

A family picture of the Triune God.

Text: Romans 8:14-17 for 5/27/2018 by Pastor Bolwerk

Family pictures: I'm quite sure most of you here today have some family pictures displayed around your home. But home is not the only place we display those pictures. Many of us carry pictures of our loved one in our wallets or purses. People display family pictures in the places where they work, on their cell phones, and even on social media. Why do we do this? Because in those pictures we see people who have special meaning in our lives. In those pictures we see more than just a person. We see someone we care about and someone who cares about us. We see people with whom we share a close, personal connection.

As the Apostle Paul writes to the Christians in Rome he displays for them a family picture. But it's not Paul's family picture, and the picture is not just for the Roman Christians. Paul sets before us

Theme: A family picture of the Triune God.

- I. See the Spirit leading.
- II. See the Father adopting.
- III. See the Son sharing.

As Paul sets this picture before us with his words the first thing we notice in this picture is the Spirit is leading. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit leads around the Father and the Son. No, the three persons of the Triune God are all equal and all work together. The 'leading' that is taking place in this picture the Holy Spirit leading us into faith through God's Word.

From scripture we know that "**Faith comes from hearing the message**" (Romans 10:17) and that message is the Good News about Jesus. The Spirit uses that gospel message to lead people into faith in different ways. For some of us the Spirit led us into faith through Baptism. At the baptismal font, water was used along with Jesus' command to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As the message of God's saving name was spoken over us the Spirit used those words to create faith in our hearts. Yet for some of you that may not have been how the Spirit led you into faith. He may have done it simply by bringing you into contact with God's word. Maybe a family member or friend told you about Jesus as their Savior. Perhaps someone gave you a Bible and encouraged you to read it or invited you to church. In some way you came into contact with that saving gospel message, and through that word the Spirit led you into faith.

As the Holy Spirit leads us into faith he is really leading us into a relationship with the Triune God. Paul says, "**you received the Spirit of sonship**" (v. 15). Paul is telling us that the Spirit leads us into a childlike relationship with this holy God. Normally, the relationship between a child and a parent is a very close and loving relationship. But in this sinful world in which we live we know that is not always the case. For any relationship to be strong that relationship requires trust. So the Spirit leads us into this relationship with God by creating trust within us. The Spirit gives us the ability to understand and trust God's word. The Spirit is helping us to understand all God has done to save us. The Spirit leads us to trust this Triune God.

Unfortunately, we don't always like to follow the Spirit's lead. We don't always feel like we can trust God with our entire lives. We don't always trust God to give us what we want when we want it. We feel like we have to handle all the little things in our lives and that God is only

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there to take care of the big stuff. And when the Spirit tries to lead us away from danger of a favorite sin, then we really don't like to follow. How many times have we allowed gossip, or greed, or grumbling against others, or even a grudge lead us away from trusting our loving God?

But the Spirit never gives up working on us. He keeps working to build our trust in God by bringing back into our minds all the good that God has done for us. The Spirit reminds us of the forgiveness we have for our lack of trust because God sent a Savior who rescued us from that sin.

As we look again at this picture it's not just the Holy Spirit that we see working. We also see the Father adopting. God the Father is adopting *us* to be his own children. If you were to adopt a child, what would you want that child to be like? Would you adopt a child who had murdered his parents? Has been caught stealing from others? Would you adopt a child who was always lying? What about a child who was manipulative, or a child who felt like they were entitled to everything you have and would do anything they could to get it? Would you adopt a child like that?

Our heavenly Father did when he adopted us into his family. We've done those things I have mentioned. Jesus said anyone who hates is a murderer. How many times have we hated brothers or sisters or parents? We've stolen from others by wasting their time. We've gossiped, we've lied, and we have done things to manipulate others. And believe it or not we have done far worse: We have put ourselves before God, or at the very least tried to make ourselves equal with God. We put our wants, needs, and desires ahead of God's holy will acting as if God owes us; acting as if we deserve God's loving care and attention. What we really deserved is to live as eternal orphans, rejected by God, and forever abandoned by him to the confines of hell.

But our heavenly Father is an amazing God. Instead of abandoning us, the Father gave up his own child, so he could make us his children. God the Father allowed his own Son to suffer and die to pay the penalty for our selfish pride and sinful self-idolatry. **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"** (John 3:16). The Father adopts us into his family by faith and gives us forgiveness and eternal life.

But it's more than just a life that the Father gives us. He also gives us an inheritance. Along with adopting us through the saving work of his Son, the Father allows us to share his inheritance with his Son. Paul tells us, **"Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ"** (v. 17a). What is it that Christ has inherited? An eternal Kingdom and the power and authority to rule that Kingdom. Christ has inherited the mansions of heaven, and the eternal praise of the angels who do his bidding.

Through the words of the prophets and apostles our heavenly Father lets us know that we are going to share in that inheritance. Trusting the work of Jesus, we will one day stand around Christ's throne, sharing in his heavenly glory, serving him as the royal priests that he has made us, and living eternally in the mansions that he has prepared for us. What an awesome picture that will be!

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But let's look at God's family picture again. As we look at this picture of the Triune God we see the Son sharing. What do we see God's Son sharing with us? We see Jesus sharing with us his suffering. Paul says we are, "**co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings**" (v. 17).

That certainly doesn't sound like a good thing for Jesus to share with us. We really don't like suffering. We would rather not suffer. In fact, if we had our way we would never have to suffer. So often we go out of our way to avoid suffering for Jesus' sake. We will even go so far as to avoid anything that would make us even a little uncomfortable. Like standing up for what God says is right. We will do that as long as it's not inconvenient. Or how about pointing out a sin that is leading a person away from God and into hell? We would do that but we don't want to offend anyone or make them feel like we are judging them. How about telling someone about Jesus and how he saved them from their sin and guilt? We'll do that as long as it's not in front of other people, especially people who might make fun of us!

Sadly, when Jesus shares his suffering we usually turn the other way. But the suffering our brother Jesus shares is not done to punish us or to be cruel toward us. We share in Jesus' suffering to prepare us for what is to come. Suffering reminds us that we have sins that need forgiving. Suffering drives us back to our Savior's cross. In repentance, that suffering drives us into Jesus' loving arms, clinging to him for forgiveness of our shameful hiding. We trust Jesus to forgive our sinful longing to avoid suffering for him and his kingdom.

Jesus shares with us his suffering because he also wants to share something else. Jesus wants to share with us his glory. As Paul said, "**we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory**" (v. 17). If every day was sunny and the weather was perfect, after a while a sunny day would no longer seem that special would it? If we never faced any suffering or sorrow in this world, after a while heaven would no longer seem all that special would it?

Christ, our brother, has ascended into heaven to prepare a place for us, a place where we can share in his glory. We have a small taste of that glory now. We share in Christ's glory when in our worship we hear again that our sins are forgiven because of Jesus. We sense Christ's glory when we tell someone about his saving work, and when we see in their eyes that spark of faith as they enjoy, for the first time, the comfort of Jesus' forgiveness and peace.

But there is a greater glory we will share in. One day we will stand in the throne room of heaven itself. There will be no more sorrow or mourning or pain. Can we even begin to image what it will be like to have no pain?! And there, as we sing our praise to Jesus we will feel and hear the glory of thousands upon thousands of voices as they praise our Lord for his saving work. We will sing with the angels as we stand in awe of our brother, our Savior, our King, Jesus Christ "**who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God**" (Hebrews 12:2). Look again and again at this family picture, because in it we see the Son sharing his love and his glory with us.

Well, that brings us to the last person in this picture that we want to look at, and that person is you. By the gospel the Spirit has led you to the Father. The Father has adopted you to be his own child and to share in his inheritance. God's Son shares with you not only his

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suffering, but also his glory. It's a picture worth displaying. It's a picture worth sharing. Display the Triune God's family picture. Display it proudly as you live your lives in this world, because by God's grace he has made you a part of that picture. It is a picture where everyone gets to smile eternally. Amen.