

We celebrate the Reformation each Fall season. May we this week unfold the benefits which flow to us because of the *solid nature of the hope* of glory we possess, as that promise of glory is declared in Romans 5:2. The Reformation began in October, 1517, re-establishing the Bible's teaching about our *sure and certain hope of eternal life*. May we likewise encourage each other with the *hope* of our like precious faith in Jesus Christ.

Mon/Tues: read Romans 4:16-5:2

Humbly Dependent

When it comes to God's bringing hope out of despair, and light to walk by instead of darkness, the Reformers turned to Paul's teaching about the hope-giving power of God's promise in Romans 4:16-17. Paul teaches us there that, despite all his struggles, Abraham believed God's promise of a multitude of believers to be born from his body. God strengthened Abraham's weak faith to hold onto a divine power that could "give life to the dead and call into existence the things that do not exist" (Romans 4:18). When Abraham saw the stars in the heavens in Genesis 15:5-6, he believed God's promise that as the "father of all who believe" he would see just as many spiritual offspring as the stars because of God's promise. God credited such faith to him as righteousness.

Meditate and Pray: What assurance to see Abraham reason by faith that God could give power to 100 year-old bodies so that he and Sarah could have the child of promise (Romans 4:19). It had taken many years of trial and the long-term work of God before Abraham could come to this point of reckoning with the life-giving power of God's promise. Years earlier God saved Abraham out of the idol-worshipping bondage of his family in Ur, calling him to live in the Promised Land. But only in the later years of his life did Abraham grasp the saving necessity of unquestioning faith in God's promise. In the same way, God's work in our lives is one of long patience and of gradually delivering us from our fears, doubts and unbelief. We ought to humbly admit this every day.

Lord, save us from *overestimating* our own Christian maturity and *mistakenly* relying on *our own* Christian walk and holiness – as if they could ensure possession of the solid hope which Abraham attained. Keep us humbly dependent on Christ alone, realizing that every day we need the resurrection power which He alone can exercise! We pray in your Name, Lord Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, Amen.

Further reflection (John Owen vol. 6, pf 348): *There are treasures of relief in Christ, to which the soul may at any time repair and find succor against the incursions of sin. Christ says to the soul, as David did to one of his servants fleeing for his life, "Abide thou with Me, fear not: for he that seeks my life, seeks your life; but with Me thou shalt be in safety. Sin is My enemy no less than yours; it seeks the life of your soul, and it seeks my life."* (1 Samuel 22:23)

How strong is our position, dear believer. Your enemies are Christ's. He takes it personally when His foes attack you! He will pray for you that your faith will not fail!

Wednesday: Read Romans 4:20-5:3

The Continuing Work of God's Promises

God's promise to Abraham and to us is more than just helpful information. It conveys life itself, for by that Word of Promise faith is born and grows. As Paul says in Romans 4:20, the promise of God was so mighty that, when grasped by Abraham's faith, it gave glory to God! Such glory to God from our undeserving faith in God's promise is possible only because the Holy Spirit is the One who uses God's promise in our lives, enabling our hearts to receive it. Just as the Spirit of God miraculously authored life in the dead womb of elderly Sarah, so He uses the Word of God to bring to birth spiritual life in our hearts – all for His glory!

Pray and Meditate: Lord, thank you that you did not finish your work for us on the Cross of your Son. Yes, "He was delivered up for our transgressions and raised for our justification" - but your work continues within us, working a potency of faith which can rejoice in future glory and even in present sufferings (Romans 5:2-3).

Thurs/Fri: Read Romans 4:24-5:2**Led By His Hand**

There are several treasures that flow to us from Christ's finished work on the Cross. Because we are united to Christ by faith through the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as our robe of righteousness (Romans 4:24-25). Even more, Christ Himself comes to us by faith, and we learn to live in communion and fellowship with Him.

One of the most compelling proofs of this "face-to-face" communion is Romans 5:1, which literally states that we now have "peace *towards* God," not merely "*with* God." It is the same prepositional phrase which describes the Eternal Word of God in communion with the Father in John 1:1:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *with God*, and the Word was God." John means the eternal fellowship between Father and Son, as the Son rests under the arm of His Father – not just "*with*" God but "*towards God*"- face to face. Therefore, the peace which Christ has purchased for us is nothing less than restoration of face-to-face communion with God!

But I can hear the objection: How could I, a sinner with heart and hands tainted by sinful motives as well as actions, ever have eye-to-eye communion with the Holy God who cannot look on sin? As if to anticipate our objection, Paul goes on in Romans 5:2 to use another "face-to-face" word, "*access*", describing our standing with God by grace as something we "*access*" by faith. This word means, according to Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, "to be led by the hand and presented as one on whom favor is to be conferred."

Meditate and Pray: Think of it! Through Jesus' death, we have peace "*towards*" God. Because of His work on the cross, Christ earned the right to introduce us to God in Heaven! "Here am I and the children God has given me"(Hebrews 2:13). Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brothers and sisters and to own us before God's Throne, ushering us right into His presence. That's what grace is; it is access as forgiven sinners into the Presence of God! Sing about the fellowship which you can enjoy with God around that mercy seat with hymn # 631 in our red Trinity Hymnal:

*From every stormy wind that blows,
From every swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a sure retreat--
'Tis found beneath the mercy seat.*

*There is a place where Jesus sheds
The oil of gladness on our heads,
A place than all besides more sweet--
It is the blood-bought mercy seat.*

*There is a scene where spirits blend,
Where friend holds fellowship with friend;
Though sundered far, by faith they meet
Around one common mercy seat.*

*There, there on eagle's wings we soar,
And time and sense seem all no more,
And heaven comes down our souls to greet,
And glory crowns the mercy seat.*

Sat/Sun: Read Romans 5:1-2 and Hebrews 10:19-23**Eternal Yet Always New**

What a living way has been opened for us through Christ's body, a way into which we can boldly enter at all times and in all situations! What privilege is ours! What daily cleansing from sin! What mercy to help us in our time of need! All this is purchased for us by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us as a propitiation for our sin! We learn this from Romans 5:1-2.

But we also learn about this access from the book of Hebrews. The author of that book several times alludes to the access which Christ's completed sacrifice of His body and shedding of His blood opens for us into the presence of God. He then exhorts us to boldly enter into God's presence with the confident hope that God will receive us as those justified in Christ Jesus.

For example, in Hebrews 10:19-23, the writer declares to us that this way of access which Christ has opened up for every believer is a "living and active" way, a way that is always fresh and alive with hope – just as pristine as when Christ first sprinkled His blood in the Heavenly holy of holies. In other words, the memory of Christ's victory on the Cross and our resultant freedom from condemnation are as filled with joy as when the first hallelujah's were heard to welcome Jesus back to Heaven after His ascension. It is always a new wonder that grips the hosts of Heaven as they behold the Lamb, "looking like it is freshly slain," (Revelation 5:6).

Meditate and Pray: Sing about the glorious access we now enjoy into Heaven, especially remembering that it is a "new and living way." Use hymn # 172 from our Red Trinity Hymnal:

1 Let us love and sing and wonder,
let us praise the Savior's name!
He has hushed the law's loud thunder,
he has quenched Mount Sinai's flame;
he has washed us with his blood,
he has brought us nigh to God.

2 Let us love the Lord who bought us,
pitied us when enemies,
called us by his grace, and taught us,
gave us ears and gave us eyes:
he has washed us with his blood,
he presents our souls to God.

3 Let us sing, though fierce temptation
threaten hard to bear us down!
For the Lord, our strong salvation,
holds in view the conqueror's crown;
he who washed us with his blood,
soon will bring us home to God.

4 Let us wonder; grace and justice
join, and point to mercy's store;
when through grace in Christ our trust is,
justice smiles, and asks no more:
he who washed us with his blood,
has secured our way to God.

5 Let us praise, and join the chorus
of the saints enthroned on high;
here they trusted him before us,
now their praises fill the sky:
"You have washed us with your blood;
You are worthy, Lamb of God!"