

October 11, 2015

Luther's Faith

Romans 1: 17 – *For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*

Some of you may already know this, but Martin Luther struggled a lot in his early years of being a monk. He spent a lot of time fasting and in prayer and in confession trying to become righteous. But, dear Martin didn't like those years as he reflected on them in his later life. "When I was a monk," he is quoted as saying in a devotional book that he wrote, "I didn't accomplish anything through fasting and prayer." Luther was convinced that neither he nor any of the other monks were being sincere in their faith. They were going through the motions, not conceding sinful hearts or truly acknowledging God in their actions.

While he was struggling as a monk, Luther even saw the "righteousness of God" as a bad thing, because it was seen as his anger toward the sinful world. It took the good Doctor Luther a long while to come to the realization that God's righteousness was a good thing. Before, then he wished that the gospel had never been revealed, because then people would not know God's anger. But, as Luther was compelled to study and dig deeply into God's word in order to defend the true faith, he came to the realization that the righteousness from God is a gift that he gives to people by faith. And, even more than that he realized that the faithful of the world *live* because of God's righteousness to them. This realization was (at least part of) Luther's great breakthrough. From then on, it was all about faith for Luther.

Roots

In our own lives, sometimes we revert to an older way of thinking, namely that we are a bunch of sinners in the hands of an angry

God. The fire and brimstone sermons of old fill our heads with images and our hearts with fear, get righteous or die. So, we struggle as Luther did as a monk to try to come up with the right formula for living, those perfect actions that will let God know we are not living like that anymore. "What do I need to do to inherit eternal life," we ask. Now as good Lutherans, we all know that we can't work our way into heaven. But, even as we say that, we subconsciously wink at one another thinking something different, wondering if we have what it takes to be saved, to become righteous.

Let me assure you, of yourself you don't! Nothing you can *DO*, no quality that you *HAVE* will be enough to get that righteousness. In his breakthrough, Luther discovered that it wasn't about the fasting and the prayer, the actions or the sincerity or anything that he could bring to the table. The only thing that gave him that righteousness was faith, complete trust in and reliance on God. It is the same for us.

Turning to God, trusting and relying on him, believing what Christ did and that he will make good on his promise is the only thing that makes us righteous. Faith is the only way to get that righteousness, to get that *life* that God offers. That faith is God's gift to you. Take it, trust it, use it.

Pastor *Carl Jh*

