

**Intro:**

In our preaching lately, we took a detailed look at six verses – seven messages, six verses. In these verses, we celebrate tremendous and beneficial theological concepts, the concepts regarding our salvation from sin.

“Luther called this paragraph ‘the chief point ... of the whole Bible’.”<sup>1</sup>

In some ways this is the pinnacle of the book of Romans. If you think about Romans like a great high plateau of God’s blessing, then the first three chapters up to 3.20 are the difficult climb up to the place where the sunlight breaks through at the top of the climb.

And this little paragraph, 3.21-26 is a little bit higher elevated than the rest. As we journey on in Romans, everything else that we find, every blessing, every lesson, every aspect of Christian salvation and Christian life is tied to this paragraph.

We looked at a number of important concepts in these verses:

- ‘Without-law’ kind of righteousness obtained by faith
- Justification (judicial declaration of righteousness)
- Redemption
- Propitiation (making God propitious)
- Vindication (showing that God is right in all that he does with respect to sin)

For the rest of our chapter, and indeed all of chapter 4, we are going to be occupied with understanding one thing:

- ‘Without-law’ kind of righteousness obtained by faith

Today’s message on that theme is entitled:

*Boasting Excluded*

One of my commentators says that Paul lists “certain advantages”<sup>2</sup> that come now as a result of the new method of justification by faith alone. The first advantage is “Justification by faith excludes boasting.”

We are all quite familiar with boasting – we are no doubt active participants in the sport! — Although it is probably easier to recognize in someone else.

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 242.

<sup>2</sup> Herman A. Hoyt, *The First Christian Theology*, p. 65.

When we think of boasting, we think of things like this:

A farmer from Texas was visiting a farmer in Georgia, who was telling the Texan how big his Georgia farm was.

“Our property line starts here,” the Georgian said, “goes through those trees in the distance, along the stream on the left, across those hills way over yonder, back along that road on the right and back to this tree stump.”

“Well,” the Texan said, “that’s pretty big. But back home on our farm, we get in the truck at sunrise and start to drive around the perimeter. We drive and drive and drive. Then noon comes and we drive some more and still don’t get around our farm. We drive all afternoon and stop for supper. Then we drive into the night and finally at midnight we get completely around our farm. What do you think of that?”

“Yep,” the Georgian replied. “I used to have a truck like that, too!”<sup>3</sup>

Now which of those two braggers do you identify with most? I heard a preacher say something like this:

- We’re all sinners, but your sin is worse than mine.
- We’re all proud, but I’m not as proud as you.<sup>4</sup>

Isn’t that how we identify with pride?

Our passage is going to have something to say to us today:

### *Boasting Excluded*

Read Rm 3.27-31

#### **Understanding our passage:**

*Paul is saying things to us in these verses that he has said before. It is a matter of review. He is going to review his teachings in summary form by asking and answering three questions.*

1. Where is boasting? Ans.: Boasting Excluded (27-28)
2. Is God the God of Jews only? Ans.: All Men Included (29-30)
3. Is the Law nullified? Ans.: God's Law Established (31)

**Proposition:** The first advantage of justification by faith is that it expels boasting – we stand justified in the merits of Christ, not self.

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<sup>3</sup> Rusty & Linda Wright, *500 Clean Jokes*, p. 56.

<sup>4</sup> Gil Rugh, Pastor, Indian Hills Community Church, Lincoln, Nebraska, “Justified by Faith Apart from Works”, 6.25.89.

## I. The prevailing culture of boasting (27a)

### A. The ancient world

#### 1. The boasting of the Jews

- a. The religious Jew - Paul has been dealing with this already (Rm 2.17-20; 3.1-2, 9)
- b. Jesus was constantly dealing with this:
  - 1) Lk 16.14-15 (really context of all of Lk 15 and 16 – lost sheep, coin, son, unjust steward, rich man and Lazarus, all rebukes to pride and arrogance)
  - 2) Pharisee and Publican (Lk 18.9-12)

#### 2. The boasting of the Greeks

- a. Greeks boast in wisdom (1 Cor 1.20-22)
- b. Compare the boasting of the Greeks in Athens (Ac 17)
  - 1) What will this babblers say? (16-18)
  - 2) Some began to mock (31-33)

### B. Our present world

#### 1. Our word boast in our text = ‘a cause or reason of boasting’

- a. The root word, to boast, goes back to: ‘to talk loudly’
- b. Boasting is that speech which is filled with self and fills our selves – talk, talk, talk, all about me, me, me

What does man have to be proud about?

- Just ask him.

#### 2. The outside world

Turn on your television – a barrage of pride, especially the advertising

- In my real estate days, we were writing ads for two people – the buyer ... and the seller (heaven help you if you ‘dissed’ your seller’s house!)

I am going to quote from an article describing pride on a website called:

- “Emotional Competency - *Developing the essential social skills to recognize, interpret, and respond constructively to emotions in yourself and others.*”<sup>5</sup>

This site seems typical of a lot of things you see in the psycho-babble world we live in.

a. Definition – Pride: “Feeling good about yourself”

- 1) “We become proud when we have good reason to think of ourselves as special. Pride is the emotion reflecting an increase in stature, while shame reflects a decrease in stature. Because stature is often considered competitive and relative, expressing our pride carelessly or unjustifiably may offend others.”

2) Additional definitions:

- a) Feeling good about yourself.
- b) Satisfaction from [your] assessment of an increase in stature
- c) Approving of your own actions or accomplishments.
- d) A sense of accomplishment.
- e) Expression of competence.

b. Benefits and Dangers of Pride

- 1) “Pride is an intrinsic reward for being good and doing well. It provides an incentive for working to increase stature. People seek challenges to increase pride. Because stature is so valuable, many counterfeit versions of pride have developed.”

2) The counterfeits

- a) Hubris (unrealistically high self-esteem)
- b) Bluster
- c) Stubborn pride
- d) Humiliation
- e) Humility
- f) False Modesty
- g) Contempt

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.emotionalcompetency.com> (Accessed 5.23.09).

- 3) The Paradox of Pride: “Humility is essential for learning and learning is essential for continued personal growth. But pride is the result of that growth. Well adjusted people learn to move quickly and skillfully from pride to humility to continue their progress.”<sup>6</sup>

The point of all this? Our culture thinks pride is good.  
Building self-esteem is good.

3. The church world
- a. Is it any different from the outside world?
  - b. Are you any different from the outside world?
    - 1) Concerned about how well you feel about life?
    - 2) Approving of your own actions, accomplishments?

I hope that your answer is no, because...

## II. The law that removes boasting (27b)

### A. Paul says such boasting is excluded

- 1. The word excluded means ‘kicked out’, ‘shut out’ — ‘turned out of doors’<sup>7</sup>
- 2. What authority issues this order?
  - a. A law of works? No – works engenders pride
  - b. Instead, Paul cites a law of faith

### B. Faith is the engine that produces ‘without-law’ righteousness and justification – and expels boasting (1<sup>st</sup> benefit of justification)

- 1. Paul is going to use Abraham as an illustration in the next chapter (4.2)
- 2. Paul teaches the Corinthians that this is their calling in life – boast in the Lord [an act of faith] (1 Cor 1.26-31)
- 3. Paul teaches the Romans that this is the natural state of the Christian life – boasting [rejoicing] in God
  - a. Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God (Rm 5.2)

<sup>6</sup> All quotes in this section from <http://www.emotionalcompetency.com/pride.htm> (Accessed 5.23.09)

<sup>7</sup> Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

- b. Rejoicing in tribulations (Rm 5.3)
- c. Rejoicing in God (Rm 5.11)
- 4. Paul's own testimony is offered as an example
  - a. 1 Tim 1.12-17
  - b. Rm 15.15-17

### III. The reason faith removes boasting (28)

- A. Because it is by faith we are justified
- B. Because we are not justified by works of law
  - 1. Notice the plural verb 'we conclude' [or 'we reckon']
  - 2. The idea expresses Paul's expectation that his readers will agree

Shouldn't they agree? Paul has been hammering away at this in all his preaching and teaching.

- Why do we need to keep hearing this?

Because we are incurably proud, prone to self-justification and self-exaltation and we keep resisting the truth of God's Word.

Gal 2.16, Gal 3.8, Gal 3.11, Gal 3.24, Phil 3.8-9

If you accept this teaching, *boasting is excluded*.

### Conclusion:

What does this faith look like when it really exists?

Does it carry on it's merry way, treating the Christian profession as if it is my lock and guarantee of heaven?

"Well, I prayed, I was baptized, so I'm in."

That's treating faith like a work – making it a boast – and isn't real faith at all.

Real faith is seen by someone who loves Jesus Christ and wants to serve and please him first of all – *boasting is excluded*.