

“Righteous By Faith”

INTRODUCTION: I have some good news for us this morning ...

1. The **Bad News** is over! This painful section of Scripture is past.
 - a) Romans 1:18-3:20
 - b) The wrath of God revealed
 - (1) *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (Romans 1:18)*
 - (2) against pagans who sin against *nature*
 - (3) against moralists who sin against *conscience*
 - (4) against religious legalists who sin against the *Law*
 - (5) even against nominal Christians who sin against the *Gospel*
 - c) each group of people is *without excuse*
 - (1) Their *deeds* condemn them
 - (2) the *light of revelation* they ignore witnesses against them
 - (3) they are all guilty before God – *condemned*.
 - d) *What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, (Rom. 3:9)*
 - e) Every human being is under *the wrath of God*.
 - f) **This is the horrible bad news of life.**
2. Because we are all sinful, and each person under sin, we are **unable** to obey God’s Law enough to be **justified** in His Holy eyes.
 - a) *Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Rom. 3:19-20)*
 - b) Calvinist (Reformed Christians), of which I am one, call this **total depravity**.
 - c) **David Steele and Curtis Thomas: Romans: An Interpretive Outline**
 - (1) *The view one takes concerning salvation will be determined, to a large extent, by the view one takes concerning sin and its effects on human nature. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first article dealt with in the Calvinistic system is the Biblical doctrine of total inability or total depravity.*

- (2) Why is that so? Because it's the first thing Paul dealt with in his exposition on salvation
- (3) Namely: What are we being saved from? The wrath of God due to our sins.
- (4) *When Calvinists speak of man as being totally depraved, they mean that man's nature is corrupt, perverse, and sinful throughout. The adjective "total" does not mean that each sinner is as totally or completely corrupt in his actions and thoughts as it is possible for him to be. Instead, the word "total" is used to indicate that the whole of man's being has been affected by sin. The corruption extends to every part of man, his body and soul; sin has affected all (the totality) of man's faculties – his mind, his will, etc.*
- (5) *As a result of this inborn corruption, the natural man is totally unable to do anything spiritually good; thus Calvinists speak of man's "total inability." The inability intended by this terminology is spiritual inability; it means that the sinner is so spiritually bankrupt that he can do nothing pertaining to his salvation. It is quite evident that many unsaved people, when judged by man's standards, do possess admirable qualities and do perform virtuous acts. But in the spiritual realm, when judged by God's standards, the unsaved sinner is incapable of good.*

d) Hence, Paul's conclusion in Romans 3:20

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Rom. 3:20)

3. Some basic questions arise, at this point, about the *doctrine of total depravity*.

- a) *Is man totally evil without any good inside him?* No, man is made in the *imago dei* (image of God) and thus possesses gifts and abilities he uses for the common good, and even, at times, to please God.
- b) *Is man as totally evil as he can get?* No. The *degree* of depravity varies from person to person; but the *extent* of depravity is total in each person.
 - (1) the *totality* of our being is sinful
 - (2) **Illustration:** *Red dye in a glass of water.*
- c) *Is man able to do anything in order to be saved from the wrath of God and his own sins?* No. Man is dead in sin and thus totally *unable* to save himself.
 - (1) Total depravity → Total inability
 - (2) *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (Eph. 2:1-3)*

(3) **Westminster Confession of Faith; 9-3**

Man, by this fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether

averse from good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto. (WCF 9-3)

- (4) **Book of Church Order: Church Vow #1:** *Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God and without hope, save for His sovereign mercy?*
- (5) This is why a person must be *Born Again*: to come alive to God for salvation.

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ (John 3:3, 5-7)

- d) *Is fallen man then without any hope of salvation?* No, God, in His love and mercy, has provided as a way of salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

- (1) *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*
- (2) *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2:1-10)*
- (3) Key: “for by grace you have been saved”
- (4) *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, (Col. 2:13)*

4. It is to this great truth of *salvation in Jesus Christ* that now turns, in Romans 3:21 ...

- a) *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: (Rom. 3:21-22)*
- b) **The Good News:** *euangelion* (good message)
- c) *Gotts spiel ... Godspell ... God’s story ... Gospel*
- d) Romans 3:21-Romans 8:39! Wow!

5. When Paul writes about the *righteousness of God* it's not always bad news!

- a) **Martin Luther** thought that way for many years: a righteous God wrathful against unrighteous mankind

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 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." For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (Romans 1:16-18)

- b) He explains how he once thought (*Luther's Words: 54; p. 442*)

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God, and said, "As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with this righteousness and wrath!" Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted.

- c) He finally came to see that there is another side to the *righteousness of God*.

(1) a human side

(2) a human dimension

(3) "... *mercy triumphs over judgment*" (*James 2:13*)

- d) The *righteousness of Jesus Christ* which God gives to those who believe in Him!

- e) Luther struggled with this concept for two years: 1517-1519. But there came a breakthrough as he meditated on Romans (*Luther's Works: 34; p. 336-337*)

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me. And I extolled my sweetest word with a love as great as the hatred with which I had before hated the word "righteousness of God." Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise.

6. Incidentally: This year of 2017 is the 500th Anniversary of Luther's famous *95 Theses*, the launch of the *Protestant Reformation*; and the rediscovery and reformation of the *Evangelical (Gospel) Faith*.

7. You've been patient souls to labor through 8 weeks of **Bad News**. Enough! We all know we are sinful all through our human nature ...
8. ... enough about our unrighteousness. Let us turn to the *righteousness of God in Jesus Christ*.
 - a) a *passive* righteousness I do not produce but receive.
 - b) an *alien* righteousness not my own but Christ's!
 - c) a *gospel* righteousness gifted to me by the love of God.
9. Here's how the Apostle Paul *begins* to unfold this great truth ...

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. Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of 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 the law. (Romans 3:21-31)

10. **Charles R. Erdman:** *Romans*; p. 57

- a) *How can a man be right with God? How can one who is guilty of sin be forgiven, pardoned, declared righteous, and regarded as though his sins had never been committed? No more important question possibly could be asked, and in all the Bible probably there is no more complete and satisfying answer than in these words of Paul. He has recorded here the very essence of the gospel which he desired to preach at Rome, the very sum and substance of the good news which this epistle sets forth.*
- b) **The Heart of the Gospel!** In these 11 verses (one paragraph)
- c) *One who wishes to know the very heart of the Christian message need ponder only these words; and one who reads them in the light of the Old Testament and the New cannot fail to be moved by their unique expression of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Paul has been insisting that the whole world is in need of righteousness and is under the condemnation of God; here he declares that through the atoning work of Christ a righteousness has been provided, and is offered freely to all on the ground of faith alone. This righteousness is “manifest” in the gospel.*

11. Three marvelous truths about this righteousness, with four life-changing effects upon each of us.

I. **THREE MARVELOUS TRUTHS ABOUT GOSPEL RIGHTEOUSNESS (Romans 3:21-26)**

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. (Romans 3:21-26)

A. First: Gospel Righteousness is Apart from God's Law (v. 21)

1. *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— (Romans 3:21)*
2. It is very important that we get this one little verse absolutely correct: *Everything depends on understanding 3:21 correctly!*
 - a) Paul does **not** mean that this Gospel Righteousness is lawless (antinomian), or without any reference to God's Law, or opposite/opposed to the Law.
 - b) Look down at verse 31 ...
 - (1) *Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law. (Romans 3:31)*
 - (2) Gospel and Law are **not** opposite enemies.
 - (3) They are **partners** in our conversion.
 - c) Paul uses the Greek words *de chōris* (but apart)
 - (1) *without, apart from, without relation to*
 - (2) *besides, in addition to*
 - (3) *separately, by itself, independently*
 - d) The same word occurs in verse 28

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (Romans 3:28)
3. **Charles Hodge:** *Romans; p. 88*
 - a) *As men therefore cannot attain such righteousness by the deeds of the law, God has revealed in the gospel another righteousness, which is not legal, but is attained or received by faith, and is offered to all men, whether Jews or Gentiles, as a free gift. The words χωρίς νόμου, without law, may qualify the word righteousness. It is a righteousness without law, or with which the law has nothing to do. It is not a product of the law, and does not consist in our inward conformity to its precepts. But the whole context treats of justification without works, and therefore the interpretation which makes the apostle say that a righteousness without the works of the law is made known in the gospel, is more suited to the connection.*
 - b) i.e., a righteousness without our obeying the law.
4. There are **two kinds** of righteousness in God.
 - a) *Perfect obedience to the Law:* This is the righteousness of Jesus Christ who never sinned. God's righteousness (works)
 - b) *A Gift from God:* This is the righteousness Jesus earned by his perfect obedience to God, gifted righteousness (grace).

5. Paul is saying: *The righteousness of God has been revealed to us in a second way. First, it was revealed under wrath from God due to all our sins.*

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (Romans 1:18)

“But now” God’s righteousness “has been manifested” in a manner that comes to us apart from our duty to obey God’s Law.

6. It is **not** divorced from God’s law. In fact, this gospel righteousness has been foretold by the OT writers.

a) *“although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it”*

b) The phrase *“the Law and Prophets”* was the way Jesus, the Jews and the Apostles referred to O.T. Scripture.

(1) *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:27)*

(2) *Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, (Luke 24:44-45)*

(3) Three parts to the Jewish Bible: *Law, Prophets, Sacred Writings (Psalms)*

(4) *And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matt. 22:37-40)*

c) The OT gave us the Law and said, *“This is what the Righteousness of God is.”*

d) But it cannot be attained by human obedience!

7. This becomes a point of *frustration* of all people: A standard we are held to but one we cannot keep, because of our total depravity, and our *total inability* to obey God perfectly!

a) *For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. (Lev. 11:44)*

b) *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:14-16)*

8. **Here is how Law and Gospel** work together to bring us the Righteousness of God.

a) They are both the children of God – His image.

b) *Brother Law* is the older of the two. He is ...

(1) strong, pure, austere, courageous, bold, inflexible, and *always right*

(2) His is admirable but hard to live with. He is impossible to please.

- (3) He loves God, his Father, and seeks only to give Him the *honor and glory* due Him.
 - (4) People grow to *hate* Brother Law. They say to Him, in spite and rage, “*You self-righteous, mean-spirited, inflexibly obstinate Jerk! You’re impossible to live with. Everybody hates you – me too!*”
 - (5) But Brother Law, who never sins, with tears in his eyes, says: “*You need to go see my little sister, Grace.*”
- c) *Sister Grace* is the opposite of Brother Law. But she clearly loves and admires him. Indeed, she’s the only one who truly understands him! *Sister Grace* is ...
- (1) compassionate, kind, forgiving, patient and in complete sympathy with sinners.
 - (2) She loves God, her Father, too and wants only to have everyone come to *know and love* Him.
 - (3) She fears neither God the Father or Brother Law, and she wants everyone to feel the same
 - (4) So, when we turn from Brother Law in anger, and go to *Sister Grace* in frustration and fear ...
 - (5) *Sister Grace* smiles at us, caresses us, and says to us, “*Allow me to take you to our Older Brother, God’s firstborn, my Big Brother Jesus Christ. He will take care of everything. But you must believe all He says and receive for yourself all He has for you.*”
 - (6) And once we meet Jesus, believe Him and receive Him it all *falls into place*.
- d) We, amazingly and instantly, are no longer afraid of the wrath of God or His righteousness. We’ve come to love God and – to our surprise – we’ve come to admire and to love Brother Law.
- e) So we go back to Him, with Jesus and Grace, and say to Him, “*I’m so sorry for the way I treated you. Dishonored you, and violated you! Please forgive me!*”
- f) And Brother Law smiles at us and says, “*It’s ok. All I ever wanted for you was righteousness. And I knew you would receive just that if you turned from me, to Grace and then to Jesus. All I ever wanted for you was God’s favor and blessing!*”

9. This is why Paul speaks so “*schizophrenically*” about Brother Law:

- a) He is, on the one hand, a “tutor” to lead us to Christ –

Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. (Gal. 3:24 NASB)

So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. (Gal. 3:24 ESV)

- b) He is the accuser, who points out of sinfulness –

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Rom. 3:20)

- c) He then becomes our Brother who shows us how to love God and Jesus.

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Rom. 13:8-10)

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Gal. 5:14)

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. (1 John 5:3)

- d) But, Brother Law **cannot** save us. That’s not his role in life nor his duty from God ...
- e) **only Brother Jesus** can do that!

10. So, in this manner, the Righteousness of God is *apart from* the Law.

B. Second: Gospel Righteousness is According to Faith (vv. 22-25a)

1. *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. (Romans 3:22-25a)*
2. This Gospel Righteousness God offers us we must receive by faith. It is “*for all who believe.*” (v. 22)
 - a) This is the *only way* everyone can become righteous and live with God ...
 - b) Why? Because all have sinned, Jew and Gentile, and are therefore without *distinction* before God ...

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, (Romans 3:22-23)
3. They are justified in the one same manner: *They are declared not guilty and therefore righteous on the basis of three things – the grace of God, the atoning work of Jesus Christ and their faith in the gospel promise of forgiveness in Jesus.*
 - a) This is the *essence* of the Good News
 - b) We are guilty but Jesus will pay the penalty for us because God has graciously determined the Christ will die for our sins ...
 - c) *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. (Romans 3:24-25)*

4. **Key Truth:** “*a propitiation by his blood*”

- a) The Greek: *hilastērion*: a means by which sins are forgiven; a place where sins are forgiven.
- b) an offering to the gods that will satisfy their sense of justice and placate their wrath.

c) **Charles Hodge:** *Romans*; p. 93

The obvious meaning therefore, of this important passage is, that God has publicly set forth the Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of the intelligent universe, as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of men. It is the essential idea of such a sacrifice, that it is a satisfaction to justice. It terminates on God. Its primary design is not to produce any subjective change in the offerer, but to appease God. Such is the meaning of the word, from which we have no right to depart.

d) When Jesus died for our sins:

- (1) God's *justice* was satisfied: the penalty for breaking the Law was paid in full.
- (2) God's *wrath* was placated: since justice was served no more punishment was called for.
- (3) God's *righteousness* was fulfilled: all God required of sinners was done for them by Jesus.

5. All sinners must do is to *believe* ...

- a) to *believe* that all that Jesus did in fact satisfy the Just and Righteous God.
- b) to *believe* that God's grace and love provided this way for sinners to be both punished and redeemed by Jesus.
- c) to *believe* that what Jesus did for sinners applies to them individually. Jesus died to save **you!**

6. **The most important phrase in all the Bible:** *"the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith."* (vv. 24,25)

7. **Don't miss those 5 words:** "to be received by Faith."

C. Third: Gospel Righteousness Comes From God (vv. 25b-26)

1. *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. (Rom. 3:25b-26)*
2. *"This was to show God's righteousness"* – this atonement for sin and salvation of sinners was the result of God's own personal righteousness!
3. **Four times** in these 6 verses God's righteousness is mentioned ...
 - a) *"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested"* (21)
 - b) *"the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ"* (22)
 - c) *"This was to show God's righteousness"* (25)
 - d) *"It was to show his righteousness at the present time."* (26)
4. In other words, this righteousness by faith through Jesus Christ was 100% **God's righteous idea and plan** ...
 - a) Manifested in God's Law

- b) Foretold by God's Prophets
 - c) Incarnate in God's Son, Jesus Christ
 - d) Put forth by God as the satisfaction for all sin
 - e) To show forth God's righteous nature in passing over sins for a time
 - f) To show to all men how just and kind God really is.
 - g) *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. (Rom. 3:26)*
5. *Just* in satisfying the demands of His Law; *Justifier* in paying for the sins of guilty people, while saving them for eternity.
- a) God's justice was satisfied
 - b) God's mercy was set forth
 - c) *For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:13)*
6. So that God is *righteous, just* and *loving* all at the same time. **The moral order of God's universe has been restored by Jesus Christ in such a way that the wrath of God is satisfied while sinful humanity is rescued!**
7. Only God could have devised such a plan of salvation, accomplished it, and applied it to all who believe!
8. *For by grace you have been saved through faith; it is the gift of God ... (Eph. 2:8)*
9. And this plan of salvation by faith affects us profoundly ...

II. FOUR LIFE-CHANGING EFFECTS OF GOSPEL RIGHTEOUSNESS (Romans 3:27-31)

* Paul again resorts to answering four hypothetical questions.

A. First: Gospel Righteousness Eliminates Pride (v. 27a)

1. *Then what becomes of our boasts? It is excluded. (v3:27a)*
2. Paraphrase: "Then do we have anything to take pride in? Nope!"
3. *boasting* in oneself is *excluded* because ...
 - a) our righteousness comes from *God the Father*
 - b) our righteousness was earned by *Jesus Christ*
 - c) our righteousness was appropriated by *faith*, which is the gift of the *Holy Spirit* (by grace)
 - d) all we contributed to our salvation process was *our sins* which caused Jesus to die for us!
4. Want to brag? Feel special? Toot your own horn?

But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Gal. 6:14)

5. **The cross of Christ kills all self-boasting.** A proud Christian is a believer who has yet to truly understand the righteousness of God, the sacrifice of Christ, the grace of the Holy Spirit, and the depths and profundity of his (her) own depravity.

6. *The proud Christian is self-deceived!*

B. Second: Gospel Righteousness Operates by a New Law (v. 27b)

1. “By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.” (3:27b)

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (Rom. 3:28)

2. Paraphrase: “Is this by a standard of my own performance? Absolutely not. Salvation is measured by faith in another’s performance – Christ’s!”

3. **John Murray: Romans: NICNT; p. 123**

a) *Justification by works finds its ground in that which the person is and does; it is always oriented to that consideration of virtue attaching to the person justified. The specific quality of faith is trust and commitment to another; it is essentially extraspective and in that respect is the diametric opposite of works. Faith is self-renouncing; works are self-congratulatory. Faith looks to what God does; works have respect to what we are. It is this antithesis of principle that enables the apostle to base the complete exclusion of works upon the principle of faith.*

b) *sola fide* = by faith alone

c) *For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (Rom. 3:28)*

d) *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph. 2:8-9)*

e) ... so that no one can **boast**.

4. **Illustration:** I once saw a bumper sticker that read, “*I may be a sinner, but at least I believe in Christ.*”

a) What poor theology; boasting in faith which is the gift of God.

b) *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, (Eph. 2:8)*

c) Boasting in what Jesus has done as if you shared in His glory! *Shamefully proud!*

C. Third: Gospel Righteousness is the Great Leveler (vv. 29-30)

1. *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. (Rom. 3:29-30)*

2. God is the God of everyone: *Barbarians ... Greeks ... Jews ... Christians.*

3. They are all *the same*: sinners in need of redemption. And since Christ died for all of them, they all share in three things –

a) a sinful guilt

b) a loving God

- c) a Redeemer named “Jesus”
- d) *For Christ died for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, (1 Peter 3:18)*

4. The Cross eliminates any sense of **social pride**.

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 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; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 1:26-31)

D. Fourth: Gospel Righteousness Reinforces the Law of God (v. 31)

1. *Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law. (Romans 3:31)*
2. **Meaning:** Rather than pit law against Gospel, the death of Christ on the Cross actually reinforces the Law by telling us these things:
 - a) The Law is serious enough that neither God nor man can overlook it.
 - b) The Law is binding on all so that Christ had to die to fulfill its demands.
 - c) The Law still applies to all mankind in every age, and that’s why Jesus remains a Savior ... forever!
3. *We uphold the law when we preach the Gospel: The Law is fulfilled in the righteousness of Jesus – for God, for Himself and for us!*

Conclusion: For the life of me, I cannot understand why any Christian could or would be proud!

1. Better said: *For the life of Jesus I can’t understand how you or I could be proud ... of anything!*
2. All I am or will ever be is this: *A self-obsessed, immoral, ignorant and impotent human being whose contribution to God’s righteousness in this world was my infantile and incessant disobedience of the Law of God. I stand before you as a filthy wretched dressed up and covered over by the beauty of Jesus Christ’s righteousness graciously given to me by God.*
3. And, the same could be (must be) said of **YOU!** A leper dressed in Christ’s robe of righteousness.
4. **Anyone want to brag about that?**