

**Not Ashamed
(Week 9)
Romans 3:21-31
“ Boast in Christ Alone”**

Introduction

“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life.”
John 5:39-40 (NIV)

Pride. The world is filled with it. People everywhere are clamoring for attention, recognition, and acclamation. I cannot help but think of all the so called “awards shows” where celebrities all get dressed up in their finery, handing out trophies to one another for their supposed achievements in the entertainment industry. It seems that these people just can’t get enough of hearing how wonderful and talented they are. When you take a step back from it all, it is all shallow and quite frankly a bit nauseating.

Why is it that all of mankind wants to glorify itself? Could it be that they are simply following in the traditions of Satan himself, who was cast out of heaven for his pridefulness?

“You said to yourself, ‘I will ascend to the heavens; I will set up my throne above the stars of God. I will sit on the mount of the god’s assembly, in the remotest parts of the North. I will ascend above the highest clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’”
Isaiah 14:13-14

You see, pride is arguably the greatest sin of them all. It is pride and selfishness that lead us to commit all others sins, convincing ourselves that we deserve to get whatever we want, no matter the cost. It isn’t just lost people who are filled with pride. There is plenty to go around in religious circles as well. In fact, sometimes it is worse in religious circles than anywhere else. In Paul’s day, many Jews prided themselves simply because they were Abraham’s descendants. They mistakenly believed that they were actually able to live up to the standards of The Law, because they attended all the Jewish festivals and kept the Sabbath. Because of their strict adherence to many of the rules of Judaism, they felt they were somehow entitled to God’s blessing. This also made them feel superior to anyone who could not lay claim to their Jewish heritage. But sadly, these very religious people were just as lost as any pagan.

In the book of *Romans*, Paul goes to great lengths to explain that **“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”**. This is why we all need a great Savior. In our own accomplishments, we have absolutely NOTHING in which we can boast. As believers, all we have that we can really brag about is... Jesus! For you see, even in “church circles” today, you can find many who believe that they are somehow more special than other “garden variety” Christians. They think that because they observe certain portions of Scripture, perhaps a bit better than their Christian counterparts, that they are God’s favorites. This is a truthful saying that deserves remembrance:

“What then? Are we any better off? Not at all! For we have already charged that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, as it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one.”
Romans 3:9-10

So how is it then, can anyone be saved? Simple, by forsaking all self-reliance in their own righteousness, and by faith, trusting in the righteousness of Christ Jesus! For you see, our salvation is based on God’s **Plan**, Christ’s **Payment**, and Our **Pledge** of faith. Therefore, we have nothing whatsoever to boast about except in the person of Jesus Christ our LORD. Please allow me to explain.

The Plan

“But now, apart from the Law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, attested by The Law and the Prophets. The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, since there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”
Romans 3:21-24

Notice that the first thing that Paul says when he starts to talk about God's plan of salvation is that it is “apart from The Law”. The message of *The Old Testament* called for men to “behave”, but the message of *The New Testament* calls for men to “BELIEVE”. No one will ever be saved by doing good works. God knew, when He created the world, that mankind would never measure up. But in His grace and mercy, He provided a means for salvation, that did not compromise His own holiness and justice.

This plan was revealed in *The Old Testament*, as well as, *The New*, but many were unable to recognize it. The Jews felt that they would find salvation by following the letter of the law that was set down in the Scriptures, but they missed the most important truth, that those very same Scriptures pointed directly to Jesus, the Son of God (**John 5:39-40**). Had they only been able to see this, many Jews would have found the salvation that they so desperately needed. You can read *The Bible*, and try to obey its rules, and strive to be a good person. These are all good things. But if you miss the Savior, if you, by studying The Word, do not come to a saving faith in Him, then you have thoroughly missed the very intent of the Scriptures. To know The Law, and yet, to somehow not recognize Jesus, is to miss the only hope for fallen mankind. Jesus... was ALWAYS the plan. He wasn't plan “B”. He wasn't a different option. He was always the only option, our only hope.

God had intended for the Jews to be a light for the rest of the world to follow. He sent His One and only Son to be born as a Jew. He kept the Jewish Law to perfection, and He was crucified by those who felt superior in their religion. Think of the irony. Those who claimed to be closer to God than anyone else, those who felt morally superior to any who weren't as “spiritual” as themselves, were the very ones who cried out for the spotless Lamb of God to be crucified. He **gave** His life, so that any, whether Jew or Gentile, who would place their hope in Him would be justified freely by His grace. **For ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.** The plan was for all men who could not behave, to simply believe.

The Payment

“God presented Him as an atoning sacrifice in His blood, received through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. God presented Him to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.”
Romans 3:25-26

Jesus paid it all. God presented Him as an “atoning sacrifice” (**vs. 25**). The word used here actually means “*propitiation*”. The Biblical meaning of propitiation is “*the act of satisfying the wrath of God*”. In short, The Son of God was offered up as a sacrifice in our stead to appease God's anger over our sin. In *The Old Testament*, many sacrifices were offered up to God so that He would “pass over” the sins of men, but they were only a temporary measure that pointed to the One, Who would be the once-and-for-all sacrifice for the sins of all mankind.

There were many different sacrifices prescribed in The Law. One, the “sin offering”, was when an animal was slain as a substitute for the sins of someone. The sin would be ceremonially “transferred” to the innocent animal, such as a lamb or goat, and that animal's blood would be shed as payment for the person's sin. In Christ, we now have the ultimate “sin offering”, for He took our sins upon Himself and shed His blood to pay for them.

Another of *The Old Testament* sacrifices was the “burnt offering”. This was when a spotless animal, without blemish, was sacrificed, and its innocence was ceremonially “transferred” to the sinner who offered it up. Also, in Christ, we find the ultimate “burnt offering”. For by His sacrifice, we who were

unrighteous now have the righteousness of Christ placed upon us, when we believe in his Name. God presented Him as righteous, so that we could be declared righteous. All the sins that had been committed in the past, those which were never fully paid by the sacrifices given in The Ceremonial Law, were finally washed away by The Blood of Jesus. Christ, and Christ alone, made an atonement for our sins. He is the only One in which we can boast. He paid it all. Our salvation is wrought by God's Plan and Christ's Payment. Upon the cross, Jesus cried out *"Tetelestai"* in the Greek (*it is finished*), which was also a word often stamped upon a bill of sale in those days, when the final payment had been received. It simply means *"Paid in full"*.

The Pledge

"Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By one of works? No, on the contrary, by a law of faith. For we conclude that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of The Law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is one God Who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we nullify The Law through faith? Absolutely not! On the contrary, we uphold The Law. Romans 3:27-31"

Have you ever stopped to think that if God were to allow us into heaven with the ability to boast in our own good works, then He would have to kick us out for being prideful just like the devil? It's an interesting thought is it not? After all, boasting comes from pride, and pride is pretty much the original sin. We are saved by grace... and nothing else. God **planned** it, Jesus **paid** it, now all we have to do is partake of it. ***We are justified FREELY by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (vs.24)***. There is nothing on our side of the ledger worth boasting about.

I have met many who actually seem to take pride in their faith. Warren Wiersbe is one of my favorite *Bible* commentators. He compares this to someone who is drowning, being rescued by a lifeguard, and then subsequently, bragging on their great faith in the lifeguard. What choice did they have? They either rely on the lifeguard, or they perish. It's that simple. No, my friends, even our faith is nothing to brag about. All that we have to boast in is The Lifeguard, Who saved us. And His Name is Jesus. We are saved by pledging our faith and loyalty IN HIM... and nothing else.

Quite frankly, I have grown rather tired of "churchy people", who think that they are something special. We all know the type. They think that they are closer to God than the rest of us poor wretched souls. Recently, I had a man, who I thought was a friend and a brother, decide to break fellowship with me, because I didn't agree with him on a particular doctrinal issue. Now, mind you, it wasn't an issue of "saving faith", it was simply a minor doctrinal dispute. He decided that since I was not on the same level as he, spiritually speaking, that he could no longer be my friend. Can someone please show me that particular verse in *The Bible*? You know, the one that says because I am morally superior, I do not have to associate with my bothers in Christ who disagree with me?

Listen to the words of J. B. Phillips on the subject of "Christian superiority":

"What sticks in my throat about the Christianity of the churches is not merely their differences in denomination, but the spirit of 'churchiness' which seems to pervade them all. They seem to have captured, and tamed, and trained something that is really far too big ever to be forced into little man-made boxes with neat labels upon them... 'If', the churches appear to be saying to us, 'you will jump through our particular hoop or sign on our particular dotted line then we will introduce you to God. But if not, then there's no God for you.'"

Couldn't have said it better myself (I suppose that's why I quoted it). When will we, as believers, realize that ***"apart from HIM we can do NOTHING (John 15:5)"***? Which conversely means that we are nothing without Him. And as such, we would do well to be a lot less exclusive and a lot more inclusive.

What if we all just remember that we're all nobodies, who are saved by the grace of God and nothing else? After all, if we really were as spiritual as we so often presume, wouldn't we be a lot more helpful to our brothers and a lot less judgmental? Or as Paul would say:

"Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, RESTORE such a person with a GENTLE SPIRIT, watching out for yourselves so that you won't also be tempted. Carry one another's burdens: in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." **Galatians 6:1-2**

The only thing that is truly good about any of us is that we have been redeemed to Christ. He gave His life to save the lost, to rescue those who are perishing, not exclude them. When Paul speaks of God being ruler over both Jews and Gentiles, He is, in essence, saying that God wants to save us all. In His eyes there is no difference, none are "better" than any other.

Paul then goes on to say:

"Do we then nullify The Law through faith? Absolutely not! On the contrary, we uphold The Law." **Romans 3:31**

Many had accused Paul of preaching that God's grace has given us a "free pass" to sin, since we are no longer under The Law. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Many people do not have a clear understanding of God's *Old Testament* Laws. They can be broken down in two distinct categories. First, there is the "Ceremonial Law", which consists of all the Jewish feast days, sacrifices, and Sabbath regulations. These laws were all fulfilled in Christ, and as such, are no longer necessary. All of those festivals and sacrifices were meant to simply point the world to The One, Who would come and be the "propitiation" for sin. The ceremonial portions required in The Law are no longer applicable.

On the other hand, yet another portion of The Law known as "the moral code", which included the ten commandments can be summarized in two components:

- 1. Love The LORD your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength.**
- 2. Love your neighbor as yourself.**

These portions of The Law most definitely apply to Believers. As a matter of fact, because we are indwelt by The Holy Spirit of God, as believers, we are able to keep the moral law far better than any who do not possess Christ! For it is He that changes our hearts and enables us to love Him and love others in this way. In fact, one of the ways that you can tell if a person is genuinely saved is that he will love Christ, and love his brothers and sisters in Christ. It is this love that compels us to live according to the moral law. It is His agape love that moves us to do so, rather than that of some "religious obligation". The born again believer will, by his changed nature; love God, love his neighbor, hate sin, and strive for righteousness. Why? Because God has written His moral law on their hearts (**Jeremiah 31:33**).

So there you have it. A person is genuinely saved from sin and the wrath of God, when they pledge themselves to Christ by faith, forsaking all notions of their own merit and simply trusting in the shed blood of Jesus to wash away their transgressions. It is a free gift, **Planned** in advance by God, **Paid** for in full by Christ Jesus, and declaring us to be righteous in God's sight, when we **Pledge** our faith and obedience to Christ alone. Thanks to Calvary, we now have The Law in our minds and written on our hearts. We are redeemed, set apart, and are being sanctified until all reach unity and maturity in Christ (**Ephesians 4:13**). And, when He returns, we will be made fully complete in Him:

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of The LORD'S glory, as the waters cover the sea." **Habakkuk 2:14**

Just as it was foretold... in The Law!

And let All of God's redeemed ones say... **TRUTH!!!**