

“Made Right Through Faith”

10-25-15

This is Reformation Sunday, a day when as we look at God’s wonderful love for us and His desire to have us as His own. He’s given us everything! We have the gift of His Word. In John 8:31-32, He told us not only who we are, but what we do as His, *“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

There are always two sides to anything. You can be right or wrong, strong or weak, rich or poor, old or young, or right or left. We all have and make choices. Robert Frost wrote a poem called, *“The Road Not Taken”* where he told of this dilemma we face each and every day. The last verse says, *“I shall be telling this with a sigh, somewhere ages and ages hence. Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”*

In 1517, this was the same situation in which Martin Luther found himself. As Luther read the verses we began with, he didn’t feel that freedom because the church was surrounded by the Law not the Gospel. God was a God of wrath not a God of love. As Luther read the Bible, there were some things on which he disagreed with the church and wanted to debate. This was what caused him to write the 95 theses and nail them to the church door in Wittenburg.

Open to Romans 3. Let’s focus on verses 21-27 which tell us a great deal about how we receive the gift of redemption, or being made right by God. Look at verses 21-22, *“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction.”*

It’s very important for us to see that verse 21 begins with the words, *“but now”*. These words signal a change. Romans 1:18-3:20 is talking about the people of the old era of sins’ dominion to a new era of salvation. In the old era there’s a focus on the Wrath of God and in the new era the **Righteousness of God**. Notice verse 21, *“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it.”*

Notice this Righteousness is happening apart from the Law even though the Law and the Prophets tell about it. Listen to how another translation puts it, *“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago.”*

Listen to Romans 1:17, *“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”* Or as another translation puts it, *“This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.”*

We become justified, or made right in God’s sight by faith. It **Comes Through Faith in Jesus Christ For All Who Believe**. Verse 22 says it another way in another translation, *“We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.”* Salvation and justification are open to all, not just the few!

All Sinned and Fall Short. Verse 23, *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”* but look at how God responds. Each and every one of us sins continually. We can’t stop! But, **We are Justified by Grace as a Gift**. Verse 24, *“and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”* Justification is unmerited! We can’t do anything to earn it, we just receive it by faith!

Pascal said, *“Grace us indeed needed to turn a man into a saint; and he who doubts it does not know what a saint or a man is.”* Grace is on God’s part, and faith is on ours! Listen to Ephesians 1:7, *“He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.”*

Look at Verse 25, *“Whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.”* Listen to how another translation puts this incredible act of God, *“For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past.”*

Jesus sacrificed Himself for you and me and all people! Because of what He’s done, we’re declared righteous. His crucifixion is our atonement! All this happens because of the **Propitiation by Blood**. The shedding of His blood makes it happen. For you, and every one of us, all of this is **Received by Faith!**

Look at verse 26, *“It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”* In another translation, *“for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.”* In this verse we learn that **God is Justifier!** The whole redemptive act was when God sent Jesus for us! It was His plan, and His plan alone, not ours!

As Martin Luther looked at verses 23-26 this is what he said, *“This is the chief point of the whole Bible because it focuses on the heart of the Bible – justification by faith. If that article stands, the church stands, but if it falls, the church falls. Justification is, from first to last, a matter of God’s own doing, to which human beings must respond, but of which they can add nothing!”*

Verse 27, *“Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith!”* Or as another translation puts it, *“Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith.”* **Can we receive by works, NO! Can we receive by faith, YES!**

All of what we receive from God is received by His tender and amazing Grace! Because of this passage and others, Luther saw three things to guide and direct: Sola Scriptura – Scripture Alone, Sola Fide – Faith Alone, Sola Gratia – Grace Alone!

Look at Ephesians 2: 8-9 at the bottom of the sermon insert, and listen how another translation said it, *“God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.”*

You and I are saved because of God’s amazing grace through Jesus Christ!