

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

WORKER OR BELIEVER – PART II

Romans 4:4-5 “Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.”

Well, if works will not make my spiritual ledger acceptable to God, then what will? This is the eternal question, isn't it? If I cannot do enough good works to earn God's favor, then how is it possible to stand before God on judgment day knowing that I have not done enough to earn my way into His good graces?

Romans 4:5 begins with the word “however.” This means St. Paul offers an alternative to your striving to do enough good works to earn your way into God's good graces. As you read further in verse 5, note that St. Paul moves you to a new direction. There is another way of coming before God than by bringing your good works. St. Paul writes, “. . .to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.” (Romans 4:5)

It is true that God's wrath is being revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness and upon those who suppress the truth. (see Romans 1:18) Paul directs all thoughts away from you, your sins and inability to earn God's approval. He directs your heart and soul to God “who justifies the ungodly.” He directs you to Jesus who ate with “publicans and sinners,” healed gentile women, gave the water of life to a woman who had been married countless times and was currently living with a man to whom she was not married and Zacchaeus a sinful tax collector.

Jesus, the righteous one, in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy, came to declare the unrighteous righteous. Jesus sends His Spirit to create faith in the hearts of the unrighteous to take hold of the righteousness He came to bring them. To this day Jesus continues to do just this. This faith that trusts in Jesus appropriates the righteousness of Christ as their personal righteousness for those who have received this faith as a gift from God. “Whoever believes shall not perish but receive everlasting life.” (Mark 16:16)

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, my Savior, grant me faith that appropriates your righteousness as my own. In Your holy name. Amen.

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds In a believer's ear!
It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds, And drives away our fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole And calms the heart's unrest;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul And to the weary, rest.

Dear name! The rock on which I build, My shield and hiding place;
My never-failing treasury fill With boundless stores of grace.

O Jesus, shepherd, guardian, friend, My Prophet, Priest, and King,
My Lord, my life, my way, my end, Accept the praise I bring.

How weak the effort of my heart, How cold my warmest thought!
But when I see Thee as Thou art, I'll praise Thee as I ought.

Till then I would Thy love proclaim With ev'ry fleeting breath;
And may the music of Thy name Refresh my soul in death!
(LSB 524)