

Reformation Sunday

October 30, 2022

“Justified freely by grace alone through faith in Jesus”

(Romans 3:23-24)

By Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, all of you who have confessed Christ for many years since your confirmation and you 12 who are confessing Christ today on your confirmation day, our text for this Reformation Sunday is from our epistle Romans 3:24.

“For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”

Here ends our text.

There's a popular song that you may have heard by Johnny Nash.

*“I can see clearly now the rain is gone
I can see all obstacles in my way
Gone are the dark clouds that had me blind
It's gonna be a bright (bright)
Bright (bright) sunshiny day”*

This song has been used many ways to relate how we all go through trials and obstacles in this life and when we get through them, it's a bright sunshiny day. It's been said that he wrote this song after he had recovered from cataract surgery. He could see clearly with his physical eyes.

We know as Christians, of course, that our merciful and gracious God is the One who helps us through all the rainy days of life. God is the One who takes away the dark clouds and reveals the sunshiny light of His Gospel. Though the song doesn't mention God, we're going to give Him all glory today because not only does He give us physical sight, but most importantly He gives us spiritual sight to see clearly.

I. We see clearly the truth of the Law

What do you see? Well two things are revealed clearly for our eyes of faith to see this day from God's Word. And you've heard me talk about these in confirmation classes often. Law and Gospel.

The first, the Law, shows all of us our hopelessness to take away the obstacles before us, to stop the rain, to remove the dark clouds over us. The first two verses of our Epistle reading say it so very clearly. Hear them again:

“19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

God's law, the Ten Commandments as we learned them in confirmation and as older confirmands know very well is a mirror. It shows us who we are, and the sight isn't very pretty. The main obstacle to a bright sunny day is this:

We are all guilty of not keeping the law perfectly before God. Yes, every mouth is stopped. All the world is guilty. And that's an insurmountable obstacle that stands in our way to have peace and happiness with God!

Try as we may, no flesh, no one by the deeds of the law, by trying to keep the 10 Commandments will be justified in God's sight! For man it's impossible. We began today's service by confessing just that, didn't we. We are guilty before God by our sinful thoughts, words and deeds. We have no defense. Our mouths are stopped. We can't say to God, "but I've tried my best". No, God demands sinless, justified lives and the truth is, none of us can make that boast. As our text says:

“For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

If we would say we haven't sinned, we would be deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us as we know from 1 John 1:8.

“8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

II. But now, we see clearly the Gospel of Jesus Christ

“21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.”

But now, we look outside of ourselves, because we see nothing good in ourselves. We look outside ourselves and see that there is righteousness – God’s righteousness.

Malachi 4:2

“But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.”

Who is this Sun of Righteousness? Jesus!

God is righteous in Himself. And because He is full of grace and mercy, He has revealed to us His righteousness, apart from the law, separate from the law. God has revealed to us and given to us His righteousness as a free gift. How? Through faith in Jesus Christ! To all and on all who believe!

God’s righteousness, this truth, has been revealed to you confirmands and to all who believe by the power of the Holy Spirit. What truth? Simply put – the Gospel.

Hear this beautiful Gospel of our text one more time:

“For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”

What does that word “justified” mean again? “Just as if I’d never sinned”. And that’s God’s truth to you. When He sees you, He see you clearly, not as a sinner but as a righteous child of God.

How could this be? Well, Paul tells us the how, doesn’t he?

“through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation (a sacrifice) by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,”

Simply put: God sacrificed His Son and passed over our sins that we have committed because He placed them all on Jesus. All our sins are gone...forever! Remember that verse from 1 John 1 again?

“8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

Now for the second part...

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

That’s the truth that sets us free. God’s truth that in Jesus He has taken away all our unrighteousness and made us holy!

And that my friends in Christ, is how you have “a bright sunshiny day” today, and every day as you live with this joyous message of your salvation. For God has taken away your obstacles of sin, death and the devil. He has taken away the dark clouds of eternal damnation and shone in your hearts the Good News of His love for you!!

Paul summarizes this great gift with these words:

“28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.”

III. And we see clearly now the new life of service to our God and neighbor

And now what? You’re confirmed. What’s next? God has many joys ahead of you! He has many plans for each of you, His sons and daughters. For you are part of His team now! He’s claimed you, washed away your sins through faith in Him, sealed this to you in your baptisms, and now He calls you to life of service to Him.

One of confirmation verse that you will hear shortly is from Ephesians 2:8-10.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Did you hear that? We're not saved by our works, but we are created by God, His workmanship to do them. What good works? Your prayers for others, your acts of love for others, your telling them about the truth in Jesus that sets them free from their sins...

God has given and will give you many opportunities to use your unique gifts and talents for the building up of His church the body of believers. Use them like Paul and Martin Luther to remove the obstacles and rain clouds of sin by the Good News of Jesus! He is calling on you to serve Him with your time, your talents and your treasures – your offerings of thanksgiving for your freedom!

And, by all means, continue to feed your own souls with this Good News, hearing His Word daily, and receiving the Lord's Supper often. Because that is how you are daily set free!

Be faithful unto death by feeding your souls with the Bread of Life, Jesus and you will receive the crown of life. That's another of the confirmation verses that you will hear shortly.

Yes, the Gospel of Christ's righteousness has set you free from all your sin. And Jesus says in

John 8:36

“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

Free from sin, free to serve God with your lives – yes, by the grace of God – free indeed! Amen

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)