

*12So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— 13for 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. 14For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 15For 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!” 16it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God,*

*17and 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. 18I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. 19For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; 20for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; 23and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 24For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? 25But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*

I missed the news for a month. We were on vacation – I seldom watched TV or listened to the radio – I only saw a newspaper a few times. I did not hear much about Barack Obama or John McCain though I noticed a lot of bumper stickers. I did not hear much about natural disasters. I heard little about wars or turmoil. Even with what little I heard it was difficult to not hear something about mortgages and banks. When we saw a friend of my daughter’s in Seattle she talked about the wildfires in California, her home state. So we were not completely in the dark. But mostly we were without news.

Had I heard all the news during that month, what do you think – would I be more hopeful today – or more fearful?

Throughout the years of my being a pastor I have noticed that the folks that are most tuned in to the evening news tend to be more fearful and pessimistic. They might tell me that they are more realistic and they certainly are when reality is defined by the evening news. But we gather here to be filled with the news of another reality.

Paul writes, “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 Paul the word flesh refers to all that is in our power to do and to think and to be: human power, human possibility. The flesh includes doing my best and trying harder but it also includes being ruled by the appetites and desires of the body. If in doing what I do I depend on me then what I have done is in the flesh. Paul says that those who live according to the flesh die. It is that simple.

Think that everything depends on you, your loved ones being safe, your having enough to eat today or tomorrow, whether the poor will have food and whether wars will end or whether terrorists will strike. Believe that all of those things are on your shoulders and you will die. You cannot save yourself. Death is standing out there waiting – always.

“But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.”

How can you do that? Have faith in Jesus. Have faith in God, have faith in the Spirit of God alive in you. “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.”

That is who you are – not self-made men and women but children of God - children – trusting, depending, receiving.

“For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear but you have received a spirit of adoption.”

Fall back into fear.

We can set our hearts and minds on what is humanly possible and fall back in fear – into fear. The stock market goes down, the housing bubble bursts, a bank fails – if my hope and my security and my future depend on what I do, I can easily fall back into fear. So I keep more money for myself and share less with my sisters and brothers in need.

The story of a robbery is on the news and I go out and buy a gun.

I hear about identity theft and soon I am shredding everything in sight.

And we keep falling, deeper and deeper into fear. There is no limit of how far we can fall into fear.

“But you have received a spirit of adoption.”

An interesting word there, adoption.

The adopted child is chosen in a way the natural born child never is. Love for an adopted child is intentional, a decision.

In Christ God has made a decision about you – that you will be a child of God for all eternity. When you were baptized God made the decision to be your Father and declared that decision before the whole people of God. God chose you so that you would not live in fear but in faith.

It is not that the evening news is bad for us. Christians do well to keep informed about what is happening in the world. Watching the evening news and then praying for all who suffer would be a wonderful practice. But when what we hear leads us to more anxiety, more worry, more fearful hanging on to what we have then it harms us and our neighbors. For God's children are created for faith and for a joyous sharing of the gifts that God gives. You are God's children as you live by the Spirit. You are a blessing to people near and far who suffer. If that should lead to your suffering also – then you will be like your Lord Jesus who suffered for you.

Good company to keep.