

Luther on the "Double Blessing"

1. Luther says: "God hath a double blessing: one corporal for this life, and another spiritual for the everlasting life" (Galatians, 243).
2. This needs to be understood against the background of his statement at the beginning of the same commentary, "there be diverse sorts of righteousness. There is a political or civil righteousness. . . . There is also a ceremonial righteousness. . . . Besides these, there is another righteousness called the righteousness of the law, or of the Ten Commandments, which Moses teacheth. This do we also teach after the doctrine of faith. There is yet another righteousness which is above all these: to wit, the righteousness of faith, or Christian righteousness, the which we must discern from the other afore-rehearsed: for they are quite contrary to this righteousness . . . because they consist in our works, and may be wrought of us either by our pure natural strength (as the sophisters term it) or else by the gift of God. For these kinds of righteousness are also of the gift of God, like as other good things are which we do enjoy. But this most excellent righteouenssss, of faith I mean (which God through Christ, without works, imputeth unto us), is neither political nor ceremonial, nor the righteousness of God's law, nor consisteth in our works, but is clean contrary: that is to say, a mere passive righteousness, as the other above are active. For in this we work nothing, we render nothing unto God, but only we receive and suffer another to work in us, that is to say, God" (21 f.).
3. Luther goes on: "This is our divinity, whereby we teach how to put a difference between these two kinds of righteousness, active and passive:

to the end that manners and faith, works and grace, policy and religion, should not be confounded, or taken the one for the other. Both are necessary, but both must be kept within their bounds. . . . This I say to the end that no man should think we reject or forbid good works, as the Papists do most falsely slander us. . . . But we imagine as it were two worlds, the one heavenly and the other earthly. In these we place these two kinds of righteousness, being separate the one far from the other. The righteousness of the law is earthly and hath to do with earthly things, and by it we do good works. But as the earth bringeth not forth ^{not} fruit except first it be watered and made fruitful from above (for the earth cannot judge, renew and rule the heaven, but contrariwise the heaven judgeth, reneweth, ruleth and maketh fruitful the earth, that it may do what the Lord hath commanded): even so by the righteousness of the law, in doing many things we do nothing, and in fulfilling of the law we fulfil it not, except first, without any merit or work of ours, we be made righteous by the Christian righteousness, which nothing appertaineth to the righteousness of the law, or to the earthly and active righteousness. But this righteousness is heavenly and passive: which we have not of ourselves, but receive it from ^{the} heaven: which we work not, but apprehend it by faith; whereby we mount up above all laws and works" (24 f.).