

So What?! *Does Luther's Theology Still Matter?*  
Justification: *You Just Can't Help Yourself* Study Guide  
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Second of Four Presentations ~ The Word with Your Pastors ~ Spring 2022

## Overview

*"The one who is righteous will live by faith."*- Romans 1:17

Filled with constant angst, fretting he had not done enough, and fearing his mistakes, doubts, and/or misdeeds rendered him outside the grace of God, Martin Luther's understanding of God's love was transformed by this pithy assertion from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans. Faith through God's grace alone justifies and makes holy due to no merit of our own. This heart of the gospel of Christ transformed his entire understanding of the divine, became the lynchpin of his life, faith, theology, and proclamation, and led to the great Reformation of the Christian Church of the Middle Ages. Does it still matter today? In a world of incessant self-justification, drive to achievement, and the constant rat-race of "keeping up" and getting ahead, it may be as needed as it ever was. Like Luther, we, too, may see we just can't help ourselves when it comes to the love of God.

## Key Passages:

### **Romans 3:21-28**

*But now, irrespective of 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. Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.*

### **John 15:16**

*"You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last"*

### **Ephesians 2:8-9**

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast.*

## Questions

1. How would you describe the need or worry to justify oneself? In what ways do you/we tend to try to "measure up" to ourselves, to others, to God, and/or pressures and expectations?

2. Can you name a time or circumstance when you received a gift you didn't possibly earn? What effect did it have? Can you name a time or circumstance when you gave a gift for no reason but love? What effect did it have?

3. What are the dangers of touting faith as a badge of honor based upon one's good and right decision and/or acceptance? Have you seen it at work? How does it play out?

4. If faith is a gift, how do we receive it?