

Oct. 17, 2021

## All Boasting Aside

Romans 3:27-31

*The ungodly are justified not by what they achieve but in whom they believe.*

LTS: Phil. 3:1-14

If you have a Bible with you, please turn to Romans Chapter 3. Our text for the morning includes verses 27-31. Please stand for the reading of God's word.

Read Rom. 3:27-31

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup> For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. <sup>29</sup> Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, <sup>30</sup> since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. <sup>31</sup> Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

May the Lord add his blessing to the reading of His word.

This morning we step back into Paul's letter to the Romans which he wrote for believers like you and me with the express purpose of explaining the intricacies our great salvation.

This is such an important doctrine! In fact, it is arguably the most precious doctrine in the whole bible. As I studied and meditated on Paul's teaching of Justification by faith once again this week, it occurred to me just how important this teaching is. Consider this:

- A. it is impossible to fully apprehend the glory of God's grace apart from the doctrine of justification.
- B. It's impossible to apprehend the glory of God's love apart from the doctrine of justification.
- C. It's impossible to apprehend the glory of God's Mercy apart from justification.
- D. It is impossible to apprehend the glory of our union with Christ, our adoption, our inheritance, and even the cross itself apart from the doctrine of Justification.

You see, “The doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone is grounded in the very Person of God. Justification is what it is because God is who he is.”<sup>1</sup>

The world may manufacture their own ideas about who God is and what He is like, but those imaginations find their source NOT in God’s perfect revelation of Himself, but in the hearts of men and women who demand to find acceptance with God on their own terms no matter what they believe or how they live.

The Bible, however, presents God as He truly is. Specifically, as it relates to Justification, we must understand that in Scripture, God presents himself as Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge.

As Creator, God made us and designed us to be dependent creatures who belong to Him, who love Him, and who purposefully live to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever.

As lawgiver, God has made us morally accountable to Him. It is not the world and popular opinion that determines what is really right and wrong. God, the Lawgiver” is the very personification of what is truly moral, right and good. He has written his law in our hearts and in the pages of Scripture, so that we would know how to live in a manner that magnifies His glory and elevates our joy.

As Judge, God presides over the lives of every man and woman who lives or ever lived in the world. Moreover, he has made an appointment with each one of us to stand in His courtroom (as it were) to give an account of our lives. No one is exempt. “For it is appoint for a man to die once and after this – judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

Now, we know that Paul is thinking about these things as legal matters in the courtroom of heaven because of the vocabulary he chose to explain it. He repeatedly speaks of ...

- A. The ungodly being judged (Rom. 2:3)
- B. Storing up wrath for yourselves on the Day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed (2:5)
- C. He will render [or Judge]to each one according to their works (2:6)
- D. He speaks of being judged by Law (2:12-13; 3:19)
- E. Paul tells us that King David was right when he said that in the end, [God the judge] will be vindicated in his words, and prevail when he Judges” (3:4)
- F. God intends to judge the world (3:6)
- G. Paul says, “We have charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin.” (3:9).
- H. The whole world will be held accountable to God (3:19)

These are all terms of the courtroom. And it is in keeping with this legal motif that Paul explains to us the wonderful doctrine of Justification by faith.

In fact, the word “Justify” is itself a legal term. To justify (as we have learned previously), means to declare someone just or right in the eyes of the law.

---

<sup>1</sup> Albert Martin, *Justification by Faith Alone*, audio sermon on Romans 3:21-30.

When the court justifies a man, it doesn't make the man just or right. It doesn't do anything but declare that upon examination and testimony, this man (or woman) is just, right, and acquitted of all charges of wrongdoing in the eyes of the law.<sup>2</sup>

Justification is the opposite of Condemnation. In condemnation the Judge doesn't make a man guilty, he merely declares what is legally true about the man; namely that he IS guilty in the eyes of law.

Likewise, When Paul uses the word "Justify" in Romans, he speaks of a legal, forensic declaration regarding one's standing before God's court of law. "Innocent" or "Guilty"?

But how can a ungodly person (sinner) receive a favorable verdict from the divine judge? That's the \$100,000 question!

Well, Paul offers a thorough response in verses 21-26 where we learned 9 essential truths about justification.

Now we don't have time to re-preach that message but let me just read to you. And the reason I want to do that is because our text for the morning begins with the assumption that you have recently heard and understood verses 21-26. So let's take a moment to remind ourselves of what we heard from Paul 3 weeks ago.

Read Rom. 3:21-26

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—<sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,<sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,<sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.<sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Now, let me take a few minutes to highlight some key statements in this passage. First, Paul speaks of "*the Righteousness of God.*" When Paul speaks of the Righteousness of God He means the righteousness that comes from God. This is important because in the beginning of Romans (1:17-18) Paul reveals that this is what the gospel is all about. He writes (1:16-17)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.<sup>17</sup> For in it [In the Gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

---

<sup>2</sup> Albert Martin, *ibid.*

The great question in the first chapters of Romans is, “How can sinners obtain the righteousness they desperately need in order to be judged righteous by God? And frankly, there are only two options.

- A. The first option is that you can try to manufacture or merit righteousness by your own effort. That is, by attempting to obey a law – whatever that law may be. It could be a moral code someone has made up and given to you (such as what is invented by various religions and cults) or by attempting to keep the law of God revealed in His word. That’s one option in man’s attempt to be made right with God.
- B. The second option is to receive perfect righteousness from God as a gift of His grace. This is a righteousness merited NOT by us, but by Jesus Christ when he became a man, lived in perfect obedience to God’s law, and then paid the penalty for our sin in full on the cross.

My friends, there are no other options. Its either your own righteousness or Christ’s righteousness. And if I can just make this personal for a moment, everyone listening to my voice right now is already taking his or her stand on one of these positions. Either you are trusting in your own effort to make yourself right with God, or you are trusting in the merits of Jesus Christ alone. These are the only options. Paul makes this abundantly clear in this epistle. For example:

- A. 3:27. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? [that’s the first option]. No, but by the law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.<sup>3</sup>
- B. 4:2. “For if Abraham was justified by works [there’s option one] , he has something to boast about, but not before God. For (v.3) what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” Paul continues (v. 4-5). “Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.<sup>5</sup> And to the one who does NOT work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,
- C. 4:6-7. We read, “Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: <sup>7</sup> “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”
- D. 9:30-32 What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Tom Pennington: This progression of verses I discovered in an audio message on this text at Countryside Bible Church.

but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.<sup>32</sup> Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works.

- E. 10:3–4 For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.<sup>4</sup> For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

OF course, all of these texts were out of Romans. But let me show you this same truth in two other letter of Paul.

- F. Galatians. 2:16. ...we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.
- G. Philippians 3:9. (this is the passage I had Randy read at the beginning of this service. Paul says,
- H. “I want to be found in him, NOT having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith...”

Now just a couple more observations from verses 21-26. Specifically, notice verse 23 where Paul tells us that every human being on earth needs this righteousness because “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. There are no exceptions.

- A. Think of the person that you consider the most righteous person you have ever known or heard of.
- Mother Thresa?
  - Billy Graham?
  - Your grandmother?
  - Your pastor. ☺ - I mean, Russ, not me!

No! **All** have sinned and fall short. In fact, in the middle of chapter 3 we are told, “None is righteous, No Not one! So how can anyone be view as righteous in God’s sight? Look at the next Phrase. Paul says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God And are justified by His **GRACE** as a gift...”

What is grace?

J.I. Packer explains that,

The grace of God is love freely shown toward guilty sinners, contrary to their merit and indeed in defiance of their demerit. It is God showing goodness to persons who deserve only severity and had no reason to expect anything but severity."<sup>4</sup>

So, you see, the Righteousness that you need cannot be obtained by effort, or good intentions, or any other means of earning it. It must be received as a free gift from Jesus Christ who purchased it by His blood.

And how is it to be received? By faith.

- A. Now, this is interesting. Why didn't Paul say that righteousness is by repentance? After all God saves no one who does not repent.<sup>5</sup> In Matt. 11:20 Jesus denounced the certain cities in which he performed miracles because they did not repent!
- B. Again, Jesus told his disciples in Luke 24:47 that that "repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations..."
- C. What about love? After all, the bible says, "Whoever does not love does not know God for God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8). And Paul said, "But now faith, hope and love, abide these three, but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13)
- D. Again, why are the ungodly NOT justified by their Humility, or by some other Christian virtue?

The simple answer seems to be that faith is unique in the sense that it is merely the empty receptacle by which justification – or *a right standing with God* - is receive. If you did nothing to earn righteousness but simply received it as a free gift, there is nothing to boast in. That's why Paul said in Ephesians chapter 2 that "*It is by grace you have been saved, and that NOT of yourselves, it is a gift of God so that no one may boast.*"

Again, Paul tells the Corinthians, that "It is by His doing that you are in in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness, and sanctification and redemption so that, as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Now all of this sets us up our passage for this morning, Romans 3:27-31, which I think, with all of this background behind us, we can push through rather quickly. Paul's primary point in this chapter us that the Ungodly are justified NOT by what they achieve but in whom they believe. So, after explaining all of these things, he asks four rhetorical questions to drive his point home:

---

<sup>4</sup> J James I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, Ill.( Inter Varsity Press, 1979), 132.

<sup>5</sup> Albert Martin, audio sermon on this text.

## I. Does Justification preserve Jewish pride?

1. Paul writes (v. 27) “Then what becomes of our boasting?”

- A. I take that to mean, what becomes of Jewish boasting. “It is excluded.” That is, their boasting in their Jewishness, in circumcision, in the fact that they were the recipients of the oracles of God – the Law of God, the temple of the Lord, and are the people from whom Messiah would come.
- B. Back in 2:19 Paul gives us a taste of their boasting. They called themselves Jews and relied on the law and boasted in God and claimed to know his will and approved what is excellent, because they were instructed in the law; They considered themselves guides to the blind, a light into those in darkness, instructors of the foolish and teachers of children, having in the law the embodiment of truth and knowledge.”
- C. With respect to justification, however, all of that is useless. All of it put together earns them not a single spiritual ounce of righteousness in the eyes of God.  
  
In 2:23 Paul makes this clear when he says, “You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. For it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed because of you.”
- D. So (back in 3:27) What becomes of our boasting?
  - a. I think Paul uses the personal pronoun “our” because there was a time when he was just as proud of the privileges for being Jewish as any other Jew.
  - b. But now he counts it as \_\_\_\_\_ Loss for the sake of Christ. Now, he has turned his back on a righteousness that is from the law in favor of being found in Christ NOT having a righteousness that is his own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God that depends on faith.”
- E. So all boasting is excluded. And that brings us to the second question:

## II. What kind of Law abolished boasting?

- A. Paul asks, “By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law (or principle) of faith.”
- B. On what basis did Paul take such a stand? Look at (v. 28) : “For we maintain that one is justified by faith apart from the law.
  - a. This is why we call this doctrine Sola Fede - Justification by Faith ALONE. It is alone because it is completely apart from any contribution of righteousness on the part of the sinner.
- C. This brings us to the 3<sup>rd</sup> question:

### III. Isn't Yahweh the God of the Jews?

- A. Paul says, "Or is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles as well?"
- a. Every Jew knew the answer to this question. They knew their own history. They understood that God has been gracious to Gentiles in significant ways that has a great impact on the nation of Israel.
  - b. Consider Rahab who was not only a pagan and prostitute, but a woman who found favor with God.<sup>6</sup> In fact, in the beauty of God's providence, Rahab ended up becoming the mother of Boaz and eventually an ancestor of Jesus' mother.
  - c. Think of Ruth. She is a woman so beloved by followers of Jesus that we forget she was a Gentile from the land of Moab. She ended up becoming the grandmother of David, Israel's greatest King.
  - d. Think also of Naaman a captain in the army of Assyria (enemy of Israel) who lived in the days of Elisha the prophet and who was healed of leprosy by a miracle of God.
  - e. Paul's point seems to be that just as there is only one God, there is only way of salvation – faith in Jesus Christ. Paul goes on to say, (v. 30) "God will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. There is no other option."
- B. And this brings us to the 4<sup>th</sup> question...

### IV. Doesn't faith invalidate God's law?

- A. Paul says, "Do we then overthrow the law by faith?" By no means. On the contrary, we uphold the law.
- B. You see, the Gospel was never intended to replace the law of God. No one has ever been saved by keeping the law. Salvation has always been by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone.
- C. In fact, Jesus Himself said, "I did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. Again he declares: "For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, nor a dot will pass from the law until all is accomplished."
- D. You seem the purpose of the law was NOT to achieve salvation but to demonstrate that we are all sinners. It was given to reveal sin so that we would fly to Christ by faith and find the grace of righteousness in Him.
- E. Listen to what Paul say to the church in Galatia: In Gal. 5:4-6 he writes,

You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you

---

<sup>6</sup> John MacArthur, *Romans 1-8 MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago, Moody Press, 1991), 227



have fallen away from grace. <sup>5</sup> For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. <sup>6</sup> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

- F. In the eyes of God Christians fulfill the law by walking in the Spirit. Because, as we walk in the Spirit, faith works through love. That is, we love the Lord our God with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves. This is the fulfillment of the law of God in Christ.
- G. So, my friends, as Paul reveals the intricacies of our salvation, we discover that the righteousness that God requires is the righteousness He freely gives to all who believe, apart from human effort.
- H.

Through the centuries men and women have labored to put these truths to music so the church can sing them together. One such hymn captures it beautifully and accurately in a song called

- Rock of Ages

The second verse reads:

Not the labors of my hands,  
Can fulfil the law's demands.  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears forever flow,  
All for sin could NOT atone  
Thou must save and Thou alone.

The ungodly are justified not by what they achieve but in whom they believe.