

**The Law of Faith Excludes Boasting:  
We are Justified by Faith Alone**  
Romans 3:27-31, Invocavit Sunday  
February 21, 2010

Beloved of the Lord. ....As Lutherans we should all be quite familiar with the teaching that a man is justified by faith alone without the deeds of the law. From our childhood we were rightly taught that we cannot save ourselves from our sin by good works, but we are saved by Christ Jesus our Savior, and faith alone in Him is all that is necessary for our salvation. Indeed as Lutherans we have been taught this truth so often, I'm afraid due to our sinful flesh, the message grows dull in our ears. One point I wish to make then today is this, while we can all easily recite the words and say with our lips that we are not saved by works but faith alone in Christ, if we have the knowledge alone of this truth without truly believing it in our hearts, we are not yet converted but yet dead in trespasses and sins. What I'm trying to say then is this, it is not enough to know, to have a book knowledge of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith. If we are to be saved we must believe this truth in our heart. An external faith spoken by the lips is different from the internal faith believed by the heart. Romans 10 says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

I. Those who make their faith into a work will boast.

Let us now begin with verse 27. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." What does this mean? It means those who make their faith into a work will boast about their faith AND those who boast about their faith have no true and saving faith at all. Thus if I could paraphrase Paul, he is saying this. "Excuse me?...did you just boast about your faith as if you are saved because you have done this great work of believing? God forbid! Is faith your work dear Jew, dear Gentile, or is it a gift of God? If you believe your faith is a gift, you will not brag about it, you will not boast about it, for you know "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." If you have saving faith, it is because God's own Spirit gave it to you. The law of faith excludes boasting." While every true believer knows their own faith is God's gift and not their work, our old Adam within is a pesky monkey on our back that constantly nags and tempts us with those words "there must be something I must do to be saved."

How do people speak then when they make their faith a work? They speak like this: "I'm saved

because I chose to follow God (and you didn't)....I'm saved because I of my own free will accepted and welcomed God into my heart April 19<sup>th</sup>, at 12:45 P.M....I'm saved because I personally accepted Jesus into my heart.....I'm saved because I opened the door when Jesus was knocking.....I'm saved because I've accepted Christ and turned my life around.....I don't smoke anymore, I don't drink, I spend 10 hours a week on charity, I gave my whole life to God.....surely I'll go to heaven." Now, don't these statements sound like boasting?

When Paul therefore teaches boasting is excluded by the law of faith, he is saying our faith does not allow us to boast about our faith, for our faith is in Him and not ourselves, "For by grace are ye saved THROUGH faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God not of works, lest any man should boast!" Saving faith does not boast, but rather falls down at the feet of Jesus, clinging to the cross of Christ crucified. Faith says, "Here is the Rock of My salvation! Here is MY Savior who died for ME and rose again because of MY JUSTIFICATION". Not only is God's grace a GIFT through the precious blood of Christ, but also the faith to believe God's grace is a GIFT through the precious blood of Christ. Thus faith and works have no common ground but are complete strangers to one another. The law of faith excludes boasting. "Seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith and uncircumcision through faith."

II. What does this mean, justification by faith?

Indeed faith and works are polar opposites, further apart than the north pole from the south pole, further apart than heaven and hell. All who make faith a work and die in such a *faith* receive hell without faith, that garment of Christ's righteousness. On the Day of Judgment they will hear those most dreadful words "Depart from me ye that work iniquity. I never knew you." On the other hand those whose faith of heart is in Christ alone, His righteousness and not their works, such will immediately enter heaven upon death. Jesus said to that penitent thief on the cross, "Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Clearly then the law of faith excludes boasting. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

Here now we enter the realm of subjective justification and the question must be asked, how then does faith justify us in the sight of God? What does this mean? First let us again remember objective justification – namely that God through the blood of Christ has already justified the whole world. Through

Jesus God in His heart has already forgiven all. It should not escape our notice that Paul earlier in this same chapter preached objective justification first BEFORE SUBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION. He declares “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Here all fallen children of Adam and Eve should know God through the redemption of Christ justifies freely ALL by His grace. This Gospel truth is an established fact, a judicial declaration of God. There is then not a soul in the whole world which God has not already absolved and freely forgiven from His heart through Christ. God through Christ declares amnesty to all.

This Gospel message of God’s reconciliation with man however, needs to be believed by faith. If we do not believe, what good will it do us? Hebrews 4:2 says, “The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it”. If you are starving and about to die and a generous man places a loaf of bread before you saying, “Here eat this and live”, if we do not eat, will we live? If a warden comes to our jail cell and opens our door saying, “You are being set free for another has taken your place”, if we do not believe won’t we still be prisoners? In the Gospel then God through Christ truly sets all men free of their sins saying, “thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace”.....who are we to doubt God’s Word? Those who believe only believe because the truth was declared to them. Indeed the Holy Spirit through the Gospel creates in us the faith to believe the Gospel. As for those who don’t believe, their unbelief is their own fault. God’s Gospel truth, the truth of His justification of the whole world of sinners through Christ does not stand or fall depending on man’s faith. Faith is not a condition we must fulfill before we are forgiven! Indeed the Gospel declares the forgiveness of all through the blood of Jesus Christ of Christ has already taken place! This Gospel truth then stands on its own like Mt. Everest for all the world to see and only the greatest fool would deny that this mountain was there. What is that Mt. Everest of the Bible? “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Who hasn’t heard this passage? Who doesn’t know it? Indeed many refuse to come to this Light only because they prefer to live in the darkness.

This is why the preaching of the law is so important in church. For who will want the gift of God’s forgiveness, unless they first know their sin and God’s punishment which is sure to come? “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” Indeed the world is

filled with millions of souls who well know their sin and have certainly heard the Gospel, but they don’t want to change their evil ways. They love their sin and cling to it thought it is a great boulder plunging them to the bottom of the sea. The Bible teaches those who do not repent of their sins will be cast into that lake of fire! Yet we who believe know Jesus died for them the same as us only (as Second Peter two says), they “deny the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”

Thanks be to God we by the Gospel have been rescued from our sins. How then does faith justify? It justifies us only in the sense that we have been justified by Him, and we know and believe this justification to be our own. It is His treasure which makes us rich, and it is He that has taught us this treasure is our own. As believers then we know we do not have to wait for forgiveness or work for forgiveness, but it is already our possession through Christ. Where there is such a faith, there is confidence, trust, and hope in the heart. We trust in Jesus. Jesus is our hope, and by His forgiveness we have the sure hope of life everlasting in heaven.

III. Faith establishes the law. Our final point for the day is that there is fruit to our justification by faith. While justification is not a moral transformation whereby we completely stop sinning and only do that which is good, there is nevertheless a new creation within us, the new man which is 100% righteous through Christ. This is that part of us which loves Jesus our Savior and seeks only to do His will obeying the law for “faith worketh by love.” So we who love Christ will gladly obey and follow the voice of our Good Shepherd. Faith then does not make void God’s law, but establishes it and is moved to action. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.....they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” Brethren, by His grace let us continue to fight the good fight of faith and through faith lay hold upon the sure source of our salvation, Jesus Christ, the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. By His blood and through His blood we conclude “that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Amen.