

Lesson 8 --- April 19, 2018

1. Review lesson 7 by contrasting Abrahamic faith to the religion of human achievement.
2. Give 2-3 examples of how God has transformed the lives of His people; then share one characteristic He's changed in your life, or someone's close to you, that evidences His transforming grace. (Ro. 4:18-25; 1/28/18, p.1,2)

3. This is a three-part question: (Ro. 4:18-25; 1/28/18, p.3,4) #1
Describe how faith and hope go together.

#2 If we want to grow in faith and hope, what must we do?

#3 What constitutes our main trouble?

4. Read Ro.5:1-5 & excerpts from "Peace with God" then answer the questions. (Ro. 5:1-2; 2/4/18)
 - a. What does Jesus say that brings us full circle to establish us on the foundation of peace?

b. What is peace a result of?

c. What some conditions for peace to be a reality in our lives?

d. List your favorite proof texts for the fact of the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence. (use notes or

personal verses)

e. In the notes, R.C. Sproul is quoted concerning peace. Rewrite the quote in your own words. What is his key point?

f. What is an important clarification made concerning peace? Can you relate? If so, how?

Notes for Lesson 8

Question 2 (Ro. 4:18-25; 1/28/18, p.1,2)

Abraham is cited as an example of faith. Give 2-3 other examples of how God has transformed the lives of His people; then share one characteristic He's changed in your life, or someone's close to you, that evidences His transforming grace.

Romans 4:18-25 *In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE." ¹⁹Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; ²⁰yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. ²²Therefore IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. ²³Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, ²⁴but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.*

Paul states that the Old Testament was written for our benefit as believers. The Old Testament is the foundation on which the Gospel is built. Beginning with Genesis 1 and moving forward, we are informed of creation and the entrance of sin into the world. We see the devastating effects of sin in the Flood that wiped out all of mankind except for eight people. Then we see God's work of grace to reconcile sinful mankind back to Himself as we encounter Abraham.

Romans chapter 4 has focused our attention on this pivotal man Abraham. In His interaction with Abraham, God laid the foundation of justification by grace through faith. God glorified Himself by reconciling Abraham to Himself. This did not happen by Abraham's efforts at being good but by his simple trust in God's provision. Along the way, we see a transformation in this man Abraham.

God changed Abraham's name from Abram. Abraham went from being a pagan in the land of Ur to being the father of many nations. He went from being an enemy of God to being the friend of God. We see this man go from weak faith to strong faith. He trusted God when, humanly speaking, there was no hope. In hope against hope, he believed God, being fully assured that what God promised, He would fulfill.

Abraham's faith was weak at first. He had to learn some lessons the hard way. He lied about his wife in order to save his own neck. He might have lost both his wife and his life, had God not stepped in.

Because of Abraham's weak faith, he impregnated Hagar and, as a result, Ishmael was born. The conflict that began during that time between Ishmael and Isaac can be seen even today as Arabs and Jews have bitter fighting.

Nonetheless, Abraham grew in his trust in God so that towards the end of his life, Abraham would not have hesitated to plunge a knife into the heart of the promised son Isaac in obedience to God. He hoped against hope that God would raise Isaac from the dead, if need be. Abraham's part was just to trust and obey.

God brings transformation into the lives of His people. We could spend all morning exploring the lives of Old Testament and New Testament people who were transformed by God's grace through faith. For example, Jacob went from being a deceiver to being a man who would wrestle with God and be called "Israel," meaning "God contends." Moses went from being a man who would have been content shepherding in the wilderness for the rest of his life to being a man who would lead the nation of Israel out of bondage. God performed tremendous miracles through Moses, but Moses first had to be humbled and taught to trust in God.

God took an insignificant man named Gideon and transformed him into a mighty general as Gideon hoped against hope. God transformed a young shepherd boy, David, into a mighty king who would do mighty things and write great portions of Scripture that still have impact on the people of God. Certainly, David had to learn that it was not through his ability. He was shown the depths of his sin, but along the way, he also saw the power of God's grace.

We find in the New Testament that through Christ, God's transforming power was put on display. Zaccheus was changed from a greedy, self-centered tax collector to a man who experienced salvation and would pay back four times to any whom he had cheated. Peter, a lowly but prideful fisherman who denied Christ three times, was transformed into a mighty preacher of the Gospel and became a pivotal man in all of history in the formation of the early church.

A boastful, pompous, egomaniac Pharisee named Saul who murdered and imprisoned Christians was transformed into Paul, a mighty preacher of the Gospel to the Gentiles. I believe Peter and Paul never got over that they were the men that they were by grace of God. I Corinthians 15:10 clearly states their attitude—*"But by the grace of God I am what I am, & His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me."*

Blind men were made to see, crippled men were made to walk, dead men were raised to life. The Scriptures are a testimony to the power of God to transform spiritually dead people into children of God who live their lives in a growing fashion to become more like Christ, to the glory of God. Many people even in the church do not know this transforming power of God because they do not have hope against hope. They are bound by their own human efforts. They do not trust in God.

God has given us the testimony of His Word in order that we may know Him and live lives of hope against hope. I want you to keep that in mind as we finish our study of chapter 4.

Question 3 (Ro. 4:18-25; 1/28/18, p.3,4)

This is a three-part question: #1 Describe how faith and hope go together. #2 If we want to grow in faith and hope, what must we do? #3 What constitutes our main trouble?

Last week we considered the passage, "Hope against hope." We saw that there was no hope that Abraham and Sarah would have a child in order to fulfill the promise of becoming a great nation--- no human hope. But because it was God who had made the promise, there was strong confidence and every reason to hope. Consistently, when it comes to the promises of God, believers are called not to

focus on adverse circumstances but on the God who is sovereign over the circumstances.

Throughout the Word of God, we find this same disregard of circumstances on the part of those who believed God. Noah did not pay any attention to the fact that it had never rained upon the earth but went ahead and built a vessel the equivalent of an 18,000 ton ship. This past week, someone told me a pithy saying, "Do not let your inexperience keep you from achieving great things. Keep in mind that the Ark was built by amateurs and the Titanic was built by experts."

Noah did not look at the circumstances; he kept his focus on God. Gideon did not pay any attention to the fact that his little army was outnumbered thousands to one. He did not look at the circumstances; he kept his focus on God. Caleb and Joshua were two of the twelve spies who went into the Promised Land to scout it out for invasion.

All twelve agreed that there were giants in the land. You can break down this account into three words that all begin with the letter "G": God, giants, and grasshoppers. Ten spies said that there were giants in the land and that, compared to the giants, the Jews appeared as grasshoppers. But Caleb and Joshua did not look at the giants. Their focus was on God who promised to give success in conquering the land.

We could consider many more examples. The Israelite nation saw only the Red Sea ahead of it as the Egyptian army was bearing down upon them, but Moses by faith and hope in God saw a pathway through the sea. The armies of Israel saw only a giant as they looked at Goliath, but David kept his focus on God and saw a blaspheming man whom God would take down with a sling and a rock. Hope against hope. You cannot view your difficult circumstances and God at the same time. You are either fixed upon your circumstances, or you are fixed upon God.

Hebrews 12:1-3 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

So many grow weary and lose heart because their eyes are fixed on circumstances and are not fixed on Christ through His Word. I have heard numerous times that the way a farmer used to plow a straight line in his field (before the GPS) was to fix his eye on a spot on the other side of the field and drive toward that spot. You cannot plow a straight line by looking at the ground immediately around you.

We saw that faith and hope go together. In order to have hope, we need to trust that God is able and will fulfill His promises. It is vital that we grow strong in faith. The Bible is clear on how we can strengthen our faith. Romans 10:17 says, "*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*" We grow in our trust in God as we expose ourselves to Him through His Word.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones speaks precisely as to how Scripture is used by the Spirit to make us strong. "If you are anxious to know how to have a strong faith, here is the method. It means thorough and deep knowledge of the Bible and of God through the Bible. If you want to have strong faith, read your Bible. Go through it beginning to end. Concentrate on the revelation that God has given of Himself and His character. Keep your eye especially on prophecy, and then watch His promises being fulfilled. That is the way to develop strong faith.

"Then read the historical portions of the Bible, and the stories of the great heroes. That is why the author of Hebrews gives the gallery of portraits of these great saints in the eleventh chapter. He says, 'Look at these men who were men like yourselves. What was their secret? It was that they knew God,

they gave glory to God and relied utterly upon Him and His word.' Turn that over in your mind, keep on speaking to yourself about it. Then finally, apply all that you learn to particular cases as they arise in your own life and experience. That is the secret of faith. It is our ignorance of God that constitutes our main trouble."

Question 4 (Ro. 5:1-2; 2/4/18)

Read Romans 5:1-5 and excerpts from "Peace with God" then answer the questions.

a. What does Jesus say to bring us full circle to establish us on the foundation of peace?

Jesus said in John 14:27, "*Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*"

Jesus says earlier in John 14, "*Let not your heart be troubled; trust in God, trust also in Me.*" He brings us full circle in establishing us on the foundation of peace realized in our relationship with Him and trust in God.

b. What is peace a result of?

We find in other portions of Scripture that peace in the believer's life is a result of the Holy Spirit's presence within. When a believer keeps in step with the indwelling Spirit, the result is a calm inner person. Galations 5:22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

c. What some conditions for peace to be a reality in our lives?

Peace within does not happen in a vacuum. There are conditions for peace to be a reality in the believer's life. We do not get zapped with peace. There are truths that we must practice. We find an important passage concerning our responsibilities in Philippians 4:4-9.

Philippians 4:4-9 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

There are some conditions in the life of the believer in order to have peace that we learn from this passage:

- Our joy must be in the Lord, not in worldly things.
- Prayer and thanksgiving must be a continual reality.
- Filling our minds with the wholesome things of God instead of the destructive things of this world.
- Practicing the truth of God's directives must be what we strive for.

As I said, we must grow in our relationship with God through His Word. As these things are a growing reality in our lives then so will the peace of God.

d. List your favorite proof texts for the fact of the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence. (use notes or personal verses)

There are numerous examples of this truth in the Word of God. Psalm 4 states *Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! Thou hast relieved me in my distress... know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself... Thou hast put gladness in my heart, More than when their grain and new wine abound. In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for Thou alone, O LORD, dost make me to dwell in safety.* Psalm 119:165 parallels this thought. *Those who love Thy law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble.*

The one whose mind is steadfast in the Lord is the one who is at peace within. No matter what the chaos outside there is peace inside. Isaiah 26:3 *You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.* (NKJVersion)

Romans 8:6 *For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.*. . .
Romans 15:13 *Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

So peace in a person's life begins with that person being at peace with God through the person of Christ in the Gospel. The starting point for all spiritual blessings, in this life and the life to come, is the peace that God has made with us through the death of Jesus Christ.

Many people would like the peace of God (or some kind of peace) in life and in difficult circumstances. But, the peace that surpasses all understanding can only be gained when we have first been established in a right relationship with God through Christ.

d. In the notes, R.C. Sproul is quoted concerning peace. Rewrite the quote in your own words. What is his key point?

R.C. Sproul wrote this concerning peace, "Today, there is talk about inner peace, peace of mind. People are troubled and, as Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God." There are people all over this world at this very moment who are desperately seeking peace of mind. They are seeking it in their vocation; they are seeking it in romance; they are seeking it in material possessions; they are seeking it in political upheaval; they are seeking it in a multitude of ways. We can find certain levels of peace in this world, and things to pacify our anxious souls. But there is a foundational anxiety that can never be quieted apart from our justification. A person cannot be fulfilled inwardly (no matter what he does, no matter what he has) if he is estranged from his Creator, if he is at war with God."

e. What is an important clarification made concerning peace? Can you relate? If so, how?

There is an important clarification concerning peace that I want to mention. It is possible at times to be at peace with God and know that we are at peace with God, but, at the same time, fail for a time to know the peace of God. Tragic, difficult situations sometimes cause us to lose our sense of the peace of God, but that does not mean that peace with God has been destroyed.

For example, death will come into our lives. Life changing circumstances arise. Major disappointments tend to shake us to our core. In such situations, knowing that God has made peace with us, and that nothing will destroy our peace with God, will enable us to go to Him quickly when we need help. That is why Paul tells us in Philippians 4:6–7 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

The fact that we go to God in dire circumstances gives further evidence that we have peace with God. Martyn Lloyd-Jones explains: "faith and peace in difficult circumstances is like the needle of a compass that always points to the magnetic north. It is possible to deflect it by a hard blow or by bringing another magnet close alongside. But these deviations are temporary, and the needle will always return to the proper position. That is what faith and peace are like. They can be jarred or deflected, but they will always return to God because God has made peace with us."

It is only those who know that God has loved them in full knowledge of their sin who can fully trust that He will continue to give grace no matter what.