

All Saints Waitara
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Romans 3:21-31 - The law of faith

* **III** – Parking Tickets

I got a parking ticket once. Once! And I found out that if I didn't pay the parking ticket, they wouldn't renew my driver's licence and they wouldn't let me register my car again. If you break the rules, you damage the relationship.

But what about our relationship with God? Can that be damaged?

Well, I want to begin today with this statement: "The relationship between God and every single person has been damaged. That's what the first 3 chapters of Romans have taught us. People are not RIGHT with God. Our relationship with Him is damaged, and we desperately need that relationship repaired. Things are WRONG between us and God, and we need things to be RIGHT with God. The word Paul uses here is "righteous". We need to be righteous before God.

* And the problem is made very clear in verse 23: "

*"For **all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

In other words, we have all broken the rules and damaged the relationship. And there is no difference between any of us! No difference between me and you and Hitler and Edie Armin and Mother Teresa and St Paul himself. There is no difference. ALL have sinned. We may THINK there's a difference. We may THINK some people are worse sinners than others. But as God sees us, there is NO difference, because ALL have sinned and ALL fall short of God.

* **III** – jumping a gorge.

Picture this. Three people are out hiking. They come to a large gorge they have to cross. 40 metres wide. But there's no bridge. So what do they do? The first says: "I can make it! I can jump that!" He takes a long run, leaps into the air, goes about 2 metres, then plummets to his death.

The second person says: "Well, I can do better than him." Takes a big run up, leaps into the air, goes 4 metres, then falls to his death. (They're all men by the way – because they're the only ones who would challenge each other like this!)

The third one says (to himself!) "Well, those guys were just hopeless jumpers. I can do better than them!" He takes an extra long run up, jumps into the air and goes 14 metres!... then plummets to his death.

Which one did the best? The first one – at 2 metres. The second one – at 4 metres. Or the third one at 14 metres? The answer is: **None** of them! They all fell to their death. None of them made the 40 metre jump. Does it matter if they jumped 2 metres or 39 metres?

If we have to rely on how well **we** do in life, then we have all failed. Doesn't matter if you think you've gone better than most people. ALL have sinned. And SIN makes us fall short. SIN makes us plummet to our death.

And that's what Paul's talking about when he's talking about the law of works. Obeying God's law. The 10 commandments, and all the other laws we find in God's word, the Bible.

* (Bible) But if we were to measure ourselves up to this book, if we were simply to record how many times we've done something against God's word, whether it's murder or rape, or gossip, or a hateful thought, lust, desire, envy, malice, jealousy, worshipping other gods, putting money or family before

God... whatever it is, if we recorded every time we did something wrong, imagine what we would have.

* (Phone Book) Imagine the record of our sins. I imagine it would be something like this... (phone book) and this... (phone book) and this... (phone book).

There is NO DIFFERENCE. All have sinned. When we hold up the law of God there is no good news for humanity because we have all failed to make the jump. We have all failed to live up to God's standard, and because of that,... WE ARE NOT RIGHT WITH GOD!

*Verse 21 ***“But” – and this is a BIG “but” “but now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the law and the prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.***

Now there is a way, apart from the law, for us to be made right with God. Through faith in Jesus Christ. Not by the law of works. Not by what we do. But by faith in Jesus. Looking at verses 24-26:

God made Jesus pay for our sin. Jesus took the punishment. The name for this is “penal substitution” and it basically means “penalty substitution” – Jesus substitutes himself for us to pay the penalty for our sin. Jesus is our **penalty substitute**. **You** deserve the punishment. So do **I**. But Jesus offers to take it for us.

Why did God do this? Verse 25:

* *“He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance, he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.”*

Think back to the time before Jesus. Think about all the sins that have been committed. Adam and Eve. The sins of the Jews against God. All the sins of Israel, King David, Solomon, and the rest of the world – every nation on earth. But we know **God's** people had a sacrificial system right? God told them to sacrifice cows and goats and sheep when they sinned. **But** these sacrifices were only **symbols**. Of course the blood of goats and cows cannot take away sin! These were symbols of what needed to come. The fact is that **all sin went unpunished until Jesus arrived**. God stored up all the punishment for sin, past, present and future, for the whole world. Then on Jesus, God delivered his justice. His penalty. God punished Jesus, for our sin, to demonstrate his justice.

But at the cross of Jesus, we don't just see the consequences of sin. We see that God is just and fair because he punishes sin. Just like it's fair to pay a fine for parking illegally, it's fair and just to punish sin. It's the right thing to do. What this means for us is that we have a choice. We are all sinners – there is no difference between any of us – we all fall short of God's glory, we all need to be made **RIGHT** with God, and that means we have two choices:

* 1. We can choose to live by **FAITH** in Jesus. We put our faith in him. We **LET** him stand in our place to take **OUR** punishment for **OUR** sin. And we can be right with God.

OR

* 2. We wait until that final judgement day. And we stand before God **without** faith in Jesus. **THAT** means we stand before God under the law of works instead of the law of faith. We are judged based on what **we** have done – and not one of us is innocent. And for what we've done wrong, we take God's punishment ourselves. We say: “God, give me what I deserve. I don't need Jesus to take my punishment. Give it to me.”

And we go to hell. We face eternal death. Eternal separation from the love of God. Because that is the punishment for sin.

Now you may think that this is just another Bible passage that explains the basics of the Christian faith. And it is. But the big point is about to come:

Verse 27 – and let me give you a more accurate translation of this verse:

** “Where then is the boasting? It was excluded. By what law? The law of works? No, but through the law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith without works of law.*

Here’s the point – there is no room for boasting because it’s all about faith. How far across the gorge you can jump. 2 metres? 14 metres? 39 metres? It doesn’t matter. We can’t boast in what we’ve done or how far we’ve jumped. Because we simply can’t jump far enough to meet God’s standards. But NOW, a righteousness from God has come that is based on your faith in Jesus, NOT on your works.

It’s simple isn’t it. If God judges us based on our faith in Jesus, we have nothing to boast in!

Sometimes there’s a temptation to say, “Look at me!” There are times we may think that we have a reason to boast. There are times we may think we are better than others. “Look at how much time I give to God. Look at how generous I am. Look how gifted I am. Look at all the ministry I’m doing. Look at how much I read my Bible, and pray. And look at them. Look at that person. Uncommitted. Hardly at church. Never at ministry events. Turns up when they feel like it.

Boasting. Boasting in what WE have done.

Or perhaps you’re at the other end of the scale. Perhaps you say “Look at **them**. They’re so much better than me. They’re always at church. Always involved. So sacrificial. They do so much for everyone... Boasting. In what a person has done.

This is not the way of faith. Because faith leaves no room for boasting. True faith relies on what **JESUS** has done rather than what **WE** have done. No boasting. No judging. No condemnation. No comparisons.

So do we stop doing those things? Keeping the law? Doing good things? Being committed?
NO!

** Verse 31 – Rather we uphold these things.*

We uphold the law, and we do good, because it brings honour and glory to God, not to bring glory to us.

Because there is no room for boasting in our faith. No room for comparing ourselves to others. Because there is no difference. We have been made RIGHT with God, not by what WE have done, but by what JESUS has done. So all we can say is “Thank you Jesus”. “Thank you Jesus”.

Prayer: “Let us not boast... Thank you Jesus.”