

Martin Luther Joy in Justification

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[0 : 00] Good morning.

What was your greatest fear when you were younger? Up until high school, which was a long time ago now, I was so afraid of the dark.

I could not sleep in a peach black room. I would insist my parents to leave the bedroom door ajar so some light would come through the gap.

I was not so privileged as current generation where some would have their own bed and a night night by the bed. I shared a bun bag with my brother, and I don't think night light was invented back then.

My nitrophobia provided my siblings with a lot of fun. All they have to do is close the bedroom door completely, and I will go crazy.

[1 : 06] And I have done a lot of other unreasonable things due to all sorts of fears too. If you are joining us today for the first time, we are finishing our summer series on looking into heroes of the faith in terms of their joy in Jesus through the ages.

We have looked into the life of Polycarp, Augustine, and Huston Taylor, which is from my right to my left.

And if you have missed any of this sermon, let me encourage you to go to our website to listen to them because it's our aim to encourage us at St. Paul's through the struggles, challenges, and hardship which lead to these men trusting in God and growing in joy so that we as a community can grow in our joy in living for Jesus, treasuring Jesus, depending upon Jesus, and being justified by Jesus.

We'll be looking at Martin Luther, which is the second left, the one with the funny haircut. To finish the sermon series, a man that was very familiar with fear, we will see how he went from fear to being freed and his joy in justification by faith.

Martin Luther was born 537 years ago in 1483 in northeastern Germany. His father was a manager of a copper mine and had the money and resources to send him to be educated and to pursue a career in the law.

[2 : 52] He earned his master's degree when he was only 22, but he did not follow the plan of his father. He went off to become a Roman Catholic monk.

The reason for his change of career was well known. It had to do with his fear of death. Not long before he finished his master's degree, he was caught in the middle of a thunderstorm while traveling.

With one bolt of lightning strike terrifyingly close to him, Luther cried out in distress to the patron saint of miners and travelers, Help me, St. Anne, I will become a monk.

This knee-death experience changed his life. His desperate cry to St. Anne revealed the general beliefs and value of his time, which is also very similar to today.

In the mid-1500s, the gospel, the true gospel, was hidden or even twisted for hundreds of years. People were reading a Bible in a language that was hard to understand.

[4 : 02] The authority of the scripture, the Bible, was second to church tradition. Importance of the centrality of Jesus Christ was not there. Today, a lot of people also approach religion as a tradition, as a form of spiritual protection, or a lifesaver in the middle of trouble.

Like what we are facing in Australia right now, a man shared on national television that, after being an atheist for 25 years, the fire causes him to pray to God as he hears a siren started going.

People were praying for protection and delivery at times of crisis from a God that they have ignored or rejected. But what often happens when danger passes?

People might later dismiss whatever files they make at their desperate time. But Luther's conscience could not. He had a bigger fear. He feared God's disapproval and wrath.

And if you fear God's disapproval, you will not approach God with joy. Luther once said, if I could believe that God was not angry with me, I would stand on my head for joy.

[5 : 24] Martin Luther hoping to reduce his fear towards God and earning God's favor by being a monk, following all the strict rules and practices, and by isolating himself from the world so that he will not do anything that will upset God.

And he once said, you may not be able to keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair.

I wonder, would that be the reason they keep such a unique hairstyle? Luther salously followed his new calling as monk, believing he could only receive absolution for sins he confessed to a priest.

So he became obsessed with visiting the confessional. He was so rattle and fearful of eternity in hell that he would confess his sins for hours and hours, confessing sins that he committed just the day before.

It was sins that were about him, not completely and totally, dedicating to the Lord with all his mind and with all his strength. Even though they were just thoughts, his thinking, he worries that he has somehow slipped far away from God.

[6 : 48] Martin Luther was taught that a holy and righteous God could not be in the presence of sin. The God's word that he was reading at the time speaks over and over again of God being completely just and punishing wrongdoers.

He understood from what he was reading that he would fall into that category and would be punished in hell. If all we know about God is judgment and punishment, we would all have anxiety about our sin and ourselves.

Being a monk did not bring him any joy. In fact, it made him even more anxious because he got more time to study God's words. He knew the Ten Commandments.

He knew the Sermon on the Mount. He knew that a holy and just God could not allow sin in his presence. So, when he would measure his life up against God's standard, he would become rattle with anxiety.

He knows the Bible far better than any one of us. But knowledge should not set him free. In fact, the more the knowledge, the more fearful he becomes.

[8 : 03] It was after becoming a monk for about a year in studying Augustine to prepare to lecture in biblical study and look at a correct version of the Bible that eventually brought joy to Luther's heart.

Luther discovered a righteousness that freed him and unlocked the joy that would serve generations to come. In German as well in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, justice and righteousness are the same word.

When Paul claimed in Romans 1.17 that the justice or righteousness of God is gospel or good news, Luther could not make sense of it.

For Luther, the justice of God had meant one thing only, the standard by which God found us guilty. Luther said, I hate that word justice of God, which by the use and custom of all my teachers, I have been taught to understand philosophically as that justice by which God is just and by which he punishes sinners and the unjust.

I did not love, no, rather I hated that just God who punishes sinners. If you look back at Romans 1.16-17, it's saying there, for I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles.

[9 : 46] For in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed. A righteousness that is by faith from first to last. just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith.

Luther had been taught by the church that this verse means we are to be made righteous through the church of Rome by doing what the church tell him to do.

But he also knows deep down that he could never measure up to God's standard. Somewhere there was always a piece of his heart that he did not offer fully to God.

Even living in a monastery, following strict rules, and allowing himself to have any pleasure, he knew he was still guilty.

No matter what he did, he could not, he cannot change the fact that crime had been committed. Today we do our own things to justify ourselves so that we do not fall in the trap of Martin Luther.

[10 : 49] We mix up being righteous to being good and kind. So we say, I'm a good person, I do not deliberately harm anyone, and in fact, I fight for those who cannot defend themselves.

I protest to protect the environment, human rights, and animals. God should be happy with me. Some might set themselves a list of things that they should do.

Work hard, be a good model citizen, be a good parent, give money to charity, keep a religion or being spiritual or go to church.

We all have a list that we check to assure ourselves that we are okay. but at the same time become very unsettled if we sense a kind of a disagreement.

Even Luther, even though Luther knows the Bible far better than us, there is something that did not add up. So he went back to the scripture and looked into the original Greek.

[11 : 56] And what the church said, being made righteous, Paul actually used a Greek word that means to be declared righteous, not made righteous.

When Luther discovered that this changed everything for him, when Paul claimed in Romans 117 that the justice or righteousness of God is gospel of good news, he was saying that in the gospel, which is by the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the righteousness of God is revealed to us.

we are declared righteous, not with the righteousness of our own, but with the righteousness from Jesus Christ by faith. At this discovery, the light come on for Luther.

The darkness and fear were lifted. He began to understand that when Paul was speaking of what Paul was speaking of here, it was a righteousness that God, in his grace, was making available to those who receive it passively, not those who achieve it actively.

The grace of God received by faith is by which a person could be reconciled to a holy and righteous God. We receive it from God, not achieve it by our own effort.

[13 : 19] At this was a moment of reckoning. Luther said, when I discovered that I was born again of the Holy Spirit and that the doors of paradise run open and I walk through.

Luther finally understood that the righteousness of God that is in the gospel is a righteousness that belongs properly to someone else. It is a righteousness that is outside of us.

It is a righteousness of Jesus Christ. And we receive it from Jesus. We do not and cannot earn it. He finally has the assurance that he was looking for all his life.

And the same assurance is presented to us because here was a confidence in front of God which was based not on our merits but on Christ.

The righteousness of Christ credited to us through faith promise to God's children of heaven without fear of help. This gospel moved Luther from fear to faith from despair to joy.

[14 : 32] When Luther went back to the scripture to the words of God he realized that the way to be saved is just as Jesus said in the beginning of Mark.

The time has come the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news. Repent and believe. Repent means turn and go the other way.

You are going your own way trying to fix up our problems and earn God's forgiveness. We turn and believe and have faith in Jesus.

Let me give you an example of this turning faith that I'm talking about. If I was to say to you I would pick you up half an hour before church and take you to church.

You might hear me say it but that isn't enough. You might choose not to do anything about it or you say okay great then you went and organized the Uber to come here yourself.

[15 : 38] People do that all the time with the gospel. They hear that Jesus died on the cross for their sin and rose three days later and they say fine and then they go about their life in their own way or find some way to make themselves less sinful or more likable or acceptable.

The kind of faith that is repentance is that you hear that I'm going to pick you up half an hour before church to take you to church. You cancel that Uber that you have prearranged.

You stand outside of your house early and wait for me knowing and trusting that I'm going to be there. And then when I do arrive you gain the car and come to church with me here.

The faith that brings you into a righteous standing with God is a faith that turns you from going about your life in your own way and turns you towards Jesus to believe and follow his way.

Your turning and following is an action that is used by your faith because you are declared righteous in God's sight by your faith in God's words.

[16 : 50] Like in my example, the moment you decide to go and meet me and cancel that Uber you are committed to ride with me because you have faith that I'm going to do what I said and pick you up.

If you don't have faith that I was going to pick you up you will not have canceled your ride. The moment you place your faith in Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins you are declared righteous in God's sight.

When God look at you he sees the righteousness of Jesus Christ not yours. However, the things around you have not yet changed. If you are involved in complicated sin that just doesn't go away it has to be dealt with.

your being declared righteous does not mean that those things you are doing wrong are no longer sin but instead you begin to work on those sins in your life not on your own abilities anymore but with faith in Jesus Christ for we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to change not to try and justify ourselves before God but to walk in close fellowship with him by being in fellowship with other Christians because he called you to him and you realize that he was willing to suffer and die in your place for use so that you could be with him the journey that begins with justification may be long and at times it's been difficult but the fact that you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ means that when things do go dark when they're pleased that Jesus is not near you can turn to look at the gospel and in seeing that the righteousness of

God is refilled you can know that even in your failings even in the disappointments and failures we can be to be righteous that because of the power of the gospel you are indeed righteous this is a message we need to keep on hearing even if we trust Christ for our acquittal on the final day we cannot too easily seek to establish our own justification today even as we share the message of justification by faith we can be practicing justification by doing instead we try to achieve instead to receive we think our approval and acceptance before the heavenly father depend on our behavior and if you fear God's disapproval you will not approach him with joy if I ask

[19 : 41] Martin Luther to give me an example of his joy I believe he would use Psalm 30 which talk about no more fearful or depressed but lift up in joy starting by talking about God lifting us out of the death bringing us up from the realm of death spaying us from going down to the pit first one it read in Psalm 30 I I will exalt you Lord for you lifted me out of the death and did not let me let my enemy go over me Lord my God I called to you for help and you healed me you Lord brought me up from the realm of death you spared me from going down to the pit he called his faithful people to sing praise and rejoice for God is angry no more. He said his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime. It called to God for mercy and to be our help, and it finishes in verse 11. You turned my whirling into dancing.

You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. Lord my God, I will praise you forever. When Luther realized the righteousness of God in Romans 1, 17 means the righteousness of God, and it was a gift to all those willing to accept it, Luther was standing on his head of joy. He was born again of the Holy Spirit and walked through the doors of paradise to the awaiting arms of God. It was made possible because of our Lord Jesus Christ, for whoever believes in what God has done for him or her have been justified by faith. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. If you do not yet know the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, like the faith that I have been talking about, if you do not yet sense that joy of being accepted by our Heavenly Father, our merciful God, I urge you today to stop trying to achieve but to receive the grace of God. Walk through that open door of paradise into the open arms of God. Turn from following your ways, the ways of this world in justifying yourself by your own effort. Turn and put your faith in following the Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified, died, and buried, who rose again three days later in fulfillment of the scripture so that you may live. You may begin that step by repenting of your sins in prayer. Ask the Lord Jesus

Christ to forgive you and tell him you want to follow him, to live your life for him. We have printed a short prayer at the back of this handout in a few different languages. You can use that as your first step prayer, walking towards paradise, walking into paradise. I will ask our worship team to join me on stage now to lead us in a song. Please take this as your opportunity to walk through the open doors of paradise, into the open arms of God. Let's sing to our God in joyful acceptance.