

Trinity Sunday. May 27th 2018

Passage- Romans 8:12-17

and also John 3:1-17.

Our God breathed scriptures in verses 14-17 in Romans 8, remind us in each verse that we are God's children, his sons and daughters. And in each of those verses this privileged status is related to the work of the Holy Spirit.

And in those verses, Paul gives four pieces of evidence of how the Spirit works within us.

Thanks to John Stott in his book on "The Message of Romans" for insights and shaping this structure.

1. the Spirit leads us into holiness.
2. in our relationship with God he replaces fear with freedom.
3. in our prayers he prompts us enable us to call God Father.
4. the first fruits of what is to come.

1.Spirit leads us into holiness.

Paul reminds us that we battle with the flesh - the fallen sinful nature within each of us. Paul in another place

"For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want." (Gal 5:17).

We are a walking civil war as someone once said. Paul has been wonderfully unpacking the gospel over previous chapters and the supremacy and grace of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Yet here he calls on believers to fresh moral responsibility and endeavour. He urges these believers not to live according to our sinful natures - but to live another way, a way of true life.

"if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. ... because those led by the Spirit of God are the children of God." (vv13-14)

He points us to an old word of mortification, which means the process of putting the misdeeds of the body to death. Moritification isn't about making life hard for yourself, or *not* doing the things you enjoy. It is simply seeing what thoughts words actions are sins and calling them that and not explaining them away. It is rejecting those words and thoughts and actions as wrong.

How does mortification take place? He says - "you put to death". We aren't passive. We don't wait for it to be done for us or for us. We are responsible to put these deeds to death. Paul is clear - it is not by our skill, but by the love care and power of the Spirit.

For some, the sin has a hold which cannot be broken it feels, there is a constant sin confess sin confess cycle we are in and so we stop resisting because we have failed so many times. But the Bible doesn't simply exhort and ask us to try better - like a country in civil war and the western or wealthy nations make comments and complaints at distance telling all involved to do better. We hear - "but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body" we have a Helper as Jesus called him. We worship and adore the Holy Trinity - as John's Gospel reminds us

- a Father who loves this world, a Son who was sent, but also the Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, who comes to dwell within us. Who comes to help us in this internal war we are in.

How does the Spirit lead in these times of internal warfare? An old theologian said it was about:

'the daily hourly putting to death of the schemings and enterprises of the sinful flesh by means of the Spirit is a matter of being led, directed, impelled, controlled by the Spirit.'
(Cranfield).

He can grow in us the discipline, the desire, the determination to act but we need to take the initiative to make the decision of what needs removing from our life.

This all sounds very hard and not very exciting. The reason some sins have a home in life, is because it is too enjoyable, what it gives to us, how it meets a need or a gap within, how it allows us to self express in some way. It is hard to stop doing somethings. As I said, some are connected to other parts of our life. Anger, pain, fear. For other sins, we will miss it if we are honest - we may not want to give it up.

But we are reminded - of a wonderful promise in a single Greek word - "you will live". He is not talking about eternal life - the free gift of God. He points to a life - now - led by the Spirit, assured of God the Father's love. A rich fulfilling abundant life, which flows from putting to death the misdeeds of the body - worthwhile for each of us as it opens the door to fulness of life.

2.The Spirit replaces fears with freedom in our relationship with 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." (8:15). In Paul's day, an adopted son was one deliberately chosen by his adopting father to continue his name and inherit his estate. He was not in any way inferior to a son born in the ordinary way.

True story of a child. A little boy who had been adopted, and he was being teased in the playground about the fact that he was adopted. And he turned round to the people who were teasing him, and he said this: 'Look,' he said, 'my parents

chose me! **Your parents got stuck with you!**'

A second true story. In Hungary there is a lady called Ildika Papp. She was a homeless alcoholic. She was living out on the streets in a town near Budapest and somebody invited her on an Alpha Course, and on that course she gave her life to Christ and she experienced the love of Jesus. And she was set free from alcoholism. She got a job; she started life anew. 18 months later at an Alpha Training Conference she was interviewed and asked 'What difference has Jesus made to your life?' and this was her reply. She said, 'He's changed me from being a beggar to a princess.'

That's what he's done for all of us. He's made us sons and daughters of the King. So we're princes and princesses. We have been chosen. God is not stuck with us. We have been chosen to bear his name, to spread his name and to inherit.. The Spirit testifies to our spirit, deep within, that we are God's children. We can know it deep inside. There is freedom and confidence in our relationship with God.

3.The Spirit prompts us in our prayers to call God Father.

" By the Spirit we are able to cry "Abba Father." A prayer which characterised Jesus own prayer life - in the Garden of Gethesemane we hear Jesus pray "Abba Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will but what you will." (Mark 14:36). One scholar said of Jesus' prayers:

"Abba was an everyday word, a homely family-word. No Jew would have dared to address God in this manner. Jesus did it always, in all his prayers which are handed down to us, with one exception, the cry from the cross."

Abba Father was the main way he related to God the Father. And he told us, his disciples, when they asked to learn how to pray - Our Father - thus he authorised them and us, to use in their prayers to God the same intimate term which he used. Remarkable.

Last weekend, Prince Charles, walked Megan Markle down the aisle before her wedding. Prince Charles is heir to the English throne. Prince Charles has a lot of titles.

He's His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. He's the Duke of Cornwall, he's Knight of the Garter, he's Colonel in Chief of the Royal Regiment of Wales, he's the Duke of Rothsay, he's the Knight of the Thistle, he's the Rear Admiral of the Royal Navy, he's Great Master of the Order of Bath, he's the Earl of Chester, he's the Earl of Carrick, he's the Baron of Renfrew, Lord of the Isles, Great Steward of Scotland.

And if I or you were to write a letter we'd have to sign it ' to Your Royal Highness' from your most humble and obedient servant'.

But when Megan's father was unable to walk her down the aisle, Harry, said "Dad, Megan's father cannot come, can we talk

about something?" To William and Harry, Prince Charles, he's Dad. An amazing thing is that Jesus is saying we can have this kind of intimacy in our relationship with God. Our God has an amazing list of titles in Scripture and titles we can give him. Yet. The Spirit empowers us to speak to our Heavenly Father, literally as a small child would speak to his or her father, maybe how your young children speak to you, we can speak to our heavenly father in the same confident and child like manner.

If we put this passage with something Paul wrote earlier: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Romans 5:5).

The Spirit gives an inward assurance - he convinces us, ministers inside us of God's love on one hand and of God's fatherhood on the other.

4.The inheritance to come.

Now, if you believe our local weather forecast, our sunny weather is soon be replaced by clouds, lots I think! Paul has shared the sun of who lives within us but then as he shares about the inheritance to come, the clouds begin to gather he says -

"we are heirs, heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

Being a son or daughter, having the Spirit living within, being loved by the Father, does not prevent sufferings connected to being a faithful follower of Jesus. Today in the Netherlands,

many churches are remembering persecuted Christians across the globe - considering again how to give, to pray, to walk or stand alongside. We seek to do our part, but praying weekly for those countries where it is currently hardest to live and express Christian faith. It seems to be part of the plan. To be willing to suffer for Christ, taking on the sufferings that come through bearing his name and seeking to walk in his footsteps.

But what Paul has written offers perspective. A new dimension. His words offer in suffering, something to help it be more bearable - we are not alone, his Spirit is with us, within us. and we have the hope of future glory.

A Christian, you me, someone whose identity is a child of God, and someone who in ethical terms one who is led by the Spirit, seeking the inspiration and enablement of the Spirit.

So children of God indwelt with the Spirit, hold and model four characteristics - radical holiness, fearless freedom and confidence, intimate prayerfulness, and the hope of glory held within and despite suffering.

Prayer:

'Abba Father, what a privilege to speak these words. We want to know the witness, Lord, the assurance of your Spirit with our spirits, to strengthen our moral resolution to live as you long us to live, and to sustain us through whatever suffering we experience in our following of your Son. In Jesus name. Amen.'