

IN NOMINE JESU

THE SPIRIT BEARS WITNESS: SERMON, TRINITY VIII

Hear again the Word of God for this eighth Sunday after Trinity:

“For all of you did not receive (a) spirit of slavery for fear again, but you all received (the) Spirit of adopted sonship, by whom we continue to cry out, ‘O Abba, O Father!’”¹

Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This week’s readings resound with the cries of those who call upon the Lord. The Psalm set the stage for the Church with these words: *“Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous!”²* The Old Testament reading reinforced the call of those who would be faithful, as Jeremiah asked, *“who has paid attention to his word and listened?”³* Only those who truly hear the Word and heed it in faith are able to rightly respond back to God.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus gives forth a warning for those who call upon Him saying, “Lord, Lord.” He stated that “not everyone who” so calls upon Him “will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of [His] Father in heaven.”⁴ That admonition then leads the Church to the call of the faithful as recorded by St. Paul for use in the Church:

¹ Romans 8:15.

² Crossway Bibles, The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, (Wheaton, Illinois: Good News Publishers, 2001). Psalm 33:1a.

³ Ibid. Jeremiah 23:18c.

⁴ Ibid. Matthew 7:21.

“For all of you did not receive (a) spirit of slavery for fear again, but you all received (the) Spirit of adopted sonship, by whom we continue to cry out, ‘O Abba, O Father!’”⁵

This focus text, and the verses surrounding it, contains a treasury of comfort for those who are called by the Gospel, enlightened by the Holy Spirit working through the Word which enables them to cling to Christ-crucified for the forgiveness of all their sins. The central jewel is the proclamation that those who are “in Christ,” - you who are baptized and regular hearers and doers of the Word of God - have the divinely legal title of sons of the living God. That is the meaning behind the phrase “the Spirit of adopted sonship.”

What this, your status before God in Christ, means is that you have all the rights to your Father’s estate. From today’s text, that means that you have a share in the eternal glory of the Father. It was given to you as you died with Christ and rose to new life in Him. The good news is that your share in the eternal glory is now, and it is also not yet.

That is because, while you are already named an inheriting son of God, you are also still in this life. On account of that you are still an heir of the father of all humanity, Adam. His sinful nature, though washed away by forgiveness, nonetheless, still clings to Christians while we remain in this life. Perhaps a return to

⁵ Romans 8:15.

the basic teachings of the Christian faith will help you to understand this sinner/saint existence that wars in you each day.

Dr. Luther wrote, in explaining the Christian life in Baptism, after asking the question, *“What does such baptizing with water signify?”*

“Answer: It signifies that the Old Adam in us, together with all sins and evil lusts, should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance and be put to death, and that the new man should come forth daily and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God’s presence.”⁶

Did you recall that little lesson? If so, good, though it will not earn you an higher place in heaven. If not, then take time to review the fundamentals of the Christian faith sometime this week, for your earthly good! It may help you to remember that your *“faith does not constitute Baptism but receives it.”⁷*

The concepts of Dr. Luther’s teaching about Holy Baptism, its use, its remembrance, and its gifts are grounded in Holy Scripture, including the Letter to the Romans. It is to the section for this week we now return, keeping God’s work in, with and under Holy Baptism in your minds as the Word is proclaimed and reviewed.

Our text began with a summary statement, numbered in most English Bibles in two verses. He states:

⁶ Tappert, Theodore, ed. The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959). 349.

⁷ Ibid. 443.

“So then, O brothers, we remain debtors - not to the flesh, to continue to live according to the flesh. For if you continue to live according to (the) flesh, you will die, but if by (the) Spirit, you continue to put to death the practices of the body, you will live.”⁸

A comparison and contrast is taking place. Just as in the Catechism’s reference to drowning and dying is coupled with rising and living, so too are the words in this section. The comparison is between living in the flesh and living in the Spirit. The contrast is found in the declaration that living in the flesh is actually remaining in death, and living in the Spirit is actually remaining in life eternal.

There seems to be, in churchly circles, some discussion of what Paul’s term ‘flesh’ might mean. For our purposes, we understand it to mean third part of the unholy trinity – the broken, false image of the Holy Trinity. This consists, as you will recall, of the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh. With these words, the Apostle is referring to the old Adam that clings to every Christian, the one that you are called to drown every day.

St. Paul indicates to his Christian hearers that we remain debtors. That is, all who are saved by grace through faith, without any work, merit or choice on our part, owe a debt, of thanksgiving, for that which God has done to us, in us and for us.

One teacher of the Church describes the Christian obligation like this:

“If it is a present, divine reality, it is therefore also a present obligation, a divine claim laid on us: ‘We are debtors...’ We owe it to our Creator and Deliverer to ‘live’ the life which He has given us...”⁹

⁸ Romans 8:12-13.

That is third use of the law language, I know. But, it is language that is necessary to help destroy the old nature who desires to place the debt, the obligation, of salvation upon the sinner. That would mean that Christians would be turned to looking at the “good” we do as the means of repaying the debt we owe.

That would put us in another church body, one which accounts salvation as faith plus works as necessary to repay the debt that is owed. We will not do that, nor can we biblically advocate such a means of salvation. Further, the confessions of the Evangelical Church state: “we reject and condemn as false the view that good works are free to believers in the sense that it lies within their free option if they may or want to do or not do them or to act in a contrary fashion and nonetheless still retain faith and God’s mercy and His grace.”¹⁰

That is not to say that we do not do good works, for that also would be unbiblical. Rather, we will cling to the revealed mind of God, which declares:

“For whosoever is continually being led by the Spirit of God, these remain the sons of God.”¹¹

Faith in Christ produces good works. These are done in us, and through us, by the Holy Spirit. The good that we do is therefore proof that we are remaining the sons of God, sharing in His glory even on earth.

⁹ Franzmann, Martin. *Romans: A Commentary*. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 145.

¹⁰ Tappert, Theodore, ed. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959). 554.

¹¹ Romans 8:14.

We continue to discover in this text the internal dimension of the Holy Spirit working in His Temple, the assembly of believers wherein He dwells. You are, in God's sight, for He is the one who is building this eternal Holy Temple, living stones. His Word, as it is being proclaimed today, is the mortar which cements you into the glorious eternal walls.

As you are so connected to one another by the Word, so you are added to the building that cannot fall. This Word is that which gives you strength to fight against even your own sinful flesh when it, with the other two – the devil and the world – or apart from them, tries to pull you from the glory that is even now yours in Christ Jesus.

To comfort you in your daily struggles with your Old Adam, the Apostle writes that which we have named this week's theme text:

"For all of you did not receive (a) spirit of slavery for fear again, but you all received (the) Spirit of adopted sonship, by whom we continue to cry out, 'O Abba, O Father!'"¹²

Again Paul resorts to word play to communicate divine truths. Now, you hear the words "spirit of slavery for fear" held against "the Spirit of adopted sonship." You who were once slaves to sin, which abducted you from the moment of conception from the household of the Father, are now sons by legal right of the Father. For us,

¹² Romans 8:15.

“the battle with sin is not a momentary event... but a lifetime commitment... Sin abducts, God adopts.”¹³

Since God has adopted you into His household, it means that you have all the legal rights granted to natural born sons in the ancient Greco-Roman world. You have a share in the estate, not as a minor who must wait under the care of a guardian, but as a full-fledged adult who may exercise rights of property. What are these rights?

You are free to conduct your life rightly under the law. You are free to recline at the Father’s Table, feasting with (and on) the Son. You are free to follow your Father’s Word, not out of compulsion, but from love, sacrificial love, as a child who has a place and right to be in the Father’s home. Lest you doubt your place in the household, St. Paul’s inspired words are repeated:

“The Spirit Himself continues to witness together with our spirit that we remain the children of God.”¹⁴

As part of the household of God, you have the Spirit of God dwelling within you. This Holy Spirit takes the Father’s food – His Word and Sacraments – and uses them to nurture and strengthen you into the son of God that you are still maturing into in this life. (No, I am not declaring progressive sanctification – that as

¹³ Gasque, W. Ward, ed. New International Biblical Commentary. Vol. 6, Romans, by James Edwards. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992). 207.

¹⁴ Romans 8:16.

God's child you will grow more and more perfect in this life that you will not sin any more. That is simply not true according to the full, revealed Word of God).

What I am saying is, that as you remain attached to the Father through the means He has chosen – Word, Word and Water, Bread/Wine as Body/Blood of the Son – you will learn to use more of the faith you have been given. You are becoming a more mature believer even as this Word falls into your ears, from your ears to the center of your being, from there to your continued good confession of Christ-crucified, and into your remaining mortal days.

Like other elements contained in human maturing, the growth of the Christian is not easy. Even those who have received the down-payment of their salvation, the gift of the Holy Spirit, will struggle with sin and its effects in this life. St. Paul continues:

“And if children, then heirs - heirs certainly of God - co-heirs also with Christ, if indeed we continue to suffer with (Him) in order that we also might be glorified with (Him).”¹⁵

What that means is that “suffering is not a glitch in the divine purpose or a lapse on the part of believers. Suffering is an unavoidable and necessary part of God's purpose for Christ and his church.”¹⁶ It is in the midst of such suffering with Christ that the legally adopted son of God cry to our Father. Our cry, “O Abba, O Father” [is]

¹⁵ Romans 8:17.

¹⁶ Gasque, W. Ward, ed. New International Biblical Commentary. Vol. 6, Romans, by James Edwards. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992). 209.

*the product... of conscious understanding... [such a cry denotes the Christian as] having a status comparable to that of Jesus Himself...,*¹⁷ and in that a share in His eternal glory.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Trinity VIII (LUTHERAN SERVICE BOOK One-year series)

Jeremiah 23:16-19; Romans 8:12-17; Matthew 7:15-23

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Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Additional Notes:

There is an Old Man/New Man contrast going on. This makes a nice tie to Dr. Luther's Small Catechism's teaching on Holy Baptism.

From Making Romans Relevant intensive week:

This section represents the internal dimension of the Holy Spirit's work.

υιοθεσις – there was widespread adoption practiced in the Greco-Roman world.

Dr. Moo places 12 and 13 at the end of the paragraph 8:1-11, and starts a new paragraph at 14.

"The faith of which we are speaking, moreover, has its existence in penitence, that is, it is conceived in the terrors of conscience that feels God's wrath against our sins and looks for forgiveness of sins and deliverance from sin. This faith ought to grow and be strengthened in those terrors and in other afflictions. And so it cannot exist in those who live according to the flesh, who take pleasure in their lusts and obey them... And in Rom. 8:12,13... Receiving the forgiveness of sins for a heart terrified and fleeing from sin, therefore, such a faith does not remain in those who obey their lusts, nor does it exist together with mortal sin."¹⁸

"Concerning this unwilling and recalcitrant flesh, Paul says, 'I pommel my body and subdue it' (I Cor. 9:27), and again, they who belong to Christ have crucified (that is, killed) their flesh with its passions, desires, and deeds (Gal. 5:24; Rom. 8:13). But we reject and condemn as false

¹⁷ Barker, Kenneth, ed. The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary. Romans 1-8, by Douglas Moo. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991). 538.

¹⁸ Tappert, Theodore, ed. The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959). 126.

the view that good works are free to believers in the sense that it lies within their free option if they may or want to do or not do them or to act in a contrary fashion and nonetheless still retain faith and God's mercy and His grace."¹⁹

"We should often, with all diligence and earnestness, repeat and impress upon Christians who have been justified by faith these true, immutable, and divine threats and earnest punishments and admonitions... 'If you live according to the flesh you will die' (Rom. 8:13)."²⁰

"5. Fruits of the Spirit, however, are those works which the Spirit of God, who dwells in the believers, works through the regenerated, and which the regenerated perform in so far as they are reborn and do them as spontaneously as if they knew no command, threat, or reward. In this sense the children of God live in the law and walk according to the law of God. In his epistles St. Paul calls it the law of Christ and the law of the mind. Thus God's children are 'not under law, but under grace' (Rom. 7:23; 8:1, 14)."²¹

"But after a man is converted, and thereby enlightened, and his will is renewed, the he will that which is good, in so far as he is reborn or a new man, and he delights in the law of God according to his inmost self (Rom. 7:22). And immediately he does good, as much and as long as the Holy Spirit motivates him, as St. Paul says, 'For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.' This impulse of the Holy Spirit is no coercion or compulsion because the converted man spontaneously does that which is good..."²²

"The regenerated do good works from a free spirit..." 7. This, however, should be understood exactly as our Lord and the apostles themselves explain it, as applying only to the liberated spirit which does good works not from fear of punishment, like a slave, but out of a love of righteousness, like a child (Rom. 8:15)."²³

"Next, since the Holy Spirit dwells in the elect who have come to faith as he dwells in his temple, and is not idle in them but urges them to obey the commandments of God, believers likewise should not be idle, still less oppose the urgings of the Spirit of God, but should exercise themselves in all Christian virtues, in all godliness, modesty, temperance, patience and brotherly love, and should diligently seek to 'confirm their call and election' so that the more they experience the power and majesty of the Spirit within themselves, the less they will doubt their election. For the Spirit testifies to the elect that they are 'children of God' (Rom. 8:16)."²⁴

"Just as justification belongs to faith, so eternal life belongs to it. As Peter says (I Pet. 1:9), 'As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls.' Our opponents grant that the justified are children of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Afterwards works merit other bodily and spiritual rewards because they please God through faith. There will be distinctions in the glory of the saints.

Here our opponents reply that eternal life is called a reward and that therefore it is merited by the merit of condignity through good works... Paul call eternal life a 'gift' (Rom. 6:29) because the righteousness bestowed on us for Christ's sake at the same time makes us sons of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17)..."²⁵

"The keeping of the law that follows faith deals with the law, in which a reward is offered and owed, not gratis but for our works. Those who merit this are justified before they keep the law. First they have been 'transferred into the kingdom of God's Son,' as Paul says (Col. 1:13), and made fellow heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17)."²⁶

¹⁹ Ibid. 554.

²⁰ Ibid. 556.

²¹ Ibid. 481.

²² Ibid. 533.

²³ Ibid. 477.

²⁴ Ibid. 628.

²⁵ Ibid. 161.

(v. 17): "The Spirit does not destroy our will but make us capable of willing and of doing; through Him we can put to death, that is, make cease, those 'deeds of the body' which make the body 'this body of death.'"²⁷

"God has drawn so close to us in His Son, and in His Spirit is so near to us, that we can make bold to use the impenitent familiarity of that children's word to call on Him... One can no longer speak truly of the present without speaking of the future too."²⁸

Verse 12 "so then" equals the conclusion that "provide(s) a transition to what follows..." "Freedom from the power of dominating sin and death through justification results in consequences for the present and eschatological existence of Christians... It is still possible for even justified Christians to conduct themselves as self-oriented and flesh-guided individuals... Paul is not speaking here only of ascetic practices... but of the inevitable consequence in Christian life of adaptation of oneself to the influence of the Spirit and divine grace."²⁹

The law of mortification does not make up the Christian life, it is the Holy Spirit who does this. "This is not a 'spirit' in the sense of a disposition or mutability that a slave would have which would connote anxiety and fear of a master..."³⁰ Paul plays on the word, *πνευμα*.

υιοθεσις was a technical term, "expressing the legal assumption of a person into the status of sonship in a natural family... Under the *patria potestas* 'parental authority' of God himself, and have legitimate status in that family..." It was not normal for Jews of the day to practice legal adoption.³¹

"Through the Spirit Christians proclaim God is Father." 'abba' in the Greek turned into *ο πατηρ* – "the combination became a liturgical formula in Greek-speaking Christian communities... the vital dynamism of the Spirit constitutes the sonship itself and bestows the power to recognize such a status."³²

The concept of inheritor is used in the Septuagint for Jud. 18:7; II Sam. 14:7, "meaning to 'give title to a possession.'" Christ's share of the Father's estate is glory. "Christian suffering is never an individual lonely experience; Jesus has suffered before, and Christian suffering is only the overflow of his (see Col. 1:24)."³³

"Luther said of v. 13: 'Therefore, we cannot overcome death and its evils by power and strength and we cannot escape them by running away from them in fear but only by bearing them patiently and willingly in weakness, i.e., without lifting a finger against them. This is the lesson Christ teaches us by his example: he went confidently to meet his Passion and his death' (Lectures on Romans, p. 230)... in the literature of early Palestinian Judaism there is no evidence of 'my Father' being used as a personal address to God."³⁴

In verses 12-13 there is a switch to the second person, which along with what also is there, "intensifies the note of admonition to the readers..."

²⁶ Ibid. 163.

²⁷ Franzmann, Martin. Romans: A Commentary. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 145.

²⁸ Ibid. 146.

²⁹ Albright, William Foxwell and Freedman, David Noel, eds. The Anchor Bible. Vol. 33, Romans, by Joseph Fitzmyer. (New York: Doubleday, 1993). 492.

³⁰ Ibid. 499.

³¹ Ibid. 500.

³² Ibid. 501.

³³ Ibid. 502.

³⁴ Gasque, W. Ward, ed. New International Biblical Commentary. Vol. 6, Romans, by James Edwards. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992). 209.

"In all rabbinic literature there is no passage where the Spirit of God aids believers in prayer... God is by nature Father... near and intimate."³⁵

"Of Paul's 41 uses of υιος, 17 refer to Christ, 8 are used of Christians or of the 'people of God,' 15 are used with no theological meaning, and 1 occurs in an OT quotation. Paul never uses τεκνον of Christ but uses it to describe Christians 9 times, and with no theological significance 30 times."³⁶

"We note that flesh (σαρξ, sarx) does not refer only to our physical, or 'animal,' appetites (e.g., for food or drink or sex); nor does Paul refer even to a 'nature' within us... 'Flesh' sums up what we often call 'the world'; all that is characteristic of this life in its rebellion against God... What is meant is death in its fullest theological sense: eternal separation from God as the penalty for sin."³⁷

"Depicting sinful actions as τας πραξεις του σωματος... is even more unusual for Paul... But it may be better to retain the usual meaning of σωμα and find a pejorative connotation in our implicit carry-over from σαρξ at the beginning of the verse: 'deeds worked out through the body under the influence of the flesh.'³⁸

"υιοθεσια of God dominates vv. 14-17."³⁹

vv. 15-16 is: "a somewhat parenthetical elaboration and justification of the assertion that those led by the Spirit are sons of God... Before the cross, the people of Israel, 'under the law,' lived as 'minors,' little better than slaves; in a similar way, Gentiles were enslaved under the 'elementary principles (στοιχεια, stoicheia) of the world' (Gal. 4:9), subject to the 'spirit of bondage' (Rom. 8:15)."⁴⁰

οσοι: "an inclusive sense ('all those who') is preferable."⁴¹

It is "more likely that only the second πνευμα in the verse, the 'Spirit of adoption,' denotes the Holy Spirit."⁴²

"We may be right to take πνευμα υιοθεσιας in the sense of 'the Spirit who confirms adoption...'"⁴³

κραξω – "Paul is quite clear in attributing this cry to us..."⁴⁴

Dr. Moo sees verse 17 as transitional and ties the concept of inheritance to the Promise given by God to Abraham.⁴⁵

"It is better to view "eiper" as stating a real condition, with emphasis perhaps on the condition ('if it is indeed then')."⁴⁶

³⁵ Ibid. 208.

³⁶ Barker, Kenneth, ed. The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary. Romans 1-8, by Douglas Moo. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991).

³⁷ Ibid. 527.

³⁸ Ibid. 528-529.

³⁹ Ibid. 532.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 533.

⁴¹ Ibid. 534.

⁴² Ibid. 536.

⁴³ Ibid. 538.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 538.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 540.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 542.