

Romans 8:12-17^{iv}

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” 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.

^{iv} About the Second Reading: Romans 8:12-17

The presentation of the Trinity in the scriptures is not a matter of formal definition but of the living experience of God revealed in creation, redemption and sanctification. For example, in 1 Thessalonians, our earliest New Testament document, Paul speaks of God as Father, of Jesus as Lord and of the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 1:1-5).

Here in Romans 8, Paul mentions, within the space of one chapter, the Spirit as being the Spirit of God (8:9), the Spirit of Christ (8:9) and the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (8:2). Paul seems neither to intend nor to feel the need for any particular distinction among these phrases. He emphasizes that the source of the Spirit is God, that the Spirit’s full manifestation is in Christ and that Christians experience the Spirit communally in the body of Christ, the Church.

The Spirit gives to Christians “the spirit of adoption” (v. 15). While Jesus is the Son by proper relationship, Christians are offspring of God by adoption. We are to call upon God as “Abba! Father!” (v. 15) as did Jesus. Adoption was rare among Jews, but more common in the Hellenistic world. Its primary importance was to establish inheritance rights. Christians are “joint heirs with Christ” (v. 17), sharing in the redemptive act of Christ’s passion and resurrection and looking forward to sharing in his glorification.