The Book of Romans

***Peace with God. . . Or, The Freedom of Forgiveness***

 “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” -- Romans 5:1

A key element in Romans is justification by faith, and a key element in justification by faith is forgiveness. “Forgiven” is the sweetest word a sinner can hear, but what is its nature, exactly, why is it so important, and how can we be sure that we have it?

***The Premise: Forgiveness originates in God’s heart.*** Luke 15:1-32

“I tell you that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” – Jesus. (Lk 15:7)

Forgiveness is not something that God does begrudgingly or flippantly, but comes from His joy-filled heart. His desire is not only to have many children, but to embrace them from among sinners. That is, it is ONLY humans who are made in His image and so they are the ONLY creatures who have sinned against Him who have still a chance of restoration. Fallen angels have no path to redemption; humans do. That God delights to show mercy is seen in . . .

* His mission to save sinners. Mark 2:15-17
* His many invitations to sinners. Isaiah 1:18; 55:6, 7
* His great sacrifice for sinners. Hebrews 10:19-23
* His steadfast promise fully to forgive sinners. Psalm 103:8-1

***The Promise: Forgiveness must be embraced to be effective.***  1 John 1:5-10

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

Forgiveness is promised to all who believe it, so it is not automatic. Admitting our sin to God is one element in confession. The other element is grasping that our sin is rebellion against God, and deserving of His wrath. Many know they are sinners who never get around to con-fessing their sins, but rather think of their sins as “not that bad,” or else excusable (“What could I do?”). Confession is not penance, but it is part of repentance, which is getting on God’s side against your sin, agreeing with Him that you are guilty. When we do this, He forgives. Period.

***The Peace: Forgiveness clears the conscience and frees the mind.*** Psalm 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143

Once we believe forgiveness, we can enjoy its benefits:

* We can live guilt-free since sins are fully forgiven. Hebrews 9:13, 14
* We approach God boldly without fear of disfavor. Hebrews 4:14-16
* We can “bounce back” after failure. 1 John 2:1, 2
* We can truly enjoy unbroken fellowship with God. 1 John 1:3
* We can overcome the depression caused by our guilt. Psalm 32:3, 4
* We can share with others the joy of reconciliation. Psalm 51:12, 13

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***1. We confess our sins, agreeing with God’s verdict.***

David warns us not to be stubborn, like a mule which needs an external motivation (Psalm 32:9). We come clean with God about our sin, and judge ourselves. When we do, forgiveness comes, and we are identified as “godly,” Ps. 32:6. John 9:39-41

***2. We believe God’s promise, receiving God’s peace.***

Faith activates God’s promises, that is, makes them effective in our case. We can be sure because He is faithful to His covenant and His name. Psalm 25:11; 79:9; Ezekiel 20:44