

Daily Discipleship

Holy Trinity Sunday (B) – Romans 8:12-17

The Choices of Discipleship: *Heirs or Runaways?*

Focus Question: *How does my life reflect being an heir of God?*

word of life

“It is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ -- if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.” Romans 8:16-17 (NRSV)

Read Romans 8:12-17

Paul writes his letter to the Romans later in his life as a self-introduction to the people of Rome before his pending visit. In this letter, he summarizes much of his theology, including his understanding of life in the Spirit (Romans 8). In order to grasp the flow of Paul’s thinking, take time to read Romans 8:1-17.

Paul makes a distinction between life in the Spirit and life in the flesh. (Romans 8:1-8) Paul urges followers of Christ to choose a life in the Spirit. To set one’s mind on things of the flesh is to choose a path to death.

1. *What does it mean to live according to the Spirit?*
2. *What does it mean to choose to set your mind on things of the flesh?*

There is no room for any gray or in-between living in Paul’s theology. Clearly for Paul, there are two choices: life in the flesh or life in the Spirit. Being connected to God is to be connected to the Spirit, and to be connected to the Spirit is to be connected to Christ. It is all one process.

3. *What are the benefits of being connected to Christ?*

The Spirit, having raised Jesus from the dead, leads us on a path of life, giving new life to those with whom the Spirit dwells. Paul invites people to stay connected to the Spirit and Christ in order to obtain life.

4. *Why would someone choose not to stay connected to Christ?*

Paul further makes his point by using the very personal language of familial relationships. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are considered to be part of the family of God, adopted as God’s children and brought into God’s own family. Adopted children of God can even cry out with a deeply intimate call, “Abba!” meaning “papa” or “daddy.” God is not a distant parental figure, but is intimately connected to God’s children.

Paul deepens the connection of the family from being adopted to becoming an heir. “It is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.” (Romans 8:16 NRSV) To be an heir has a special ring to it, and consider the company! We are heirs beside Christ. Thanks be to God!

5. *What does it mean to be an heir of God?*
6. *What does it mean to be a joint heir with Christ?*

word among us

Joseph was 7 years old and mad at the world. He stomped into his bedroom, proceeded to load up his prize possessions and placed them roughly in his backpack. He was going to run away from home, but before he left, he stopped by the kitchen. Joseph wanted to tell his mother where he was going. He found his mother making his favorite homemade cookies, which called for a change in plans. He decided to stay awhile and eat a few cookies. Eventually, he forgot his plan to run away.

1. *Do you ever feel like running away?*
2. *What keeps you from doing so?*
3. *Is it possible to run away from God and God's ways? How so?*

In his letter to the Romans, Paul urges followers of Christ to keep God's Spirit dwelling in them and to live in the Spirit. It is really a matter of life and death. (Romans 8:9-11) Paul is clear about the distinction between a life in the Spirit and a life of the flesh. Anyone who has Christ has a life in the Spirit.

4. *Explain Paul's message in your own words.*
5. *Give an example from this past week of a choice you made to live according to the Spirit.*

Beginning in Romans 8:15, Paul develops the concept of followers of Christ being adopted by God and becoming heirs of God. This language of God's family is often used in the church and may be quite familiar. Some life-long Christians have always considered themselves to be connected to God's family, part of the royal lineage, heirs to God's many blessings.

6. *What does it mean for you to consider yourself adopted by God?*
7. *What does it mean to be part of God's family?*
8. *At what age did this begin to make sense to you?*

Part of being a mature disciple of Christ is to recognize the daily choices to follow Christ. The imagery of the choice between being an heir or a runaway is a rich one. More often, the reference is to being a saint or a sinner. Yet in reality, we are both at the same time – runaway and heir; saint and sinner. It is a daily struggle. The Holy Spirit is working on our side, creating heirs and saints.

Martin Luther writes, "We must not doubt that the Holy Spirit dwells in us. We must be sure and acknowledge that we are a 'temple of the Holy Spirit.' (1 Corinthians 6:19) For if someone experiences love toward the Word, and if he enjoys hearing, speaking, thinking and writing about Christ, he should know that this is not a work of human will or reason but a gift of the Holy Spirit." (*Lectures on Galatians, Luther's Works, volume 26*)

9. *How have you experienced living in the Spirit?*
10. *Knowing you are an heir of God, what might you do this week?*

Prayer

Loving God, teach us to live as your heir. Amen

Dig Deeper

John 3:1-17

last word

As you pass by people this week,
offer a silent prayer of encouragement for each
to grow as an heir of God.



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