

## Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!

SUNDAY.

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities. – Psalm 103:2-3.*

Christendom, the one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, God's chosen people, those who through true faith in Jesus Christ have become His dear children, this Christendom, and each and every member of it, possesses something daily in rich abundance that is better than anything there is, and which cannot be procured or purchased with any deed man may do, or any treasure in the world: *forgiveness of sins*.

Dr. Luther says in his Small Catechism: "In which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers." And the Holy Ghost prompts every Christian to say these words, these words of praise and rejoicing: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits : who forgiveth all thine iniquities."

Truly, this forgiveness of sins is better than all the treasures of the world. If God would not forgive us our sins, we should be lost. If but one single sin were not forgiven us by God, we should be lost. But God forgives us, us Christians, all our sins, and He does this daily and richly. Daily He takes us to His fatherly bosom and forgives us all our sins in an overabundance of grace. And hence we also have life and salvation. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

Since we have received forgiveness of sins, yes, because our sins are being forgiven every day, every curse and every punishment is far removed from us, and blissfully and peacefully do we rest in the bosom of God and await eternal life, which He will surely give us. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities." This is most certainly true.

*PRAYER.* – every day, every curse and every punishment is far removed from us, and blissfully and peacefully do we rest in the bosom of God and await eternal life, which He will surely give us. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities." This is most certainly true. Amen.



Illustration: The Sermon on the Mount

A Devotional for the  
Week of the Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

Hymn 415, 2.

But love and grace with Thee prevail,  
O God, our sins forgiving;  
The best and holiest deeds must fail  
Of all before Thee living;  
Before Thee none can boasting stand,  
But all must fear Thy strict demand,  
And live alone by mercy.

MONDAY.

*In whom (Christ) we have the redemption through His blood,  
the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.*

– *Ephesians 1:7.*

My dear Christian, do you know how the matter really stands concerning that most precious gift of God, the forgiveness of sins? – It is given us by the *grace* of God; for, surely, we have no claim or title whatever to the forgiveness of sins; and, to be sure, it is given us out of the great and inexhaustible riches of the grace of God, for we are very grievous transgressors. And it is given us *for Christ's sake*. Not merely from a gracious impulse does God forgive sins; that would be against His righteousness and against His holiness, which is a flaming fire, as well as against His truthfulness, the truthfulness of His Word, in which He threatens to punish transgressors.

But in Christ, our Savior, who bore our sin and our punishment as our Substitute, we have the redemption through His blood; and this redemption consists in this that God forgives us our sins. And by the *Gospel* of the grace of God in Christ the forgiveness of sins is made known to us, yes, and offered unto us. And through *faith*, through faith in this gracious Word of God concerning Christ and concerning the redemption and the forgiveness of sins in Him, we receive and accept the forgiveness of sins.

And thus we have it. – This is how the matter stands concerning the forgiveness of sins, and not otherwise. And now, Christian, take freely! The grace of God is rich to you also. Christ is also your Savior. The Gospel is meant also for you. God wants you, too, to say rejoicingly: "I believe the forgiveness of sins."

*PRAYER.* – I thank You, most merciful God, that of Your pure grace for Christ's sake You do, at all times through the Gospel, offer me forgiveness of sins, that treasure which alone can save me. I have but to take freely, only to believe. Now, then, my God, I pray You, give to me Your Holy Spirit, that I may not fear nor doubt, but believingly and rejoicingly take the salvation which You do give to me freely and without price: the forgiveness of my sins. Amen.

Hymn 59, 2.

He shows to man His treasure  
Of judgment, truth, and righteousness,  
His love beyond all measure,  
His yearning pity o'er distress;  
Nor treats us as we merit,  
But lays His anger by,  
The humble, contrite spirit  
Finds His compassion nigh;  
Far as the heavens above us,  
As break from close of day,  
So far, since He doth love us,  
He casts our sins away.

TUESDAY.

*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law.* – *Romans 3:28.*

If a man is not found righteous before the judgment-seat of God, he is damned. But no man can be found righteous before God

by the deeds of the Law. For no man can perform even a single deed of the Law that is perfect in the sight of God; much less can he be fully justified before God by the deeds of the Law. So what is to be done? Now God comes and proclaims that man is justified before Him without the deeds of the Law, without merit, yes, in spite of and regardless of all sin and guilt. But this is quite beyond all human conception.

How shall a man become righteous before God without the deeds of the Law, without merit, yes, in spite of and regardless of his sins and guilt? God says: "by faith." But how so by faith? by what faith? By that faith which rests on the blessed fact that God forgives sins out of His great mercy, for Christ's sake. You know that God does this, And now ponder and consider what is meant by the words: God forgives sin. It means: God does not impute sin. If God does not impute sin to us, then, of course, He declares us – righteous. And it is just this that God does say to us lost and condemned sinners: He forgives us our sins, and thus declares and makes us righteous in His sight, justifies us. And now we must not reject this, but accept it in true faith as a most gracious deliverance.

Thus we are righteous in the sight of God by faith, without the deeds of the Law. –This is the true, genuine Christian banner, our standard, following which we shall conquer everything and obtain eternal salvation: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law." Let this also be your faith.

*PRAYER.* – Lord, my God, because You say it to me, therefore will I believe it, and cling to it in life and death, that I am justified in Your sight by faith, without the deeds of the Law. Trusting in this, will I depart, and lifting up my head before Your judgment-throne, I shall say: You, O God, have forgiven my sins to me and thereby declared me righteous. I pray You, my God, keep me in this faith which alone will save me. Amen.

Hymn 415, 3.

My hope I rest then on the Lord,  
And build not on my merit,

My heart shall trust His gracious Word,  
His goodness stays my spirit.  
His precious Word assureth me  
He will my Joy and Comfort be;  
This is my firm reliance.

WEDNESDAY.

*Who of God is made unto us . . . Righteousness.*

*– 1 Corinthians 1:30.*

In ourselves we have no righteousness whereby we might stand before God. But Christ is made Righteousness to us by God. We must say: Considering myself, I confess that I am all unrighteousness; but Christ is my Righteousness. God has made Christ our Righteousness. How are we to understand this?

Christ is *for us*; He is our Substitute. Christ has fulfilled the Law of God perfectly – for us. Christ, though He knew no sin, nevertheless was made sin by God for us. (2 Corinthians 5:21.) On Christ lay all the chastisement for sin – for us. (Isaiah 53:5.) Christ did all that the Law of God demands of us – for us. Christ suffered all with which the Law of God threatens us – for us. Christ fulfilled all the righteousness demanded by the Law of God-for us. God did this in His great mercy. So Christ was made Righteousness unto us by God. So Christ is our Righteousness. A blessed exchange was made: Christ was made sin for us, we are made the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21.) Surely, the righteousness of Christ is valid before God, and the righteousness of Christ belongs to us.

You must firmly believe, my dear Christian, that the righteousness wherewith you may stand in the sight of God is not your own, but that of another – the righteousness of Christ. This God gives to you; it belongs to you; you must apprehend it in true faith. Thus you may stand before God. Thus all Your sins are taken away from you and gone; they are forgiven you for Christ's sake, and pure

righteousness, spotless, blameless, perfect righteousness, envelopes you, as it were, the righteousness of Christ. If you firmly apprehend this in true faith, you will nevermore fear nor despair. Then you at all times possess that perfect righteousness wherewith you may stand before God.

*PRAYER.* – O God, how graciously did You help me: You did make Christ Righteousness to me. Christ is my jewel, Christ is my glorious dress, Christ is the robe of my righteousness. Grant that through the gracious operation of Your Holy Spirit I may put on Christ, by believing in Him, and wrap myself in Christ, and hide myself in Him. And for Christ's sake, O righteous God, declare me, a sinner, righteous! Amen.

Hymn 83, 6.

Christ, Thou art the sole oblation  
That I'll bring before my God;  
In His sight I've acceptance  
Only Through Thy streaming blood.  
Immaculate righteousness I have acquired,  
Since Thou on the tree of the cross hast expired;  
The robe of salvation for ever is mine,  
In this shall my faith through eternity shine.

#### THURSDAY.

*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. – 2 Corinthians 5:19.*

"*God was in Christ*" – for Christ was and is God, who became man. "*And reconciled the world unto Himself.*" God has reconciled the world to Himself through Christ. As far as God is concerned, the old relations of love that obtained before the fall are reestablished. The righteous wrath of God, which had been kindled against sinful

and ungodly mankind, was appeased. All punishment is done away with. God is reconciled. "*Not imputing their trespasses unto them.*"

Since God is reconciled unto the world, He, self-evidently, no longer imputes their trespasses unto them. How could He be reconciled and still impute sin? "*And hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*" Through His Word, which He has committed to us, God now informs us that He was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. And God not merely informs us of such reconciliation, but He also offers it to us, and actually presents it to us, chartered and sealed, through His Word.

And now we must be reconciled to God; we must accept this reconciliation. Yes, and God most kindly invites and with a loving heart and powerfully persuades us by means of His Word, and the Holy Spirit graciously operating through this Word, to accept this reconciliation.

He that accepts it has it, and in time and eternity he enjoys its blessed fruits. He that rejects it remains under the wrath of God by his own fault and is lost forever.

*PRAYER.* – Great God, what wondrous compassion You have bestowed on me! Me – the sinner and Your enemy – You have reconciled to Yourself, and have not imputed my sins to me, but to Christ. And to this reconciliation You invite me through Your Word and Holy Spirit. Help me, O Lord, that I may always follow this gracious invitation, and through faith rest in Your fatherly bosom. Amen.

Hymn 311, 4.

By grace His Son, on earth appearing,  
Vouchsafed beneath thy woe to bend;  
Hadst thou, damnation justly fearing,  
done aught to render Him thy friend?  
Was't not that He thy welfare sought,  
And but by grace deliverance wrought?

## FRIDAY.

*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteous. – Romans 4:5.*

He that works, he that in any way works, in order thus to stand righteous in the sight of God, he - note this well! - renounces the grace of God and lays claim to salvation not as a gift of grace, but as a gift which God is in duty bound to give him in remuneration for his works. He that is so blinded as to work in this way, in defiance and derision of the entire Word of God, shall receive wages very different from salvation. "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse." (Galatians 3:10.) "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly."

– Stop! What does this mean: "that justifieth the ungodly"? This means that God was in Christ, reconciling the world, the ungodly world, to Himself, thus not imputing their trespasses to them. Now, then: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." What does this mean: "to him his faith is counted for righteousness"? It means this: To him this is counted for righteousness what the Word of Reconciliation proclaims and communicates unto him, namely, that God in Christ reconciled all the world unto Himself and therefore no longer imputed their trespasses to them: – this gracious deed of God, which He accepts in faith, on the strength of the Word of God, is counted to him for righteousness.

The believer accepts for himself what God in Christ did for the whole ungodly world, namely, that God in Christ justified them in His sight. Thus, through such faith, he has the righteousness of God, and now in fact he is the beloved child of God and is saved. Therefore, do not work, but believe in Him that justifies the ungodly. Then shall your faith be counted to you for righteousness. And you shall obtain Salvation.

*PRAYER.* – My Lord and God, grant grace to me, Your child, to be diligent, indeed, in good works, but nevermore to presume that

by such miserable works of mine I might become righteous before You. Help me to live and to die in the right faith which alone justifies me, in the firm assurance that in Christ You have justified the ungodly, and hence also me. Amen.

## Hymn 307, 3.

'Tis not by works of righteousness  
Which our own hands have done,  
But we are saved by sovereign grace  
Abounding through His Son.

## SATURDAY.

*By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. – Ephesians 2:8-9.*

We Christians are saved. We are rescued from damnation, and salvation is given us, the fullness of which we shall soon enjoy. But we are saved by grace, yes, indeed, by grace, through faith, through faith in Christ. And this is in no wise of ourselves; there was nothing whatsoever in us, nor did we do anything for the sake of which God would have been moved to save us. It is wholly and solely the gift of God, a gracious gift of God. Not because of our works were we saved. None of us can boast of any work for the sake of which God would have been moved to save him.

Hence also our faith is not a work of which we might boast. No, faith is but the spiritual hand given and even opened by God, into which He has put the righteousness and salvation which He so mercifully gave us for Christ's sake, that we might have, hold, and enjoy it. In the very moment indeed in which faith receives these free gifts of grace and is conscious of their possession, it begins to be the fruitful mother of all good works; for love, which is the fulfilling of the Law, is at once conceived in it.

But though we become righteous before God and are saved by faith, it nevertheless is in no wise a work which might have moved God to give us righteousness and salvation. No one should say : I believe, and therefore God justifies and saves me, but this is what all should say: God gives me righteousness and salvation solely by grace, and therefore I believe. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

*PRAYER.* – O Lord, my God, I rest assured of Your grace, and depend upon it to save me. I depend on Your grace in Christ Jesus, my Lord, which You give to me through Your Word. I depend upon nothing in or of myself. Even my faith is frail and miserable through my own fault. Do not let the spark of faith within my heart be extinguished, O Lord, but preserve and strengthen my faith. Let it be a vessel that holds Your grace. Amen.

Hymn 311, 5.

By grace! This ground of our salvation,  
 As long as God is true, endures:  
 What saints have penned by inspiration,  
 What God by His own Word assures,  
 What all our faith must rest upon,  
 Is grace, free grace, through His dear Son.

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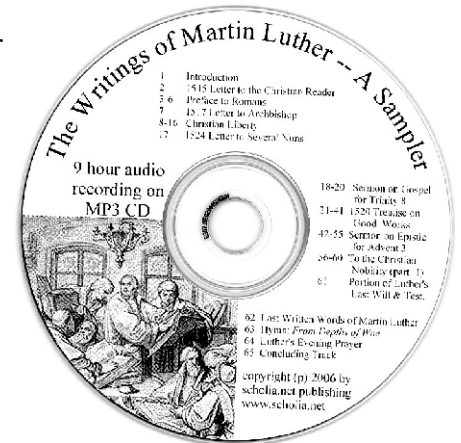
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