

## SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Romans: God's Power for Salvation

TITLE: No More Boasting

SCRIPTURE: Romans 3:21-31

DATE: October 29, 2017

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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter, and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

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Have you ever noticed how much bragging and boasting goes on in our world today? Politics, professional sports, and talk radio are full of people boasting about who they are, what they've done, and what they promise to do. We inhabit a world of boasting because boasting inhabits us. Boasting is the outward manifestation of a proud heart. It's interesting, even though Paul mentions boasting dozens of times in his letters, most churches today hardly ever mention the topic. But Christians can easily get caught up in boasting about our heritage and traditions (or non-traditional traditions)—in how our worship is more acceptable to God than other churches, or our theology is more doctrinally sound than others. Boasting was just as much a part of the culture in Bible days as in our day. Your boast reveals your ultimate confidence.

READ Romans 3:21–31

1. Paul's main point in this passage is that God has made a way for all people to enter into and live in a right relationship with God apart from the law—the law of Moses. (3:21, 28).

One way that people sometimes think of "righteousness" or "right standing with God" is that it comes from your moral, spiritual track record.

2. It's hard for good, moral, religious people to believe that the good things they do won't make them more acceptable to God.

For many people today, their good works are their boast—the ultimate source of their confidence that God will accept them. Both "high" churches and "low" churches can distort the Gospel of free grace into a Jesus + doing good = salvation. But Scripture makes it clear that when God justifies you, it's not because of anything in you that justifies you (cf Rom 4:5). Some people think that if God really gave salvation away as a free gift there would be no incentive to live a good life. Tim Keller talks about this: "If when you lose your fear of punishment, you lose your incentive to be good, then the only incentive you had to be good was the fear," That would mean, if you try to do good things that ultimately benefit you, the good things you do are not really good. Why not? Because "goodness" is unselfish living so if you do good with a selfish motivation to get good and avoid bad, then the good you do is not good. Knowing your good deeds won't make you more acceptable to God makes your good deeds good. Here's what

makes you a Christian—don't just look at your sins; look at your boasting. Look at what you boast in as your righteousness. Look at the things you think justify you as a good person worthy of God's acceptance, and repent of that.

### 3. Receiving God's righteousness means repenting of your own righteousness.

The Gospel of grace destroys our boasting—Faith alone in Christ alone destroys boasting (Ephesians 2:8-10). What makes you a Christian is not simply that you repent of your sins, but also that you repent of whatever you think justifies you before God—you repent of whatever you might boast in as your ultimate confidence for gaining God's approval. So to become a Christian, you transfer your trust from what you hope will be good enough for God to accept you to what Jesus has done for you through his death to make you right and keep you right with God. You transfer your trust from what you hope will be good enough to Jesus who is more than enough. A true Christian is someone who knows they will never be good enough to earn or deserve God's favor, but they also know they don't have to be. They only need to receive God's approval as a gift through faith in Christ.

#### *For Discussion —*

When you listen to Bible teaching, you should be listening with an ear to learn but also an ear to share with/teach others what you learn. Keep that in mind as you discuss today's message. How do you need to internalize this message so you could share this Good News with others who are confused about what makes a person right with God?

1. Most of us feel that boasting is unbecoming—modesty and humility are much better qualities—so that being the case—why do you think there is so much boasting in our world today?
2. What was the issue of boasting in the Roman church all about?
3. Have someone read the bookends of our passage—Romans 3:21 and 28—How might you share the Gospel in these verses with someone who thinks that their good deeds put them in good favor with God? Anybody up for role-playing?
4. Why do most people believe that having a good moral, spiritual track record is important for connecting with God? ...Why is it hard for good, moral people to believe that the good things they do won't make them ore acceptable to God?
5. Read Romans 4:4-5. Then explain this statement in your own words—"When God justifies you it's not because of anything in you that justifies you."
6. OKAY—spend some time trying to get your head around Tim Keller's statement—"If when you lose your fear of punishment, you lose your incentive to be good, then the only incentive you had to be good was the fear," How does doing good out of fear of punishment, make good things, not good?
7. How would you gently lead someone who thinks doing good earns them God's favor to believe that God's favor rests on those who repent of their own righteousness?