



THE DOVE NOVEMBER 2016

I've Got Peace Like...

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

– Galatians 5:22-23(NIV)

In the last couple of weeks I've noticed that I keep connecting thoughts and ideas to music, especially the hymns and songs I grew up with as a child. I will admit, I'm writing this in the middle of our annual revival, which has only sent things into overdrive. Continuing on with the Fruit of the Spirit we find ourselves at Peace, which for me personally is an idea as wonderful as it is convicting. I imagine you're already humming or singing “I've Got Peace Like a River”, which is where this month's title comes from.

In the midst of that good old catchy tune though, I was personally convicted about my own life and what kind of peace I practice on a daily basis. How would you finish the sentence at the top of this letter? Think for a moment and answer honestly, “I've got peace like...” Lately for me if the peace I have is like a river, it's certainly not a calm one. The river I'm in can feel like it's full of rapids, rocks, and other kinds of trouble to get caught up in. Something that would be real fun to kayak or raft in, if you're into that kind of thing. Whether or not

I feel like I have a paddle to steer with depends on the day and hour.

Whenever I get too caught up in my circumstances I pause, breathe, and say a 2 or 3 line prayer to re-center myself and remind myself who is steering and who blesses me with true peace in my life. The anxiety and all-over-the-place-ness I just described isn't the peace that comes from God. Our definition of peace as Christians can't be simply limited to whenever everything seems to be calm and okay because that isn't following and being obedient to Christ. If our peace and calm depends on our circumstances, we're giving control of ourselves to the world and its ways, not the Lord. Later on in the book of Job we read these words, “Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you. Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart” (22:21-22, NIV). You would be hard pressed to find a more straightforward description of what we have to do to know the peace of God in our hearts and live it out.

As with many things in life, control is at the heart of this matter. Depending on our circumstances for peace is allowing the broken persons and ways of this world to dictate the state of our soul. True peace cannot come from another person, an event, or anything made or shaped by human intervention. The peace of God must come

from Him and from within. We need to confront our lives and anything that is set in our way with the blessing of a God-given everlasting peace that wells up from our hearts like a spring. In order for God to give us this gift, we must first give over control and direction to Him. Have you ever tried to give someone something when they aren't looking at you, even when they are blatantly ignoring you? It doesn't work so well. We can't receive fully from God until we are fully turned and focused on the Lord. Once we submit to God, we are as the passage says at peace with Him and in relationship with God. Once we have the peace and presence of the Lord in our lives and are actively engaging with Him we will have a spiritual prosperity.

This kind of prosperity isn't about having stuff, it's about the assurance and knowledge that we have all things with the Lord. Romans 8:28 says that, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (NIV). Knowing that God loves us, is with us, and giving us what we need in all things is that assurance that enables us to survive and thrive in the greatest of joys and most severe of trials. Believing that enables us to make the statement to ourselves and others that we are not defined by what today brings, or the day after. We are defined by what God has done for us and is doing through us! That all sounds good, but what happens when we hit that first rapid or rock in our path? That is where the end of this passage from Job is critical. We are never fully prepared, understanding, or protected even after we

accept Christ into our lives and practice our faith daily. We're going to feel burdened.

We're going to get knocked down. Sometimes we won't feel like we can or know how to get back up. In Job 22:22 we are given the direction to accept instruction from the Lord and to store His words in our heart. That is our defense and our refuge in times of distress. If we continually open ourselves up to the grace and love of God, if we stockpile it all in our hearts, then we will have a vast reservoir to tap into when the bad, tiresome, and seemingly impossible comes our way. Remember, the Prince of Peace humbled himself to be like us, to bear the worst of us, so he could pay the ultimate price for us, and lead us into everlasting life. The peace and assurance of that can guide our every day if we allow it to. May we all strive to know it, follow it, and show it for the entire world to see.

Blessings and Peace,
Pastor Brad

Aging Faithfully

We had a nice turnout for Cookie BINGO this month. Join us for the second Tuesday in November (the 8th) at 10:00 in Wesley Hall. (Don't forget to vote that day.)

Our December get-together will be for the wonderful Christmas music of the AARP Chorus! Tuesday, December 13th at 11:00 AM in Wesley Hall for the singing....then stay for a pizza lunch! See you there!

The Strength of Our Church

Dear Friends in Christ

How would you measure the strength of our church? Is it the number who attend worship? Is it the amount of worship giving? I believe that our true strength lies not in those quantities, but in our love for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and our love for our church family and friends.

It is through His love that our church family is solidly joined in the knowledge that Christ died to remove our sins so we may enter the kingdom of heaven, and that God loves us and hears our prayers. He has promised to never leave us. Together, through prayer and perseverance, our Lord will give us the strength and wisdom to overcome any obstacle.

Over the past few months, our church leadership has become aware that our Sunday worship attendance is down by about 10% compared to last year, and worship giving is also down.

- To deal with the first matter, Pastor Brad and some others have, after much prayer, developed a plan to introduce our church to the local community, especially new developments, to make them aware of what we have to offer in the way of a religious experience.
- With respect to the second matter, the finance committee has recommended, and the administrative council approved, a measure to seek a reduction in our district/conference apportionment by about 25%, or

\$3,800. This will be the first time in recent history that the church has asked for this type of financial relief. The committees also agreed to a revision of the previously approved 2017 church budget by about 4%, to bring it more in line with lower worship giving.

The above measures may address the problems, but the most important thing we can do is this:

- PRAY!!--COME TOGETHER AS A CHURCH FAMILY AND CONFIRM THROUGH PRAYER THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE ANSWER; THAT HE IS IN CONTROL OF OUR DESTINY AND HIS WILL IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WE SHOULD SEEK.

As in all families, there is a tendency to look for reasons for problems, and assign blame. This is counterproductive, and will lead to divisiveness. The course of action we must all embrace is to show love and support for all, from Pastor Brad and his family, to our newest members.

Our church has faced more significant problems in the past, some of a similar nature. As we have done in the past, let us join together as one in prayer to ask our Lord Jesus Christ to show us the way.

Matthew 7:7 (NIV) *Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.*

Rich Spina

Words of God: Justification 2

By Ed Thornton

Justification is God's act of removing the guilt and penalty of sin while at the same time declaring a sinner righteous. It is a one-time act, a gift from God. Righteousness is the state of perfection required by God to enter heaven. Justification is granted to all who exercise faith.

What does the New Testament say about the benefits of justification by faith?

Read Romans 5:1-9.

Introduction

The gospel of Jesus Christ promises us the forgiveness of sins and the certainty of a relationship with God that will last through all eternity. Once we have entered into this relationship with God, through faith in Jesus Christ, we discover a whole new world of benefits all flowing from our justification by faith. In the first nine verses of Romans 5 Paul tells us the benefits of justification.

But first let's look at the context of this passage. After explaining his relationship to the gospel in Romans 1 Paul sets out to show the righteousness of God as evident in the gospel. God's righteousness is revealed in His response to sin. Both Jews and Gentiles have failed to produce the righteousness God required and thus all are under the sentence of divine condemnation. God's divine condemnation was appeased in Christ's death on the Cross. Thus God is able to save

and to bless everyone who believes in Jesus Christ.

In Romans 3 Paul looks more closely at this justification available to us through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul views justification from God's point of view, focusing on the public demonstration of His righteousness. In Romans 4, justification is viewed from our perspective, focusing on the faith by which God's righteousness is provided. Now Romans chapter 5 verses 1-9 identifies the benefits of Justification by Faith.

Note there is a vast difference between the "hype" of our world and the "hope" of the gospel. This world's "hype", all its answers, always lets us down. But the hope of the gospel only grows. Paul's words in verses 1-9 offer some of the most comforting words a Christian will ever hear. For the Christian, life in this world is filled with turmoil and despair. This message of hope in Romans 5 is sweet indeed.

So what are the benefits of justification?

The first benefit of our justification by faith, Paul writes, is we have "**peace with God**". The peace "**of God**" is that inner tranquility which God gives to the Christian, even when there is external turmoil and despair.

Our sin brings about divine wrath. Jesus Christ death satisfied God's condemnation of sinners, appeasing God's wrath toward those who have faith in Christ. Since God's animosity toward the believer has been appeased, God now deals graciously with those who have been justified.

From the believer's point of view, the hostilities have ended. The one who has been justified by faith can now breathe a sigh of relief. The war with God is over.

Peace has been declared. That person has been reconciled to God. All of the other benefits of justification described in this passage are first and foremost the result of peace with God.

The second benefit of justification is "a **standing in grace**." Since justification by faith is based upon the sacrificial death of Jesus, God can deal graciously with us in spite of our sin. Justification by faith gives us access to God's grace, a place of security. This standing in "**grace**," which justification accomplishes, is merely the beginning. Paul calls it an "**introduction**." A whole new world commences for the person justified by faith. And as time passes, more and more of God's plans and promises are revealed to the believer.

The third benefit of justification is "**The benefit of the jubilant hope of a glorious conclusion**." Our justification by faith is also the basis for our confidence in a hope for a glorious conclusion. This glorious conclusion is Christ's return and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. We also joyfully exult in the "**hope of the glory of God**". The "**glory of God**" is the promised blessing of enjoying eternity in the presence of God, in His kingdom.

The fourth benefit of justification is "**The benefit of a jubilant hope in present tribulations**". Paul characterizes the

Christian life as Jesus and the apostles did as a life which will encounter trials and tribulations. We hardly need to be convinced to rejoice in times of peace and prosperity. But to claim that Christians can and should rejoice in their tribulations requires some explanation.

In explaining, Paul says that tribulation produces "**perseverance**." God's resources are more than sufficient to sustain the Christians, even as they face adversity and difficulty. As a result, endurance over time produces perseverance, a staying power. Perseverance in turn produces a "**proven character**."

Over a period of time, endurance becomes a state of mind and reflects one's true character. What we really are becomes most evident in our response to adversity over the long term. Proven character, in turn, produces "**hope**." Seeing that we can endure, we find hope. We find that our character has been strengthened in the process of facing life's trials and we find hope. For this we should rejoice.

Tribulation not only develops our character it also reminds us of God's character, bringing assurance that our hope will neither disappoint nor fail.

The reason it does not, and cannot, fail is that it rests on the character of God Himself. God's character is a character of love and grace. God's love was "**poured out within our hearts**" at the time of our justification by faith. It was "**poured out**" by the Holy Spirit who was given to us at the time of our confession of faith. As we reflect on God's

great act of love and our justification our hope can only grow.

The final benefit of justification by faith is **Christ brings about even greater blessings**. Justification, based upon the shed blood of Jesus Christ, assures the Christian that God's wrath has been satisfied, that the penalty for sin has been paid and we no longer need fear divine condemnation. Now, having been justified by His death, we are free to enjoy the benefits of His life. Think of the benefits of Christ's resurrection. Remember all His eternal benefits are available to the believer. It promises so many greater things as the believer lives the life of faith.

Through justification by faith we have peace with God and enjoy the many benefits justification provides.

