

Savoring God's Word

A Meditation on Romans 5:1-2, 6-8

by Jan Johnson

www.janjohnson.org

This meditation exercise on Christ's acceptance of us is especially for those wishing to build intimacy with God. You might want to use it when you need a greater sense of God's love and acceptance. If you wish to have a group meditate on the passage together, the instructions for the group leader are in italics. If you wish to use it alone, ignore those instructions. This meditation roughly follows the pattern of *lectio divina*, but also includes elements from the Ignatian style of Scripture meditation. For more information about how to meditate on Scripture, see [Savoring God's Word](#) or the recording [Meditating on Scripture](#) (scroll to bottom of page).

WARMING UP (5-10 minutes)

Center yourself by breathing in and out deeply several times. Bend your neck back and forth and then let the muscles in your arms, hands, legs and feet go limp. Turn over each distraction, one by one.

When you are relaxed, consider this quiet question: **When has it been most clear (if ever) that God accepts you?** If an answer to the above question doesn't come to you at this time, that's fine. Simply enjoy sitting in God's presence.

Group leader: After group members have greeted one another, ask them to close their eyes, relax their muscles and breathe deeply. Then present the above "quiet question" and let them reflect quietly for a few minutes. Repeat the question and ask them to share their thoughts in a sentence or two. Anyone who wishes to pass may do so.

READING the PASSAGE (15-20 minutes)

Read silently the passage printed below, noting the explanations in the right column.

Group leader: Ask a group member to read the passage below aloud. Suggest that other group members might want to close their eyes and listen.

ROMANS 5:1-2, 6-8

GOD'S OFFER

1 Therefore, since we have been *justified* through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

WHY IT CAN WORK

6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man

ITALICIZED WORDS & PHRASES

JUSTIFIED made right in God's eyes even though we don't live perfectly, having a broken bone set perfectly and then mended so well you can't tell it was ever broken.

STILL SINNERS God doesn't wait to love us or help us until we

someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were *still sinners*, Christ died for us.

become godly creatures. He loves us as we are, even before we turn to Him.

If you haven't read the notes in the right column, read them silently now. Take a minute to consider the following questions.

Group leader: After the passage is read, ask group members to read silently the explanations in the right column and then to jot down answers to the questions below. After a few minutes, have them choose one question and share their answer to that question in a sentence or two. Or they may pass, if they wish. Explain that this is not a time for discussion, but for reporting responses to the questions.

PASSAGE THEME

1. Which of these things do you need most? (Rate them 1-4, 1 being the most needed.)
 - ___ a sense of being justified -- that you're OK before God?
 - ___ peace with God
 - ___ faith in God
 - ___ a sense of God's grace, that He loves you, regardless of mistakes
2. What does this passage say to you when you think: *I really blew it this time! God must be mad at me now.*
 - About how God accepts you ?
 - About how God equips you to move forward?
3. In what situations do you feel most powerless (vs. 6)?
4. How has God demonstrated His love to you recently?

PICTURING the PASSAGE (10-15 minutes)

Before reading the Bible passage again, consider this cue.

CHARACTER CUE: THE APOSTLE PAUL, CHIEF OF SINNERS

Writing to Timothy his friend and partner, Paul said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Timothy 1:15, KJV). Before Paul became a Christian he was a mass murderer of Christians, going from house to house, dragging off men and women and putting them in prison. His mission? "To destroy the church" (Acts 8:3).

Certain words in this passage take on new passion when we realize that God spoke these words through the mouth of person who ordered the deaths of so many people:

- justified: Can such a sinner ever be justified?
- peace: Can God really be at peace with such a person? Can that person ever be at peace with himself?
- grace: Is there enough grace in God to forgive such a man?
- ungodly: That describes Paul's actions perfectly.
- sinners: That also describes Paul, and in that state, Christ died for him.

Now read the passage aloud and close your eyes. If you wish, use the following idea to picture a scene from this passage. The phrase, "gained access," (vs. 2) in the original biblical language carries with it the idea of being introduced into the presence-chamber of the king.¹ Picture for a moment your being ushered into the physical presence of God by Christ (Eph. 2:18; 3:12).

¹D. Guthrie & J.A. Motyer, *The New Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), p. 1024.

Based on the Bible passage above, what words might Christ use to introduce Paul? To introduce you? How would God respond? For example:

- Christ might say to God about you, Here is my friend who is powerless to save himself (vs. 6).
- God might respond: I am here for you. You and I have peace together (vs. 1).

As you picture yourself being introduced, read the passage aloud and then close your eyes, picking a few phrases that would be appropriate to the scene. If you wish, use your ideas to fill in the blanks below:

How Jesus introduces me: _____.

How God responds: _____.

Group leader: Have group members read the above cue and picture suggestion silently. Then have a group member read the passage aloud while the others picture the introductions. After a few minutes, ask group members to describe in a sentence or two what they pictured. Anyone who wishes to pass may do so.

SOAKING in the PASSAGE (5-15 minutes)

Reflect now on the important issue that must always be considered when Scripture is read: How does the truth of this passage touch your life today? Read the passage aloud again and ponder the following question for several minutes: **Is there within this passage one word or a phrase that speaks to you and stays with you?**

After a few minutes, write about the word or phrase that resonate within you from the passage.

Word or phrase: _____

Group leader: Have a different group member read the passage aloud and then state the question printed in bold. Have the group sit together quietly and then fill in the blank above. After a few minutes, ask group members to read what they've written. Remind them that they may pass if they wish.

PONDERING the INVITATION (5-15 minutes)

Perhaps God is offering you an invitation in this passage to do or be something in the next few days. What might that be? Sit quietly for a few minutes, pondering this question: **What do I sense this passage telling me that I need to know in a fuller sense?** Be open to the quiet, but don't feel pressured to come up with something.

Group leader: Read the above instructions aloud and after a few minutes, repeat the question printed in bold. Ask group members to respond by saying, I SENSE THIS PASSAGE CALLING ME TO: and then completing that statement with a short phrase. Anyone who wishes to pass may do so.

PRAYING (5-10 minutes)

Respond to God by telling him how you feel about what you sensed or didn't sense during this meditation. If you need to present questions to God, do so.

Group leader: After allowing a few minutes for private prayer, ask group members to pray for the person on their left. Anyone wishing to pray silently may do so, saying, "I'm praying silently." When they're finished, they can say, "Amen."

DAILY LECTIO:

If you wish, use the above format to meditate on God's word between group meetings. You may wish to focus on today's passage everyday this week or use the following passages:

- Psalm 21:1-7 (joy in the presence of God)
- Luke 7:3-10 (a centurion who did not deserve to have Jesus come)
- Romans 8:1-5 (becoming powerless instead of living by sinful nature)
- Ephesians 2:14-18 (Christ gives us peace and access to God)
- 1 Timothy 1:13-17 (Paul's experience of grace and love)
- Jude 21-25 (joy in God's presence)

###