

Saved By Faith In Christ Alone
Romans 1:17

TEXT: *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."*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

FOUR MORE YEARS! Every good Lutheran knows the significance of October 31, 1517: The anniversary date associated with the observation the Lutheran Reformation. And in four more years we will be able to observe the 500th anniversary of this event.

But rather than a crisp autumn day in Wittenberg Germany, let us consider the hot, muggy, conference hall in the Germany city of Worms on April 18, 1521, about 3 and a half years later when the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles V, presided over the trial of the heretical monk, Martin Luther. Charles had other pressing issues: the Islamic terrorists were pressing closer to the European cities of his empire, burning churches and killing thousands of citizens. But the Pope was also pressuring him to do something about the persistent monk whose writings and preaching was causing so much discontent among throughout the Roman Catholic Church. The matter became more urgent as the Pope felt the financial crunch as people were beginning to question the validity of some of the most lucrative sources of income: the sale of indulgences, relics, and even the purchasing of a masses for the special assurance of their forgiveness. Nevertheless, Charles gave Luther 24 hours to think things over. The pope's officials had demanded that he recant all that he had written, or be judged a heretic and executed.

On April 18, 1521, at 4 pm, Luther's hour had come. He began his answer by acknowledging that the many books and pamphlets before him were indeed his own work which he had intended to serve the Church in two ways: to edify and comfort believers; and, to serve the Church by exposing and correcting errors, according to Scripture. He then acknowledge the fact that his conscience was bound by Scripture alone, and that it is never a good thing to go against one's conscience. Finally, he declared that, unless someone would demonstrate that what he had written was contrary to Scripture, he had no other choice but to stand firm: **GOD HELP ME! HERE I STAND!**

There is coming a moment in each of our lives when we must do what Luther did. But our judge will not be pope or emperor; father, mother, saint or sinner. Our Judge will be the Almighty God who has revealed the one and only way of salvation which was accomplished in the death of His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ. There is no other Savior; and, it is clearly written: ***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."***

SOLA GRATIA -- Latin for "By grace alone." First experienced by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after they had sinned and God caught them. They must have stood there wondering: "What's it going to feel like, this death? Will it be a quick snap of the neck; a hanging; a torturous and long death? What will God's wrath feel like?"

Why didn't God kill Adam and Eve and start over? **By Grace Alone** -- pure grace -- pure UNDESERVED LOVE, not only for these two sorry sinners, but also for you and for me. For, encapsulated in their bodies and their genetic makeup were you and me and our future glory in paradise. The Bible says: ***...He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to***

be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will...

Ep 1 Martin Luther was driven into the monastery because he was sensitive to his unworthiness. This sensitive conscience almost drove him insane, had our gracious Lord not intervened in Luther's life with faith. Luther himself speaks of an amazing moment in his life when his eyes were opened to the meaning of the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. *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..."*

SOLA SCRIPTURA means "by Scripture alone..." That truth is expressed in Paul's words: *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."* What is revealed by God in written form for our salvation ought to be cherished above all earthly things. What is written ought to be read and re-read, committed to memory, preached and taught to our children and to our children's children.

Today, many are looking for ways to FEEL righteous. FEELING RELIGIOUS appears to be the way that some accomplish this. To FEEL righteous for others often is accomplished by FEELING MORAL in a relative sense: "I'm not that bad" and "God isn't going to damn me for this." Others learn to use euphemisms for sin: "alternative lifestyles" for sexual perversion; "termination of pregnancy" instead of murder. They forget, or do not believe, that what also is written is God's Law. That also must be believed to be true.

Today's Epistle Lesson clearly teaches: *Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.* In view of God's Law, EVERY MOUTH IS SILENCED: Living together when not married? SILENCE! Bearing a grudge? SILENCE! Gossip and enjoying the hearing of it? SILENCE! Having no desire to worship the Savior whenever possible? SILENCE! This is God's Law! It's not Pastor Garbow's, or the WELS, or your parents. It is WRITTEN! *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

But instead of FEELINGS, the Bible says: *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."* What is revealed is God's grace in Jesus who kept the Law perfectly FOR US! And then He died on the cross to pay for our sins! This also is written. Which will you believe? The Law that condemns you or the Gospel that is the power of God for your salvation?

Another Latin phrase is part of the motto of the Lutheran Reformation: SOLA FIDE -- by faith alone... That faith is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ which reveals to us God's unique and wonderful plan (OT) and its fulfillment (NT) in Jesus' death and resurrection. The righteousness that God demands of us is impossible for sinners to acquire. Adam and Eve hung their heads in shame until they heard God say to Satan: *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.* Ge 3:15 This is God speaking about life and a Savior; about them, sinners though they are, and the hope that rests on their being a husband and wife, child-rearing team. What a gracious God!

The sad part of world history is revealed in the constant arrogance of man's sinful heart. Adam and Eve's very first son, Cain, was too religious to worry about a Savior.

God warned that this would happen. Isaiah the prophet wrote about this same problem blinding the eyes of so many even when the Christ would come: *He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.* Is 53 This had happened in Luther's day when the simple promise that God's salvation was accomplished in that one Man, Jesus Christ, dying and rising again for our justification was overshadowed by works of men. If anyone wanted to feel saved, let him become a monk or a nun. If anyone felt he was going to fall into sin, let him buy an indulgence signed by the pope. If anyone wanted protection from the devil, let him buy a statue of St. Anne.

For Luther, these things weren't working, for he never felt certain that he was doing everything right. Whenever he read the words: righteousness of God... he thought of the perfect righteousness by which God would judge Martin Luther. But when he came to FAITH in the righteousness of God THAT COMES from Jesus who graciously died for us and rose again for our justification, then the righteousness of God became Luther's own possession -- his own righteousness credited to him by faith in Jesus! Just like it is written, about Abraham "*who believed and it was credited to him as righteousness.*" Today we read: *The righteous will live by faith.* Today we remember with thankful hearts the Lord's gracious working in our history that has resulted in the simple Gospel message being proclaimed to us and by us. Never forget that NOTHING ELSE WORKS! Only what is written about what God did for us through Jesus and is held as truth in the hearts of those who are being saved!

Four more years! On October 31, 2017, we will have the opportunity to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the event that marks the spark of the Lutheran Reformation. Unless we are in heaven, may we all be eager and prepared to celebrate this great event that recalls our Lord's grace to us in having kept the Gospel in our hands and hearts. Amen.