

## Vignette 2

### God's Undeserved Gift: Justification by Grace

#### Video—God's Undeserved Gift

1. Martin Luther wrote, "To begin with we must have knowledge of its language and know what St. Paul means by the words: 'law,' 'sin,' 'grace,' 'faith,' 'righteousness,' 'flesh,' 'spirit,' and the like. Otherwise no reading of the book has any value" (*Luther's Works*, 35:366). To help us appreciate some of the Bible words in the video and the Bible passages later in this lesson, let's do a word study. Give a definition of the following words:

righteous/righteousness \_\_\_\_\_

salvation \_\_\_\_\_

grace \_\_\_\_\_

peace \_\_\_\_\_

mercy \_\_\_\_\_

justified \_\_\_\_\_

law \_\_\_\_\_

gospel \_\_\_\_\_

2. In the video, what scene caught your attention or what comment was made that you think would be beneficial to remember?

#### Study the Scriptures

3. Luther said this about the book of Romans: "[Romans] is really the chief part of the New Testament, and is truly the purest gospel. It is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but also that he should occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. We can never read it or ponder over it too much; for the more we deal with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes" (*Luther's Works*, 35:365). Today, let's "occupy ourselves with it" and "deal with it," specifically Romans chapters 1 to 3.



A. Romans 1:18-32

While reading this section, answer the following questions. Read through the bullet points first so you can mark your answers in the text as it is read.

- In these verses, the Holy Spirit rebukes wickedness and unbelief that are open and obvious. Show examples in these verses where the Spirit rebukes open wickedness and unbelief. Identify what the sins are.
- How would you demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is applying this section of Scripture both to others and to you?
- If you had to pick one verse or sentence from Romans 1:18-32 to summarize this section, which one would you choose and why?

B. Romans 2:17-29

While reading this section, answer the following questions. Read through the bullet points first so you can mark your answers in the text as it is read.

- In these verses, the Holy Spirit rebukes those who seem outwardly righteous or pure but who commit sins in secret. Show examples in these verses where you see the Spirit rebuking outwardly righteous people who sin in secret. Identify the sins.
- How would you demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is applying this section of Scripture both to others and to you?
- If you had to pick one verse from Romans 2:17-29 to summarize this section, which one would you choose and why?

### C. Romans 3:9-28

While reading this section, answer the following questions. Read through the bullet points first so you can mark your answers in the text as it is read.

- In these verses, the Holy Spirit puts everyone (both Gentiles and Jews) together and says that each one is like the other when it comes to being sinners before God and recipients of his undeserved gift of being justified by grace. Pick out words or phrases in these verses where you see the Spirit speaking to all.
- How would you demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is also applying this section of Scripture both to others and you?
- If you had to pick one verse or sentence from Romans 3:9-28 to summarize this section, which one would you choose and why?

### Listen to Luther

4. In Romans chapters 1–3, we saw the importance of being justified by grace, being declared not guilty of our sins by God’s free gift. Luther knew the importance of this teaching. Look at the following quotes from Luther. Identify *three key words or phrases* in each quote that you think are important points Luther is making when it comes to justification by grace, and give the reason why you chose those words. Try to connect your comments to the verses we looked at in Romans chapters 1–3.

A. “When the article of justification has fallen, everything has fallen. Therefore it is necessary constantly to inculcate [teach] and impress it, as Moses says of his Law (Deut. 6:7); for it cannot be inculcated and urged enough or too much. Indeed, even though we learn it well and hold to it, yet there is no one who apprehends it perfectly or believes it with a full affection and heart. So very trickish is our flesh, fighting as it does against the obedience of the spirit.” (*What Luther Says*, 2232)

B. “Nothing in this article can be conceded or given up, even if heaven and earth or whatever is transitory passed away. . . . On this article stands all that we teach and practice against the pope, the devil, and the world. Therefore we must be quite certain and have no doubt about it. Otherwise everything is lost, and the pope and the devil and whatever opposes us will gain victory and be proved right.” (Smalcald Articles, Article II:301 [Kolb-Wengert])

## Bringing It Home

5. If you needed to defend the message that we are justified by grace through faith in Jesus, what passage or passages would you select to share?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What is one thing you will want to remember or found interesting in today's study?

## Living My Faith

Luther wrote, "Grace and peace—these two words embrace the whole of Christianity. Grace forgives sin, and peace stills the conscience" (*Luther's Works*, 26:26). Out of thanks for Jesus' gift of sins forgiven, we can reflect God's undeserved love in our lives to others. This week, give someone a gift of an undeserved act of love. It might be something unexpected, fulfilling a need for them, a kind action in secret, or something else of your choosing. When carrying out that act of love, let it be a reminder to you about the undeserved love your Savior Jesus showed you so that you can be in heaven with him.

## Closing Prayer by Martin Luther

"Dear Lord God, I cannot count the sins that I have done and still do. I have forgotten most of them and no longer feel my guilt. All that is in me and all power that is not grace is sin and is condemned. My works and my powers only make me despondent. I do not know what else to do but to hope and pray for your mercy. As grace and faith control me, I am devout through Christ. Where these fail me, I know and confess that nothing good is left in me. No matter how long I live, it will never be different. If I had the holiness of monks, there would still be nothing good in what I think, speak, live, and do, if it did not have your divine grace and power. All my sins are forgiven out of pure grace. This is the joy and comfort which you gladly grant to me, a poor sinner. Amen." (*Luther's Prayers*, p. 69)