

More than 500 years ago, Martin Luther and the other Reformers rediscovered that we are justified by faith alone, which lays hold of the alien righteousness of Christ that God freely credits to the account of those who believe. This week's Bible notes affirm the precious fruits of this justification, especially in terms of the peace and hope which flow from the righteousness which God imputes to us through Jesus Christ. May our studies in Romans 5 enable us never to lose hope.

Monday: Read Romans 5:1-2

Peace Accomplished

Having been justified by faith alone, we come to know a lasting peace with God. The foundation of our experience of this peace lies in what God has done for us through His Son and His Spirit to remove all enmity between us and Himself: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." As B.B. Warfield writes: "*We are by nature at enmity with God. No peace can be found until that enmity is removed. It cannot be removed by anything but a perfect sacrifice, a perfect righteousness. Christ alone can do it... We cannot produce it for ourselves, even on the basis of Christ's work. A fountain cannot rise higher than its source and a sure and stable peace – an everlasting peace – an infinite and perfect peace – must be the work of Him who is Himself all this. 'Now the works of the Spirit are love, joy, peace.'*"

Meditate and Pray: How we should thank God that both the Son and the Spirit of God have been sent into this world to produce a lasting peace between us and Heaven. It is what Warfield calls: "*Fundamental Peace... which naturally and necessarily arises from our justification... We cannot cultivate this, we have it; it cannot be less true or be made more true... it is objective!*" This is why we sing in Horatius' Bonar's Hymn (# 461):

*Not what my hands have done can save my guilty soul;
Not what my toiling flesh has borne can make my spirit whole.
Not what I feel or do can give me peace with God;
Not all my prayers and sighs and tears can bear my awful load.*

*Thy work alone, O Christ, can ease this weight of sin;
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God, can give me peace within.
Thy love to me, O God, not mine, O Lord, to Thee,
Can rid me of this dark unrest, And set my spirit free.*

Tuesday: Read Romans 5:6-11 and Psalm 30:6-7

Reason to Boast

In Romans 5:11, Paul urges us to "rejoice!" He commands us to "boast" (the word "rejoice" could be translated "boast") in our sufferings (v. 5:3). He repeats the command in Rom. 5:11 that we are to "boast" in God through the Lord Jesus as we look forward to a life lived in the reconciled peace which Christ has purchased! This life comes to fuller expression in Romans 6 (freedom from the reign of indwelling sin); Romans 7:1-13 (freedom from the tyranny of legalism), and Romans 8 (freedom from death and condemnation). With this triumphal emphasis, then, we are not surprised to hear Paul conclude in Romans 8:37: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." What a triumphant peace is to characterize the Christian life!

Meditation: Do we find joy in the triumphant peace which the blood of Jesus has purchased for us? "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!" Saved from wrath -- What joy and peace! Let us confess that our struggle with sin often robs us of such peace. Because of our weak faith, we do not appropriate God's promises as we should. Because of our pride, we rest

contented with past blessings, smug in our own attainments, thus experiencing with David, the lack of peace of Psalm 30:6-7: “When I felt secure, I said, “I will never be shaken” ... you hid your face, I was dismayed.”

Prayer: Lord, when our peace of heart is robbed by our sin and unbelief, and we groan with David in dismay because we thought we could stand in our own strength, remind us then that we are your sheep, and that we cannot live for one moment outside of your loving care. Do not let us find peace in our own accomplishments or possessions. Let our lack of peace constantly drive us back to you and to seeking your face alone as our comfort and joy. Amen.

Wednesday: Read Romans 7:17-19

Permanent Bonds

One source of a lack of peace in the Christian life is an unrealistic view of Christian experience, as if by virtue of the title “Christian” all memories of the old way of life can be removed. But Paul shows us that the internal conflict with the “old man” of sin is so great as to almost tear him in two: “For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I want is what I keep on doing”(v 19). Augustine wrote of this internal struggle with the same kind of realism in his *Confessions*: “The new will, which began to be in me, whereby I would love thee, O my God...was not yet able to overcome, perfectly, my former will... So my two wills, the one old, the other new, the one carnal, the other spiritual, conflicted between themselves, and rent my soul by their disagreement...”

John Owen also wrote of this struggle between the old “I” in Adam and the new “I” in Christ, as follows: “In every regenerate person there are, in a spiritual sense, two principles of all his actions – two wills. There is the will of the flesh, and there is the will of the Spirit... a “new” man and an “old,” and “inward man” and a “body of death” (Volume 11, pg. 515).

Meditate and Pray: For the young Christian, the new life of faith is like a honeymoon, a time of intimacy with the Lord sometimes rarely equaled later in life. What a shock to wake up one morning and to realize that the old legal husband of condemnation and guilt, (Romans 7:1-4) from whom we are now divorced in our marriage to Christ, still has remnants of sinful influence in our lives! Well, be of good cheer. It is not, in the end, our spiritual wholeness and victory over sin which serve as our ultimate source of peace and assurance. It is the Christ-life in us which the Devil cannot touch. Though Satan may trip us up and trample on our faith and catch us in many inconsistencies of life, he can never undo the work of Christ within us. We belong to Christ, and His victorious faith is now ours. No Devil can ever again move in and claim lordship over our hearts -- Hallelujah!

Thursday: Read Romans 5:5 and John 16:12-22

Spirit’s Certainty

Whether our present day is up or down, we can truly experience the love, peace, and joy which Christ’s victory over death accomplished because the *Spirit* who raised the body of Jesus is still at work in us who believe. By this Spirit, God literally can and does pour out into our hearts the very same love, peace and joy which sustained Jesus– as Romans 5:5 declares. Jesus also said that His *own* love, peace and joy would be given to His church when He promised the disciples in John 16:14-15 that the Spirit would “take of what is Mine and make it known to you.” Have you known such love, peace and joy from Jesus Himself? Well, *all* Christian love, peace and joy come from the Spirit of Christ. If you belong to Christ, then this *same* love-outpouring, peace-bestowing and joy-giving Spirit of Christ lives in you (Romans 8:9)!

Meditate and Pray: Take a moment to thank God the Father and God the Son for sending into your life the divine Holy Spirit. His job is to bring the very same love, peace, and joy which the Trinity shares among each member of the Holy Family and which takes us up into their intimate conversation. As Hymn # 336 by Thomas Pollock says:

*Spirit, aiding all who yearn
More of truth divine to learn
And with deeper love to burn;
Hear us, Holy Spirit.*

*Spirit, Fount of faith and joy,
Giving peace without alloy,
Hope that nothing can destroy;
Hear us, Holy Spirit.*

*Source of love and light divine,
With that hallowing grace of Thine,
More and more upon us shine;
Hear us, Holy Spirit.*

*Holy, loving, as Thou art,
Come and live within our heart,
Never from us to depart;
Hear us, Holy Spirit.*

Friday: Read Romans 7:21-25

Benefit of the Battle

It would be easy to triumphantly move into Romans 8 and Christ's total victory over all our foes without taking much stock of Paul's struggle in Romans 7. But here is the question: With all this triumph in Romans 8, *why* is it that Paul struggles so in Romans 7:21-25, even to the point of concluding in Romans 7:24 that he must be rescued from his "body of death" as a "wretched man"? Ponder it. Can't you think of some benefit in Paul's revelation of his own struggles with sin, as he confesses, "when he wants to do good, evil is right there with him," (Rom. 7:21)? As one Scottish Pastor, James Fraser, put it: "Christians are often too easily satisfied with the disposition and frame of their own hearts. But if, with sincere and earnest desire to advance in holiness, they looked more closely into the law, as it is spiritual, and into their own hearts, they would see, to their great benefit, more of these motions of sin in them, by which they "do what they would not, and are unable to do, in manner and degree, as they would," (Romans 7:14-25)..."

Meditate and Pray: Thank God for the great benefit of seeing the motions of sin in ourselves. Let us thank God that he uses our conflicts with sin (as our Westminster Confession chapter V says) "to humble us by the discovery of the hidden strength of our corruption and the deceitfulness of our hearts." Let us confess that we know something of being humbled in this way by agreeing with William Cowper in these words he penned about such humility:

*'Tis joy enough, my All in All,
At Thy dear feet to lie;
Thou wilt not let me lower fall,
And none can higher fly.*