God's one command. Adam was created by God to lead their loving relationship, so Adam gets the blame for bringing sin, death and sorrow into God's family. The sons and daughters of Adam and Eve have been proving ever since that we are still by nature stuck in the mud of their sin.

In a letter of Paul "*to Titus, my true son in our common faith*" (1:4), the Lord's inspired Apostle describes our brokenness like this: "*At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.*" (Titus 3:3 NIV) We were like hikers who wandered into a huge mud pit, then blamed each other for being dirty. We could not see the mud on ourselves. The harder we tried, the deeper we sank. We had no way to help ourselves. No one wanted to. No one could. Adam and Eve blamed each other and God.

Right in front of them the LORD God said to the enemy tempter in the serpent's body: "*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*" (Genesis 3:15 NIV84) The virgin Son of Mary would fulfill all that, struck on the heel when He died on the cross, but crushing Satan's head by His death and resurrection. That's why the holy Apostle Paul could find relief as one of God's **Adopted children**. Trying to do good – failing, hoping to avoid evil – falling in again and again, Paul cries out in agony of soul like someone drowning in mud: "*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*" (Romans 7:24f NIV84) A sick child cannot keep himself clean. But we love it if the tender hands of our mother will clean us up and strong hands of father will hold us.

How well do we appreciate God's tender loving care? Do we have so many blessings that we act like spoiled children who can't appreciate our Triune God's hard work? Are we so busy wanting more that we fail to give thanks for what we already have? Paul warns about letting our minds be controlled by discontent and evil desires. Our sinful nature can't help it. Hostile to God, it can only wallow in self pity. But Christ came to rescue us, sending the Holy Spirit to lift us out of the muck and mire. Now "*we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*" (Romans 8:12–14 NIV84)

God's master plan is to take away our bad fear and give us the good "fear" that respects God as our loving Father for Jesus' sake. *"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" (Romans 8:15 NIV84)* "Abba" is like "Papa" or "Daddy" in its warm family Aramaic. One pastor saw an Israeli father running with his son piggy back along a beach in Israel. As he bounced, the son kept calling, "Abba! Abba! Abba!"

But what if you feel you've lost that relationship with God? What if I feel more like an orphaned child than one of God's **Adopted children**? Brothers and sisters in Christ want this grace and comfort for each other. The Holy Spirit gave me a lesson in His loving intensity after a long day of teaching on the far side of God's green earth. A man who had listened intently for several days was asking a question which I thought I understood through my interpreter. But each time I answered, the class became more agitated. Something was wrong, and I was only making it worse. Finally a sister in Christ who knew their language stepped in. As she spoke, their faces relaxed. The man looked so relieved. Everyone clapped. Later my dear sister explained: "The students knew we only had a few more minutes before hurrying to the airport. But their classmate was wondering if God would take him back after he wandered away from the faith. The class was afraid he would not get God's comfort because your interpreter was not helping. I told him the story of the Prodigal Son and our Father's forgiveness. (Luke 15:11-24) Then he could see that God does want him back. So everyone was happy for him." **Adopted children**, so am I.

△ Co-heirs with Christ (vv.16-17)

Sometimes we don't feel safe and content in our faith because we block off too much wind. Years ago some dairy farmer friends explained why they started raising their calves in outside shelters. In the barn was too much disease. The fresh air was good for little calf lungs to grow strong and healthy. Jesus told Nicodemus in today's Gospel Lesson: *"The wind blows where it pleases. You hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."* (John 3:8 W.P.) Put on your goggles, open your Bible and let His holy wind soothe your soul.

The fact that you are concerned about your faith is already proof you belong to God's family. Otherwise, you would not care. Your new nature has only holy desires which your old nature keeps trying to put down. But **Led by the Spirit**, we head out into the gentle breezes of God's Word and find this is true again and again: *"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."* Here is one of my favorite testimonies. Your holy desires prove you are **Co-heirs with Christ**:

✉ *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.* (Philippians 2:12f NIV84)

Why do we always expect this to be easy? Do we forget the final verse of today's text? *"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."* Some suffering we cause by our sin. But we have God's forgiving grace even then. God always welcomes us back like the Prodigal Son while the angels party in heaven over every sinner who repents. Then even our suffering with Christ is blessed. As the Lord tells us later in this Great Victory Chapter of Romans 8: *"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* (v.28 NIV84)

So my family has been **Led by the Spirit**. Dad and Mom have been in the Midwest for Lent... Easter services, and our family reunion last week. A few strokes and heart attack put Dad in hospice. But this joined our blended ten siblings in prayer. My blessing in a devotion Dad repeated on the grandkids later. God guided our caravan safely to Chicago, the jet to Portland and a few hours home. **Co-heirs with Christ** we pray: "Christ, I suffer here with thee; There, oh, share thy joy with me!" (CW 452:2) Amen.