

“100 Billion or ...more.” Romans 8:12-25

“So then, brothers, 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 sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Around 100 billion... this is how business journal “Forbes” estimates the worth of British royal family. Now, what do you think, what would someone be willing to do to become an heir of such incredible wealth and fame and influence?

First, everyone would face the fact that to become an heir, first you need to belong to the family. No one can choose or merit that. It is, of course, in theory possible, if you are adopted into that family, but that is not your choice to make.

But then to what length people would agree to go if they had such opportunity? What would they agree to do? Would they agree for a while to live according to this new royal status, behaving honourably and committing to all responsibilities?

Would they agree to live with certain choices and options and to reject others, to be restrained in certain ways? Most certainly so. Besides, how much would they love the person who offered them this opportunity, and how much would they fear to disappoint them and to endanger their dream?!

The truth is that people give up a lot for much less. We are willing to sacrifice some of our choices and freedoms so that we can pursue others. If you want to succeed in your career or business, you will need to give up your leisure time and to focus on your work.

If you want to achieve heights in sport, you will have to give up unhealthy habits, and to be very disciplined. If you want to have children and raise them well, you will need to sacrifice a lot of your time and things that you would love to do. We could go on and on... We always, always need to give up something to pursue and obtain what we value the

most. And we are happy to sacrifice a lot for what we love the most, and we fear a lot that we may lose those things – be it our career, spouse, fame, wealth, family, etc. We see people doing it all the time. Sometimes, as neutral observers, we can see how unreasonable some of these sacrifices are. How empty the things that people pursue with their utmost devotion can be. But they still are passionately committed.

In our today's reading Paul describes our situation with the Triune God our Creator and Redeemer. What the Holy Spirit reveals through Paul borders with unbelievable. Because comparing with what Paul describes the 100 billion British empire seems like nothing worth of our attention.

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. [...] you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”

This is about you. You have received the Spirit of God. You are adopted as children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ. How do these words make you feel? Are you shocked?

Are you overwhelmed? Are you utterly taken by God's grace and generosity? Are you overjoyed because of this wonderful and undeserved gift, of this incredible opportunity? Do you feel the reality changing around you?

For you are a child of God the Father, and He has given His Spirit to dwell with you, He has adopted you into His family, and you are made, by His grace, a fellow heir with His true Son Jesus Christ. So, how about that?!

Do you now love your God the Father and your Redeemer Jesus Christ with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength for everything that He has done for you and for what He has prepared for you? Do you fear sincerely to do anything that would displease and disappoint Him, and would endanger your relationships?

Do you? This is where we can clearly see what our sin has done to us. We can't even comprehend what a gift our God has given to us. We can try to put it in words, we may try to reflect on it, but the overwhelming joy that should issue evades us.

I guess that if someone rang me and told that I have won a lottery, I would probably go crazy, but when the Holy Spirit reveals that God the Father has adopted me in His family, that He has made me co-heir with Jesus, His Son, eternally ... and what do I feel?!

It is much worse, actually. One thing is that we can't fully rejoice in God's gifts, but then there are so many who would still self-identify as Christians, but who seemingly don't care a bit about their relationships with their Father and their Brother Jesus who sacrificed His life for them. There is apathy and lukewarm indifference...

“Yes, yes, I have my faith. Leave me... I know that there is a god.” Or even: “I know that He will forgive me all my sins. That’s what He does. That’s what I will get. Aren’t we saved by grace alone and not by what we do?”

Their conclusion is: “So, I don’t need to do anything. I can do whatever I want. And what I want is to live according to the flesh.” It is so sad... the devil and their own sinful passions have deceived them.

Gracious God has called them and revealed Himself to them, He has given them all His gifts, but their sinful blindness and attractions of this world have robbed them of these divine blessings. They have lost their love, or maybe they never had it.

But no one can do both, to live according to the flesh and to live according to the Spirit. No one can serve two masters. No one can hope to reject God’s grace and to ignore Him and to live. Paul is as clear as he can be: “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.”

Can you see how inadequate such lukewarm attitudes are? They don’t make any sense. It is illogical, it is foolish. If almighty and holy Father has given us such awesome gifts and promises, then how fervently should we love Him?

How passionately should we strive to please Him and be with Him? How keenly should we inquire for His will for our lives? How careful should we be not to displease or anger Him, but to do everything to live according to the Spirit?

Nevertheless, there are so many who don’t care much about their God given new identity and about their eternal inheritance. It is so sad to see that the swamp of our sinful passions and worldly busyness devours them.

As Paul writes a few sentences later, “nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus...” except, we ourselves can reject Him and our sonship and our inheritance. To be fair, and this is a scary thought – to some extent we all are guilty of this.

Even the most zealous Christians. We all are continually pulled into opposite directions by two mighty forces. On the one hand we are drawn to live according to the Spirit, but on the other, we are continually tempted by the flesh. We need God’s wisdom to understand our situation and to see clearly what is at stake.

On the one hand – attractions of this world; whatever appealing, they all are temporary and fleeing like shadows. Everything where we attach our heart in this world, it enslaves us and forces us to toil for it, and when it seems we have got it... it disappears like water through fingers. We hope and trust that something in this world will satisfy our deepest longings, but it never does, it promises and fails and we are left with nothing.

On the other hand, there is eternal glory and blessedness, eternal life with the very source of life, with God the Creator Himself. It is not just about getting something that may satisfy our longings. It is about being with the One who put them in our hearts in the first place, and who is the only One who can fulfill them.

It is not about being enslaved to someone, so that you can get what you want. It is about being children and heirs of the One who created everything that exists and who now gives it all to you. And you will reign with Him forever and ever. That is His promise to you. “These words are trustworthy and true.” (Rev 22:6)

Sure, some may object, that with this-worldly things we at least see what we want to get, it is tangible, but what Paul speaks about is not. Not true! What we see here are created things that our sinful hearts believe will deliver what we long for, but created things can never serve as a substitute for the Creator, and you are created to live with Him.

Besides, how tangible are the promises of the world? Why would we believe that getting this or that – power, or wealth, or pleasures – will grant us happiness, or meaning, or security, or joy? Only because the thing that we see is tangible, it doesn’t mean that it will deliver the intangible gifts of peace and joy and satisfaction. They never do...

On the other hand, our God has come to assure us, that we can trust Him, in as tangible a way as possible. He came as one of us. Many touched Him with their own hands. He showed His commitment to you as tangibly as possible. He sacrificed His life for you, and did it through great sufferings.

So that you can be assured that if He was willing to lay down His life for you, He most certainly will not withhold from your smaller things... such as your inheritance in New Heavens and New Earth, in the great city Jerusalem, where you will live with Him.

Finally, what we have is not just promises of our God, there is more – He has sealed His promises. Not with a seal on a paper, but with His own Spirit indwelling in us, who is a guaranty of our inheritance.

It is only because God’s Spirit dwells in you, that you are able to trust Him, that you want to be with Jesus, that you want to know everything about Him, that you want to listen to Him, and you want to be with your fellow-Christians, your fellow heirs, that you want to pray and praise God your Father, who truly is your loving Dad who is in heaven.

The Day is coming when the entire creation will be restored, when the entire creation will rejoice together with God’s children, when everything will be infinitely better than you could imagine in your wildest dreams, when we will be capable of experiencing the heavenly blessedness fully and without any hindrances.

Paul the apostle was shown a glimpse of what is coming, and this is his encouragement to you: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

Let’s live according to the Spirit, in the community of God’s heirs, supporting one another in trials and sufferings of this age, for what we are after is not just some 100 billion, it is infinitely more, and it is already yours, sealed and guaranteed.

Amen.