

LIFE IN CHRIST

A PREACHED RETREAT BY FR. RANIERO CANTALAMESSA

SESSION 2: THE JUSTIFICATION OF HUMANKIND

A. The problem of sin

"The anger of God is being revealed from heaven against all the impiety and depravity of men who keep truth imprisoned in their wickedness." -Romans 1:18

- Everybody is in sin. The root of all sin is impiety - putting self in the place of God.
- Paul spoke out against the pagan's sins of idolatry and depravity.
- He also spoke against the hypocrisy of the religious Jews who were also living for themselves.
- Paul's message is also for us, reminding us that we too are a sinful people.
- We truly are lost in our sin, and are in dire need of God's saving grace.

"God's justice that was made known through the Law and the Prophets has now been revealed outside the Law, since it is the same justice of God that comes through faith to everyone, Jew and pagan alike, who believes in Jesus Christ. Both Jew and pagan sinned and forfeited God's glory, and both are justified through the free gift of his grace by being redeemed in Christ Jesus who was appointed by God to sacrifice his life so as to win reconciliation through faith. In this way God makes his justice known; first, for the past, when sins went unpunished because he held his hand, then, for the present age, by showing positively that he is just, and that he justifies everyone who believes in Jesus."

-Romans 3:21-26

B. Justification through faith

- Martin Luther rediscovered an important teaching that was rarely being taught - justification through faith in Jesus.
- Catholics emphasized good works, effort and chastisement.
- Justification by faith: the act by which God freely, in Jesus' death and resurrection, gave salvation to everyone who believes. Salvation is by God's grace, it is a gift that we receive.
- Convert - believe - have faith was Paul's message.
- Jesus is our righteousness, sanctification and redemption.
- This gospel message, that we are saved through faith, is what the Romans needed to hear, and what our world today needs to hear.
- All are called to be saved by the justification of Jesus Christ.

C. Justification given freely through faith

- The Justice of God is the act by which God freely makes you holy.
- Unlike other world religions, Jesus doesn't just provide an example of how you can earn salvation; he gives his own sacrifice in atonement for you.
- We don't earn our salvation, it is freely given to us.

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- It's not based fundamentally on what we do for God, but what He has done for us. Our good works are our free response to His grace.

"Imagine there has been an important wrestling match in a stadium. A brave man has fought against a cruel tyrant and with tremendous effort and suffering has defeated him.

You did not have to fight, you neither struggled nor got wounded. But if you admire the brave man, if you rejoice in his victory, if you make garlands for him, provoke and excite the crowd for him, joyfully bow to the victor and shake his hand-but if, all told, you become so delirious as to consider his triumph yours, you will surely participate in the victors reward. Moreover, let us suppose the victor does not need the prize he has won, but longs to see his friend honored and considers the crowning of his friend to be his prize, will that man not receive the crown without having fought or been wounded? Certainly, he will! Well, then, that's what takes place between Christ and us. Even though we have not yet struggled or fought, even if no merit is ours yet, nevertheless, through faith we extol Christs battle, praise his victory, honor his trophy which is the cross and show deep ineffable love for him; we make his wounds and death our own." -Unknown Orthodox Author

"If your lips confess that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved." - Romans 10: 9

D. Salvation comes from professing Jesus and believing Jesus

- Justification on your part is professing that Jesus is Lord, and believing God raised him from the grave.
- This happens for us at baptism through our sponsors. We must do something to receive the graces of our Baptism: make a mature act of faith, a personal commitment to Jesus.
- Jesus justifies and transforms you through His death and resurrection, making you a new, holy person.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What stood out to you from the talk?
2. How would you define justification by faith?
3. Do you believe you have been justified through your faith in Jesus?
4. What does conversion mean to you?
5. Have you had a conversion experience or made a personal commitment to Jesus? Share your experience with your group.
6. What is God's grace?
7. How has God transformed your life through grace?