

“Justification and Boasting”

Romans the Gospel of God

Romans 3:21-31

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Jeff: Our gracious God, You are a mighty fortress to us, and we are thankful for that. You are the One to whom we can flee. You are the cleft in the rock in which we can hide. And Your wings are like pinions that spread over us, and we have shade from the heat and sun. Father, we are so thankful to be in Your presence, to be hidden in Christ our Lord, to be united to Him and so to You, and that through faith which is not our own, but is even a gift from You. So Father, as we come we are thankful people. And we are joyful knowing our position in Christ.

Father, we pray that You will make us a people dependent upon prayer, not just in the mornings or before meals. But Lord, make us a people who hide away in our closets. Make us a people who pray without ceasing, and so before the King or before the children. We lift up our prayers to you, asking that You will do that which is wise and good, and exercise Your wisdom according to the power of Your might. And so, Father, we pray that You would bless and strengthen us as a people and as a church. And Father, we pray that the church would do what it is commissioned to do: to worship You and praise You and believe everything the Scriptures say about You, and then tell others, that they too might believe. And Father, we pray that the expansion of the church would be foremost in our minds. And we pray that as You grow Your church from that little mustard seed to that huge bush which encompasses the earth, we pray, Father, that Your truth would be like a leaven in people’s lives, and that they would make decisions according to Your word, and that they would live lives of integrity according to Your word and by the help of Your Spirit.

So Father, as we come we pray these things that are uppermost in our minds. But we also pray for individuals. Father, we think about Ted our brother who is in discomfort because of the surgery. And we pray that You’ll relieve him of that and make him well soon. Father, we also pray for Bob. And Lord, the news that he received must have been unsettling at first. And yet we’re thankful for his testimony of Your presence and Your power indeed for these many years. Lord, You’ve kept him and strengthened him through loss—loss of those who are dearest to us—a wife, and Lord, with the loss of two wives. You have been kind and a blessing to him; be a blessing to him once again.

Father, we also give You thanks for Alex’s presence. And we lift him up in his loss and ask that You will tend and keep him. We certainly pray for Your blessing to be upon him. Lord, we ask that you will in many ways comfort him in ways that many of us are ignorant of. Father, we just ask that Your hand would do that and that Your Spirit would be mighty in his life.

Father, we also pray for David, and we pray for wisdom. We pray that he would be able to discern, or that the doctors or others would be able to discern his situation and give him relief. Father, we also pray for Curt. And Lord, we ask not only for him and for his physical condition. We’re thankful that the COVID has passed. But we also pray more importantly for his wife; that must be a burden to him in ways that are trying to the soul. Lord, we ask that You would bring repentance to her life. And we pray, Father, that they would again joyously go to the church of the living God and so worship You and offer You praise and adoration.

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Lord, we ask now that You'll bless each one of us. Lord, as we stand at the cusp of a new day we don't know what it holds for us. We hope that it holds good things. And in one way we know that it does because everything that You do for Your people is good. But we also know that we live according to the humiliation of Christ. And so in this life there is a valley of tears in which we must walk. Yet Your Spirit comforts us, guides us and certainly keeps us. And so whether it be a valley of sunshine in which we walk today or a Valley of Baca, we ask that Your Spirit would be present with us in a mighty way. We ask it in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. Well, let's go to Romans chapter 3. And let's start with verse 21 today. And we're actually going to jump down to verse 26 and finish that up. And then we'll start in with verse 27 through the end of the chapter. So let's start with 21.

“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law,--although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it,--the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 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. 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.

“So what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

“Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold it.” This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: All right. By way of introduction I want you to just remember what we've talked about in regard to the righteousness of God. You'll remember that we asked this question, because it's a question that comes up in our text. We asked the question. What is the righteousness of God? And we basically come away with three answers to that question.

First of all, the righteousness of God is what God is. In other words, it's an attribute of God. God is righteous.

But we also noticed that righteousness is what God does. God is a righteous Judge, and He judges righteously. And so those two things are clear in the text.

But there's a third thing that is important to us, vital to us. And that is that righteousness is something that God gives. In other words we talk about the imputation of righteousness to the believer when the believer stands in Jesus Christ. It's part of justification.

And so when we think of righteousness we think of it in those three categories: who God is, what God does, and we think of what God gives.

Now up until this point, up until 3:21, we've not seen the third; we've actually had to wait. It's been anticipated. We saw it coming in some ways, especially as we looked at 1:16 and 17.

Transcriber's Note: Romans 1:16-17, ESV. *“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*

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the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written: ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”

Jeff: But what has been absolutely clear is that God is righteous and judges righteously. And He judges all men righteously, not just some. All have fallen short of the glory of God. And in that sense everyone is equally bad. Everyone is equally lost. Everyone is equally in need of righteousness.

And so we’ve come to the end of chapter 3, realizing who God is and what God does. It’s in 21 that we found that beautiful verse which helps us to see that God not only is righteous and does righteousness in His judgments, but He imputes righteousness to those who lack it. And this is vital. Remember, this is vital because no one who is unrighteous can stand in the presence of a righteous God. And in order to do so we must have the righteousness of God for us, and that is in Christ.

So that’s by way of introduction. And I want us to move to verses 26 and 27, because verses 26 and 27 is where we left off the last time, after having spent three weeks on verses 21-25. So I want us to think about 26 and 27. And I want to read those verses again, because they have a way of unsettling us in some ways when you hear them.

Just listen to these verses, 26 and 27. I’m sorry; verses 25 and 26. *“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 passed over former sins. 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 I want you to take a look at this. Look at what he says in verse 25. *“This was to show God’s righteousness.”* What was to show God’s righteousness? Simply this: that Jesus Christ was made a propitiation for our sins, that we might have redemption in Him, that we might be justified by His grace. In other words, it’s the gospel of Jesus Christ that demonstrates the righteousness of God for us.

But then he says this. God passed over sins formerly, that His righteousness might be shown. Now the question I have for you is, what kind of righteousness passes over sins?

Think about that if we were thinking about a typical law court scenario. And it takes forever as it is for a judge to hear a particular case. But let’s say for instance that nine months or a year goes by. Finally the case is ready to be made. It’s filled; the lawyers are ready. And the judge says, “I think we’re going to put this off for another five years.” Even if he said that he was going to put it off for another year, wouldn’t you think that was in some sense a miscarriage of justice? Wouldn’t you want to cry, “Foul!”? Wouldn’t you want to say, “Wait a minute! How in the world is justice going to be carried out if you keep delaying justice?”

And yet here God says that former sins have been passed by in order to show His righteousness at the present time, that He might be both just and the justifier. What does he mean by that? Don?

Don Maurer: Jeff, my translation says, *“He passed over the sins that were previously committed.”* Would that mean the same thing?

Jeff: The same thing.

Don: Okay.

Sig Tragard: I got here too late. *(With the microphone)*

Jeff: You got here too late. But you might as well hang on because you know Don is going to raise his hand again. *(Laughter)*

So what does that mean? Well, I want you to think of it this way. Let’s put a visual up here. Are these good?

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Sig: Oh, I hope so. Don Rimbey checked them out personally.

Jeff: All right. So,--ah, we're not going to do it. Ah, that's okay. So here we have the cross, which is the demonstration of the righteousness of God. And here we have all the sins formerly committed that are passed over. And what we find is that God says that this passing over these previous sins was to demonstrate His righteousness.

Now what does he mean by that? Well, here's what he means. Starting with Adam in what is the covenant of works, and going forward in terms of the covenant of grace, what we find is this. And we're not surprised by this if we put it like this and think of it like this. Adam ate from the tree in the middle of the garden, or at least his wife did. And because he was her federal head he was held accountable for it. And what did God say to him? “Adam, on the day you eat of that fruit you will surely—

Brave Man: Die.

Jeff: “Die.” Now certainly he experienced the spiritual death that God promised him. He was separated from God. But there was another aspect of that death that he didn't experience immediately. And what part of that was it? Well, it was the physical part. He didn't immediately die. That would come in due time. In other words, that portion of the curse was delayed.

Now I want you to think about that in terms of what we're talking about here. Justice, at least the carrying out of the curse, was delayed. And in the same way we can think of the righteousness of God was demonstrated in Christ as delayed. In other words, here's what God did, and it's according to the same way of thinking. In the same way that He delayed the curse until a later time to be carried out in Adam's life, both spiritually and physically, so too He delays something else—that is, His righteous demonstration of being both just and the justifier.

Think of it like this. God says to Adam, “I'm going to give you a promise. And if you believe that promise you will be saved.” What was that promise? The promise was the gospel in Genesis 3:15.

Transcriber's Note: Genesis 3:15, NKJV.

*“And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.”*

Jeff: The promise of the gospel in Genesis 3:15. Though the serpent would strike at the Redeemer's heel, the Redeemer would crush the head of the serpent. Now I want you to think about that. Adam was told, “If you believe that promise you will be saved.” But that promise that a Redeemer would come does not come to fruition until this moment. And in that sense what we find is that the righteous demonstration of God in satisfying the sins through propitiation in the Messiah is delayed. And therefore it's delayed that He might demonstrate His righteousness, and show Himself both as just and justifier.

So it's not that people in the Old Testament aren't saved by looking to Jesus through the promises, types and shadows that they're given; they most certainly are. What is delayed is the actual fulfillment of the promise, type and shadow that was fulfilled in Christ. So when God passes over these sins previously committed, what He's saying is that the propitiation itself had not come yet. But they looked forward to it through the promises, types and shadows that they were given, so that when it came about at the proper time God would be both the just and the justifier. In other words, the Just as He stands condemning us as a righteous Judge, and the Justifier as He makes propitiation for

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the sins previously committed and for sins that would be committed, once for all time in the Person of Jesus Christ. That’s the idea that we find moving around in verses 25 and 26. I can’t read you. Maybe you have questions; maybe you don’t. Anything on that?

Jim Hamilton: What about all the sins that were committed before we came to Christ? We don’t remember them in our lives. How does He handle us?

Jeff: How does He handle sins we’ve committed before coming to Christ?

Jim: That’s right.

Jeff: Yeah. So you know, maybe a text and a story would help us. Colossians is a good place to go for that question. And Don, I may need your help on this. No, I won’t. Thanks Don; I appreciate it. *(Laughter)* It’s Colossians 2:13. “*And you who were dead in your trespasses, in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.*” Now listen to this part of it. “*By canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross.*”

Now I want you to think about that. There’s a lot there. But basically what that text is saying is this: that there was a written demand against us. And that written demand against us was the law as it stood testifying against us. And what Christ does is, He takes that written demand against us and He nails it to the cross. In other words, what He does is, He takes the demand of sin, the curse of the law, and He takes it upon Himself at the cross, becoming a curse for us. And when He does that He takes all of our sins upon us as Paul says, forgiving us all our trespasses. So at the point of the cross we’re forgiven for past sins, we’re forgiven past sins and we’re forgiven future sins.

Now the question that comes up at that point is usually well, why do I need to continue to ask for forgiveness if I’m already forgiven of my sins? And the answer really has to do with a kind of already but not yet-ness to our sanctification. When we think about our sanctification we think about what we call a *definitive* and a *progressive* sanctification. And when we think about a definitive sanctification we think about a realm change. And that realm change is that we were in the realm of death under the curse of sin. And we get moved to the realm of life.

Think about it like this. You go into the funeral home. You’re delivering flowers and you’re just a delivery boy. And you take the flowers in and you set them down and you turn around. And all of a sudden there’s a dead body there behind you laying on the table. And you[’re shocked by it, you know?

Now that fellow isn’t shocked. That fellow’s not shocked because he’s in a different realm; he’s in a different realm entirely, right? He’s not shocked by anything. And that’s the difference between the realms.

And so we are moved from the realm of death to the realm of life. That’s definitive sanctification. And in that sense we will not get any holier than that.

But then there is also what we call the progressive aspect of sanctification. And the progressive aspect of sanctification is that which is ongoing. So we think about growing in holiness.

For instance, you think about it, and I’ve told this story to you before. You can put it in a number of ways; I’ve used this illustration. Think about how many chromosomes a child has: 23 pairs or 46 altogether, right? And that’s what a zygote has in terms of chromosomes. A zygote is not going to have more than 46 chromosomes if it’s a healthy zygote. And you’re certainly not going to have more chromosomes when you’re 40 or 50 or 60; you’re always going to have 46 chromosomes. So a zygote, the smallest of all human development, is fully human, as fully human according to the genetic code as it’s

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going to be; it has 46 chromosomes. It actually then is growing into its humanity. In other words, it goes through the process of being a zygote on up through birth, on up through adolescence, on up through old age, and so on. So it’s growing; it’s becoming what it already is. It’s growing up into the genetic information that it already possesses.

That’s us as Christians. There’s a sense in which, definitively speaking, that we’re not going to get any more princely. In other words, we’re princes in the kingdom of God. We’re not going to get any more princely. But as princes we’re going to learn how to live in a new kingdom, because we’re sort of like *The Prince and the Pauper* who traded places, right? And now the pauper doesn’t know how to live in the kingdom because he’s a pauper. But he’s not going to get any more princely because he’s in the kingdom. But now he’s learning the ropes. And that’s the way it is with progressive sanctification; we’re learning the ropes.

So how is it that I learn the ropes? Well one of the ways in which I learn the ropes is that I repent of my sins. Why? Because I’m still human; I still live in this world; I still commit sin. I still feel guilt for my sin. And though I’m forgiven in Jesus Christ for that sin I am commanded to come to Him and repent for an actual sin that I’ve committed, and find the forgiveness that I have in Him. And so that’s why I continue to repent of my sins since they have been atoned for in Christ. In fact, part of genuine repentance is this. Part of genuine repentance is remembering that Christ paid for that sin upon the cross. And the shame of it is how could I have committed it? And yet the relief in that is that I have a Savior who forgives me; that’s the idea. So does that help?

Jim: I think so. I wouldn’t want to have to repeat it. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: Anything else? Yes, David?

David Held: Well, one question that might have been answered already is imputed righteousness. Is that all or nothing, or is it progressive?

Jeff: That’s a great question, David. And so we talk about justification and sanctification in different ways, and rightly so. For instance, when we talk about justification we talk about it as being a declaration from God whereby we are imputed with the righteousness of Christ and forgiven our sins. So it’s twofold.

But when we talk about sanctification we’re talking about both that realm change—definitive sanctification—and progressive sanctification, growing up into that new realm. But they are two very distinct things, and we need to keep them distinct.

So when we talk about justification we talk about the forgiveness of our sins. We talk about the imputation of righteousness. But when we talk about sanctification we then talk as a result of this about moving from the realm of death to the realm of life, and then growing up in that.

Now both of these things can’t be talked about separately because they’re both part of union with Christ. So you can’t possess justification and not sanctification. You can’t possess sanctification and not justification. They are two of the many benefits that we possess in Christ. Does that help?

David: Yes.

Jeff: Don had something over here.

Don: Jeff, I think what you said was very important, because there are many people who misinterpret that Scripture about former sins. The old King James says, “*sins that are past.*” They say, well, it’s only former sins that are forgiven, sins that are past. If you sin again then you’re not forgiven.

Jeff: Right.

Don: And that’s a very dangerous way to interpret that passage.

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Jeff: Yeah. In my first congregation, actually it was the summer I moved there; this would have been in the mid-‘90s. I had a woman ask me a question, and she asked me, “What about sins that I commit after I become a believer?” She said this to me. She said, “I believe I’m forgiven for my sins that I committed prior to my conversion. But I’m held accountable for the sins that I commit after my conversion.”

And you know, it was kind of interesting. I was able to tell her that that’s a question that people struggled with in the early church. In fact there’s a book called *The Shepherd of Hermas* that is usually considered a part of the Apostolic Fathers collection of books. And in that book *The Shepherd of Hermas* it says that one ought to delay his baptism up until the very last point of life if possible, because you are held accountable for any sin committed after baptism.

So that’s why, for instance, if you have ever read Augustine’s *Confessions*, Augustine is who we love and revere, right? But Augustine was oftentimes wrong. He was right more than he was wrong. But when he was wrong he was wrong big. And this is one of those places where he was wrong, and he was wrong big. He believed that you should delay your baptism for that very reason. And in the *Confessions* he talks about a friend of his doing that, and he talks about it approvingly.

So that was alive and well in the early church—not the apostolic church, but 100 or 200 years after that. And so what you find is, you find that kind of thinking persists. And yet I think that the passage I just read in Colossians is very clear about that. It’s not just previous sins pre-conversion; it’s all our sins that are forgiven in Christ. So great; it’s a good question. Anything else before we move on?

No? Okay. Well, that’s all I have to say. Actually I missed a bunch of slides. But I wanted to show you one thing that I think that you’ll be interested in. This wraps up this particular section. And God is both the just and the justifier of all sorts of people. All sorts of people are just and justified. *(Laughter)*

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff shows pictures of Sig and Don Maurer.

Sig: You told me you got rid of those pictures!

Jeff: I did get rid of those pictures. *(Laughter)* And I want you to know, Don, that you’re up there too. *(Laughter)*

Don: Oh, boy! Me and Sig, huh? Or Sig and me.

Jeff: Yeah.

Sig: Fortunately, Don’s picture is covering most of mine. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Yeah. I just couldn’t resist one last shot. *(Laughter)*

Don: What’s sinful about being on the beach?

Sig: Nothing. It’s not wearing swimming trunks that’s sinful.

Don: Ohhhhhh!

Jeff: He’s wearing them, Don. *(Laughter)* Don’t let him kid you. I don’t even want to go down that road. *(Laughter)*

Don: And he lies on top of that. I’m just kidding.

Jeff: Oh, yikes! That’s rough. *(Laughter)* All right. So we’ve already read 3:27-31. And I want us just to think about what Paul is saying here.

First of all let’s think about what he says regarding the truth about each one of us. What is the truth about each one of us? Well, we’ve already been given that in one sense.

But I remember back in 1983. When I was in college in the mid-‘90s there was a book that was written in ’83 that we used by James Hunter. And he was a sociologist, but a Christian sociologist. And he wrote a book called *American Evangelicalism*. And one of

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the things that he said in that book (and actually there were many things that stuck with me, but this was one of them.) He said that 81% of all Christian titles are about self.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: They’re about self-esteem. That number may be inflated even further than that today; I don’t know. But I just remember reading that back in the mid-‘90s and thinking to myself, that’s disturbing.

Sig: Do you mean book titles?

Jeff: Yes, book titles that were more self-help oriented.

Sig: Yeah.

Jeff: Yeah. I want you to remember that human nature has not changed. And what we find here in this text is true, and that’s this. If what has been said is true, that our salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, if that’s all true, then the question is, where does the boasting come?

And that means that we have to ask ourselves some hard questions. I think anybody that reads about Pharisaism knows that is just not the case. Somebody walks in the door who is a Pharisee and says, “I contribute to what I get.” And you turn to these people and you say, “Oh, you’re nuts!”, right? But isn’t it interesting how it slides in in the smallest ways?

Let me give you a couple of examples on how it slides in. For instance, there is a view that says that Jesus does most of it, but I do a little bit of it.

Now how does that work out? I’ve already given you the Roman Catholic position on this, right? The Roman Catholic position says that you are responsible for the temporal aspect of your sin. How so? By going and saying the rosary and the Hail Marys and the Our Fathers, right? And by doing that you receive forgiveness for your temporal sins. But if you die with some debt against you, which you will,--if you’re a Roman Catholic you will die with some debt against you. I remember when Pope John-Paul died, and they were discussing whether he was in purgatory or not. So in the Roman Catholic position you will die with debt against you. And you’ll have to go to purgatory and you’ll have to purge that debt through suffering.

Now that’s contributing to your salvation. And a whole bunch of people under the realm of Christendom believe that.

Or think about it this way. Think about the person who says, “I’m not really dead in sin; I’m just pretty sick.” And it’s sort of like I’m sick. I have three COVID viruses all at once, you know? And I’m in bed, and somebody leaves the serum that will make me well right beside my bed. Well, I have to reach out for it; I have to get it. You know, that sort of thing. And so if I don’t reach out and get it I don’t get the cure. And yet I have to reach out for it; I have to do my part, right?

You know, it’s sort of like this. Maybe I’ll give you another illustration that will say the same thing. But what is it really like?

Let me give you one more. You know, there’s the person who says this. “I don’t know about other people. But I not only go to church on Sunday, but I go to church school; I go to Sunday school. But so-and-so doesn’t go to church school.” And so then what we do is that we begin to think like this. We begin to think, well I may do this, but at least I do that, right? That kind of mentality where you start to negotiate. You start to go, “I may have this failure, but at least.” That kind of thing.

And that’s the kind of thing. The first one was Roman Catholicism. The second one was a view of soteriology that’s off. But this is the one that we all struggle with. Not a one of us doesn’t negotiate with God and say, “Yeah but, I mean, come on! Really? I’m

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pretty good”, you know? That sort of thing. And maybe we’re not so crass about it. But that’s the thought we have in our heads—that we’re not too awfully bad in comparison to some others we know. And that being the case, this one ought to slide.

And that is just as much boasting as anything else. And here’s what we forget. We forget that the antidote of salvation came to us when we were dead. It didn’t come to us when we were sick. In other words it came to us in morgue, when we were cold and dead. And we couldn’t reach out for it. It had to be given to us. And the funny thing about it is that we couldn’t even take it because it would run out of our mouths. We had to be made alive to receive the benefits that are in Christ.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: And that’s what the text says. That’s what Colossians says; that’s what Ephesians says. *“When we were dead in our sins and transgressions He made us alive in Christ Jesus.”* And that’s the idea. Yes? All the way back there.

Bryan Whittington: I was at a Bible study, and I was thinking about the confidence that we have in God.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bryan: And what we did was a study of the person who talks about being out of Christ or in Christ, which is personal sanctification when we’re in Christ. And so I got to thinking about what it looks like when we’re out of Christ. And you look at who you are out of Christ. And then you look at Ephesians 1 and 2—that beautiful who you are in Christ. And that’s where I was trying to derive my identity; it’s not in what you were or anything like that. If you’re saved here’s who you are. You’re in the image of God. That’s how you want to live.

And what I’m challenged with—and I’m curious about this—it’s not necessarily a boasting issue. But okay, what does the fight look like? When we give into sin what does that look like? If we are truly given this much, what’s the thing to do to remember that gratitude? God will talk about remembering; we’re to focus on remembering.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bryan: That’s what I’m struggling with.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bryan: Not with the boasting, but with the gratification and how to live that out.

Jeff: Yes. And when you think about it, where is the struggle? That question is different for any one of us. But I’ll take the one you mentioned. When you think about younger people today you oftentimes think about surface level stuff being representative of their identity. So for instance you’ve met the person, the young person who says, “I’m going to wear this because I’m not me without this,” right? Or “I’m going to get this tattoo because it represents who I am. And I couldn’t be without it; I couldn’t be me without it unless I had it.”

And what they’re saying is this: that surface level stuff describes them in the deepest way possible. And what they’re missing is that surface level stuff is just surface level.

I just saw an example of this; it’s kind of interesting that you mentioned it. Who is the home school girl who is very depressing? She’s a popular singer. Does anybody know who it is? I’ll come up with the name if you don’t.

Sig: Billie Eilish.

Jeff: Billie Eilish; thank you; Billie Eilish. I don’t know if you’ve ever seen a picture of her. She wears oversized clothes, oversized hoodies. She always looks depressed; always looks kind of oooo, right?

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Well, she decided to dress up. And she dressed up and then posted some pictures where she looked very attractive. And all of a sudden she lost ten thousand followers because they said, “She betrayed who she was.”

And she said this. And it’s interesting because she probably would have mentored those people until that point in her life. But all she said was this. She said, “I just changed my clothes; that’s all I did.”

And you see, the point is that she had done a good job in building up that kind of thinking in her followers for so long that they called her on it when she actually changed her clothes. But she’s actually right; all she did was change her clothes, because who she is is who she is regardless of what clothes she wears. And that is that she’s a sinner in need of grace. And she’s either in Christ or out of Christ. And that’s the basic of all identity distinctions right there.

And so where is the struggle? Well, it’s different for every one of us. But I think you’ve nailed it with that example.

All right. But let me just say this. The Mosaic law as a system upon which a relationship is built up between a person and God, that becomes an opportunity to boast. And that’s what Paul is saying. Paul is saying, “Where is the struggle for the Jew?” The struggle for the Jew is the law, because that becomes their identifying point. That becomes the bridge between them and God. My righteousness then is a contribution to my salvation. That was the problem with the Jew.

Let me just say it this way. Verse 27: One is justified by faith apart from the law, apart from the works of the law. The practical question is this. If people are saved by faith that tells us something very important. Paul says that it tells us that God is not the God of the Jews only.

The practical question is this. If I’m saved by observance of the law, if that’s my boast, then Paul says, “Where are the Gentiles?”, because they can’t be saved. But is God the God of the Jew? Yes. Is God the God of the Gentile? Yes. Then it can’t be on the basis of the law. It can’t be on the basis of the works of the law.

And Paul goes on to say that if one could be justified by the law then justification would be limited to those who have the law. And Gentiles would be excluded.

Now think about this. Paul says, “Is the God that we worship the God of the Jew?” Yes. “Is He the God of the Gentile?” Yes. This means that justification is not by the works of the law; it’s by faith in Christ. Thus says Paul. The uncircumcision are justified and the circumcision are justified by one and the same thing: faith in Jesus Christ. That’s what he’s saying.

I realized that I rushed through that last part. But let me say this. What then does this mean for the law? Is the law overthrown? I’ll just save it.

Brave Men: Aw!

Jeff: I’ll just save it; I’m not going to rush it. Yes; go ahead.

Sig: Hold on, Don. Don wants to answer that question for you, Jeff.

Jeff: Yep.

Don: Not really. But there’s so much here. And I think where I struggle personally is that on the one hand, like you were saying, we’re justified by faith alone apart from the works of the law. And yet we know, for example, that I gave the example of my friend whose wife no longer comes to church.

Jeff: Yeah.

Don: We would be very distressed if people in our congregations, for whatever reason, stopped coming to church. We would do all we can to confront them lovingly to

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get them back to church. And yet on the other hand there’s a tendency of some of us to say, like you said, “I go to Sunday school or church school and that person doesn’t. I go to evening service; that person doesn’t. My quiet time.” And we can’t do that either; we can’t boast.

Jeff: No. But the actual difficulty for us is that we can’t boast, but we must do those things.

Don: Exactly, yes. Right.

Jeff: So the best example for us is the Luke example where Jesus tells the story about the unprofitable servant. When the servant has done all that he is required to do, all that he is supposed to do, he can only say at the end, “I’m an unprofitable servant. I’ve only done what I’m required to do.”

Don: Right, exactly. And then there’s so much more. You know, the whole Roman Catholic scheme of the legal fiction. Imputed righteousness is a legal fiction. I’ve heard Roman Catholic apologists say that when Paul says that we’re saved by faith apart from the works of the law he means the ceremonial law, not the Ten Commandments, and that stuff.

Jeff: Yeah. Well Don, you have the last word. Let me pray and then we’ll close out.

Father, thank You for this day and for the time You’ve given, and for the love of Christ that You have shared with us. Lord, we ask now that You’ll bless us in that and strengthen us by Your grace to go out and face the day. And Lord, we pray that come what will that You will be God to us; we know You will. Lord, help us to have a sense of that regardless of what may come, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Don: Thank you. (*Applause*)