**Luther’s Turmerlebnis (Tower Experience)**

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|  “The righteousness of God is revealed in it.” For I had hated the phrase ‘the righteousness of God’ which, according to the use and custom of all the doctors, I had been taught to understand philosophically, in the sense of the formal or active righteousness (as they termed it), by which God is righteousness, and punishes unrighteous sinners. Although I lived an irreproachable life as a monk, I felt that I was a sinner with an uneasy conscience before God; nor was I able to believe that I had pleased him with my satisfaction. I did not love (in fact, I hated) that righteous God who punished sinners, if not with silent blasphemy, then certainly with great murmuring. I was angry with God, saying ‘As if it were not enough that miserable sinners should be eternally damned through original sin, with all kinds of misfortunes laid upon them by the Old Testament law, and yet God adds sorrow upon sorrow through the gospel, and even brings wrath and righteousness to bear through it!’ Thus I drove myself mad, with a desperate disturbed conscience, persistently pounding upon Paul in this passage, thirsting most ardently to know what he meant.” “At last, God being merciful, as I meditated day and night on the connection of the words ‘the righteousness of God is revealed in it, as it is written: the righteous shall live by faith,’ I began to understand that ‘righteousness of God’ as that by which the righteous lives by the gift of God, namely by a passive righteousness, by which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous lives by faith.’ This immediately made me feel as though I had been born again, and as though I had entered through open gates into paradise itself. From that moment, the whole fact of Scripture appeared to me in a different light. Afterwards, I ran through the Scriptures as from memory, and found the same analogy in other phrases such as the ‘work of’ (that which God works within us, the ‘power of God’ (By which he makes us strong, the ‘wisdom of God’ (by which he makes us wise), the ‘strength of God,’ the ‘salvation of God’ and the ‘glory of God.’ And now, where I had once hated the phrase ‘the righteousness of God,’ so much I began to love and extol it as the sweetest of words, so that this passage in Paul became the very gate of paradise for me.”(Luther, “Preface to Latin Writings,” in *LW*, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia , 1955-76), 34:336-37.)***How does Luther’s understanding of righteousness change?*** ***Compare active righteousness to passive righteousness.******How does his new understanding fuel the call to reform the church?*** |

