

JUSTIFICATION THRU CHRIST

Oct. 25, 2015

Ro. 3:21-22

The Bible contains 66 separate letters with 30,000 verses. Faced with nearly 1 million words. Some find it hard to understand simply because of the sheer volume of words.

Not to worry. The Apostle Paul has summarized the central message of the Bible in the first 4 chapters of Romans. The result is a special emphasis on the key doctrine of Justification. To better understand what this word means, I have used vertical lines to make 3 words out of justification. One line is after the t, one is after the f and one is after the second i. This gives you ~~just~~—~~if~~—~~I~~. Just if I had never sinned.

This is the teaching that Dr. Martin Luther found to be the key teaching of Scripture; the Word of God that set Luther on the path to reforming the Christian Church 500 years ago this next Tuesday.

In the first 4 chapters of Romans, Paul points out how mankind has gotten away from the truth of God's Word to follow manmade teachings. Luther, as he studied the Word of God came to see that his own catholic church was not teaching the whole counsel of God.

Errors crept in thru papal decrees, such as the teaching of purgatory, a place where a Christian must go after he dies to have the rest of his sins forgiven. Another pope said that the people can no longer have the wine in the Lord's Supper lest someone spills it. But, another manmade teaching makes this ok. The teaching of consubstantiation says that since the wafer is changed into the body of Christ by the priest, therefore, the communicant is receiving both the body and the blood of Christ, since a body had blood flowing thru it.

Another pope decreed that all clergy be unmarried and those already married must divorce their wives. Another pope decreed that we are to adore the host, that is, the wafer. They also teach that Mary was born without sin and was taken bodily to heaven. But, worst of all, his church was teaching that we are saved by faith in Jesus and by our works as well.

Luther came to see where his church was teaching things that were not Scriptural and that souls were at stake. Romans 3:10 says that there is no one who is right before God, not one. All have turned away. Luther was taught that his works would get him closer to God but instead he told his superior that he had come to hate God because God expected Luther to be perfect and that was one thing he could not be.

In reality, none of us are or can be perfect. We confess that we are sinners in thought, word, and deed. If we were to count on what we do to get us to heaven, could we ever know if we had done enough? In fact, if keeping the rules get you there, but you confess to always breaking the rules-----where is the comfort?

The Jews of Jesus' day saw the OT writings as rules to live by and be saved by. Jesus butts heads with the self-righteous Pharisees on many occasions over how one is saved. In the 5th chapter of John Jesus says in v. 39: "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them, the Scriptures, you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life."

The Pharisees thought that by keeping the Law, they would receive eternal life.

This belief is with us yet today. I know that from personal experience. While on vicarage in Thibadaux, LA in 1972, I was alone at a mission church and went out about every day to knock on doors to find people to come to church. I would ask the 2

Kennedy questions. If you were to die tonight, would you go to heaven? Most said, I don't know. I hope so. Secondly, if you were to stand before the Savior on judgment day, and He says to you; "why should I let you into heaven?" Most answered; I try to be a good person, I go to church, I support the church, I, I, I.

God, you have to let me into heaven because I try to be a good person. Nothing about faith in Jesus or His cross.

Just like the lawyer who asked Jesus: "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

In a survey a number of years ago, 60% of Lutherans agreed that the main emphasis of the Gospel is God's rules for right living. This is how the devil has distorted the understanding of God's word in the minds of people. This is a tragedy. If you look to keeping rules instead of falling on the grace of God thru faith in Jesus----- you are lost and doomed to hell.

Paul even says in 1 Cor. 13: "If you give your body to the flames, that is become a martyr in the church, but have no love for God, you gain nothing."

How then are we saved? Let us say together the Fourth Article on Justification in the Augsburg Confession of 1530.

It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before god by our own merits, works or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for His sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5.

Christ is our only hope to escape death and eternal suffering in hell. God, the Judge, looking at the world of man, has

pronounce all of us not guilty. Why? God put all the guilt of man onto His Son who went to the cross to die our death. Isaiah 53-----
By His stripes we are healed.

Jesus did it all. There is nothing that you or I can do to be saved. Ephesians 2:8,9: "For by grace you have been saved, thru faith, and this not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works, so that no one may boast."

So, where do works fit in? They are a response to God's free gift of forgiveness in Jesus. We do not ever, ever, ever have to wonder-----have I done enough to please God so that He will welcome me into heaven?

No----you have not done enough. You never could. The writer to Hebrews says that without faith, you cannot please God.

We please God as we continue to look to Jesus. To hear His Word. To commune at the altar, receiving the true Body and Blood of Jesus.

There are some who maintain that the Lutheran Church puts too much emphasis on Martin Luther. Not so. We should study and read his works more to appreciate what God did thru this simple monk almost 500 years ago.

We still use Martin Luther's Small catechism which was put out by Dr. Luther in 1529. We thank God for this humble servant who stood up against the forces of church and state, trusting only in the Word of God so that the Good News about salvation thru Jesus Christ would once again be heard from every pulpit.

And so we continue to say yet today: SOLA FIDE; SOLA GRATIA AND SOLA SCRIPTURA.

FAITH ALONE GRACE ALONE SCRIPTURE ALONE

