

Romans 3:27-31

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Date: 07 August 2011

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[0 : 00] It's certainly a blessing to be here this morning. I was telling Chris earlier that I usually feel pretty good about my sermons until everybody starts showing up and I suddenly start to feel the inadequacy of them.

But it's also very nice to see you guys. It also makes a little bit of joy spring up in my heart to see God's people gather together to sing praises to his name and to study his word.

We're going to finish the third chapter of Romans. If you'll turn there with me, Romans chapter 3. We're going to read together verses 27 through 31.

I started a couple of weeks preaching from this snazzy iPad, kind of out of necessity the first week, but with this light solo, I'm very thankful that I've been doing that because I can actually see what I'm reading.

I can't quite see my Bible, so I'm glad I copied the text here. Let's read together. Verses 27 through 31. Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded.

[1 : 07] By what kind of law? By a law of works? No. By what kind of law?

It's a law of works. A bit of a work in progress. You'll see there an introductory statement to what we believe as a church. It links you to a complete statement of faith, but that introductory statement, primarily written by Wes, speaks of the five tenets that came out of the Protestant Reformation. Many of us know them as the five solas, which is Latin, meaning only. The five solos. And this is the phrase. I want to read it to you quickly. We believe, Christ's family church believes, that the Bible alone, sola scriptura, tells the truth about God's plan for the redemption of his people and that he eternally saves us by his grace alone, sola gratia, through faith alone, sola fide, in Christ alone, solo Christo or solus Christus, to the glory of God alone, soli Deo gloria.

It's a beautiful, beautiful phrase. I'd encourage you to memorize it, memorize those solos in that fashion. And so the thing I kind of want you to draw your attention to is that sola fide, by faith alone, which we discussed last week in the previous verses, verses 21 through 26.

We saw Paul, who's still addressing a primarily Jewish audience, say that we've all sinned. None of us are escaping the wrath of God because we have all sinned, Jew, Gentile.

[3 : 09] And if we are Christians, we are in fact Christians, that we're justified not by works, but by our faith in Jesus Christ. And so we come to this place where he begins to work out some of the objections.

He goes ahead and addresses them so that people can't excuse his argument, but so that he can move on beyond this. So it's kind of a works versus faith argument, addressing of these objections. So I'm going to say this morning that genuine faith is what makes us Christian. It's what brings salvation to our souls. Genuine faith placed in Christ.

So let me give you a very probably silly and simplistic analogy for this. I have a favorite Saturday shirt. I'm sure many of you have that shirt. My Saturday shirt's my favorite color.

It's navy blue. It's a size too big for me. I've had it for over a decade, so it's been washed a lot. You know, it's that nice, but it's getting kind of thin. And it kind of has a silly saying on it, which I just find to be fun.

[4 : 15] It has a really simplistic picture of a quilt on it, and it says, quilters make better comforters. I get a kick out of that. Quilters make better comforters. Well, yesterday, I was running errands, and I have a bit of an idea for a project I'd like to do here for our building, a bit of an art project that I've got going on in my brain, and I need fabrics for that.

And so now in Gainesville, there's a new Joanne Fabrics. And so I decided to go to Joanne Fabrics and look at some of the things they had there to see if I could make this project work. And I walked in the store, and walking in, I saw the quilting section and realized what shirt I had on.

I thought, wow, people are really going to think I'm into quilting, being in a store, looking at fabrics. And it made me think of this. If I actually were a man into quilting, and wanted to feel accepted in Joanne Fabrics, I think I was the only male there, I might have actually put a shirt like that on. I might have wanted to say, if I actually was a quilter, I might have wanted to say to that world, that subculture, I like quilting. Look at my shirt. Of course, it was entirely an accident. But we do that, both as non-Christians and Christians, in order to fit into the place, be known for what we want to be known for.

[5 : 36] We tend to put on certain airs. Sociologists call it front stage and back stage. Everybody has a front stage. We come out and we perform for the world, and in the back stage, we're totally different.

So, genuine faith is who we actually are. What do we actually believe? Certainly, what we believe affects the front stage and ought to be coming out of who we actually are.

But when I say genuine faith, I'm not talking about the things we put on, the trappings, the denomination we're affiliated with, or what labels we put on ourselves, or how we dress, or what buildings we show up to.

Even the good works that we do in the world, I'm not talking about those things. I'm talking about a genuine belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that He is the only way to restore our relationship with Him, and avoid eternal damnation.

That's what I mean when I say genuine faith. So, I can put on my quilter shirt, all right? I'm not a quilter. The genuine faith would be me actually being a quilter.

[6 : 43] Going home and sewing quilts would be my genuine faith, and my rather lacking example there. So, I've got four points for you out of this morning's text. I'll read them to you quickly, and we'll go back and repeat them.

And they are, genuine faith excludes boasting. Number one, genuine faith excludes boasting.

Number two, genuine faith is liberating.

Number three, genuine faith promotes ethnic harmony and missions to the end of the earth. I'll repeat that, so don't worry about copying that down, though. And number four, genuine faith changes our hearts.

So, number one, genuine faith excludes boasting. Verse 27 says, then what becomes of boasting? If righteousness is by faith alone, which we've seen in the previous text, which is a gift from God, what becomes of our boasting?

And Paul says, very emphatically, it is excluded. We have no room to boast in our salvation. By what kind of law? By a law of works?

[7 : 51] By the things we can do? No. But by the law of faith. By that which we cannot accomplish. So boasting is entirely excluded.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 2, 8 and 9, for by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. This is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

He says that very plainly for us, doesn't he? Your salvation comes as a result of faith. faith. But that faith is not your own. It was a gift given to you by Almighty God.

Why? So that you didn't do it. So that you can't boast in it. Because God is jealous for his glory. God is God-centered.

For us to be man-centered, for Nathan to be Nathan-centered, would be sin. It would be selfish of me. But God is God-centered. Because God is completely loving toward the world.

[8 : 53] If he were to do anything else but have us focus on him, he'd be unloving. Let me say that again for you in different words. God is the best thing that any of us could experience.

Any of us could have and hold for our own. God is that thing. He is the creator. Therefore, everything is subservient to him. He is better than all things because all things emanate from him. So if God were to say, no, no, don't look at me. It's cool. Nathan's a good guy. Nathan's a good preacher. Nathan looks good in his plaid shirts on Sunday morning. If he were to say any of those things, he would be unloving toward you because you would be looking at me and not at him. So God is entirely God-centered. He is jealous for his glory. He wants us to praise him for all things. Isaiah 41, Isaiah 41, he says, my glory I will not give to another.

He will not give his glory to another. So even in our salvation, it's his work, it's his doing, it's a gift of faith for us. So we cannot boast!

[10:19] I think there's far too much boasting. I get this sense that there's an air of arrogance amongst us because we've figured it out.

Right? We've looked at the landscape of philosophy and religion and we've picked the right one. We must be smarter than everybody.

Right? We've figured it out. We've figured it out. I'm brilliant. I picked the right one. No room for boasting in the gospel. If you have a proper soteriology to understand our salvation, you will be humble.

a lot of people have false humility. A lot of people would say, somebody said to me, Nathan, you preached a great sermon this morning.

I go, no, no. It really wasn't that great. That's not humility. But if I say, thank you, praise God, because I'm really bad at this.

[11:19] I'm so feeble. You have no idea how desperate I feel on a Sunday morning for God to use me to proclaim his truth. That's the kind of humility that's birthed out of a proper understanding of the gospel.

So, genuine faith excludes boasting entirely. Completely excludes it. Number two. Genuine faith is liberating.

The burden of keeping the law has been lifted from our shoulders. Verse 28. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

This is a restatement of things that he's been saying all along in the book of Romans so far. And he says it again. We hold that this is the truth. That one is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

People can do good things. It's within our capacity as unbelievers to do good things. It's possible to be philanthropic.

[12:25] It's possible to help mend wounds. To dig people out of the mud in land fights. That is possible to do apart from the work of Christ. But none of that is honoring to him if we're not Christians.

It's self-serving. You see? So it's faith that sets us before God as right. Justifies us. proclaims us as righteous before him.

It's our faith. It's our belief in him. Paul writes in Galatians 5.1 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm therefore and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

And what's he referring to? The great issue that was going on in the church of Galatia was the Judaizers those Christian Jews that were trying to press people to become circumcised. to carry this outward sign of what they must do. Do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. We have been set free by the grace of Christ.

[13:30] I'm going to talk a little bit more about liberty when we get to our fourth point. I want to give you an example. I went to a missions conference in Urbana, Illinois and there was a group of Indians Native Americans from Canada so Native Canadians and they talked about how when the white man came when the Christians came to convert them that they put them in schools and they took away their names and they wouldn't allow them to speak in their native tongue they actually would beat them if they did so and what they attempted to do with these young Indian boys is turn them into them.

Jesus was not a white middle class Republican but yet we press at people to become us take on our culture we could set free from that they proceeded to have a drum circle which I didn't connect to at all but the point was we can use the things that are ours as a Native American people to praise the one true God we've been set free from the burden of the law in John chapter 4 Jesus meets with the woman at the well the Samaritan woman and she says to him where is it that we should worship she presents this question to him because my people are saying we should do it on this mountain and your people say it should happen in Jerusalem in the city there where's the proper place for that to happen and Jesus responds to her the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the father in spirit and truth for the father is seeking such people to worship him

God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth we've been liberated from the law number three genuine faith promotes ethnic harmony and missions to the ends of the earth verses 29 and 30 where is God the God of the Jews only is he not the God of the Gentiles also yes of Gentiles also since God is one who would justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised

through faith recall that he's writing to a primarily Jewish audience and they would have known who God was who is this God that Paul is talking about they were very familiar with Exodus chapter 3 when Moses is being sent to the people to be setting them free from Egypt and he says who should I say has sent me

I'm going to sound like a crazy guy who should I say has sent me and we see then this name for God that the Hebrew people held very sacred Yahweh I am who I am is what he responded I am who I am that means that God is the source of all things he's the source of all life everything plugs into him he plugs into nothing to get his power all emanates from his being so we were all then created by God I don't think any Jewish people are sitting in this room with us today so we're on the Gentile side of Paul's argument but all the different ethnicities out there we were all created by God and that's Paul's argument isn't God the God of everyone is he just the God of the Jews is there another God that created the other peoples of the earth no because God is I am who I am he is the source of all things that ought to change the way we feel about other ethnicities and notice I'm using my terms carefully I haven't said race once have I using the term ethnicity there's certainly differences amongst us aren't there there are people from different countries and cultural backgrounds race is socially constructed we invent race in order to draw lines create divisions the big genocide in Rwanda was a was a fabricated genocide Denmark was ruling correct me if I get this wrong Denmark was ruling and created by measurements of people's faces by measurements of their faces divided them into two groups the Tutsis and the Hujus divided them into two groups of people because they knew that if they could divide the people they'd be less likely to rise up against them they created they invented races of people and they fabricated they pushed warring between them once a million people were hacked with machetes because of the invention of race it's tragic the gospel speaks through that doesn't it we gotta love all kinds of people even the ones we don't understand there's no doubt that there are varying cultures

[19:06] I don't get all the peoples of the world what motivates them why they like certain foods it's beyond my understanding but yet I don't love them the same because their God is the same as my God and he created them just like he created me Matthew 28 18 we're commanded to make disciples of all nations not just our own or those who we feel most comfortable with but of all nations Revelation chapter 7 verse 9 and 10 we see a picture of the throne room and if this doesn't motivate us to share our faith to the ends of the earth I don't know I don't know what to do for you if this doesn't get you excited about world missions John writes after this I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation from all the tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the Lamb clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb genuine faith promotes ethnic harmony and missions to the end of the earth number four genuine faith changes our hearts verse 31 do we then overthrow the law by this faith so here he has the people who have done their best to live by this law do we then overthrow the law by our faith by no means if you were here a couple of weeks ago you'll remember that that phrase in Greek is the strongest negative term he could have placed in that place absolutely no way is what he's saying by no means on the contrary we uphold the law the Jews thought that their salvation came to them because they did good things because they threw in the effort they didn't understand the sacrificial system if that's what they believed they didn't understand that there was nothing all their effort there was nothing they could do they couldn't uphold the law but here comes

Christ he doesn't come to abolish the law but to what fulfill it what's he talking about when he says that I did not come to abolish the law but to fill it that's in Matthew chapter 5 if you care he didn't come to abolish the law but to fulfill it when we place our faith in Christ we receive the spirit of God which moves in us which creates in us the ability to have right motivation and to live for him changes our hearts God says in Ezekiel chapter 11 verse 19 and 20 and I will give them one heart he's talking about the church what he'll do for his people I will give them one heart and a new spirit I will put within them I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them and they shall be my people and I will be their God and then later chapter 36 verse 27

Ezekiel God says and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules so we're given then the ability to live righteously we're declared righteous and given the ability to live righteously that means something for our life doesn't it I mean in our in our liberty we have the ability now we don't have to be burdened by this law if I don't keep this law

perfectly then I'm cursed there's no way around that and none of us have been able to do that and that is a burden on our shoulders that burden has been lifted because of the grace of Christ but now because we have God's spirit working within us we love God and the things of God we will want to do what he wants us to do that's why the gospel is so vital to our daily Christian living some people feel like we've moved beyond that I'm a Christian now I've heard that story heard it over and over again I get it I was sinful Jesus died for me I placed my faith in him in that is the motivation for my Christian living the spirit of God stirs in me when I hear the gospel presented when I am reminded of who I was and who I am now and what happened to get me there I am moved to praise him by living a righteous life I wish I could pay somebody to follow me around and just preach the gospel we can put it on the radio we can listen to it on our headphones great I wish I had a person just constantly reminding me consistently what God has done for me in Christ so we uphold the law we live righteous living because what he has done for us it's a struggle though isn't it

Paul speaks to that in Romans chapter 7 verse 15 he says for I do not do what I want but I do the very thing I hate and then in verse 24 he says wretched man that I am who will deliver me from this body of death thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord and what he's actually talking about in this case was a Roman punishment when somebody committed murder one of the ways they could be punished was that the person they murdered would actually be tied onto them fastened onto their back this is fascinating because that person is going to begin to decay no one's going to want to be around them and what's going to begin happening to their flesh is going to rot right along with it that's what Paul's talking about here a little culture for you that helps you understand what is it that he's saying he looks at his own flesh the desires of his flesh that way as a wretched decaying thing rotting away on his back incredible who will deliver me from this body of death

[25 : 56] Jesus Christ our Lord so do you find in your life that you are advancing in your love for God and his statutes and the things he's concerned about or your love for the world the lens you ought to hold up constantly how am I doing today versus yesterday have I advanced in holiness this year versus last year which way am I waning do you love God's people do you love the lost do you love sharing the gospel or do you love the things of this world do you care more for your clothing and your car and your TV shows entertainment comfort do you care more about test your faith by that simple example of this we come together on Sunday mornings to meet with the church which is precious to Christ understand that this is his bride and all over the place this morning people are meeting together to learn about God to be motivated to Christian living to encourage one another support one another this is special time many of us don't prepare for it at all it's another thing we do what do you do on

Saturday evening what are you up to preparing yourself for Sunday morning not many of us are about that business do we look forward to the things of God to what he's going to do with his people on Sunday morning enough that we prep ourselves for it young people how late do you stay up on Saturday night Saturday night another party night for you playing video games got your halo going until 3 o'clock in the morning some of you walk in here looking miserable we ought to prep ourselves for this we love the things of God we ought to be excited about Sunday morning we ought to come expecting that God is going to speak to us because he does that the proclamation of his word is the primary way in which God speaks to his people did you know that we get awfully wrapped up in this personal relationship with

Jesus Christ bit which we all have right go to many churches this morning and there is no light in the room right because they want you to have your personal relationship with Jesus Christ if you can see or hear the person next to you you're not worshiping God saved a people on the cross which includes persons but a people we ought to come prepared for this morning that's just one example one that's been burning in me for a while so we see then in this text some tests of genuine faith excludes boasting liberates us from the burden of the law promotes ethnic harmony and missions to the ends of the earth and it changes our hearts and

I say thanks be to God through Christ Jesus our Lord as we fail in these things and strive to do better all praise belongs to him when we pull it off let's pray God