

“Inclusive Exclusivity” // Romans 3:27–31 // Romans #8

[Bumper Video](#)

Baptism update

That is awesome. Olivia is just 1 of almost 100 baptisms we’ve seen over the last couple of weeks.

(Also, after last week we’ve seen 311 professions of faith since January 1... **each one of those** invited by one of you; brought by one of you--except for 1 (guy who worked a late shift and followed a car to TSC. Put one on there and drive like a Christian)..

That’s good news worth celebrating?

Another chance to be baptized: WRAL. Most consecutive wet weekends in history (4); of the 10 weekends this year 8 have seen rain. That’s true at the Summit Church, too. **Another wet weekend.** Looks like you’ll be leaving here wet either way--might as well do it for Jesus. We have all you’ll need.

Introduction

Romans 3:27, if you have your Bible (p 32 in Journal)

Works Consulted:

“The Law and Faith,” Ryan Stone

“Romans 3:21–31,” Tony Merida

Recently my family and I were at Universal Studios, in Orlando. (I had to speak in Orlando so we decided to make a short family trip of it and visit a couple of the parks.)

If you’ve been to Universal you know that one of the main attractions there is Harry Potter world. And **regardless of what you think about that whole saga (I know some of you have some reservations about it, and I’m not trying to wade into that right now)**, but it is one of the most elaborately-built, amazing sections of any amusement park that I have ever been to. The creativity and construction that went into it are staggering. **But here’s the thing...** the entrance to that part of the park is at the very back and almost completely unmarked. And that’s intentional. It’s supposed to recreate how you **get into the magical world** in the books. So, in the park, you basically walk through an open doorway in a wall that looks like you are going into a restroom, but it opens up into this amazing and complex world of imagination.

I told **Veronica that if you didn’t know that part** of the park was there, you likely could walk right by it and miss the most elaborate thing at Universal Studios.

I share that because that is a little how I feel about Romans 3:27–31. I almost skipped it in teaching it because **on the surface it looks kind of inconsequential.**

After explaining in big, beautiful theological language what salvation is, Paul says,

Romans 3:27-31 (CSB): Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By one of works? No, on the contrary, by a law of faith. [28] For we conclude that a person is justified by faith apart

from the works of the law. [29] Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, [30] since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. [31] Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

It's almost like **Paul is rambling on a little bit** about the law after he's finished making his **main point**.

But **the more I have learned about Romans**, the more I see that these verses are crucial in addressing one of Paul's primary concerns in Romans.

Remember: the book of Romans is not just a treatise on the gospel; It is also practical counsel on a real-live problem plaguing the church in Rome--the fact that Jews and Gentiles were not getting along.

- **If you remember, Romans was written right** after Jews returned to the church in Rome after being gone for 5 years. They'd been gone because 5 year before **Emperor Claudius** had banished all Jews from Rome, which included Jewish Christians (You can find that story, btw, at the **beginning of Acts 18**). Well, after 5 years Claudius lifted the ban, and so all these Jews were coming back.
- **But here's the thing:** Jews and Gentiles had all these cultural differences; stylistic difference; political differences and so forth.
 - **And prior to this, Jews had basically** been in charge of the church, because they had been the 1st Christians, and Gentiles had been added on.
 - But after they left, Gentiles took charge.
 - And so now the Jews are returning to a church very different than the one they left: the church was doing Gentile music with Gentile instruments, the pastor was wearing Gentile styles--he preached sometimes in his "Air Ceasars." At the potlucks they were serving Gentile foods. Some of the teenagers were even wearing Harry Potter t-shirts to church and what-not.

- So, the **culture that used to be in charge** wasn't in charge anymore, and so all these racial and cultural tensions are flaring.

So Paul is writing to help unify them:

- **(BTW, I think it's** important to note here that they didn't do the easy thing and just start a **Jewish campus** and a **Gentile campus (or 2 different churches on opposite sides of town)**, which would have been much easier--
- and that's because Paul's vision of the church was Jew and Gentile in one united body--which is why multi-ethnicity is important to our church, too). We say should be to reflect the diversity of our community and proclaim the diversity of God's kingdom.

And, if I could be candid--some of our brothers and sisters of color have told me, 'You in the majority culture like the concept of diversity as long as you remain in charge. As long as we adapt to your customs and styles.'

- Many of us, I've told you, **think we want a multi-ethnic church** when all we want is a multi-colored one.
- That makes for a good photo opp, not actual diversity
- This is why, Summit, we **try to share leadership** and be open to doing things a little differently than some of us may have grown up used to.
- **Let's make this real:** Imagine, if you're white, that all of us white people had to leave the Triangle for 5 years--Governor Roy Cooper ordered it--and so when we come back all our black and Latino Hispanic brothers have been running The Summit Church for 5 years. And now we have to adopt to customs not as familiar to us. **Branden, who works up here with me as our music direction (pic)** has total freedom on the music, so it feels different; **Pastor Raudel** is preaching so each sermon lasts an hour and a half.
- This is **what was going on in Rome**. You can see how it would raise some issues.

Paul says the answer for this relational breakdown is the gospel, and he writes the longest treatise on the gospel in the Bible to address this relational problem--which is itself a lesson to us! *Relational problems are best addressed through gospel realities!*

Paul says that one of the primary things that is dividing Jew and Gentile believers is how Jews approach the law. Jews approached the law with the typical religious mindset: *"I obey, therefore I am accepted."*

They assumed, like every religion except the gospel teaches, that being right with God was determined by how well they kept the law. Their justification was found in their law-keeping.

And that premise, Paul says, is what fuels this division.

Now, you say, "How's that?"

- Well, when your justification is based on how well you do, you are always in competition with everyone else, because how good you see yourself is determined by how you compare to others.
- And that results in pride/boasting (when you are doing well), and despair/jealousy (when you're not).

You see, the essence of pride (in any area: religion, sports, academics, parenting, culture or ethnicity) is competition.

- I love how C.S. Lewis put it: "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others. If everyone else became equally rich, or clever, or good-looking there would be nothing to be proud about. It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest."¹

- **Think of this way:** It doesn't matter to you Duke fans that your team is good; only that they are better than Carolina. And vice versa.
- And to State fans, you don't care what your record is for the season, only that you beat at least one of those teams at least once in the season.
- **Right?** I mean, we can't just enjoy the fact that we have two of the greatest basketball programs in history right here in RDU. We have to count championships or which coach has more wins.
- And, obviously, we should just all be State Fans since Jesus said the last shall be first.
- **Pride sustains itself by comparison.**
- So, in religion, we are always asking:
 - Am I a better than _____?
 - Am I as good of a mother as _____?
- And, like I said, when you are doing well, comparatively, that leads to **boasting**.
 - Which turns to judgmentalism, even disdain.
- And, when you don't compare favorably to others, that leads to an inferiority complex, or despair, which turns into jealousy and hatred.
 - And then you develop a real sensitivity to criticism. Criticism really bothers you, because your identity is built on being good compared to others, and if people challenge your sense of goodness, they challenge your identity.
 - So, you get really prickly when criticized. And it either devastates you, or in self-defense you start compiling a list of all the things wrong with the person criticizing you.
 - Your justification has been attacked, so you have to defend yourself.
 - Or, maybe you just silently resent whomever makes you look bad.

¹ C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, 122

- That **guy at works gets that promotion** instead of you, “Yeah, but I’m a better dad than him.”
 - I **used to think this about other pastors** I was jealous of. They were better preachers, but I was better at X, Y, and Z which made me all around better than them. That’s because my justification came from how good I was at my profession.
 - That **other mother** puts up that perfect little pic on Facebook of her perfect little kids all dressed in their perfect matching bows with her perfect brownies in front of her perfect HGTV-worthy kitchen, you think, “Oh, I just hate her” and you assume, even hope, she is having marital problems. (**Don’t act like I’m not describing** your inner thought process.)
- That **all comes from having an identity** built on goodness.
- In fact, **when our justification comes from our law-keeping**, we usually live in denial about our flaws. We can’t admit our flaws even to ourselves because that would undermine our sense of goodness.

See **why Paul pinpoints this as a major source of division?**

So **after explaining the gospel in detail** in chapter 3--that our justification comes not from how good we are, but given to us freely as a gift in Christ Jesus, Paul says: 27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By one of works? No, on the contrary, by a law of faith. (How is boasting eliminated? By a law? “Thou shalt not boast!”)

- **No**, the gospel eliminates boasting but by undercutting the very basis of pride.
- You weren’t saved by anything you did.
 - You couldn’t keep the law. You were a miserable failure! There was none righteous, not even one!
 - In fact, you were **so bad Jesus had to die** to save you.

- And that **destroys the basis** of pride: *When I survey the wondrous cross... my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.*

29 Or (Paul says) is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is **one God** who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

IOW, why do you think of yourselves in different categories?

- There’s only **one kind of person**: sinner. 3:23, For all jew/gentile/old/young/rich/poor/black/white/male/female **have sinned, and all short of the glory of God.**
- **And there’s only one way of salvation: 3:22**, The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, since there is **no distinction**.
- And, vs 29, there is only **One God** who justifies **both the circumcised** (religious) and uncircumcised (irreligious) through the same means, faith.

The gospel, Paul says, creates a new humanity that overcomes the divisions created by the boasting that comes from distinguishing ourselves from others.

- **It’s a new, inclusive** humanity that overcomes any divisions come from our pride.

Now, you say, “Wait. Only one God; only one way of salvation? That doesn’t sound inclusive, that sounds like the definition **EXCLUSIVE.”**

Good point. But understand first that **all religious claims are exclusive.**

(Hang with me here for a second--especially if you’re new to church)

For example, if you say, “**All good people of every religion go to heaven.**” That sounds inclusive, right? #coexist. OK, well, if you say that, then **whom have you excluded?**

- **Bad people.** And I guess you get to define what is bad... and I suppose **racists, rapists, child molesters,** are on that list...
- and, if you’re conservative, you probably put **sexually immoral people** on the list
- Or, if **you’re liberal,** you probably **put those who call certain kinds of consensual sex immoral on the list.**
- But the point is **you all have a list and some people are on it** and others aren’t.

You might say, “No, no. I’m not religious at all. I don’t exclude anyone for any reason.” *You still have your standard as to what constitutes a good person.*

- I **used to live right outside of Chapel Hill.** That’s a **#coexist** place, right?
- Try driving a **truck with oversized tires and an NRA sticker** on the back windshield and **another telling people** you think global warming is a hoax and that’s why you refuse to recycle and I bet you’ll experience some non-acceptance.
 - That’s **not what I did,** BY THE WAY)
 - **The point is—their definition of what is good and bad is just as exclusive in CH** as any other fundamentalist community in the world.
- **All religious and moral viewpoints end up being exclusive.**
Everyone has a line for who is in and who is out

But **the gospel of Jesus, you see, is a different kind of exclusivity,** because **the gospel teaches** that our acceptance with God is not based on anything about us... We’re not accepted because of our moral record, our education, our marital status, our race, or our political viewpoint. **God gives salvation as a gift to all who will repent** and receive it in humility and faith.

- You could say, “**All religions are exclusive, but Christianity is the most inclusive exclusivity** there is.” Tim Keller

Listen: What made the **gospel in the first century scandalous** was not whom it excluded, but whom it included.

- According to **the Talmud**--a *collection of Jewish traditions*--each morning a Jewish man would pray, “Thank God I’m not a woman, a slave, or a Gentile.” When we went through Acts, I pointed out the irony that **when Paul, a Jewish rabbi, goes to start a church in Philippi, the first 3 converts were...**

The gospel overturns all basis for the boasting that leads to division.

- Like Paul says, **It is excluded. By what kind of law? By one of works? No, on the contrary, by a law of faith.** Through a law, “Thou shalt not boast? Thou shalt not discriminate?”
- No, through undermining the very things that cause division in the first place.

Btw, in case it hasn’t been clear, don’t just think of seeking justification or keeping the law in strictly religious terms. All people seek, secular and religious, seek justification.

- **Maybe that comes through success as a job:**
 - I read this thing about the famous movie maker **Sydney Pollack:** Shortly before he died in 2008 there was an article written about him that explained that even though he was sick and dying, he couldn’t stop working. Even when his family begged him to stop because it was shortening his life he refused. The article said, “**Movie mogul, Sydney Pollack, says that although the grueling film movie making process is wearing him down he can’t justify his existence if he stops.** And he said, ‘Every time I finish another picture I feel I have earned my stay for another year or so.’” We all say *Here’s how I earn my stay. That’s a secular quest for righteousness*
- Some try to **find it in your parenting:**

- **I read about another writer whose career was not going anywhere**--nobody was reading his work and so he questioned his whole purpose in life. "But then I look at my two little girls," he said, and I know that my existence is justified."
- IOW, being a good dad to those 2 little girls justifies his existence.
- A lot of **parents are like that. Their existence is justified** by enabling their children to be successful.
 - But **here's the thing:** if your children are your justification, you end up putting too much pressure on them, because **you need them to succeed** for you to be validated.
 - And if they don't--if they do poorly or get in trouble or compare unfavorably you take it as a deep personal blow to your identity.
 - You may even say to them, "If you don't do this, then I have failed as a parent."
 - Your **passion for their success** is ultimately selfish: you need them to succeed so you feel justified.
- **All of this goes back to a soul condition we see pictured in the GoE**, it's one of the most revealing pictures of the human race. (BTW, I repeat illustrations like this often because I want you to be able to repeat these things in your sleep!). This one comes from **St. Augustine: the result of our sin was a sense of nakedness...**
 - We look for **something to be our clothing**--our "righteousness," our justification.
 - (BTW, the **word righteousness and justification** are the same word in Greek.)

Charles Spurgeon, (the 19th century British pastor I quote so much that some of you have asked if he's on staff—we consider him "Pastor Emeritus of the Summit Church") said he saw **three main dividers--three main places of boasting that caused division**--in London society during his day (and **it's amazing how true these** are still today).

First, he said is...

A. The pride of race: For many, their **ethnic identity** becomes a way of distinguishing themselves above others.

- **Jews in that day took pride in their Jewishness** and Romans in their Romanness. That leads to racism, feelings of superiority, and xenophobia.
- Today, people can take pride in their American-ness, or their Southernness, or blackness, or their Asian-ness, their Indian culture, or Latino-ness. Or whatever.
- A racial distinctive is core to their identity.

Now, hear me: Our cultures are beautiful things, and there is nothing wrong with taking delight in them and feeling a profound sense of dignity in them. God **created our various cultures** like a many-sided diamond to reflect his glory and **we glorify him** by delighting in and displaying them.

- But when they become our primary, distinguishing identities--part of our justification, what sets us apart--they **cause division**.
- You become really **proud of**--and **defensive of**--your culture, because your culture establishes your uniqueness, your specialness.

Paul would say, friend do you not understand the gospel?

- There's only one race of people—the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve.
- We have one core problem--sin. *All have sinned, there is no distinction.*
- We have one hope--the blood of Jesus that cleanses us all--black, white, Latino, Asian, Arab and mixed--alike.

Where is boasting, then? From where comes this sense of superiority about your race?

- Any kind of **ethnic superiority is stupid** and completely antithetical to the gospel.

What gives us our worth and identity is not our Jewishness or whiteness or American-ness or blackness anymore.

- “By the keeping of the law, or by preserving of culture—no human being is justified.”

In fact, after our identity in Christ, Paul says, all the rest of these defining characteristics, Paul says, are **GARBAGE** compared to the worth of our identity in Christ.

- In fact, in **Philippians 3** Paul said his **Jewishness was like scubala** to him (*scubala* is translated in our Bibles as garbage--more literal translations say “dung,” but scholars say it’s the kind of word that if your **12 year old son** used it you’d wash out his mouth with soap).
 - **Paul says**, “I used to boast about my race. But now I see that is all **BS: Bull scubala.**”
 - **When Paul says that**, that’s not self-loathing or embarrassment over his race. Paul loved being a Jew. He loved his heritage.
 - Just **compared to his identity in Christ**, it seems like scubala. It would be like comparing a Timex watch to a Rolex one.
- **IMPORTANT: When we become Christians, our cultural distinctives don’t go away, they just become a less important in our identity.**
 - **Tony Evans (pic)**: *“The racial application to (Paul’s teaching on the gospel) is that it is technically incorrect to say, “I’m a black Christian, or “I’m a white Christian” because now you’ve made black and white adjectives and Christian a noun, and the job of the adjective is to modify the noun, so now you’ve got to keep*

Christian looking like the adjective that describes it or it ceases to be Christian.”

- But black and white culture have nothing to do with the **essence** of being a Christian.
- **Better: “I’m a Christian whom God made white.”** Or “I’m a **Christian whom God made black.**”
- Evans says, *“If we could get enough Christians to be Christian before white, Christian before black, Christian before Spanish, it doesn’t take 240 years to fix this. It takes about two minutes and 40 seconds.”*²
- **God is not telling Jewish people to become Gentiles or Gentiles to become Jews;** he’s not telling **white people to be black people** or black people to be white people.
- **He’s telling all people in the church to identify first and foremost as kingdom people**, having crucified their whiteness or blackness or Jewishness on the cross and regarding it as scubala in giving them worth or justifying them before God.

Sometimes, not all the time, but sometimes, when we experience racial division, at the root is that our ethnic identity has become **too large** in our identity. **We’ve started to** look at it as a part of our justification.

- **IOW, we’ve forgotten the gospel.**

BTW, this happened to no less than the **Apostle Peter! In Galatians 2**, Paul confronts Peter for acting like a racist by refusing to eat with Gentiles.

- So, **Paul starts explaining the gospel to him!** Which may seem condescending to do to the leader of the church, but Paul is saying,

“Peter, at its core, racial division is a gospel issue. The gospel is that we are justified not because of something about us, or

²<https://www.christiantoday.com/article/rev-tony-evans-on-racial-tensions-we-should-be-christians-first-before-being-black-or-white/91478.htm>

something we eat or don't eat or do or don't do, but because we accept Christ's righteousness as our own.

"And when you really embrace that, Peter, it is going to tear down any sense of superiority we might feel toward someone else.

"God took you when you were an outsider, Peter, when you were unclean, based on nothing about you but solely as a gift of grace.

"So, **who are you to exclude** someone else?"

- A **failure to pursue diversity** means we have forgotten how far Jesus reached out to include us.
- He was **infinitely more different** than us than **any of us are from each other**.
- His **choice to make us his family** is the reason we can cross cultural lines to do the same with others.
- Yes, racial reconciliation and oneness can be costly and inconvenient, yes, and sometimes awkward and painful--maybe you'll experience that in your small group.
- But **oneness cost Jesus** his very life. **Who are we to decide** that the cost of pursuing multi-ethnic oneness is too high a price to pay?

So, there's the pride of race. Then there's:

B. The pride of face and place: We think some characteristic or personal accomplishment sets us apart, "justifies" us before others.

We tend to see people in **categories:** successful and the unsuccessful, the intelligent and the dull, the beautiful and the ugly, the fit and the fat, the rich and the poor.

- And we **look down on those** who are less than we are in these areas, and feel intimidated by those who are more.

But, friend, do you not understand the gospel?

First, do you realize **how little of your talents** you can actually take credit for? Your parents gave you your genes, and God gave you the health and opportunity to pursue them.

- **Do you really think** if you'd been born as an orphan in a village in Somalia you'd have succeeded like you have?
- **All that you have is a gift!** So, pride about that is stupid.

Second, do you realize how **worthless our talents where** when it comes to the things that really matter? They couldn't justify us before God!

- **Before God, there is only one kind of sinner:** Hopeless. Dead. There's not successful, high capacity sinners with a lot of potential and unpromising sinners. Just hopeless, dead sinners.
- **Heaven's not a scholarship program** where God rewards the best.
- The best resume in God's eyes, Paul says, is a big, steaming pile of scubala.
- And, what we **have now in Jesus, Paul says**, is worth infinitely more than any of those things anyway.
- **Who cares if I am not that intelligent now**, I am promised I will inherit the mind of Christ!
- **It doesn't matter if I'm not beautiful now, because** one day Jesus will make my outside match the beauty of his righteousness on the inside. I can be ugly for 70 years because I'll be beautiful for eternity.
- **It doesn't matter if I am not successful now; the weakest saint here** has still been appointed by Jesus to reign with him as kings and queens eternally.
- **It doesn't matter if someone now doesn't appreciate me here**, in Christ I have a Father who rejoices over me with love and dances over me with singing!

So, the pride of race makes no sense; the pride of face or place make no sense...

Maybe worst and most nonsensical of all, Spurgeon said, is...

C. The pride of grace: This is the **pride that comes from having lived a moral or religious life; having avoided certain shameful sins or mistakes.**

- You **feel a sense of pride** because you have **avoided bad things** you see some others fall into: you've never been to prison; you didn't get pregnant before you were married; you've never been fired from your job, or get divorced or don't have a porn problem.
- And **so now you feel a sense of distinction**, even set apart from others who have gone through some of those things.

Ah, friend, but do you not understand the gospel? In Christ, *there are no "good people" or "bad people"; "people who have it together" or "dysfunctional people."*

There's only bad, dead, sin-sick rebels, without God and without hope in this world--that God saves freely by a sheer act of grace.

And just because God in his grace kept you from some of the worst fruitions of your sin doesn't mean you are made of something different than others who have gone down that route.

- **Puritans: The seed of every sin is in every heart.**
- There is none righteous, none who instinctively seeks after God, no not one!"

So, where do you get off thinking you are **superior** because of your **race, your face or place, or your experience of grace?**

No merit of yours brought you **closer** to God. Your **acceptance** was all the gift righteousness of Christ, Paul says, *imputed* to you.

27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By one of works? **Hardly!** No, on the contrary, by a law (read: the logic of) of faith... 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

Yes, Christianity is exclusive. It teaches that the **only way we can be justified** in God's sight is by having Christ's righteousness imputed to us.

But that is the most inclusive exclusivity that has have ever been! **Because it says "whosoever will may come!"**

- **WHOSOEVER! Regardless of your past; your potential** for the future; your **problems** in the present--**WHOSOEVER!**

Go back through once more and read all the "all" language in chapter 3: There is **no distinction**: All have sinned and all are justified freely by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus!

- **"there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith."**
- Again, what was scandalous about Christianity in the first century was not who was excluded, but who was included.
- Yes, It's **only the repentant and believing** who are accepted by God; but it's **the repentant and believing from every background, every race**; he receives every type of sinner no matter how downtrodden, damaged, or scarred.

Embracing this destroys division, and, I should note, **makes us, in general, easier people** to be around.

- We are less judgmental about others. More accepting. **Certainly** we never look down on people with a sense of smug superiority.
- You start to show empathy towards people in hard circumstances, because you don't think you are made of something totally different.

- We are **less prickly** when people point out our flaws. That's because **our identity** is no longer built on being perfect, so we don't have to minimize or deny our flaws to protect our image as a perfect person or awesome parent.
- As **Paul David Tripp (pic)** says, *"Nothing can ever be uncovered about me that God has not already seen and covered by the death of Jesus!"* As a symbol of that...

SO: When you are experiencing **division, jealousy**; or feelings of bitterness, insecurity, or pride, you should always ask yourself first: **Where is my boast--and it is contributing to this conflict?**

Is my boast in my race? My face or my place or my experience with grace?

Is it in **how much I've accomplished**; or how **good of a parent** I am; or **student**, or how **good of a person** I am?

Any time you boast in something besides the gospel, it will lead to conflict.

- But **when we boast in the gospel**, we'll become the most inclusive community the world has ever seen!

Last verse: **31 Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! On the contrary, we uphold the law.**

Paul ends this chapter by dealing with the objection he hears coming from his Jewish listeners: "Paul, you are **so hard on the law**. You've basically said it is worthless."

Paul says, "Contraire, mon frere. I am upholding the law."

The law reveals God's character to us, Paul says--and the first thing it does is function like **a mirror** that shows us how far short we fall of that and drive us in desperation to God's grace.

Second, after experiencing that, it functions **as a guide** showing us what a life pleasing God will look like.

- **Analogy: the law is like railroad tracks**: it can point us in the right direction to go, but it is powerless to move us along the tracks.
- The gospel is the **locomotive**. It's the power from God to change us.
- But **after we've been given the engine power** to obey, the Law can still help us know the direction that we should go.
- The **law is like a mirror that shows us how little** like God we are; but then, **after we receive the power of the gospel**, the **law serves as a guide to becoming** more like him!

I love **how Jen Wilkin (pic)** (who will be with us in a few weeks) says it: **The law drives us to grace, but grace drives us back to the Law.** The law drives us in desperation to grace, but an experience of grace drives us in devotion back the Law so that we can more closely resemble the God it reveals.

(MUSIC)

So, as we close out **chapter 3**, let's make sure we have everything straight:

- **Justification**: God's declaration that we are righteous because through faith Christ's righteousness has been imputed to us.
 - He lived the life...
 - Simul iustus et peccator (how to pronounce in Latin?)
- **Sanctification**: The process whereby we become more Christlike as God infuses his righteousness into us as we continue to exercise faith in the gospel.
- Sanctification is about transformation; justification is about declaration. Sanctification is about process; justification is about pronouncement. In sanctification you become righteous little by little; in justification you are declared righteous all at once.

From this, all the additional treasures of the Christian life flow, including unity and harmony in the church, and every other relationship, too.

Invitation

- **Have you begun? Have you received Christ?**
- **Been baptized?**
 - Maybe you are 1 of those 311...
 - *We have seen you raise your hand; now we want to see your face; now we want to know your name.*

Bow heads

Salvation

Baptism

- "Give me courage"
- "Don't be scared--don't let what others think about you keep you from making a life-changing decision"
- What will they think about me?

Prayer

"Not a good time to go to the bathroom"

