

Luther's Two Kinds of Righteousness

1. Passive (Alien) Righteousness

This is the **righteousness** by which a sinner stands before God. It is:

- **Gift given by God.**
- **Received through faith.**
- **Earned entirely by Christ.**
- **NEVER produced by human effort.** (Depends on Christ rather than our performance.)
- **Complete and perfect.**

This righteousness is called **alien** because it belongs to Christ and is **credited to believers**.

Because of this righteousness, Christians can have complete confidence before God.

2. Active Righteousness

This is the **righteousness** lived out toward our neighbors. It is expressed through:

- **Love.**
- **Service.**
- **Obedience.**
- **Vocation.**
- **Good works.**

Unlike passive righteousness, active righteousness is **NEVER perfect**.
It is always incomplete because Christians continue to struggle with sin.

Two Different Relationships

Before God: Christians contribute NOTHING. Everything depends upon Christ.

Before Neighbor: Christians actively serve, work, sacrifice, love, seek the good of others.

This distinction prevents confusion between salvation and sanctification.

Freedom from Anxiety

Because salvation is already secure, Christians are free to ask a new question.

NOT: “How do I save myself?”

But: “How can I best serve my neighbor?”

This shift transforms the Christian life.

Vocation: The Place of Good Works

God places every Christian into specific callings. Examples include:

- Husband or wife
- Father or mother
- Child
- Employee
- Employer
- Citizen
- Church member
- Friend

These **ordinary relationships** become the primary arena for Christian ethics.

God rarely calls Christians to extraordinary acts of heroism. Instead, He calls them to **daily faithfulness**.

Good Works Are for the Neighbor

One of Luther's central insights is:

Good works are **NOT performed** to earn God's approval.
Instead, they are **done** for the benefit of other people.

God does not need our good works. Our neighbors do.

This completely changes the motivation for ethical living.

Christian Freedom

Because Christ has accomplished salvation, Christians possess genuine freedom.

- NOT freedom to sin.
- NOT freedom from responsibility.

Rather,

- Freedom to love without fear.
- Freedom to serve without trying to earn God's favor.

Simul Justus et Peccator

Luther described every Christian as: **simultaneously righteous and sinner**.

The Daily Christian Struggle

Every believer experiences tension.

The Christian desires:

- To **love**.
- To **obey**.
- To **serve**.

Yet continues to struggle with:

- **Pride**.
- **Selfishness**.
- **Weakness**.
- **Failure**.

This struggle **does NOT mean salvation has been lost**. Rather, it is the normal experience of the Christian life.

The Daily Rhythm of Repentance

Christian living follows a continual rhythm:

1. **Hear** God's Law.
2. **Recognize** sin.
3. **Repent**.
4. **Receive** Christ's forgiveness.
5. **Begin again** in joyful service.

This rhythm continues throughout the believer's life.

Sanctification

The gradual **work of the Holy Spirit**, who shapes believers into Christ's likeness.

This growth is: real, often slow, never complete in this life.

Christians should therefore expect continual growth while also expecting ongoing struggle.

Even **failures** become **opportunities** to return again to God's grace.

Living with Joy

A blessing of Lutheran theology is **freedom** from constant uncertainty, **knowing**:

- **God** *already* accepts him in Christ.
- **Failures** are forgiven.
- **God's grace** does NOT depend upon perfect performance.

This **produces confidence** rather than despair.

The Beautiful Tension

The Christian life as holding 2 truths together:

1. Christians **should strive wholeheartedly** to become what God calls them to be.
2. Christians **will NEVER perfectly achieve** that goal in this life.

Yet this does not produce hopelessness because **God's forgiveness remains certain every day!**

Believers can:

- Spend the day earnestly striving to serve others,
- Recognize how far they have fallen short,
- And still go to bed with “an absolutely light heart,” confident that Christ has already accomplished everything necessary for their salvation.