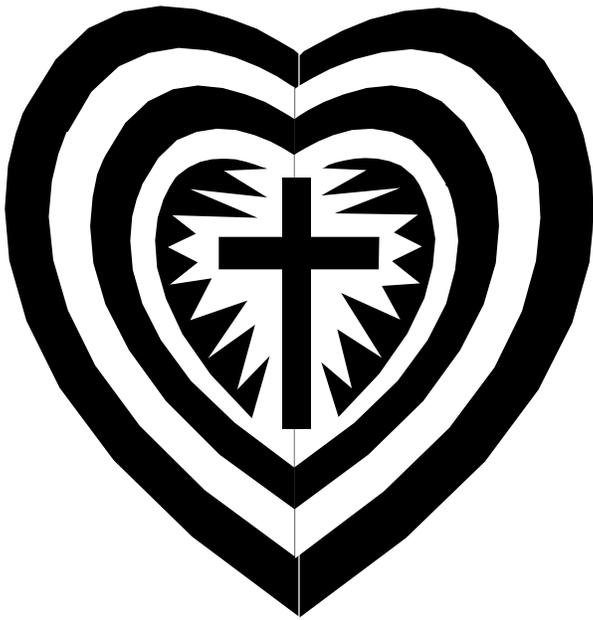


# Justified By Faith Alone

## Lesson 8

If the authority of Scripture, God's Word, is the wisdom that directs and controls the body of our Lutheran Confessions, then the principle of "***Justification by Faith***" is its heart. The Gospel of justification by faith is THE central message to the good news of Jesus Christ and ALL Christian theology. For this reason, it represents a fundamental building block for Lutheran Confessions. It is the heart of the confessions upon which all of the other points rotate.



The whole idea of justification by faith isn't just a concept that Martin Luther somehow arrived at in his study of Scripture. We don't just believe in this. It is literally what happens to each of us, sinners all, when we come to believe and have faith in the saving action of Christ.

So, how do we explain it?

In the Augsburg Confession, the understanding of justification is expressed in Article 4.

### IV. [Justification]

"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."

As we can see, this article is based upon Paul's writings in Romans 3:21-26 and in chapters 4 and 5 of that same letter.

*"But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and*

*fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.”*

Romans 3:21-26

Take time to read the fourth and fifth chapters of Paul’s letter to the Romans, too.

In basic terms, God forgives us ALL our sins. He doesn’t do this because we deserve it or are especially lovable, and certainly not because we are innocent of the punishment our sins merit. No, God justifies us, that is, forgives us, for the sake of Jesus Christ. It is His righteousness, His obedience to God’s will and law, His undeserved suffering and death on the cross at the hands of sinful men that makes our forgiveness possible. But there is even more to this understanding. When God justifies us, He not only forgives all our sins, He allows us to share in the perfect righteousness of His Son. Jesus is the one who stands between us, with our sinful nature, and the grace of a loving God.

**We Are  
IN HIS HANDS**

If you look at the Formula of Concord, Part 2: Solid Declaration, Article III, we can see how this understanding is developed.

*“Concerning the righteousness of faith before God we believe, teach, and confess unanimously, in accord with the summary formulation of our Christian faith and confession described above, that a poor sinner is justified before God (that is, he is absolved and declared utterly free from all his sins, and from the verdict of well deserved damnation, and is adopted as a child of God and an heir of eternal life) without any merit or (ta-541) worthiness on our part, and without any preceding, present, or subsequent works, by sheer grace, solely through the merit of the total obedience, the bitter passion, the death, and the resurrection of Christ, our Lord, whose obedience is reckoned to us as righteousness.”*

The Lutheran Church confesses that the redemptive work of Jesus Christ is the means by which we are justified. God justifies us by His grace. The justification God gives and His continuing blessings come to us through our faith in Christ, nothing else.



By faith alone. What a revolutionary concept. This casts aside our idea of works righteousness or doing good things to earn our way into God's good graces. It blows them away. But even faith is not our doing.

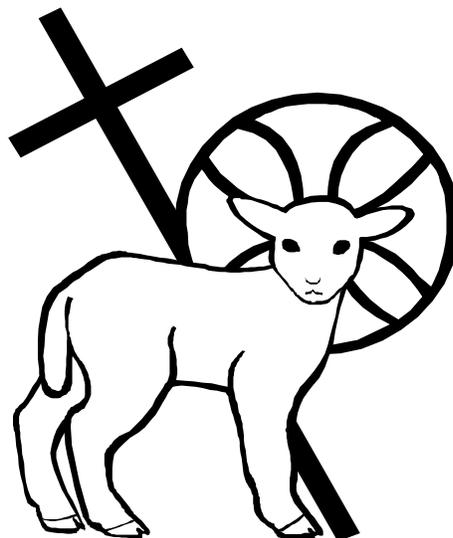
Remember, we studied that even our faith is a gift given to us by God. We **do not** come to faith, catch faith, or chance upon it by our own design. In Baptism, God gives us the gift of faith as He gives His Spirit, too. The Holy Spirit, in turn, calls, gathers, strengthens, enlightens, and sanctifies us in that faith. We have nothing to do with it.

*“ For faith does not justify because it is so good a work and so God-pleasing a virtue, but because it lays hold on and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy Gospel. This merit has to be applied to us and to be made our own through faith if we are to be justified thereby. Therefore the righteousness which by grace is reckoned to faith or to the believers is the obedience, the passion, and the resurrection of Christ when he satisfied the law for us and paid for our sin.”*



Our faith receives Christ and His saving action on the cross which, then, justifies us before God our Father. Faith is the absolute assurance in what Christ accomplished and in God's mercy toward us for Christ's sake. You see, our faith is always a very personal thing. Someone else's faith cannot save me. Only my faith, my believing in Jesus and His salvation makes me able to stand before God as one justified in the blood of the Lamb.

What our faith does with regards to our justification is accepts what God gives to us through His Son. Check out the Formula of Concord, Part 2: Solid Declaration, Article III, which states,



1. What is at the heart of Christian theology?

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2. Why isn't our faith something that we make happen in our lives?

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3. Why do you think it's so hard for us to accept the fact that we don't have to do anything to justify ourselves before God so that our sins can be forgiven? You'll have to come up with your own answer to this question. Search your own feelings about being saved.

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