

ROMANS BIBLE STUDY

Romans 5:01-05

Lesson #9

Introduction

Last week we finished chapter 4 of this study of Paul's epistle to the Romans. By this time we have thoroughly examined Paul's teachings on the total depravity of mankind, and the absolute impossibility of man to effectuate his redemption by his own deeds and actions. Paul has forever dispelled the idea that some people are able to live up to God's minimum standard and earn their place in heaven. He has also dispelled the idea that God will lower His standard enough to get some of mankind saved irregardless of their sins. These are popular ideas to be sure, but they are not found in the holy scriptures, in fact the scriptures everywhere refute this thinking.

Furthermore, we have seen that all mankind, every person ever born of woman by the seed of man, bears the curse of death for the original sin of Adam and Eve, and what that sin did to our very nature and composition. Everyone dies eventually. And why is this so? Because everyone is born a sinner from their very conception. And the wages of sin is death, as Paul will declare in the next chapter. Contrary to public opinion, God has intentionally created a situation where man's only hope of redemption, and eventual salvation from a terminal condition of sin, is by His grace alone. This is God's doing. This is what the bible teaches from cover to cover. But the pride of man wars against this whole idea. Ironically, it is the direct effect of that sin on the mind and heart and spirit, that causes man to rage against the cure. The disease itself is what makes him detest and reject the cure. This is the condition of unregenerate humanity, a whole race of beings who are terminally infected with a love for sin, and yet are innately averse to the cure for that condition. In fact, the majority will tell you that they aren't even sick at all, because they've never known anything different, having been born in their existing condition. And, due to well intentioned but tragically misguided evangelism, that believes man can simply choose to believe by his own efforts, most of what calls itself Christianity is an obvious sham, so there's little trust or belief in the teachings of holy scriptures.

This was Paul's message in the beginning chapters. That all mankind is lost in sin, and yet very few will admit to their condition, and fewer still are seeking the cure. In fact, none will seek the cure unless they are blessed with the grace of God to give them the gift of saving faith. (Eph 2:8-9) Again we say, this is God's own doing. God establishes justification, and redemption, and salvation by His grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. (Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12) And it is God alone who chooses whom it is who will receive this grace. (Rom 9:15) Justification is by faith alone because there is no other way for man to find it or achieve it. God made it this way intentionally. But, when the gracious gift of faith has been bestowed on a man or woman, there is a resultant effect upon their thinking and behaviors that cannot be denied. God's act of justification and regeneration produces results, and Paul begins to discuss some of them in this and subsequent chapters. The title of this lesson is:

The Results of Justification

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Romans 5:1-5 (NASB)

Verse 1:

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Have you ever met someone who says they have no problem with God, they have an agreement with Him. They agree to leave Him alone and He agrees to leave them alone. I knew such a person, and he was a good friend, though he's passed on now. I preached the gospel to him a number of times, and he was gracious enough to listen, but when all was said and done, he simply repeated his perceived agreement with God. If there was a God, he was pretty sure he would be there with Him, based on this perceived agreement that existed in his own mind. Of course I explained to him that this agreement was a unilateral concept of his own creation, and God had no part in it, but he remained adamant that it was valid nonetheless.

This way he didn't have to deal with the possibility that God might be upset, or even downright angry with him for his behaviors and attitudes. He didn't want to be at odds with God, he just wanted to be free of God's demands on his life. And, he didn't openly challenge God's authority, he just wanted to be allowed to disregard it at his own leisure, and without serious consequences for doing so. He wanted to be able to live in peace with God while simultaneously retaining the right to obey Him or disobey Him at his own discretion. Does this sound familiar? It should, because it describes the bulk of humanity, and even much of liberal Christianity. Of course there are exceptions, but most people don't want to go to war with God, they just want God to leave them alone so they can live their lives the way they see fit, and then forgive them for their shortcomings when they die. Isn't this the prevailing concept, we know that it is?

But the question is, is it true. Can we live in peace with God while openly disobeying His commandments? Well, can we live in peace with our own governments while we openly violate its laws? Will the police just continually ignore our crimes of theft, or violence, and simply let us live in peace? This is absurd and we all know it, so why in the world do we think that God will do this when we perpetually disobey His laws? Are our laws higher than His laws? Are our laws more important than His laws? There's no rational explanation for thinking that we can intentionally and perpetually disobey the laws of God and continue to live in peace with Him. As long as we are still living in intention disobedience, and our crimes are unconfessed and unpunished, we are not at peace with God, or perhaps more accurately, He is not at peace with us. We don't want to believe that we are in a state of war with God, but by our actions we make it so. The thief doesn't want to be at war with the police, but his actions make it so nonetheless. We think we can make friends with God and then He'll just ignore our crimes. But it simply doesn't work that way, neither here on earth with the police, nor in heaven with God.

We are at war with God, and He is at war with us, unless we have confessed our crimes (sins) and been justified by God on His own terms, not ours. As long as our innate desires and affections are in direct conflict with the laws of God, we are at war with Him over every action we take, every thought we think, and every word we utter. We cannot be at peace with the police while we continue to practice crimes, and we cannot be at peace with God while we continue to ignore His laws. Why are we unable to come to terms with this reality? Very simply, because we don't want it to be this way. Because the police arrest us and take us directly to jail for our crimes we understand this in the worldly perspective. But because God delays His actions, we begin to think that we might just be getting away with our crimes. But His word declares that He will surely and eventually hold everyone to account. (Rom 2:5-11; Mat 16:27; Rev 20:12)

Every human being who has not been justified in the eyes of God, by His only prescribed means (faith) is by definition at war with God. If you are not justified, you are a criminal awaiting punishment, and as such you are at odds with God. There is no peace with God for the unjustified, just as there is no peace with the police for those who are convicted criminals. Once a criminal has served their sentence they may again be at peace with the police, but until that time they are prisoners and criminals. Once a person has been justified in the eyes of God, through the gift of saving faith, they are no longer criminals under His sentence of wrath, but rather they are free men, or women, and can live in perfect peace with God because both the cause of the war, and the consequences of it, have been justified in the eyes of God. But for there to be true peace, it must exist on both sides. We've seen that God is at peace because He has been satisfied with the sacrifice for sin provided by His own Son, and justified all those who believe in Him. But what about peace from the human perspective?

To be at peace, we ourselves must be in agreement with the conditions of our existence. A slave may appear to be at peace with his master because he obeys all his commands, but he may not like it and longs to be freed from his bondage. This isn't really peace as we perceive it, it's more like peaceable existence. But Paul says that *having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*, Paul is speaking of a two sided peace, where both parties are in full and amicable agreement of the terms of that peace. God is not still a little bit angry over our sins, and we are not still a little bit angry over having to obey His laws and commandments. This happens *through our Lord Jesus Christ*, It does not happen through our own doings, it happens because God fully accepts the acts of His only Son as total and complete payment for the sins of His chosen children, forevermore. The scriptures do not say that we will never ever commit another sin, they say that all our sins, ever committed, are forgiven forevermore. But this alone doesn't really make for perfect peace. Both parties must be in full agreement for peace to be perfect.

And in verse 5 Paul says that *the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us*. This is not just the love of God as an entity, but for all that God is in His divine and holy and righteous nature. We don't just love God, we love everything that makes Him who He is. His desires are our desires, and His dislikes are our dislikes, and all this is through the working of the Holy Spirit who pours out a love in our hearts for God and everything He is. This is peace with God, when we are also in full agreement with Him in all respects, and have no conflicts of interest waging constant wars within our minds. We are at peace because there's nothing over which we disagree, and this is a direct result of the workings of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:29; 1Pet 1:2) The Holy Spirit pours out a love for God, and for all that He is, into the hearts of those whom He justifies by saving faith. This is not just a spurious result, that happens to some but not to others, it is the direct effect of having been justified and regenerated by the grace of God. It is not missing from any who are truly justified, because it is an act of the Holy Spirit, not something each person decides for themselves to do or not to do.

What most of Christianity calls a difference between a spiritual Christian and a carnal Christian is really a distinction between a true Christian and a false profession of Christ. The Holy Spirit does not allow carnal Christians, that 's a human term to permit us to avoid stating the obvious when speaking of those who claim to be Christians but show no desire whatever for righteousness and holiness. By using this term we are guilty of enabling them to remain self-deceived, but we think of it as benevolent and loving for some strange reason. Yes, I do acknowledge that Paul tells some churches that they are behaving carnally, but he immediately rebukes them severely for it, and calls the true Christians to repent of such behaviors. Which they did. (2Cor 7:6-12) Paul didn't try to comfort and reassure those who were acting carnally, he rebuked them severely and called them to demonstrate the authenticity of their faith by genuine repentance. Those who were indwelt with the Holy Spirit, and sought His intervention by confession and prayer, were both willing and able to repent of their errors. But the false Christians were simply powerless to effect any lasting change of behaviors. Nobody said it any clearer than the Apostle John:

3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

1 John 2:3-6 (NASB)

Peace with God produces a lifestyle that is in conformity with the heart of God. And it does this by the power of love, not by threat or by force. The Holy Spirit pours out a love in our hearts that both motivates and constrains our behaviors. This is the evidence of authentic saving faith. If it's missing then don't sugar coat it, confess it, and humbly ask for that love of God that brings perfect peace of heart and mind, and abolishes conflicts of interest.

Verse 2:

2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God

After saying that we are justified by faith, and brought into peace with God through Jesus Christ, Paul continues with the statement that it is also through this same Jesus Christ that *we have obtained our introduction, by faith, into this grace in which we stand*; We have been introduced into this state of God's grace through faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Paul's use of the word introduction makes it clear that we didn't come on our own authority or initiative, but we were brought by another, who had the authority to bring us into a place where we couldn't have come by ourselves. Jesus Christ provides the necessary introduction into the state of God's grace. There's no entry into this state or condition of grace apart from Him. Jesus said:

44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. (Jn 6:44)

There is an external drawing force acting upon the called of God that isn't of their own initiative. But neither is it against their will either, because that's the gift of God, both the will and the ability to respond to God's calling.

and again He said:

65 ... "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

(Jn 6:65) I said earlier that God uses justification by faith alone as a means to control who responds and who does not. Apart from a specific effectual calling, no one will answer the general call to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. That capability was lost as an effect of the damage caused by sin's entry into our species.

Remember we said already that one of the most insidious effects of sin is that it creates an innate aversion to being cured. Once infected the victim doesn't want to get better, they like the disease. It's like the drug addict that loves the high and doesn't want to be freed from the bondage of his addiction. Unless we are introduced into another state of being, by an outside influence, we will choose to stay in bondage to our sin master. It is God alone, through faith in Jesus Christ, who can break this cycle of destruction.

And he goes on to say *and we exult in hope of the glory of God*. The end result of justification, and sanctification is our sharing in the benefits of the glory of God. (Rom 8:28-30; Phi 3:20-21; 1Jn 3:2) One dictionary defines exult as "triumphant elation." This is an apt description of the hope of every Christian, that we will eventually triumph over sin, and be conformed to the image of our beloved Jesus Christ, and such a thought fills us with elation for the glory of God that will bring it about. Our gratitude is based on our thorough understanding of the fact that it is a gift of God that we didn't earn or deserve, this knowledge is what glorifies God. To appreciate a priceless gift, one must know with certainty that they had no possibility of acquiring it on their own. God's glorification, in the eyes of His family of worshipers, rests on their knowledge and understanding of His gracious mercy and benevolence toward them. They have good reasons to give God glory, and they know what those reasons are. Jesus said that His Father seeks those who worship Him in spirit and in truth.(Jn 4:23) In spirit, in that verse, is referring to our state of mind. That it is genuine and sincere, not just feigned rituals. And the truth is referring to knowing Who is the one true God, and rightly understanding His divine nature, and what He has done, and what He desires. God is glorified when His worshipers know everything about Him, and love and respect Him for His infinite holiness, and righteousness, and loving kindness toward those who are His. One cannot give glory to God if they are completely ignorant of God. To exalt in the hope of the revealed glory of God requires that we know what this means.

Verse 3-5:

3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

At this point Paul makes a change of emphasis. He had just been speaking of the exaltation of the revealed glory of God being manifested, and this must be inferred as meaning at the end of the age. But now he's speaking of the day to day life experiences of each of us, that work toward that same end result. Both Peter and James have similar passages in their epistles.

Now I wish to make something very clear. We are Not being told to exult **for** the tribulations themselves, but rather in the **results of** those tribulations. I've heard too many preachers infer that we should seek troubles because God knows that we need them. That we should be looking forward to every trial and tribulation because that's what matures us. While there's a hint of truth in this, it misses by a country mile the point of the teaching. For example, did Jesus show exuberant exaltation, and joyful expectation when He was praying to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane? Was He excited and joyful for the experiences that He knew awaited Him the next morning? Of course not, and neither are we being told to seek and look forward to pain and suffering just for its sake alone. What Jesus did, as horrible as it was, did in fact, eventually work out for the immense good of both Himself and all of God's elect children. We exult in the results, but not necessarily in the means that are required to achieve them. Paul says that we exult because we know that these tribulations eventually bring about something worth the suffering. But we must learn what we were intended to learn from these things or they have no effectual use. Paul says that they produce perseverance, and perseverance brings proven character, and proven character brings the assured hope of the revealed glory of God.

When we suffer for the sake of the name of Jesus Christ, or for the sake of righteousness and godliness, we ourselves are strengthened in our faith by this perseverance, as it proves the authenticity of our faith, not just to others but perhaps even more to ourselves. Persevering in the faith brings about proven character. Note the word "proven" here. When we stand fast to our faith we prove the authenticity of our belief by our good character under trials. Many make claims of faith, but not all who do so endure in those professions to the end. The proving of our faith is a valuable asset. What soldier would want to go into battle with a rifle that had never been fired? Who would want to have heart surgery by a doctor who had never done one before? In these examples I've just made, maybe the rifle will fire just fine, but then maybe it won't.

And maybe the heart surgeon can perform the operation just fine, or maybe he can't. Proven character is like a proven rifle or a proven surgeon, there's much comfort in having a track record that's been thoroughly tested and proven successful in the past. It is our having come through these trials, and having experienced the thorough testing with unflinching faith, over which we exult. We do not seek tribulations, but we seek the results that God has planned to achieve through them, knowing that all things work together for the eventual good of those who love God. We can believe this because it has been proven over and over again, we've seen it for ourselves, not just in our own lives and the lives of our predecessors, but especially in the example of Jesus Christ's own experience of death and resurrection. God doesn't send us troubles and tribulations because He enjoys it, or even because we deserve it, which we do, but because it's one of His ways, His predestined means, to benefit us and Himself in the long run. And how does it benefit God? By ultimately making us the kind of worshipers that He seeks to have and set out to produce.

Finally, in verse five, Paul gets to the more subjective portion of his point. He says: *and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us*. It's so easy to just read right over this sentence and think little of it, but if we examine it, like all of scriptures, it holds more treasure than it might first appear. After having begun with justification by faith, Paul moved to peace with God and standing in His grace. He proceeded to exaltation at the assured hope of Christ's soon return. He then spoke of exalting in our own tribulations because they are doing an essential sanctifying work within us that is conforming us to the nature of Jesus Christ. He speaks of perseverance, and proven character that are based on this expectation of eventually sharing in the glory of our Lord. All of this is quite magnificent to be sure, but there's one major element that Paul saves to the last.

And what is that element? It is **love**, and not just ordinary love, but a **love of God**. Yes, a love of God, the God we have never seen with our eyes or heard with our ears, but yet we know Him like our closest friend. How is this possible? Because that love is administered, Paul says poured out, through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Yes, who **was given** to us. Not, will be given to us, or could be given to us, but **has been given to us**. Do we realize how important love is to the whole plan of God? We could live with Him in His glorious kingdom, and embrace His gift of eternal life, but how valuable would that be if we didn't love the One that has provided all this? If He were just a powerful overlord to whom we were forced to submit to maintain our status. This is not what God has set out to produce for Himself. He set out from the very beginning to create an eternal family that He Himself loves with an everlasting love; and who love Him back with all their hearts, all their soul's, all their mind's, and all their strength, and this is what makes heaven a paradise - mutual eternal love. I have said that love is the adhesive that forever bonds together the inhabitants of the kingdom of God. Make no mistake, God has other means at His disposal. He has the power and authority and capability to keep it together any way He wants; but of all the ways at His disposal, He has chosen **love** to bind Himself to His family and His family to Himself. Pure, unselfish, everlasting love for one another. Poets write beautiful poems of such a love, and song writers compose many songs of such a love, but in this world it escapes our grasp. For now, We can only imagine.

Among all the manifold gifts and benefits of God's grace that He gives us, a love for Him is the first and foremost of all. It is both the reason and the power that drives sanctification and transformation. It is the reason for repentance and obedience to God, and the motivational impetus that empowers it. *"If you love me you will keep my commandments"* said Jesus, because He fully understood how the whole thing works. Nothing else will produce wilful obedience to God. Fear and intimidation might produce a kind of obedience, but certainly not wilful obedience. When Moses was about to pass away and turn control over to Joshua, He made a parting speech to the people, and it's recorded as the book of Deuteronomy. Over and over again Moses tied observing the Lord's commandments to loving Him with all their hearts. The two are inseparable. We cannot do one and not do the other. To have peace with God, true peace, both external and internal, one must love God and everything that He is and represents. This is precisely what the Holy Spirit has been tasked to perform. It is His divine responsibility to pour out the love of God into all those who are God's chosen people.

It's clear that God loves us, but this verse is speaking of our loving God. The Holy Spirit puts this love for God into the hearts of those who have been justified and sanctified and regenerated. This is perhaps part of why Jesus called it being born again, because that's an apt description. It is love that makes the difference. Everything else can be said to be the fruits of that single element. And it is this love that gives us assurance and confidence that we know our God and He knows us. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to pour out this kind of love into the hearts of each and every child of God.

And Paul says that He has done so. Paul says that the Spirit has been given to us. This is a matter of fact, it's a done deal as we say in today's vernacular.

If we don't spend a lot of time reading the scriptures we might still understand the essential elements of salvation. But if we pursue the scriptures more diligently, if we dig deeper, we begin to see that there's a whole lot of things going on beneath the surface that we didn't even realize. For instance, in today's churches we hear the gospel preached and we're told to make a decision as to what we believe. We're told that we're in control and have the ability to decide for ourselves. Now in fact, this is how it appears on the surface, but I know that my prayer to the Lord, before I was converted, was that I did NOT have control over what I truly believed. I could hear the facts about Jesus, and even be desirous to believe those facts, but my mind, that part that we metaphorically call the "heart" was not really under my conscious control. I could make a public profession, but I could not really change my heart by my own choice. It was not simply a decision, it took more than that. This is a true testimony from my past. I complained to God that He was asking me to do something that He knew I couldn't do, and I saw that as patently unfair. I was ignorant of God's ways and His purposes, so all I had to go on was my own human feelings. I knew full well that this was NOT something that I had control over. I just didn't understand why.

I've shared this to make the point that God's plans are specific to His own purposes, and the less we know about God the more mysterious and unfair they seem to us. It wasn't until God intervened in my situation that the status changed. It wasn't that I finally worked it out, and came to the right decision, it was that the Triune God stepped in directly and interceded on my behalf, precisely because I did not have the ability to do it myself. Salvation is a work of every Person of the Godhead. God the Father grants access and draws the sinner, (Jn 6:37, 65) Jesus Christ dies on the cross to pay the debt of sin on their behalf, and the Holy Spirit effectuates the change of "heart" by directly instilling "belief" into that individual. All of this is going on beneath the surface every time a sinner is truly born again. On the surface we simply see a person say they "believe" but underneath that, is this whole monumental operation of God that's invisibly producing it. Salvation is of the Lord says the scriptures, but few really understand the true depth of this statement.

We need to understand what we've just discussed to realize that our loving God is not simply something that we decide to do by our own decision. Part and parcel with the whole package of justification and redemption and sanctification is this amazing gift of love for God, without which all of the other attributes would be simply tools of a trade. We follow God because we love God, we obey God because we love Him, and we use all those other tools to serve and please Him because we love Him. Love makes all the difference in the world. Paul said to the Corinthians that without love we have nothing and we are nothing. In spite of all his knowledge and capabilities, Paul knew full well that it was his love of God that marked the beginning of his ministry, and stood also as the finish line for himself and all those who believe. To possess a genuine and proven love of God is the finish product that God set out to create when He planned His entire creation. Along the way we're given tools to demonstrate it, and knowledge to comprehend it, but in the end it is that pure, unselfish, and abiding love of God, from His own chosen children, that God has set out from the very beginning to create for Himself, eternally. If you pray to Him today for many of those things that you need, please remember to also pray for His gift of your love for Him above all else that He might grant you. To Him be the glory, forever.

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