

This week, we pause to focus further on the fruits of Christ's Resurrection – a fruit which upholds us in every struggle. Because of Christ's victory, Paul is able to declare that “nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ” (Rom. 8:35). What a great message to celebrate this Easter! Because of Christ's death and resurrection, we can be sure that nothing can separate us from His love! What security we have! In the heat, conflict, and confusion of this broken world, we thank God the Father for both: the Heavenly intercession of the Risen Christ (Rom. 8:34) and the earthly defense of the Holy Spirit living within us (Rom. 8:9-11).

### **Monday: Read Romans 7:21-25 & Romans 8:15**

### **A Father's Ears**

Paul shouts in Rom. 8:31: “If God be for us, who can be against us?” Link this to the anguished cry in Rom. 7:24: “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?” This cry underlines the depth of Paul's need. It is a heart-rending cry which should characterize our lives too, for in Rom. 8:15, Paul claims that the same Holy Spirit which drove him to cry out also drives every believer to cry, “Abba, Father!” And what do such cries sound like? Well, to us, there is great weakness as we “croak” (the word cry, /krazw/ being onomatopoeic for a raven's cry) and make known our needs to God. But to our Father in Heaven, such cries come to His ears as the beautiful sound of His adopted children! How is that possible? Because, as Romans 8:26 says, the Spirit of God takes our ignorant, stammering prayers of weakness and turns them into effective and holy groans of spiritual power!

**Meditate and Pray:** Thank God for the intimate and effective intercessory ministry of the Holy Spirit within the breast of each Christian, turning their cries of pain into mighty and beautiful prayers of adopted children. Let us therefore be bold in our asking of God, knowing how the Holy Spirit will transmute our prayers into mighty petitions. Let us ask even as Hosea urges us to do:

Take words with you  
and return to the LORD.  
Say to him: “Forgive all our sins  
and receive us graciously,  
that we may offer the fruit of our lips.  
(Hosea 13:2)

### **Tuesday: Read Romans 7:21-25, 8:34 and Acts 2:33**

### **Indwelling Ally**

How is it possible that our weak, croaking cries of pain, even despair, can become beautiful pleas which move God the Father to rise and come to our aid?

The answer is that Jesus made the sending of the Holy Spirit His first order of business when He ascended to God's right hand. We could even say that the first *proof* of Christ's Heavenly intercession for us is the presence of the Holy Spirit upon and in the church. Acts 2:33 states that the exalted Christ's request for the Spirit to be poured out on believers has been answered! This outpouring is exactly what the embattled church of every age needs. As she struggles with the horror of indwelling sin and the evil forces arrayed against her, the church needs an indwelling ally “on the inside” to repel the fiery darts of the Evil One. What a faithful soldier and eloquent messenger to God's throne room is the Holy Spirit as He dwells in the believer's breast! God knows the weakness of our hearts, and places, at Jesus' request, the “Sentinel” of the Holy Spirit within us to stand guard over them!

**Meditate and Pray:** Use the words of John Newton's great hymn (# 647 in our *Trinity Hymnal*) to give thanks for the Spirit of Christ' defensive work within our sin-tossed breasts:

*How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear!  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
And drives away his fear.*

*It makes **the wounded spirit whole,**  
And **calms the troubled breast;**  
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,  
And to the weary, rest.*

*Jesus! my Shepherd, Husband, Friend,  
O Prophet, Priest and King,  
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,  
Accept the praise I bring.*

*Weak is the effort of my heart,  
And cold my warmest thought;  
But when I see Thee as Thou art,  
I'll praise Thee as I ought.*

### Wednesday: Read Romans 7:21-8:11

### The Spirit's Dominion

In order to share with Paul in the joyous victory (Rom. 8:31-34), we Christians need more than the Spirit's help in prayer (Rom. 8:15 & 8:26). There is also the need for deliverance from the deadly enemies of Satanic evil (Rom. 7:21) and from the strife of those who hate God (Rom. 8:5-8). How does that deliverance come about? Where can we find "breathing room" and a place where we will be secure and able to live for God's glory, free from sin's dominion?

The answer is in the dominion of the Spirit asserted in Romans 8:9-10. Notice that verse nine describes the Christian as "controlled by the Spirit." This is a translation of Paul's classic use of the preposition "**in** the Spirit." Literally Paul declares to the Christian that he is no longer "**in** (carnal) flesh" but "**in** the Spirit." What he means is that the Christian is no longer under the sway of a carnal sin nature which eagerly obeys the dictates of sin and Satan's desires. While as Christians we will at times stumble because of sin's remnants within us, we can now say "no" to our former slave-master of sin in our carnal flesh because our whole being, body and soul have been translated into the sphere of the Spirit of life!

**Meditate and Pray:** Thank God that, though the whole world "lies under the sway of the Evil One" (1 John 5:19), Christians have been set free from this law of sin and death. Now it is no longer the sinful ego of our sin nature which lives and reigns in our hearts – it is Christ who lives enthroned there now. Ask God to give you fruitful and thankful thoughts of Christ's reign within you with the words of *Trinity Hymnal* # 707:

*Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow Thee.  
Destitute, despised, forsaken, Thou from hence my all shall be.  
Perish every fond ambition, all I've sought or hoped or known.  
Yet how rich is my condition! God and Heaven are still mine own.*

*Take, my soul, thy full salvation; rise o'er sin, and fear, and care;  
Joy to find in every station something still to do or bear:  
**Think what Spirit dwells within thee;** what a Father's smile is thine;  
What a Savior died to win thee, child of heaven, shouldst thou repine?*

**Thursday: Read Romans 8:9-14****Led into Sonship**

The indwelling of the Spirit of the Risen and Exalted Christ now lives within every Christian to give us the fullness of Divine power and comfort! That is Paul's emphasis in verses 9-11, where he speaks of this indwelling Spirit repeatedly, as the English Standard Version of these verses brings out:

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the **Spirit of God dwells in you**. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if **Christ is in you**, although the body is dead because of sin, the **Spirit is life** because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead **dwells in you**, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his **Spirit who dwells in you**.

**Meditate and Pray:** Talk about a new spiritual circulatory system and heart transplant! It is the Holy Spirit in us who makes us a new creation in Christ; it is the Holy Spirit within who enlightens our minds to understand the Gospel. He renews our wills to embrace the Gospel and persuades us to embrace Jesus Christ as He is offered to us in that Gospel. In short, the Spirit is **life** in us because of the righteous new nature planted in our bodies through regeneration. Sing about this mighty work of the Spirit in our regeneration with *Trinity Hymnal* # 335:

*Gracious Spirit, dwell with me!  
I myself would gracious be;  
And with words that help and heal  
**Would Thy life in mine reveal;**  
And with actions bold and meek  
Would for Christ my Savior speak. Truthful Spirit,*

*dwell with me!  
I myself would truthful be;  
And with wisdom kind and clear  
Let Thy life in mine appear;  
And with actions brotherly  
Speak my Lord's sincerity.*

*Tender Spirit, dwell with me!  
I myself would tender be;  
Shut my heart up like a flower  
In temptation's darksome hour,  
Open it when shines the sun,  
And his love by fragrance own.*

***Mighty Spirit, dwell with me!**  
I myself would mighty be;  
Mighty so as to prevail,  
Where unaided man must fail;  
Ever, by a mighty hope,  
Pressing on and bearing up.*

**Fri/Sat/Sun: Read Romans 7:21-8:11 & 8:34-39****Speak the Right Word**

We, with Paul, are daily experiencing what the Puritan John Owen called "the dust, blood and noise of battle" against sin within and the world, flesh, and the Devil without. How then can we experience the confidence of Christ's victory over these external foes as well as the peace within which comes from Christ' dealing with our sinful hearts? The Holy Spirit uses faith to join us to Christ Jesus in His death, resurrection, exaltation, and intercession. This four-fold work is what Paul highlights in Rom. 8:34. Through Christ's death, resurrection, exaltation, and intercession, we have the assurance in our earthly struggles that "nothing shall separate us from the love of God" (Rom. 8:35-39).

It is especially Christ's heavenly, priestly activity of intercession which is in focus in Romans 8:34. Oh, dear Christian, see Paul's rationale in this verse! If Christ died for us in order to prove both His and His Father's love

for us; if He rose for our justification; if He took our nature into Heaven to be glorified... will He fail to speak the words exactly suited to our need as our High Priest standing in Heaven to represent us?

Surely all that needs to be said for our survival in this life, our resurrection into the next, and our enduring with Him in glory forever... will be said by this Priest who offered Himself up to die in our place! With what confidence, then, are we assured that, indeed, **nothing** will separate us from this loving Savior, Jesus Christ!

**Meditate and Pray:** Where is the church to find the replenishment of her spiritual strength to endure? The answer is to ask God for a clear vision of her glorious Mediator as He intercedes in Heaven for her survival, blessing, and triumphant progress towards Heaven. This must trumpet forth from our pulpits in a day when many grow discouraged at the increase of wickedness: We must affirm with new force Christ's triumph in rising from the dead to carry his victory at the Cross into Heaven, there to intercede for us. With Christ's prevailing intercession for us at every turn of our lives, we can confidently sing this lesser known verse from *Trinity Hymnal # 707* by Henry Lyte, (which sounds as if it is lifted straight out of Romans 8):

*Go, then, earthly fame and treasure! Come, disaster, scorn and pain!  
In Thy service, pain is pleasure; with Thy favor, loss is gain.  
I have called Thee, "Abba, Father"; I have set my heart on Thee:  
Storms may howl, and clouds may gather, all must work for good to me.*