

Faith Not Feelings

Romans 8: 33 – 34

“Facts don’t have feelings.”

- Our culture is no longer driven by truth, but rather by feelings. It is a dangerous thing because feelings are very subject to change. So, what is acceptable or even valued today, might be something that you are canceled for tomorrow.
 - Facts are bedrock you can build your life on. Feelings are shifting sands.
- Many churches and Christians are on the feelings band wagon--turning Christianity into an emotional feelings-driven experience with no doctrine, no theological truths.
 - So, many churches never want to talk about sin, or the holiness and justice of God. They never want to talk about the wrath of God because that makes people feel bad. But if you don’t understand the wrath of God, you can’t really understand the love of God the way you must understand it.
 - God’s mercy without God’s justice really doesn’t mean much does it?
 - Feelings driven Christianity is like the seed that fell on the rocky ground in Jesus’ parable of the sower.

Matthew 13: 5 – 6 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶but when the sun rose, they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.

- There has to be the depth of truth to sink your roots into or when trouble comes you will wither and die.
- Feelings should come as a result of faith, but feelings aren’t faith. Faith is built on trust in the truth. The truth of who God is. The truth of who we are. The truth about what Christ has done for us.
 - Facts are first and those facts will lead to a heartfelt love, which will lead to heartfelt obedience. Listen to how Tim Keller describes it:

“If you don’t see the absolute holiness of God, the magnitude of your debt, the absolute necessity of God’s just punishment of your sin, and therefore the utter hopelessness of your condition, then the knowledge of your pardon and deliverance will not be amazing and electrifying.” Tim Keller

- What is being amazed and electrified? It’s a feeling. A feeling that will cause a person to live their life with zeal and passion for Jesus and His Kingdom.
- This is the kind of life that we are called to live—a life of zeal and passion for our King Jesus. Those are feelings but those feelings will only come from facts—from seeing the magnitude of your pardon and deliverance, and the only way to see that is to first see the truth of God’s holiness, and your sinfulness, and the state that puts us in.
- As we come to the end of chapter 8 Paul asks us a series of rhetorical questions that are designed to make us apply all the theology he has been teaching us, so that we see how complete, and sure our salvation really is. Because the more we come to grips with the fact of how complete and secure our salvation is, the more our hearts will be enflamed with passion for our king.

Romans 8: 31 - What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It

is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

- What do we say in response to this God who is so for us that he spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all?
 - Do you realize what Paul is telling us there? In God, we have the all-powerful king of the universe who has proven His love for us by giving His Son for us.
 - If God is for us who can be against? If we really think about what that means, shouldn't that electrify and empower our lives?
- Now this week we turn our focus to verses 33 and 34. In these two verses, Paul is taking us into the courtroom—the courtroom of heaven, and in doing that he is giving us a glimpse of just how amazing and electrifying our deliverance is from the curse and penalty of sin.
 - But it is all based on facts not feelings. Feelings don't enter into a court of law. Feelings don't deliver justice. Facts do.

1. Who is the judge?

- At first glance we would simply say it is God, and that's not wrong.

Psalm 9: 7 – 8 But the Lord sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, 8 and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.

- As our Maker, God owns us, and He has the right to make laws for us and to reward us according to whether or not we keep them. That's a fact.

Jeremiah 17: 10 "I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

- When the Bible teaches us about God judging, it emphasizes that God is the searcher of hearts and the finder of facts. Nothing can escape him; we may fool men, but we cannot fool God. He knows us, and judges us, as we really are. That's a fact.

- But as we come to the New Testament listen to what Jesus says:

John 5: 22 – 23 For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father.

- Now at this point we might be tempted to feel, "Whew! That was a close one. For a minute there I thought the God of the Old Testament was going to judge me, and that wouldn't be good at all. But instead, it's Jesus. Oh, that's good, because Jesus is all love, grace, and mercy, so he is just going to let me slide. I can live however I want because Jesus loves me. This I know."
 - That may be what we feel but it doesn't align with the facts in the Bible.

Revelation 19: 11 – 16 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp

Sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

- Jesus is the one who is executing judgment treading the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God. That's a fact. So much for any thought of gentle Jesus just letting everything slide.
 - It may make us feel uncomfortable, to see Jesus this way but facts don't have feelings. Facts are just the truth. Truth, we need to know.
- God the Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son, but that doesn't give anybody a pass. The Son is treading the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God. There is a just judge who demands justice in His courtroom.
 - Remember why this is important, you cannot fully comprehend mercy without first understanding the wrath and justice from which mercy is rescuing you.

2. Who are the defendants?

- Everyone will appear as defendants in the courtroom of heaven.

Revelation 20: 11 – 15 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- Everyone, from the greatest to the least is a defendant and will have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. That's a fact.
- But notice there are actually two different groups of people before the court.
 - Both groups have a written record of charges against them. It is all there in the books. The facts of the case are clear.
 - But one of the groups of defendants has something else. Their name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. What's that all about?
 - We can tell what it is all about by what doesn't happen to them. If their name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life, they are not thrown into the lake of fire. They are spared from eternal punishment and death. This is what mercy is rescuing you from.
- Who are these people who have their names written in the Lamb's book of life? Well, look back at our passage in Romans 8: 33.

Romans 8: 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?

- The elect are those whose name is written in the Lamb's book of life. The elect are those whom God is in the process of saving and bringing to glory.

Romans 8: 29 – 30 those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.



- Those who God foreknew are the elect, those whom God is working to save, and that will be saved.
- Saved from what? Well, in a general sense hell, but in a more specific sense, the charges that are being brought against them.
 - Everybody is in the courtroom. But the elect, those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life have no charges filed against them.
 - One group will stand guilty as charged, because they are choosing to stand on their own record.
 - And the other group will never be charged because they are standing on the record of Jesus—the Lamb of God who takes away their sin.
- To understand how amazing this rescue, this reprieve is, we have to start by understanding what the charges are.

3. What are the charges?

- All the bad we have done and all the good we have left undone. Listen how Jesus describes the charges in:

Matthew 12: 36 – 37 on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, 37 for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

- Based on that standard we all deserve to be in the winepress of the fury of God's wrath getting crushed for our sin because,

Romans 3: 12 - 14 “no one does good, not even one.” ¹³“Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” ¹⁴ “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”

- This is the fact of the indictment against each of us. By our own words we will be judged and condemned, and all of us, everyone has a mouth full of cursing and bitterness.
- It is easy for us to think we are not like that. But the Bible says the fact is that we are. How? Think about all of the times we pass judgment on others—speaking against them. Think of all the times we complain about God's providence in our lives—from our finances, to our car breaking down, to the weather.
 - “Oh, come on Jeff it is not a sin to complain against the weather.” Well, who brought you the weather? God did. When we complain about our life, we are complaining against God and His all-wise providence. Isn't that worthy of God's condemnation?
 - The truth is that we really have no inkling whatsoever about the magnitude of the things that are written against us in the book of our life.
 - I've fallen short, you have fallen short, and the world out there has fallen short, there is no distinction.
- If these charges are to be leveled against us, they will be devastating. We will be found guilty and executed as rebellious traitors against the rule and authority of God. And the words of our mouths are all of the evidence necessary to convict us.
 - In the courtroom, facts don't have feelings, all that matters is justice because God is just. God searches our hearts and knows the truth. He hears every murmured word and the charges against each of us demand a verdict.

4. The just verdict

- A just verdict for what we have done and haven't done is eternal death—the lake of fire, because even the smallest sin is an act of cosmic treason against the God who loves us and cares for us.

Romans 6: 23 For the wages of sin is death

- Paul doesn't specify what kind of sin brings death, because all sin is rebellion against God and deserves death. That is the fact.

"The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire." Jonathan Edwards Sinners In the Hands of An Angry God

- Preachers tend not to preach that way anymore because it makes people feel uncomfortable—afraid. But isn't it a good thing to fear that which is a mortal danger to us? And if you take what the Bible says about our sin to heart, each of us should feel that we are in a very dangerous, a very precarious spot.
 - We need to know the truth. If you don't see the truth of the state you are in, apart from Jesus, you will never run to Jesus to be saved.
 - And if you are already saved, but you forget what you are being saved from, you will never be electrified and amazed at the salvation God has provided for you in Jesus.
- The only thing that saves a person from the just verdict that we all deserve is to be one of God's elect, to have your name written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation 20: 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- Those whose names are written in the book of life, are not thrown into the lake of fire. They are guilty, but they escape judgment. How? Why? How can the just judge of all the earth allow the guilty to go free?

Romans 8: 33 – 34 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

5. Where did our accuser go?

- For a trial to proceed in a courtroom, there has to be an accuser, someone to bring charges. But what Paul is saying here in Romans 8: 33 is that for the elect there is no one to bring a charge.
 - Why? Because God has justified them. That's what Paul is saying in verse 33.
 - Let me try to illustrate and then I'll explain.
 - Last week, I went to lunch with someone, and being men we both wanted to pick up the check. Justice demanded that our lunch should be paid, but who would pay? Well, the waitress gave person I was with the check, and he paid the bill. I no longer had to pay because he had. I was free because he paid the price.
 - Now imagine, if after my friend paid, he left and a while later the waitress came back and said to me. I know your friend paid, but since you are still here, I am going to make you pay too. What would I say?

“That’s unfair, the debt has been settled. You have already been paid in full. I would be unjust for me to have to pay again.”

- Through Christ, God has made a way for us the elect to be justified, that is for the elect to have their sin debt paid in full. At the cross:

2 Corinthians 5: 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- That’s justification. There is no charge because Christ took the charge for us. It would be unjust for God to charge us again for what Christ has already paid. He satisfied the debt, and because of that we no longer stand on our record. What is written in our books no longer matters. To have your name written in the Lamb’s book of life means that books on your life are closed and Christ’s record has now become your record.

Zechariah 3: 1 – 5 Then he (God) showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. ²And the Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?” ³Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. ⁴And the angel said to those who were standing before him, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” And to him he said, Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.” ⁵And I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So, they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord was standing by.

- What do we see here? Well, first off keep in mind this is a vision, so it is representative of a spiritual reality, but it shows us that justification by faith isn’t just something that Paul dreamed up. It was God’s plan for the ages.
 - In the vision Joshua the High Priest is standing before the Lord in dirty garments. If you read the book of Leviticus, this was capital offense in God’s eyes. The High Priest would be struck dead by God for doing this. Nothing unclean can come into the presence of a holy God.
 - The High Priest represented the people of God to God. Being dressed in filthy clothes was indicative of the sin of God’s people, and their unfitness to stand before a holy God.
 - But what else do we see here? Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? Satan is waiting in the wings to do just that. The guilt is there. The accuser is there. It looks like judgment and condemnation are about to be executed.
 - But what does God do? Rather than condemning Joshua, He rescues Joshua. He plucks the smoldering stick from the fire, but that’s not the end of it. At God’s command, the filthy garments are removed, the iniquity is taken away, and the High Priest is robed in new clean garments. Joshua is no longer defiled in God’s sight. He is righteous. Now who can bring any charge?
 - Who did all of this? God did. It is God who justifies. It is God who removes our sin through the blood of Christ and then adorns us in the robes of Christ’s righteousness. There can no longer be any charge or any condemnation.
 - And what happens to Satan the accuser of God’s elect?
 - God rebukes him. He is silenced by God. Who will bring any charge? Who will condemn? No one. Because God has justified. God has removed the filthy clothes and clothed His elect in righteousness.

• “But Pastor Jeff, I still feel guilty.” Oh, but beloved remember, you are in the courtroom of God, the only courtroom that matters, and in the courtroom, facts don’t have feelings. Remember Jesus’ own words:

John 8: 36 So if the Son has set you free you are free indeed.

- And Paul’s words earlier in:

Romans 8: 1 There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

*I hear the accuser roar, Of ills that I have done; I know them well, and thousands more;
Jehovah findeth none.*

- “But Pastor Jeff, is that really true? It sure feels like with all the trouble in my life that sometimes God hasn’t forgotten or forgiven anything, and He is punishing me for everything.” It may feel that way, but in God’s court facts don’t have feelings.
 - In this life, neither the elect nor the non-elect (the saved or the unsaved) should ever feel like God is punishing them for their sin. To do that is really to make light of God’s punishment for sin.
 - Punishment is being thrown in the lake of fire. It is a punishment that we can scarcely imagine how terrible it is.
 - In this life God will certainly discipline you but He is not punishing you.
 - We often use those words interchangeably with our kids and in doing that we are doing them a great disservice. Discipline and punishment are not the same, and we should never present them that way to our children.
 - Punishment is about condemnation. Discipline is about correction.
 - For those who are not saved, nothing in this life is a punishment. Their punishment awaits them on the last day.
 - The elect, the saved, will never be punished for their sin in this life or the next, because Christ has already stood in their place and taken the punishment for them. It would be unjust for God to demand a second payment and punish a second time.
 - But God will discipline because God loves His children and wants to use all things conform them to the image of His Son, because that is for our best—our ultimate glory.
- But how do we know that what Christ did is enough to satisfy the court? How do we know for sure that there is no charge no condemnation?

Romans 8: 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us

6. How do we know that justice has been done?

- The only one who could ever condemn us is Jesus. Because Jesus came and did what we couldn’t do. He lived the life we should have lived. You can’t condemn someone for the same things you have done, or you would be condemning yourself.
 - I can’t condemn you because I’m a sinner, and you can’t condemn me, because you are a sinner. In fact, if you think about, even Satan can’t condemn you because he is the biggest sinner of all. Just like with Joshua the High Priest. Satan can accuse, and does accuse, but he cannot condemn.



- Only Jesus is free to condemn, because only Jesus lived a sinless life. But for the person whose name is in his book of life, the one who is trusting his as savior, rather than condemning you, Jesus took the condemnation for you.
 - He is the one who died who died for you. How can he be condemning you when he is the one saving you?
- But how do we know that his death for us satisfied the court of heaven? Because God raised him from the dead.

Romans 4: 25 Jesus our Lord, ²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

- His resurrection is one of the proofs that God has given us that our sin debt is paid in full. It is proof that God was satisfied with Christ's sacrifice for us.
- But there is also another proof that that our debt is paid in full that we see in Romans 8: 34. Where is Jesus right now? He is seated at the right hand of God. What is the significance of that?
 - In all the furnishings that God designed for the Old Testament Tabernacle and Temple, there were no seats to be found anywhere. There were altars, a basin for washing, there was a lampstand and several tables, but no chair.
 - Do you know why? Because in the Old Testament Temple and Tabernacle the priest could never sit down. The work was never done. There were always sacrifices that needed to be made.

Hebrews 10: 11 – 12 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God

- But as Jesus died on the cross, he cried out, "It is finished." Why? Because his work was complete and so is our righteousness in him.
- Who will bring any charge against God's elect? Who will condemn God's elect? No one because God has justified us through Christ and Christ is seated at God's right-hand, day after day bearing the marks of his once and for all sacrifice for us.

Five bleeding wounds he bears received at calvary. They pour effectual prayers they strongly plead for me. Forgive him, oh forgive they cry nor let that ransomed sinner die.

- These are the facts: All of us have a written record that stands against us. All of us deserve God's wrath and just judgment. Facts don't have feelings. They are what they are, and if we stay in our sin rather than running to Jesus we will die.
 - But if we run to Jesus there is no condemnation because there is no charge, because Jesus paid it all.
 - It is good to feel that Jesus loves me. But the key to having a transformed life isn't simply to feel. It is to know:

Ephesians 3: 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

- The deeper you dig into the facts of Christ's love, the deeper you'll feel Christ's love, and the deeper you feel Christ's love, the more you will be transformed into his likeness. You behold what you love and you become what you behold.