

ROMANS 3:27-31 "Let Him Who Boasts, Boast In The Lord!"

Romans 3:27-31 ²⁷ Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. ²⁹ Or is God *the God* of Jews only? Is He not *the God* of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. ³¹ Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

One of the things we learned last week is that to be able to be reconciled to God we must be justified. To be justified is to be treated by God as though we had no guilt.

But to be declared not guilty, the penalty for sin must be paid completely by God on our behalf. God paid that penalty when He came into this world by taking on flesh, and then living the perfect life we couldn't, and then as a sinless sacrifice took our place and died on the cross, satisfying the debt we owed to our Creator.

And so Paul could write in 2Co 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

To enter into a relationship with God we must be righteous. The problem, because of our sin, is that we have no righteousness that we can bring to God and declare that we have a right to be with Him forever.

And so, in God's amazing grace we are given a righteousness that we don't possess inherently, but a righteousness which is found perfect in Christ put to our account as we embrace Christ as Lord and Savior.

By faith in Christ's work of redemption for us we receive His righteousness. We don't actually become perfect, we just have the perfect righteousness of Christ put in our ledger. And when the Father looks to our ledger He sees His Sons blood covering our sin and declares us not guilty based on that covering.

As we examine the salvation we have in Christ our focus begins to take us away from anything we could possibly do to try to earn our salvation, and our gaze is thrust outward to the One who died on our behalf and then rose from the dead.

At that point we clearly see that our salvation truly is a gift which God graciously gives us as we turn from self and turn to the Giver of that gift, God Himself.

Our forgiveness, our salvation, our eternal inheritance, and the glory in Christ to which we look forward, are all part of a gift which was accomplished outside of ourselves and then offered to us so that we might have this life with our God.

It's a humbling experience to realize that had God not stepped in to rescue us we would be lost forever, eternally separated from the love and fellowship of our Lord.

This is why Paul picks up in verse 27 of our text, "Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith."

Anyone who truly understands their salvation must come to the same conclusion. You see boasting here in our context relays the idea that there is something we can take credit for before God as it pertains to our salvation.

Fitzmeyer puts it this way: "By this word boasting Paul means self-confidence which seeks glory before God and which relies upon itself."

The point Paul makes is that self-reliance, as it relates to our salvation, will only result in death. And so for the believer we should concur with our text when the question is asked, how can we boast before God as though we contributed something to our salvation?

The answer of course is that boasting is excluded. Well, why is it excluded? Certainly not on the basis of observing the law.

Rom 3:19-22 "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. 21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe....."

So we can't be boasting or taking any credit for our salvation, by observing any sort of rules or regulations, so as to earn this

salvation. Rather as the end of verse 22 says, and as our text this morning says, we are justified by a law or principle of faith, and that faith can only be in the One who came to give us His righteousness, Jesus Christ the Righteousness One.

Rom 3:28 "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law."

And so our justification before God is not based on anything we can do for God and then say to Him, you must accept this work as sufficient payment for my salvation.

No, a man is justified, declared by God as not guilty, based solely on Jesus Christ and our faith in His redeeming work on our behalf. And this was exactly the same point Paul was making to the Christians in Galatia.

Gal 2:16 "know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified."

Here in our text Paul wants to drive home the point that the God who justifies us in Christ is the same God who declares that He is the One true God. And so the God of the Jews is also the God of the Gentiles.

Rom 3:29-30 "Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, 30 since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith."

Therefore, no one can claim any exclusive rights on God, which by the way, the Jews tried to do. And in claiming that God was only the God of the Jews, in the sense that only they could have a relationship with Him, they boasted in themselves, thinking that God came to them based on something in them which deemed them worthy of God's special attention.

No, all boasting is excluded. And God is the God of all, and all men may have a relationship with Him through faith in Christ. "He will justify the circumcised by faith, and the uncircumcised by faith." In other words the Jew and the Gentile.

Now, Paul has been wrongly accused of promoting a faith in Christ which sees no need for the law and a total disregard for obedience or compliance with the statutes of God's word.

Paul had been accused of this by his contemporaries, especially the Jews, who felt he was promoting a "religion" which had no morality. In other words, they felt he was teaching, 'only believe in Christ and don't worry about any aspect of God's law because it has absolutely no use.'

In answering his contemporaries who accused him of such things Paul says in Rom 3:31 "Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law."

The word nullify in the Greek is *katargeo* which means to be entirely idle, or to have no effect. Paul says, no we don't say that the law has no effect or is idle, in fact we uphold or stand on the law.

He saw a need for the law, but it was not the need to use the law to gain a righteousness before God. Last week we saw what Paul understood the law to be used for by God.

Gal 3:19, 24-26 "What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. 24 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. 25 Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. 26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,"

It's important to understand however that though we may not be saved by the law, or receive justification through the law, we don't negate what the law teaches.

You see the law not only teaches that we cannot keep the law effectively enough to gain salvation, it also teaches the perfect moral character of our God.

We are called to be moral agents of our Most High God. This is why the scriptures teach us to be holy even as our heavenly Father is holy.

We often times quote Eph.2:8-9 when showing that we can't earn our salvation through good works of the law.

Eph 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- 9 not by works, so that no one can boast."

There's that word boast again. God will not allow us to take any credit for our salvation in the sense that we can earn it by good works.

However, we should not exclude good works outright as though they don't have any significance. In fact when we look at Eph.2:8-9 we should also look to verse 10 which says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *to do good works*, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

And so it's not as though we're given a license to act any way we want, simply because our justification is based on faith in Christ.

F.F Bruce makes this comment: "While justification is received by faith alone, the faith which justifies is not alone; it is as Paul says in Gal.5:6 "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."

And how does faith express itself through love? It expresses itself through the kinds of works which are the result of the Spirit of God working in and through us.

Gal 5:22-24 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires."

James speaks of this as well in Jam 2:14-17 "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

Now, James is not suggesting that there is a type of faith which must be accompanied by good works to earn salvation. He's simply stating a fact. Only faith in Christ can save, but if you have Christ you have His Spirit, and if you have His Spirit then your desire will be to do those things which the Spirit prompts you to do and who enables you to do them.

That's why our faith in Christ is often compared to fruit trees. Fig trees produce figs. Apple trees produce apples. Why is that? That's the nature of the tree and the tree does what it should do because it was created by God for such a purpose.

When a Christian is told that he is created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do, it's not as though we must now find all the rules and regulations in the bible and somehow satisfy them by going down the list and trying to keep these things to show how much of a Christian we are.

Rather, because we are God's workmanship in Christ Jesus, our desire will be to walk after Christ in obedience; not because we're compelled to follow a bunch of rules and regulations but because we love the Lord and what He's done for us, and also because we do have a new nature, by the power of the Spirit, which now desires spiritual things; the kinds of things that Paul speaks of in Galatians when he lists the fruit of the Spirit.

This is what the Lord had in mind when He wrote in Jer 31:33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

When Jesus said, "If you love Me keep My commands", He wasn't suggesting that to earn His favor we must keep the law, He was telling us that if you love Him you will have a new heart which will desire to follow Him.

David understood this principle of life by faith in God alone when he said in Psa 40:8 "I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

And it is this same amazing work of God in our lives, and in the lives of all of God's people, who submit to the Spirit of God, who love the Lord because He first loved us, which prompted Paul to recognize that work in the lives of some Christians in Corinth.

He wrote in 2Co 3:3 "You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts."

There are lots of Christians who treat their Christianity as though it were a work oriented religion so as to boast of their ability to walk with God and show the world how wonderful they are.

Rather, God desires a humble attitude, totally dependent on Him and His power working in and through us. And that comes as we approach Him honestly and admit that we can't walk after Him in our own strength, but that we need Him every moment of our lives.

It's at that point that His fruit, the fruit of the Spirit, will flow from us to others. And the ultimate fruit will be displayed in the love of Christ in us.

Does this mean that as soon as we believe we will all be super Christians without any problems or temptations? Not at all. God accepts us where we are and then He takes us from there as He works on our hearts.

Some will show fruit in great abundance, others will show fruit which needs a little ripening, others will seem to only show the blossom of the fruit which is on its way.

But the common denominator, for someone who has truly placed his or her faith in Christ, is that God's Spirit is at work in us moving us away from satisfying self all the time, and now giving us the desire to satisfy our Lord and Savior.

The old nature will try to rear its ugly head and take the lead, but God's Spirit will convict us and show us how we must turn back to the One who died for our sin and who desires for us to walk in that new life by faith in Christ.

You've heard the expression the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. You know who said that? Jesus, on the night He was betrayed when He asked His disciples to come pray with Him.

Mat 26:41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Jesus Himself knows our weaknesses. In fact the writer of Hebrews says in Heb 4:15-16 "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

In fact, Paul himself learned something about the weakness of the flesh and came to the realization that when he was willing to give up trying to strive in the flesh and submit to the Spirit, therein was the power he needed to live to God's honor and glory.

2Co 12:7-10 "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

We all struggle with sin. But because we have the Spirit of God by faith in Christ we don't have to be enslaved to sin any longer because Christ died that we may be freed from, not only the penalty of sin, but its power as well.

You see on the one hand God urges us to flee from sin, but He doesn't leave us powerless with that command. He enables us and gives us the strength to flee from sin and to flee to Him for grace and mercy.

His Spirit, which He has placed in us, is the same Spirit who created the heavens and the earth, the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead, the same Spirit who loved us so much so as to woo us to Christ and seal us for the day of redemption by faith in Christ alone.

We're not alone in this struggle which is designed to lift up Christ in our lives. As the Body of Christ we are in this together and we are instructed to encourage one another to love and good works. But our strength is not ultimately in ourselves or even in each other. It's in the God who saved us.

Tit 3:1-7 "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, 2 to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men. 3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having

been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

The power to live unto God's honor and glory comes from God, but our motivation and our desire to seek our God and please Him must come from the intimate knowledge that "he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,"

Do I have room to boast about this new life I have in Christ? Only to the extent that I boast in Christ and the cross, not in myself.

The prophet Jeremiah records God's word for us in Jer 9:23-24 "This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD."

Paul comments on this verse and puts into perspective how we should view our salvation and how we should appreciate the God who saved us.

1Co 1:26-31 "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

We may have been called by God in weakness, or in shame, or in our lowly position, but in Christ we are given a crown of Righteousness, His righteousness. We are given God's redeeming power to love Him and serve Him and we are given the joy of our salvation that we may live lives worthy of His high calling.

The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. That may be true but don't sell yourselves short when it comes to which reality we live

in. Live in the power of the Spirit as you seek God continually and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

I love what God declares for all of us in Isa 40:29-31 "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. 30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Whether it's our salvation or our ability to walk in Christ, trust in God completely; He never disappoints.