

Romans 3:19-28 NIV

When God Caught Us Red-Handed, What Did He Do?

Sunday, October 27 8:00 & 10:45

Monday, October 28 at 7 PM

Reformation Day Observed – 2013

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Today, *as we observe the Reformation*, we remember Martin Luther, *the greatest of the Reformers*, who greatly struggled with his own sin. For years he was aware of God's standard of righteousness—justice, yet, *at the same time*, he knew he was constantly falling short. He wanted to be right in God's sight, *yet he was helpless to remove his sins!* We are also helpless; the Bible says *"that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one...'"*

1. **Caught Red-Handed:** What does that mean? Imagine this scene: Someone walks into a room where a person has been murdered and YOU are standing there red-handed – *with blood all over YOUR hands!* The point is this: *We have sinned and the LORD has caught every one of us red-handed:* ¹⁹ **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.** ²⁰ **Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.** // *But even more than that!* When God enables us to rightly understand the law, *then we rightly understand our total inability to be declared righteous*

through keeping it! **Dr. Kretzmann wrote:** *"no sinner can... actually keep all its demands in regard to omission and commission."* (NT, Vol. II, 17) *We have been caught red-handed – Luther knew it and so must we!*

2. **God Freely Offers Us What We Need:** ²¹ **But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets [the OT Scriptures] testify.** ²² **This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.** // We need it BUT we cannot earn it, *SO God freely gives it through Jesus!* God sent His Son to save us; then He gave us faith to believe in Jesus *through whom we possess this righteousness from God!*
3. **All Have Sinned; All Are Justified:** ^{22b} **There is no difference,** ²³ **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,** ²⁴ **and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.** // Some people do better than others—YES! But still: ALL are sinners, ALL have fallen short! Therefore, God's work – *not our work* – is what justifies! **Dr. Kretzmann wrote:** *"Justification does not designate a moral change in man, but signifies a forensic¹ [judicial] act on the part of God, by which He [pardons all the sins of those who believe in Christ and]...makes us possessors of a righteousness which was not ours, which we did not merit..."* (NT, Vol. II, 17) **God is so good to us!**

¹ "...it is the judicial act of God, by which he pardons all the sins of those who believe in Christ, and accounts, accepts, and treats them as righteous in the eye of the law..." (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/justification?s=t>)

4. **There is No Plea-Bargaining with God:** Sin has been committed, *so punishment is required* – God made NO DEAL with Jesus; instead, *He poured out on Jesus His full wrath for our sins!* ²⁵ **God presented [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement** [*expiation, propitiation, to make amends for our sins, to cover over our sins*], **through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished--** ²⁶ **he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.** // We have all sinned, *BUT we are NOT condemned!* That would *seem* to point to God being unjust, *but He is not!* For those who sinned prior to Jesus, God left those sins unpunished for a while. But then, *when Jesus was on the cross and bearing the sin of the whole world*, God fully punished Jesus for every sin – *past, present, and future!* Therefore, God is just and, *without compromise or plea-bargaining*, He **“justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”**

5. **No One Can Actually Boast; All Should Give Thanks:** If anyone is boasting by *thinking* or *saying*: “I am good enough,” then he is also currently ♦blind to the condemning power of his sin and ♦rejecting God’s gift of salvation through Jesus!

a. ²⁷ **Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith.** // If our salvation required us to do anything; then those who did such a thing could boast – “I did it!” But, instead, *our salvation is all about God’s work through*

Jesus! Furthermore, God is even the One who must give us the gift of faith ♦by which we believe in Jesus and ♦thru which we receive His righteousness!² **Dr. Kretzmann wrote:** “Justifying faith can in no way be...understood as an act by which the salvation of Jesus is merited, no more than a beggar can be said to earn the slice of bread or the coin for which he has extended his hand.” (NT, Vol. II, 19) “...the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 6:23 NAS)

b. ²⁸ **For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.** // As St. Paul maintained that truth – *that we are just in God’s sight through faith alone in Jesus*, so do all people who are God’s dear forgiven children!

Conclusion: Nearly 500 years ago the Holy Spirit was working through God’s Word to open Martin Luther’s eyes to the precious truth that we are saved *by faith alone!* Therefore, today, *through our faith in Jesus*, let us rejoice that we are ✚righteous in God’s sight, ✚at peace with God, and ✚members of His holy family! Then, may God use *our eternal joy* to bring *His eternal blessings* to others!

And all God’s people said: **Amen!**

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² God works by the Holy Spirit through baptism to give the gift of faith (Gal. 3:27; Titus 3:5); He also gives the gift of faith through His Word (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23).