



10.
'Becoming a believer'
Romans 3.27-31

Background

The 5 brief verses which comprise this passage are a necessary and important sequel to the previous paragraph. Having just set out the provision God has made for us in Christ in terms of the guilt, power and effect of sin having been so completely addressed – and having underlined again that this gift is to be simply received by faith – Paul now spells out in very general terms the implications of the exercise of such faith by us. What does becoming a believer entail?

He does so under three broad headings, which – at the risk of mutilating an old Christmas carol! – correspond to the three 'ships' on which we go sailing out onto the ocean of life in Christ: **worship** (vv.27-28), **fellowship** (cvv.29-30), and **discipleship** (v.31).

The significance of the first of these – particularly in the way in which Paul expresses it – is greater than ever in an age in which the culture of celebrity is so all-pervasive (and in danger of creeping more and more into the life and perspective of Christ's church). Our boast is to be exclusively in the Lord: far from the spotlight being directed to ourselves – our qualities and our accomplishments – our hearts, and thus our lives as well, are to be focussed on, and preoccupied with the Lord.

In a similar way, as the disintegration and divisions within our western society become ever more pronounced, the reality (and indeed the challenge) of people from very diverse backgrounds being brought together and integrated by Christ into one body becomes an ever more striking phenomenon. The logic of the gospel, of course, demands this: the power of the Spirit effects this: and thus believers are urged always to aspire to, and strive for this.

The final verse points up the means by which the Spirit of God effects the radical change in us to which the gospel points. We are not *saved* by the Law, but we are emphatically *shaped* by the Law. And the life of the believer involves always that commitment to be a learner – learning from the Lord how life is to be lived; and as a necessary corollary of that, being ready and eager for the Word of God to teach us, rebuke us, correct us and train us in righteousness, so that as servants of God we might be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim.3.16f).

Read the whole passage as ever and if pressed for time start with '**days**' (1), (2) and (3).

1) Monday 11th March – to God be the glory

Read [Romans 3.27-28](#)

“.. Where then is boasting? It is excluded ..” (Rom.3.27)

“The way of justification by faith doth for ever exclude boasting; for faith is a depending, self-emptying, self-denying grace, and casts every crown before the throne: therefore it is most for God’s glory that thus we should be justified” M Henry

What does Paul mean by speaking of “the ‘law’ that requires faith”?

To what extent does the use of social media tend to foster a spirit of boasting through the need to present ourselves to the world always in the best light?

To what extent and in what ways has the culture of celebrity crept into the life of the church?

Once we’ve come to faith in Jesus, it can be easy to slip into a certain legalism through which you pride yourself on keeping the law: how can you avoid that?

Prayer: *Make me ever mindful, Lord, that it is by grace that I am saved, by grace that the saving work of Your Spirit in my life is carried forward, and finally completed.*

2) Tuesday 12th March – one God and one way

Read [Romans 3.29-30](#)

“.. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles too ..” (Rom.3.38)

The church is a diverse community of very different backgrounds. The one God has no favourites and there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved, other than Jesus. Whatever your background, what Jesus has done is your only hope.

There was a huge tension and often great hostility between Jew and Gentile: what would be comparable barriers today which are broken down in Christ?

How are the different expectations and different perspectives, which believers from very different backgrounds may bring to a fellowship, best handled?

What steps might you take to ensure that your church is a fellowship where all are welcome, no matter their background?

Each fellowship has to ‘land’ somewhere on a range of different (secondary) issues on which there are differences of view: how should a church’s ‘line’ on such issues be wisely and sensitively applied?

Prayer: *From every kindred, every tongue, You brought Your chosen race; and distant lands and isles have shared the riches of Your grace! How worthy You are of my praise!*

3) Wednesday 13th March – the law of God

Read [Romans 3.31](#)

“.. Rather, we uphold the law ..” (Rom.3.31)

The perennial question. If we're not saved by the law of God, is that not a way of saying that the law of God doesn't really matter? God's law is not the means by which we are saved, but it's the lines along which the train of our faith in Jesus now travels.

How can a believer maintain the right balance in regard to the law of God?

Why did God give His law to His people in the Old Testament?

Read [Jer.31.33](#): how does the Spirit write the law of God on our hearts, and how (if at all!) are we able to facilitate that work in our lives?

Former generations in Scotland were accustomed to the use of 'catechisms' (a set of questions and answers which were learned and repeated 'by rote') as a way of bedding the truths of Scripture in a person's heart and life: is this a component of discipleship which might profitably be used by a congregation?

*Prayer: Stir in my heart a love for Your law, O Lord! Help me to meditate on it all day long, for Your commands are always with me and make me wiser than my enemies**

4) Thursday 14th March – His power in your weakness

Read [2 Corinthians 12.1-10](#)

“.. I boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses ..” (2 Cor.12.9)

In the 'celebrity' culture of Corinth, it was the sustaining and strengthening grace of Christ that Paul was always eager to commend: not what Paul had accomplished in his own strength, but when he had none, what Jesus had done for him and through him.

Why does Paul use the third person in speaking of himself in these verses?

Is it wrong to tell others about your own spiritual experiences?

Prayer: I am weak, Lord, but You are strong! If my weakness is the platform You need to display the glory of Your power, then take my life and use me thus for Your glory.

5) Friday 15th March – displaying God's glory

Read [1 Corinthians 1.26-29](#)

“.. so that no one may boast before Him ..” (1 Cor.1.29)

Created 'in His image', we are made for the display of God's glory. Too easily, however, we hide that glory of God by our proud asserting of our own credentials. God will often choose, therefore, those with few credentials, that *His* credentials be the better seen.

‘Think of what you were when you were called:’ how would you describe what *you* were before you were brought to a saving faith in Jesus?

What does Paul mean by God ‘shaming’ the wise and the strong and ‘nullifying’ ‘the things that are’?

Prayer: *We won't fear the battle, we won't fear the night, we will walk the valley with You by our side: You will go before us, You will lead the way, only You can save.*

6) Saturday 16th March – all God's doing

Read [1 Corinthians 1.30-31](#)

“.. *it is because of Him that You are in Christ Jesus ..*” (1 Cor.1.30)

Salvation belongs to the Lord’ ([Ps.3.8](#)) – it’s all *His* doing. It’s by His grace, through His Spirit, that He has put you ‘in’ His Son, uniting you with Jesus so that what’s true of Him is true now of you. Vindicated. Consecrated. Liberated. Made whole at last!

Why does Paul use the language of the law-courts (righteousness), the temple (holiness) and the slave-market (redemption) in speaking of Christ Jesus?

About what, or whom, do you find yourself speaking to others above all else? Is the Lord your boast?

Prayer: *Help me, O Lord, to delight myself in all that You are, to marvel each day at the wonder of Your grace, the beauty of Your holiness, and the perfection of Your ways.*

7) Sunday 17th March – knowing God

Read [Jeremiah 9.23-24](#)

“.. *let the one who boasts boast about this ..*” (Jer.9.24)

Your credentials and attainments are only ever relative, looking good compared to others. Those of the Lord are absolute – He is infinite in His perfection. Whatever your natural gifts, your greatest gift – given graciously to you – is the knowledge of the Lord.

Read [Mk.10.24-25](#): why is it so hard for those with great ‘riches’ – in terms of goods or gifts – to enter the kingdom of God?

In what ways are you able to recognise that your knowing the Lord has issued in a changed way of living, marked by kindness, justice and righteousness?

Prayer: *Praise be to You, my God and Father, for You have blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ! ([Eph.1.3](#)) Let the people praise you Lord!*