

REFORMATION 2022

OCTOBER 30, 2022

TEXT: ROMANS 3: 19-28

THEME: THE RIGHTEOUS WILL LIVE BY FAITH

**21** But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— **22** the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, **25** whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

In the name of Jesus:

Imagine two men coming to a frozen river. One has a very strong faith in the ice and he drives his snowmobile across the ice to the other side. The other man has a weak faith in the ice, so he gets on his hands and knees and crawls ever so carefully across the ice, fearing the ice will break. Eventually he gets to the other side. Both men make it across the ice to the other side, not because of their faith, but because the ice is strong enough to support them.

Two weeks later the same two men seek to cross the ice. The first man, having a strong faith, drives across the ice in his snowmobile, only to fall into the river as the ice beneath him breaks. The second man crawls once again across the ice, fearing it would break. It does, and he also falls into the river.

Both men fall into the ice, not because of their strong faith, weak faith, or even lack of faith, but because the ice was paper thin.

Such is the nature of faith. It is not the strength of our faith that matters, it is the object of our faith, or what we place our faith in that matters. The righteous live by faith, not because their faith is strong, or weak, but because that faith is rooted in Jesus Christ, the Son of God in human flesh. It is rock solid because Jesus, the Crucified One, has risen and ascended into heaven, and now sits at the right hand of God. The righteous live by faith in Jesus, whose blood covers their sins. The righteous live by faith because of Jesus!

That is the truth of the Reformation. Over 500 years ago a monk by the name of Martin Luther struggled with the question of how he could be certain that God loved him, that his sins would be forgiven, and that he was a child of God. Luther tried everything and everything that he could in order to know God's love. He left law school, pursuing his father's dream of becoming a lawyer, to enter a monastery and became a monk. There Luther said his prayers, faithfully performed his duties, attended services, and did everything that was expected of him, even making a pilgrimage to Rome in order to find the peace of having his sins forgiven. But through it all, Luther wondered if God loved him. Did Luther do enough to appease an angry God? Could he do

more? He punished his body, as well as his soul, all in an attempt to become right with God, but still found no peace.

It wasn't until he began his study of the Scriptures that he found the peace that surpasses all understanding. He read the book of Romans, and as he read, the Holy Spirit revealed to him how one becomes right with God. Not by what someone does or how that person lives his life or even how much money that person pays to the church. A person becomes right with God because of Jesus.

As he read the book of Romans, one thought kept coming back to him, over and over again, it is what Paul wrote in Romans 1: 16-17: **6** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. **17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Luther discovered the fundamental truth of the Bible, that no one could make satisfaction for their sins. All have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. Salvation, a right standing and right relationship with God is given as a free gift of God's love, for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him, Jesus, will not perish but have everlasting life. This is how one becomes a child of God, through faith in

Jesus, who was born of the Virgin, who lived, died, and rose again from the grave. Jesus, who gives life and gives it abundantly. Jesus, who alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Jesus, He who is the Resurrection and the Life, no one can come to the Father except by believing in Jesus.

Luther had the weight of the world, really, the weight of his sins, lifted from himself and finally felt at peace, all on account of Jesus. Luther described his life, indeed the Christian life, with the phrase, “we are all beggars, this is true.” A beggar has nothing to offer of himself, he purely relies on the generosity of others. Luther, you, and I, are beggars, for all that we have and all that we are comes from the hand of our loving Heavenly Father. He has created us and still preserves us, giving us all we need. In love He sent His Son to pay the price for our sins. The Holy Spirit alone gives faith in the only One who saves, Jesus. The Holy Spirit calls by the Gospel, gives faith in Jesus, and enlightens and makes us holy in the Father’s sight. And all of this is a free gift of God because God loves sinners!

This moved Luther to write 95 statements, called the 95 Theses, nailing them on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. From this point on Luther dedicated his life to telling others of God’s love for them. For Luther, he now understood that a sinner was saved by God’s grace through faith in

Christ, not as a result of anything anyone can do, so that any if there is any boasting the sinner, saved by Christ, boasts about Jesus.

So too, you have been saved by God's grace in Christ. God loves you now and into eternity. In love He sent His one and only Son to save you. In Holy Baptism He has made you His own and a member of His Kingdom. He speaks His words of forgiveness, life, and salvation in the Bible. He comes to you to forgive and strengthen you in the Lord's Supper.

As a Christian who seeks to live your life to the glory of God, your faith has been tested and will continue to be tested. Yet throughout your life, Christ has a hold of you! Jesus is strong enough and continues to hold you through the trials and tribulations of life. You are right with God on account of Jesus. The Christian life is a life of faith, saved by grace, placing our trust in Jesus so that we are all in with Jesus. We place all of our life, all of our being in the hands of Jesus. Faith is putting all of your trust in Jesus to save you because you can't save yourself.

Someone once said that believing in Jesus means trusting in Him so much that if He can't take you to heaven then you aren't going there. If Jesus can't take you to heaven then I will never make it because I am going all in on Jesus, putting all my eggs in one basket, Jesus. There is no plan B, there is no other way. The righteous live by faith, trusting in Jesus alone to help and to save.

For there is no other name under heaven whereby a person can be saved, except by God's grace through faith in Jesus alone. In Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

Amen