

“Justification by Faith Alone”
Philippians 3:9
(Preached at Trinity, March 19, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Verses 2-3** Paul describes one of the most dangerous heresies of his day. These heretics, known as Judaizers, presented a perverted form of the Gospel, insisting that Gentiles coming to Christ must first be circumcised. These people claimed to be the true people of God, those circumcised according to the Mosaic Law. Paul declares that Christians who have trusted Christ by faith alone, both Jew and Gentile, are the true circumcision.
Philippians 3:3 NAU - "we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh"
2. In **Verses 4-6** Paul uses his personal testimony to refute the false claims of the Judaizers. The Judaizers circumcised to declare themselves the people of God and connect them to the promises of Israel. Paul contrasts his life with theirs. If anyone had the right to boast in the Jewish heritage it was Paul. In fact, Paul declares that if it were possible to boast in the flesh, he would have far more to boast of than they. He places his credentials before them.
Philippians 3:4-6 NAU - "If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless."
3. As a Pharisee Paul considered himself blameless regarding obedience to the Law.
Philippians 3:6 NAU - "as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless."
Paul is saying that his meticulous and scrupulous adherence to the Law was above reproach.
4. But under the Gospel Paul found out an infinitely important truth. His meticulous obedience to the Law fell far short of the perfection demanded by God. It wasn't enough. His condemnation before God remained.
Galatians 2:16 NAU - "nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified."
5. The only way a man can be declared righteous before God is by meeting the demands of the Law through perfect obedience.
 - A. The Moral Law is God's everlasting standard of righteousness – it reflects God's holy character. The Law is the standard by which all men will be judged.

- B. The Law demands not only obedience, it demands perfect obedience. The problem is no man apart from Christ has ever perfectly obeyed the Law. To fail at a single point, to have one single infraction is to become guilty. James says it well,
James 2:10 NAU - "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all."
- C. This leaves all men guilty before God. All are justly condemned.
Romans 3:23 NAU - "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"
6. The good news is God sent forth His Son who, through His perfect life, met the Law's demands on our behalf and then went to the cross to suffer the penalty we are due. We must trust Christ alone as the only way to satisfy Divine justice.
Romans 3:21-22 NAU - "But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;"
7. The only way to come to Christ is to come empty handed. We must renounce any degree of self-righteousness. We need a righteousness that can only come through Jesus Christ. In **Verse 9** Paul describes the glorious doctrine of Justification by faith alone. It is the heart of the Gospel.
Philippians 3:9 NAU - "not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith"
8. James Montgomery Boice called Philippians 3:9 a "summary of the Book of Romans, for it deals with the heart of salvation in one verse."¹
 In **Verse 9** Paul is speaking of the righteousness of God apart from the Law. This is the only way we can be made accepted before God.
 There are several things that we need to know about this righteousness.
- I. First of all, it is a righteousness that we ourselves do not possess
 "not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law"
- A. Prior to Christ Paul was proud of his righteousness.
1. As a Jew Paul's life was above reproach, but he stood guilty and condemned before God.
 2. Paul discovered that his best efforts fell woefully short of God's standard
 3. The reason no one can be made righteous by keeping the law is because all of us have broken the law and are guilty and condemned.
- B. Most people use a faulty system of judging themselves
1. Many have the notion that as long as our good outweighs the bad we will be accepted into heaven.
 - a. They imagine a great balance scale with our good deeds on one side and our bad on the other.

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Philippians: An Expository Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 172.

- b. For the guilty sinner, no amount of obedience will remove his guilt. Even if we could live perfectly from now on it could not remove our guilt. It is all a moot point, however, because we can't live perfectly.
 - c. This is why circumcision was so powerless. It had no power to change a wicked human heart. This is also why our good works are so powerless. No outward act can replace God's demand for perfect holiness.
2. The problem with fallen humanity is their standard of judging themselves is purely subjective.
- a. They excuse their sinful behavior and imagine themselves to be good people.
 - b. It is vain thinking because we are *not* good people. God is not concerned with a few good deeds. He is concerned about holy hearts. We are evil, wicked – our hearts are defiled.
None of us possess any goodness before God
Romans 3:12 NAS - "There is none who does good, There is not even one."
 - c. This is why we need a righteousness not our own.
Philippians 3:9 NAU - "and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the Law*"

II. Second, this righteousness has Christ as the focus. It is made possible through the life and death of Christ

"not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the Law*, but that which is through faith in Christ"

- A. The righteousness of God could only be applied to us if His justice were satisfied
 - 1. The reasonable conclusion is for us to bear our own guilt, to hear the dreaded words of the Great Judge of all the earth. This is the just conclusion of our condemnation.
Matthew 25:41 NAU - "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels"
 - 2. But what if God's perfect justice could be met another way. What if the Law's demand of perfect obedience could be met? What if the penalty due to our sin could be suffered by a substitute?
 - 3. This is precisely what God has accomplished through His Son
 - a. Jesus perfectly met the demands of the Law through His perfect obedience.
 - b. He went to the cross to suffer the wrath of God upon sin.
- B. Jesus accomplished all that was necessary for our salvation
1 Corinthians 1:30 NAU - "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,"
 - 1. God is perfectly just and will execute perfect justice
Jesus satisfied God's demand for justice by taking our place. He bore the penalty for our guilt.

2. But we need more than a removal of our guilt –
We need the righteousness of God - God's perfect righteousness.
Jesus has given us His righteousness
 3. The nature of justification involves receiving the righteousness of another – imputed righteousness. The imputed righteousness of Christ
"and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith"
- C. What is this imputed righteousness which is our justification?
1. Justification is the legal, forensic transfer from one person to another
Romans 3:23-24 NAU - "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus"
 2. Our sins were transferred to Christ and He suffered the full penalty thus satisfying God's Divine justice.
 3. The perfect righteousness of Christ is transferred to us.
This transfer is called imputation.
Romans 4:3-5 NAS - "For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness,"
 4. In Justification Christ has become our righteousness
- III. Finally, this righteousness must be received by grace alone through faith alone –
"but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,"
- A. We have seen many times in Scripture that salvation is a gift to be received.
This is the nature of grace – God giving us something on the basis of His good pleasure—not due to anything we have done.
1. This is the righteousness of God – the work of God
You cannot earn it. If you could earn it then God would owe it to you. He would be indebted to you.
 2. God only owes us one thing – His judgment. This is something He has promised and He will make good on His promise.
 3. Condemnation is owed to us.
Salvation is a gift.
Romans 6:23 NAU - "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- B. Salvation is all of God
1. It is His work from start to finish
 - a. Paul stresses that God is accomplishing His perfect work in us.
Philippians 1:6 NAU - "*For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."
Philippians 2:13 NAU - "for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure."

- b. God's redemptive purpose finds its origin in eternity
2 Timothy 1:9 NAU - "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,"
 - 2. Paul declares this righteousness doesn't come from within himself but from God. – It is "righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith"
 In other words, it is a righteousness of God's own making. God has provided a way to meet His demand of righteousness and He has done it apart from our obedience to the law.
- C. This righteousness becomes ours through faith alone
 "that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith"
Galatians 2:16 NAU - "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus"
Ephesians 2:8 NAU - "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God"
 - 1. Salvation demands that we believe and rest upon Christ alone.
 - 2. Immediately upon trusting in Christ we are declared just.

Conclusion:

- 1. Look into your own heart. Upon what are you trusting for salvation? Are you trusting in your actions, even just a little?
- 2. Most people don't see themselves as infinitely wicked before God. Most are content in their own goodness and presume God will accept them.
 - a. This is why the Gospel is such foolishness to them
1 Corinthians 1:18 NAU - "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."
 - b. To preach about a man nailed to a cross is meaningless to most people.
 - c. To speak of sin and condemnation is offensive to most.
 - d. God demands that we own our guilt, that we confess our sin and believe and rest upon Christ.
- 3. Have you seen your need of Christ? Have you embraced Him? Are you resting completely in Him?