

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 2-28-10 PM
 “THE RESULTS OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH”
 ROMANS 3:27-31
 #20 in Series, “Verse by Verse through Romans”

One of the major themes of the book of Romans and one of the central doctrines of the Bible is justification. Martin Luther said: “This doctrine is the head and the cornerstone. It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God; and without it the church of God cannot exist one hour” [Quoted in John Piper, “Brothers We Are Not Professionals”, Page 17]. John Calvin said of justification, “Wherever the knowledge of it is taken away, the glory of Christ is extinguished, religion abolished, the church destroyed, and the hope of salvation utterly overthrown” [Piper, Page 17]. Last week, we defined justification this way: “An act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous in Christ on the basis of the finished work of Christ on the cross.” The doctrine of justification by faith alone is the heart of the gospel. It was the central message of the early church and after centuries of neglect, it then became the central message of the Protestant Reformation. It is still the central message of every church that is faithful to God’s Word. When the First Great Awakening broke out in the American Colonies in the 1730’s, most trace it back to a series of messages Jonathan Edwards was preaching in his church in Northampton Mass. It was a series on justification by faith. When Edwards finally published the series of sermons, he wrote this in the preface: “The following discourse of justification ... seemed to be remarkably blessed, not only to establish the judgments of many in this truth, but to engage their hearts in a more earnest pursuit of justification, in that way that had been explained and defended; and *at that time*, while I was greatly reproached for defending this doctrine in the pulpit, and just upon my suffering a very open abuse for it, God’s work wonderfully brake forth amongst us, and souls began to flock to Christ, as the Savior in whose righteousness alone thy hoped to be justified. So that this was the doctrine on which this work in its beginning was founded, as it evidently was in the whole progress of it” [Piper, Pages 24-25]. Nowhere in the Bible is the doctrine of justification so clearly laid out as it is in Romans 3:24-26 that we looked at last week. What we have in tonight’s text is sort of a postscript that gives us three consequences or implications of the truth of justification.

Before we get into the text, let me say a word about Paul’s use of polemics in the book of Romans. Polemics is defined in the dictionary as “the art or practice of disputation of or controversy”. Paul not only laid out the true doctrines of Christianity, he also disputed and laid out the answers to those who were perverting or denying these same arguments. Much of the content of the Epistles was Paul’s answer to his critics and the false teachers that hounded him constantly. Some people despise polemics. They say, “Let’s just keep it positive; we should never argue or confront or correct when it comes to Scripture”. The Apostle Paul would adamantly disagree with that. Notice as you read Romans how much of the content is aimed at false teachers who were leading people astray. I like the way Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones put it: “No man should like argument for the sake of argument. We should always regret the necessity; but though we regret it and bemoan it, when we feel that a vital matter is at stake we must engage in argument. We must ‘earnestly contend for the truth’, and we are all called upon to do that by the New Testament” [Martyn Lloyd-Jones, “Romans”, Page 114]. The apostle Paul commends the church at Philippi in **Philippians 1:7 (ESV)** “It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.” In laying out the consequences and implications of justification, Paul confronts many errors that are obviously floating around concerning the doctrines of salvation. Let’s examine these three implications or results of justification by faith alone in Christ alone and His finished work on the cross.

I. Boasting Is Excluded (V27-28)

God hates human boasting because it is a manifestation of pride. If any human being had ground for boasting in himself, it would be the Apostle Paul. He said in **Philippians 3:4-8 (NKJV)** “⁴ though I also

might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷ But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ". Paul said that what may have seemed to others to be fuel for boasting in himself, he counted as rubbish. He said in **1 Corinthians 1:27-29 (ESV)** "²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God." Every world religion makes room for boasting. It may be subtle, it may be disguised, but it will be there because every world religion teaches that whatever their concept of salvation might be, it is achieved by human works. Only in Christianity is there no boasting since everything is by grace through faith! **1 Corinthians 4:7 (HCSB)** "For who makes you so superior? What do you have that you didn't receive? If, in fact, you did receive it, why do you boast as if you hadn't received it?" Everything good and "boast-worthy" about us is because of God's grace. That's why our boasting should be in the Lord and His work. **Galatians 6:14 (NKJV)** "But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." God lays human pride in the dust! If our justification was based even partially on works, we would boast about it. **Ephesians 2:9 (NKJV)** "not of works, lest anyone should boast." This is another area where we must be counter-cultural. The world honors a person who "Pulls himself up by his own bootstraps". Anyone who thinks he can pull himself close to God doesn't realize how far away he is from God. He doesn't realize the depths of his own sin or the heights of God's holiness. It is not we who lift ourselves up to Him; it is He who reaches all the way down to us and lifts us up. **Psalms 40:2 (NIV)** "He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand."

In loving kindness Jesus came

My soul in mercy to reclaim,

And from the depths of sin and shame

Through grace He lifted me.

From sinking sand He lifted me,

With tender hand He lifted me,

From shades of night to plains of light,

O praise His name, He lifted me.

- Charles Gabriel (1905)

Boasting is excluded!

What is he speaking of in the last part of verse 27 when he speaks of a law of works and a law of faith? He is using the word "law" in the sense of principle. The NIV translates it that way: **Romans 3:27 (NIV)** Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith." That's another way of saying that boasting is excluded because in salvation as a principle, as a law, God operates in response to faith and not works. He expounds on that principle in verse 28. Again let me emphasize that faith is the instrument of salvation. It is Jesus Christ who saves us and faith is the instrument that appropriates what Christ accomplished on the cross. Faith and works cannot mix; they cannot coexist in the receiving of salvation. Listen to this excellent summary by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: "Faith is nothing but the instrument or channel by which this righteousness of God in Christ becomes ours. It is not faith that saves us. What saves us is the Lord Jesus Christ and His perfect work. It is the death of Christ upon Calvary's cross that saves us. It is His perfect life that saves us. It is His appearing on our behalf in the presence of God that saves us. It is God putting Christ's righteousness to our account that saves us. This is the righteousness that saves; faith is but the channel and the instrument by which His righteousness becomes mine. The righteousness is entirely Christ's. My faith is not my righteousness and

I must never define or think of faith as righteousness. Faith is nothing but that which links us to the Lord Jesus Christ and His righteousness” [Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Page 120].

It is at this point that some see a conflict between what the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write and what He inspired James to write. Listen to **James 2:24 (NKJV)** “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.” When we read Romans 3:28 and James 2:24 together, it certainly does seem like a contradiction at first glance. Even so great a scholar as Martin Luther saw this as a contradiction and he called James an “epistle of straw”. One of the cardinal rules of Biblical interpretation is the rule of context. When we look at the context, we see that James and Paul had two different goals. Paul was confronting those who tried to mix works with faith to attain salvation. James was dealing with those who claimed to have been saved but had no transformation of life. If we had time we could look at the context of James 2:24 and see that this was his burden. Paul was speaking of how salvation is obtained and James is illustrating the results of true salvation. Paul was confronting legalism and James was confronting “easy believism”. Paul was speaking of how to attain salvation from God’s viewpoint – through faith alone. God sees into a person’s heart and knows if their faith is real and involves a preparation by repentance followed by a complete reliance upon Christ and His shed blood. Our works cannot add one one-thousandth of one percent to our salvation. How can this truth be manifest to man since we don’t know one another’s heart? There is only one way – by the outworking of a new heart in good works. Paul and James are in agreement; they are just coming from opposite directions. Paul is emphasizing how justification is initiated and James is emphasizing how justification works itself out in a truly saved person’s life.

When a person is truly justified, boasting is excluded.

II. Distinctions Are Abolished (V29-30)

God’s way of salvation abolishes all distinctions between people. All who come to God come on exactly the same basis and that basis is through faith in the finished work of Christ. Christianity transcends all national, cultural, and people group distinctions. It is interesting that in Paul’s day the problem was excluding people who wanted to come to God through Christ and today the problem is those trying to include people who want to come to God in other ways than through Christ. In Paul’s time, some Jews were saying that the Gentiles couldn’t be reconciled to God unless they became Jews. In other words, some were excluding those who wanted to be saved. Today the problem is telling others they don’t need to be saved because there are many ways to God; all that matters is that you are sincere in the path that you have chosen. The answer to both errors is the same. There is only one way to God and that is to be justified through faith alone in Christ alone, period. I am going to focus on the problem we have today. The technical terms to describe the conflict are that it is between those who believe in inclusivity and those who believe in exclusivity. Inclusivity says that anyone can come to God through any means they choose. The illustration often used is that God is on a mountain and there are many paths up the mountain. There is the Buddhist path, the Hindu path, the Muslim path, the make up your own religion that combines some from all the paths path. No path is wrong – it is whatever seems right to you. The key is that we all just love and tolerate one another and never, never, never tell anyone they are wrong. That’s inclusivity, and it is certainly the majority view today. Those who believe the Scriptures are counter-cultural and are inclusivists when it comes to who may come to God through faith in Christ (look at all the “whosoever” in Scripture) but exclusivists in that there is no way to come to God except through faith in Christ. This exclusivity is actually dangerous to proclaim outside the walls of the church. Those who proclaim that faith in Christ alone is the only way of salvation are thought to be narrow, bigoted, mean spirited, ignorant, wicked, intolerant, cruel, and vile. We are told that this is the belief that leads to religious wars, genocide, and inquisitions. The fact is that to deny the exclusivity of salvation through faith alone in Christ alone is to deny the clear teaching of Scripture. **John 14:6 (NKJV)** “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” **Acts 4:12 (NKJV)** Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” As we saw last week in Romans 3:26, if there was salvation or justification on

any other basis, then God would not be just. The character and glory of God rides on this issue and we must not waffle on it; we must not compromise on this issue whatever the consequences to us may be.

III. The Law Is Established (V31)

Here we see Paul's polemical approach. He raises an objection that he knew would come. The question he had either already gotten or was anticipating was "Do we then make void the law by faith?" Paul responds with one of the strongest negatives possible – "certainly not". Here is the big question in this verse that the scholars cannot agree on. What is meant by "we establish the law"? The word "establish" means to fulfill the intended purpose. That could mean one of three things and I'm not sure which one he means here, but all three are taught elsewhere. First, it could mean that the law reveals our sinfulness which leads us to the Savior. **Romans 3:20 (NKJV)** Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin. **Galatians 3:24 (NKJV)** "Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith." When we come to Christ in faith, the law has done the work that God intended for it to do – it is established. Second, it could mean that through faith we have the righteousness of Christ and that righteousness satisfies the law and thus the law is fulfilled. Third, it could mean that the cross by crucifying the old us in Adam and reconciling us to God, enabling His to give us the indwelling Spirit enables us to obey the law. **Romans 8:3-4 (NKJV)** "3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." When we walk in the Spirit, we fulfill the moral law of God. The fact is that the law is fulfilled when we come to Christ through faith.

CONCLUSION

Lest I be misunderstood, in closing let me ask and answer three basic questions [based on James Boice, "Romans, Volume I", pages 415-418]. First, "Who may come to Christ?" The answer is everybody; no one is excluded whatever their skin color, educational background, economic level, or ethnic background. One of my burdens is that we don't have more diversity in our church. I assure you that the lack of diversity is not intentional. It is perhaps due to the fact that the last census showed our area to be 96% Caucasian, but I believe God loves diversity. When we see a picture of the throne in Heaven in Revelation it is emphasized that there are people here from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation. When God created Adam and Eve He created them genetically to enable all the diversity we see today. When He confused the languages in Babel in Genesis 11, He knew that it would result in the diversity we have today. Our text tells us that the general call of the Gospel goes out to every sinner – "Whosoever will may come"! The second question is, "How may I come to Christ?" You come as you are! Some come filled with morality and self-righteousness; some come dragging the heavy load of sin; some come excitedly; some come reluctantly, but all come as they are. The Lord who has drawn us then opens our eyes, gives us ears to hear, grants repentance, and when the sinner believes on the Lord Jesus Christ they are saved, rescued, justified, made righteous in Christ's righteousness, forgiven completely, reconciled to God, and adopted into His forever family! The third question is "When may I come?" From God's side of salvation we know that as Jesus said in John 6:44 (NKJV) "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day." But from man's side you can come whenever you desire to come to Him. You can come as a child. You can come as a Senior Adult. You can come in a church service, in a fox hole in the midst of combat, at night in your bed, or in your Lifegroup. I love the invitation of Charles Spurgeon: "Oh, my dear hearers, come to Jesus! Come in the morning when the dew is on your branch, for He will not cast you out. Come in the heat of noon, when the drought of care parches you, and He will not cast you out. Come when the shadows have grown long, and the darkness of the night is gathering about you, for He will not cast you out. The door is not shut; for the gate of mercy closes not so long as the gate of life is open" [Quoted in James Boice, "Romans, Volume I", Page 417]. (3334)]