

Text: Romans 3:23-28

Theme: From Failure to Fantastic

October 28, 2018

How many children in Taylor County wake up every morning feeling like they're a failure, that nobody wants them, that nobody cares? Let's bring the topic a bit closer to home, "How many of you have ever felt like a failure?" We know the term and we know how it feels. In our text, Paul could have easily said, "You're a failure," and it would have been an accurate statement. Yet, at the same time, he could also have said, "You're fantastic," and it, too, would have been an accurate statement.

I. Simply put, faith in Christ is fantastic! A. However, on our own, we are failures before God. 1. We are failures because we have sinned. Paul writes, "For all have sinned." Sounds pretty all-inclusive, doesn't it? You may want to argue or insist that you're at least better than the next person, but no matter what we attempt, we are failures because we have sinned; we have missed the mark, the bull's eye. We have broken the heart of God, and, worst of all, we do it every day. If you or I had to stand before God at the end of today based on our own deeds, the verdict would be the same for everyone of us, "Failure. Disqualified from receiving the crown."

2. Paul also points out that we are failures because we have fallen short of God's expectations. Suppose we created a "perfection target." How close would be close enough? As the saying goes, close would only count in horseshoes and hand grenades. Every day, God expects and even commands us to be perfect just as our Father in heaven is perfect. Yet, every day, we fail; we disappoint God. We give Him every reason to disown us forever. But why do we need to focus on our condition, on our failure status in God's sight? Because it's only when we realize who we are before God on our own that our hearts are ready to discover the fantastic.

B. So, how do we move from failure to fantastic? 1. We make that move by clinging to justification. Paul says we are justified by His grace, but what does that mean for us? Justification in very simple terms means, "forgiven." We fall short; we miss the mark. We sin which puts us in the failure category. Yet forgiven changes everything! To every mistake, every time you miss the mark, every time you let God down, to every little thing or big thing in our minds, God's response, as we stand before Him with a repentant heart, is the same. It's predictable. In fact, it's guaranteed as He says, "My dearest child, I forgive you!"

2. We move from failure to fantastic by claiming grace alone. "Justified by His grace." Justified without grace is empty justification, empty forgiveness. The two always go hand in hand. Why? Because grace is what motivates God to justify, to forgive you. God doesn't look at you, check out your list of good deeds in His little black book and then determine His next move. Instead, God closes His eyes, ignores every good deed you have ever done, and says, "Because of My grace, My undeserved, unearned love for you and for no other reason, I choose to do what you don't deserve. I choose to do the unthinkable by forgiving you!"

3. We move from failure to fantastic by acknowledging that it's all a gift. Paul adds another key phrase, "And are justified by His grace as a gift." Why is that so difficult to accept? Because it's so illogical! Here's the Creator of the Universe, the God who spoke and there was light, plants, and people. This amazing God has the time and cares enough to step into your personal world when there are seven billion other people out there, and say to you personally, "Here's another gift from your

Creator. Forgiven. Forgotten. Forever.” It makes no sense, but God says, “All you need to do is take what I offer; take My gift and treasure it!”

4. We move from failure to fantastic by realizing that redemption is the only means. Why does our church have a cross in our altar area? Why do you find one in virtually every Christian Church? Because Christian living is all about the cross, because your life and my life are all about the cross. The cross is where it all happened. On that first Good Friday, Jesus on the cross was the accepted payment for our sins. Jesus on the cross was our means of redemption, of being redeemed or bought back from the clutches of the devil. The cross is everything because everything that moved you from failure to fantastic happened right there, at the cross.

5. We make the move by acknowledging the accepted payment. “Whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood.” How many times have you used the word, “propitiation”? Why would we use the word when most of us don’t even know what it means? If we boil it down to simple terms, kinda like you boil down maple syrup, we would come up with the word “payment.” Christ’s death was the accepted payment and with that payment, failures became fantastic overnight! Christ, who willingly chose to be our substitute, our scapegoat, stepped into our world and said, “Father, I will make the payment so that My people can step out of failure and into fantastic.”

6. We make the move from failure to fantastic by realizing that it all becomes possible for us by faith alone. Five hundred years ago, a man sat in a monastery agonizing over his sin, tormented by the realization that he was a failure, and struggling with how he could get right with God. This text, particularly the realization that it was all possible by faith alone, was the turning point in his life. Maybe your name isn’t Martin Luther, but when it’s faith and faith alone that opens the door to God’s storehouse of unimaginable and eternal treasures in your mind, you will understand fantastic and you will respond accordingly.

7. We move from failure to fantastic by acknowledging that Christ alone enables it all to happen. How many mathematicians do we have among us this morning? Here’s my question for you, “How many positive numbers can you add to the number 1 and still have an answer of 1? It’s not God 50%, you 50%, nor is it God 75%, you 25%, or even God 99.9%, you .001%. It’s God 100% and you 0%. Back to our mathematical equation it’s  $1 + 0$ . Yesterday, that was true; today, that’s true and every tomorrow until the end of time that will still be true -  $1 + 0$ . Failure to fantastic is all about God. It always has been and always will be.

8. Depending on the event, the moment, or the circumstances, you may feel like a failure. But just remember the facts. When it’s all about God, it’s all about fantastic! Amen.