

10/26/11

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Almighty God, gracious Lord, pour out Your Holy Spirit on Your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in Your grace and truth, protect and comfort them in all temptations, defend them against all enemies of Your Word, and bestow on the Church your saving peace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE EPISTLE LESSON Romans 3:19-28

(We are justified by faith apart from works.)

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, **23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**

25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

THE GOSPEL LESSON John 8:31-36

(God's Son sets us free, free indeed.)

31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

33 They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. 35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

INTRO - Tonight we are going to look at a basic teaching of faith in a simple way. There is a coach in the NFL who for the last 3 years has guaranteed his team would win the Super Bowl. Now, they have been pretty good, but they haven't even gotten there. This man seems to be more hot air than substance to many. In fact, his boasting detracts from what his team has done.

I. Sometimes Christians are thought to boast.

- A. Have you ever heard someone say, "Those kind of people shouldn't live."
 - 1. Have you ever seen another Christian look down on others, like the tax collector in the parable?
 - 2. Have you ever thought yourself superior to others who may . . . have a substance problem, have family problems, have trouble keeping a job, or live a life that is contrary to God's design?
 - 3. Unfortunately, in this world of competitive comparison, most of us have thought more highly of ourselves than others, and maybe even put it in words of boasting.
- B. Please don't get me wrong. God does want us to live a righteous life.
 - 1. We are to love God with our heart soul and mind. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves. Our lives are to be free from greed and hatred and full of love and faith.
 - 2. But, who has always lived as God calls us to do?
- C. Look at what our lesson for today says.
 - 1. Romans 3:20 says, **20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.**
 - 2. Romans 3:23 says, **23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**
 - 3. That is why Romans 3:19 begins to talk about boasting by saying, **19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.**
 - 4. So when Christians boast, or put ourselves above others, we sound like that football coach that no one believes anymore.

II. In sports there is another example of boasting that can help. Both Roger Clemens and Andy Petit were pitchers for the Yankees and friends. Both are thought to have taken steroids, which is illegal. Clemens's reputation is horrible, because he has denied it, in spite of evidence to the contrary. Petit admitted his use in the beginning, and kept pitching. He admitted his failure and continued.

- A. Rather than boasting of ourselves, we need to be honest about our failures.
 - 1. It can be scary. What would some think about a failure? Well everyone fails, and at least we are speaking the truth when we admit our sin.
 - 2. It can be scary. Why would God love someone who sinned? Because He is God, and perfect and holy when we are sinful.
- B. Thankfully, knowing our sin God still sent Jesus as a "sacrifice of atonement"
 - 1. Look at Romans 3:25-28, **25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the**

one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. 27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

- C. So we can boast, in Jesus.
1. It is not our righteousness - but His.
 2. It is not our payment for sin - but His
 3. It is not our earning eternal life - but His

CONCLUSION - Have you ever met someone who, rather than boasting about themselves is always telling you how nice and special you are? There are some really special people like this who live in love and grace. When you ask someone why they are so complimentary, and they say, "God is good to me." do you see how wonderful a witness that is to our Lord. And, who will save us, ourselves or Jesus? Let's boast in the Lord and His grace for us in Jesus! Yet, by grace of God, we are saved through faith!!