

**In the name of our Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

<sup>14</sup>Indeed, those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>For you did not receive a spirit of slavery so that you are afraid again, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we call out, “*Abba, Father!*” <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself joins our spirit in testifying that we are God’s children.

<sup>17</sup>Now if we are children, we are also heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, since we suffer with him, so that we may also be glorified with him. **This is God’s Word.**

**Dear fellow children of God,**

Do you ever have doubts – doubts about choices you have made in life; doubts about your faith; doubts that seem to suck the joy out of your life and cause you to worry all the time? The Apostle Paul certainly had challenges in his life and plenty of reasons to have doubts.

He struggled with sin and temptation. Earlier in his letter to the Romans he said, **“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup>For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.”** (Romans 7:18-19).

And Paul had a thorn in the flesh, some chronic condition that affected his life continually which he had asked God to remove, but God had basically told Paul to live with it. Paul had plenty of reasons to doubt and despair about his faith and his life. He had plenty of reasons to complain, but he didn’t. His letter to the Romans lays out how having God in his life helped him to set aside his doubts and any thought of despair.

This small portion of his letter, that is our sermon text for today, helps us to set aside our doubts too as it answers the question, **“How can I be sure – sure that God loves me and cares for me?”** As we consider Paul’s words, he brings us that assurance through our Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**I.** How can I be sure that God loves me? Paul says it is because of the Holy Spirit. You would think that Paul would focus on the Son; on Jesus but in this 1<sup>st</sup> half of chapter 8 he is pointing us to the Spirit. Last week was Pentecost Sunday and we talked a lot about the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and in our lives. We talked about how the Holy Spirit performed a miracle in our lives by giving us the gift of faith so that we could receive forgiveness for our sins and be declared “not guilty” in front of God’s judgment throne, but Paul wants us to know that the work of the Holy Spirit doesn’t end with the gift of faith.

That’s why he points out, **“Indeed, those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”** Jesus speaks to us through his Word and the Holy Spirit helps us to understand the Word and apply it to our lives. James wrote, **“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”** (James 2:26). Our works are an indication of the faith that is in our hearts. It is an indication that we are being led by the Spirit and that we are a Child of God and that changes our relationship with God.

Paul points out this relationship as he tells us, **“For you did not receive a spirit of slavery so that you are afraid again, but you received the Spirit of adoption.”** The Holy Spirit has taken us from being a slave to our sins and having a fear of God and his punishment for our sins, to a wonderful adoption into God’s family where we can now live as a child of God.

We belong to a family and we receive the benefits of being part of God’s Family. Benefits like forgiveness for our sins, comfort from our heavenly Father and getting to tell others about our family as Paul writes, **“<sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself joins our spirit in testifying that we are God’s children.”**

You might say that the Holy Spirit is the official seal on our adoption papers that bring us into God’s family and the Holy Spirit continues to lead us in life through the Word. The work of the Holy Spirit in our lives shows us that God loves us, but Paul also points out that we can be sure that God loves us because of the relationship we now have with the Father.

**II.** As a child of God, we can cry out to God in a very personal way, “Abba, Father!” Abba, expressing a close relationship with the Father whom we look to for our every need. Luther explained how the Father provides for us in his explanation to the 2<sup>nd</sup> article of the Apostle’s Creed: **“And I believe that God still preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, property and home, spouse and children, land, cattle and all that I own, and all I need to keep my body and life. God also preserves me by defending me against all danger, guarding and protecting me from all evil. All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserve it.”<sup>1</sup>** We need God in our lives to preserve us, to discipline us as needed and specially to forgive us.

But Paul also points out, **“<sup>17</sup>Now if we are children, we are also heirs—heirs of God”** Children don’t think about an inheritance too often anymore because people are living longer and many times any inheritance is often gone by the time a person dies. But Peter describes this inheritance for us as, **“an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you.”** (1 Peter 1:4). It is an inheritance that will always be there for God’s people – for you and for me. What is that inheritance? Quite simply put, it is heaven. That means an eternity of joy and a perfect life with no sorrow or pain or any of the issues we have here on this earth.

But we share in that inheritance already here on this earth. For God wipes away our sorrow and tears. He comforts us in every need and provides strength to move forward. He quiets our doubts as he comes to us through his Word – through his Son Jesus.

**III.** On this Trinity Sunday, as we talk about God’s great love for us, we have to talk about Jesus. Our Gospel lesson reminds us that God the Father loves us so much that he sent his son, Jesus, into the world to redeem our sins. And Jesus, himself said that he did not come to condemn but to save us and that is exactly what he has done. Now, as we live our lives, guided by the Holy Spirit, Paul reminds us that as a child of God we share in the sufferings of Christ.

---

<sup>1</sup> Luther’s Catechism, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, NPH 1998, David P. Kuske, page 4

His suffering brings us life and forgiveness. Our suffering might come as a result of talking about Jesus' suffering – as a result of sharing the good news of the gospel. We might suffer as we take a stand against the influences of the world but that's okay because we will also share in the glory of our Lord when we receive our inheritance of heaven.

So, what do I do when I have doubts – when life gets me down and I don't know where to turn? Remember that God loves you and he cares about you. The evidence is all there. Jesus went to the cross to pay for your sins. The Holy Spirit gave you the gift of faith and continues to work in your heart on a daily basis and the Father preserves you and provides for your needs. We might suffer in this world because we are a child of God but we have an inheritance that is better than anything in this world waiting for us. So, cry out to God in prayer and listen to his reassuring Word in answer and let him bring you true peace and contentment. Amen.