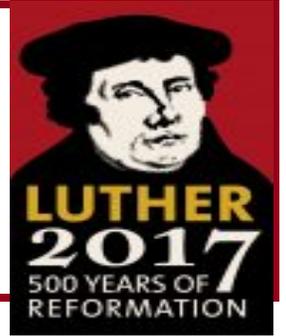


The Righteousness of God

1 Cor 15:3-17 Romans 1:13-17 Luke 18:9-14

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Martin Luther had a terrible time with his sin. He could never find peace with God; his conscience troubled him greatly; his sin and his guilt were always a problem for him.

As an Augustinian monk, Luther had been taught that God was **righteous**, **holy**, and **perfect**, and that you also had to be **righteous**, **holy**, and **perfect** in order to be saved. Luther was taught that God gives you power in your baptism so that you can become **righteous**, **holy**, and **perfect** on your own.

In other words, your own good works had to be righteous, holy, and perfect if you wanted to be saved.

Luther was **never** able to achieve this, and he finally discovered that **no one** could; an, it wasn't even what the Bible taught!

When the Bible teaches us about the righteousness of God, **it does not mean** that we have to be **righteous**, **holy**, and **perfect** on our own, but rather that God **declares** us **righteous**, **holy**, and **perfect** in His sight. Righteousness is a **legal verdict** from God; it is an **official pronouncement** that we are "**not guilty!**" of our rebellion and immorality.

Here is the Bible verse that changed Martin Luther's life, that started the Lutheran Reformation, and that rescued us all from striving to be **righteous**, **holy**, and **perfect** in order to secure our own salvation!

For I am not ashamed of the **Gospel**, for it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who *believes*, first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. Because in the Gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed, a righteousness that is from faith to faith, just as it is written, "The righteous will live by faith." ROMANS 1:16-17

The Gospel is the good news that you are declared righteous in God's eyes through faith in Jesus Christ!

The Gospel is the **POWER OF GOD** that saves you; you are not saved by your own good works! Righteousness is a legal verdict where you are declared “not guilty!” of your sin because Jesus was declared “guilty!” for you on the cross.

Remember that we are sinful and unrighteous. Our lives are swamped in rebellion and immorality. **We have no power and no ability to save ourselves.** In fact, the Bible says that we are totally and thoroughly ungodly and unrighteous. In the Book of Romans, St. Paul quotes King Solomon and says, “*There is no one who is righteous, not even one... There is no one who does good, not even one.*” (Rom 3:10,12) It would be impossible for us to boast of our own good works in God's presence. **We have no power and no ability to save ourselves!**

The Pharisee in the parable today thought he had the power and ability to save himself. He was standing before God and boasting about his own good works, even comparing himself to the poor sinful tax collector. The Pharisee thought he was **righteous**, **holy**, and **perfect** because of His own good works!

In the parable, Jesus condemned the Pharisee; and, if you trust in your own good works for salvation, then Jesus will condemn you also.

That parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector is a strong warning to each of us not to trust in our own works for salvation.

- † Search your heart and ask yourself if you have completely and totally renounced any good work or effort on your part when it comes to your eternal salvation.
- † Do you trust in Christ and His Work for 100% of your salvation?

Salvation is not because of your own good works; it is through faith in Jesus and **HIS good works that save you.**

Jesus' perfect life is credited to you, and God considers you holy and righteous. **Jesus' perfect death** on the cross paid for your sins, so that you are forgiven and reconciled with God. **It is 100% Jesus' good works that save you --- His life and His death --- and never your own works or effort.** *This is so important that St. Paul spends the first 8 chapters of the Book of Romans teaching this to us in many different ways.*

Salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life is a gift of God: it is dependent on Jesus' good works --- His life and His death --- and never your own works or effort.

The word the Bible uses to highlight and emphasize all this is **faith**;

- † **Faith** is a gift from God;
- † **Faith** is God at work through His Holy Word.
- † **Faith** highlights that we are passive, and God is active.
- † God's promises create **faith** in us;
 - in this case, you hear God's promise that you are "Not guilty!" and you **believe** it.
 - You **trust** that God is telling you the truth and that it applies to you.
 - You **rely** on Christ and not yourself!
 - You **look to** the Lord and His mercy and grace.

St. Paul highlights God's work in saving us by saying that **righteousness is from faith to faith**, in other words, from beginning to last, it's all by faith!

Remember, the opposite of faith is not unbelief, but works. Trusting in your own works is the great danger to salvation. Rather than trusting God, you think that you have to do something; the focus turns away from Christ and onto your good works, or your own good intention, effort, merit or contribution. **Trusting in your own works is the great danger to salvation.**

RIGHTEOUSNESS

means that you are declared "not guilty" in God's presence. Jesus is your *substitute* in life and in death.

You are declared *righteous* because

① Jesus lived a perfect/holy life and it is "credited" to you through faith.

② Jesus died on a cross and took your sins and their punishment away.

The Bible emphatically teaches that righteousness is “from faith to faith”. It is only by faith, and St. Paul throughout the book of Romans will reiterate that truth over and over again!

For we maintain that a person is **justified by faith apart** from the works of the law. ROMANS 3:28

For I am not ashamed of the **gospel**, for it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who *believes*, first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. Because in the Gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed, a righteousness that is from faith to faith, just as it is written, "The righteous will live by faith." ROMANS 1:16-17

Now that you are **declared righteous** in God’s eyes through faith, ***you live a life of faith***. Now, as a response to God’s verdict of “Not guilty!”, you strive to live a **righteous, holy**, and **godly** life based on Holy Scriptures. ***Never to earn salvation, but as a response to salvation!***

It means that you live at **peace with God**. Your sin no longer separates you from God; you have been reconciled, and have peace with God because of Jesus’ death and resurrection. ***Your sin and guilt have been forgiven and forgotten never to be mentioned again.*** This is the same peace that Martin Luther found, and it turned his entire life, as well as the entire world, around!

It means that you live with **joy**; you can praise and thank God for His good gift of righteousness in the midst of the changing circumstances of your life.

It means that you have **assurance and confidence**; you live each day knowing that God loves you and cares about you. His promises to watch over you and provide for you give you **stability** and **courage** as you live as a disciple.

It means that you have **hope**; deep conviction that God has given you eternal life now, and promises to raise your body on the Last Day. Hope makes you bold and courageous as you live as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The righteousness of God shapes your entire life! The righteousness of God is a gift given to you through faith, and never by works!

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