

His Resurrection and Our Justification

Introduction

He Is Risen and He Is Here!

- A. What an amazing morning! When on the first day of the week, a Sunday like this one, life—Spirit-wrought, indestructible, everlasting life—began to course through the cold corpse of our Savior and He rose never to die again!
 - 1. And as He ascended to the right hand of His Father He told His disciples: “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20b). Which we understand to mean He is here by His Spirit in this room with us right now.

The Text

- A. We pick Paul up here mid-stream, so allow me to modify the pronoun that begins v. 25 to make it clearer for us: “[Jesus] was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Rom 4:25).

Life in the Courtroom

- A. We might not realize it, but we live our lives in desperate pursuit of justification. You say: “‘Justification’? I don’t even know what that word means. How can I be in desperate pursuit of it?!”
- B. Let me give you a brief definition before elaborating on this point: “Justification denotes...that action in the law court whereby a judge upholds the case of one party in dispute before him...Having heard the case, the judge finds in favor of one party, and thereby ‘justifies’ him...The person justified is described as ‘just’, ‘righteous’...as a statement of his status before the court” (New Dictionary of Theology, p. 359).
 - 1. Justification, then, is a legal, forensic category. It requires a law, a judge, and a court. And it is a pronouncement of righteousness by that judge, according to that law, in that court.
- C. So when I say that we live our lives in desperate pursuit of justification, I’m saying that, wherever we are, whatever we’re doing, we are always in a courtroom. The law, judge, and court might take on different forms, but, in one way or another, we are always in a courtroom.
 - 1. We’re trying to prove to others, to ourselves, and perhaps even to God, that we’re right, that we’re okay, that we finally measure up. We’re trying to justify ourselves.
- D. Where’s your courtroom? Where are you desperately pursuing justification?

1. Is it at work?

- a. There's a law and a judge there. You want to be seen as smart and successful, capable and qualified. So you labor. You let everything else go. Family, church, sleep. "I want to be right in their eyes! I want their approval."
- b. I get this! I can turn the church, my "work", into a self-justifying program. I may be a pastor, but I still get those invites to Easter Services at other churches in the mail: "We're dropping 1000 eggs; we've got bounce houses; we've got fog machines; we've got free brunch for all; we've even got a goose that lays golden eggs and we'll give an egg to each of your children." In my weak moments, when I read things like this I just want to throw in the towel. With Wal-Mart down the street, why would anyone come here?
 - i. But why would I feel this way? Why wouldn't I see value in what we're doing right now?

(1) I'm thinking justification for my life is to be found in my work. If my church is not the biggest and best then I'm not justified or acceptable. I'm condemned. And either I become a workaholic to try to get there, or I just give up. Either way, it's a slavery.

2. Is it in front of the mirror?

- a. There's a law and a judge there. The magazines along the checkout line at the grocery store are a jury and the verdict's in: you're not pretty enough—you're not blonde enough, you're not tan enough; you're not skinny enough; etc.
 - i. And so you labor. You refuse to eat. You spend money you don't have on the latest fashion trends. You're in the gym religiously though you don't even like it. All in an attempt at justification: "I am beautiful; I am not overweight; I'm not misshapen; I am right; I am worthy your attention and affection."

3. This can even happen in our relationship with God.

- a. We might wake up to the vanity of seeking justification from our fellow man and start to seek it from God. We step into the right court, before the right Judge, but we still might be seeking justification on the wrong basis. We think it's on us.
 - i. So we resolve never to sin again; we're up early doing our devotions every day; we don't miss a church service; we're giving to the poor; etc. "I just want to be right before God. I want Him to be pleased with me."

Our Exhaustion and Easter Sunday

- A. It's exhausting isn't it. Couldn't you just hear it in these few illustrations? You can't stop. You're always laboring, never resting. We live our lives in desperate pursuit of justification, but we never find it in any sort of lasting way. And we're exhausted.
 - 1. But Easter Sunday comes for an exhausted people. What man could never earn in himself, God freely gives in His Son: "[Jesus] was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification."
 - a. Here, brought together in a single verse, is all the glory of Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Here we have both our Savior's death and resurrection put in almost creedal form.
 - i. And the upshot of all this Holy Week activity is nothing less than "our justification." Here alone, in Jesus (His person and work), is the end of all our desperate pursuit. Here, at last, is the way to be put right!
- B. I'm just going to divide this verse in half and take the first half as my first point and the second half as my second point.

(1) Jesus Was Delivered Up For Our Trespasses... (v. 25a)

For Our Trespasses

- A. At the bottom, our desperate pursuit of justification reveals a stunning fact about all of us: namely, we know we're not right. We labor to be counted righteous in one way or another because we get this sense that we aren't. We know that we're broken, that we're not quite measuring up. We intuitively feel this, but we're not always sure why.
- B. In the first half of this verse, Paul tells us why: "our trespasses."
 - 1. This word "trespass" is a vivid, visual word. When I think of trespassing I think of a sign and a line. "No Trespassing!" But then you have a man who comes upon these things and says: "I see your sign, and I see your line, but I don't care." So he trespasses.
 - a. There's a sign like this at the end of a trail I often run. And I must admit it makes the hills beyond it seem even more appealing. Suddenly they're alive with the sound of music. It's like we think someone is keeping us on this side of the line because life is just awesome on that side.
- C. Now Paul uses this word because it brings us to face our relationship with God and His holy law. In His law God has given us the sign and the line, but we've all stood on this side of it and said: "I don't care. Life is over there. You're just trying to keep me from pleasure."

1. Sadly, humanity has been line-crossers from the beginning. Paul uses this same word numerous times in [Rom 5](#) to refer to the trespass of Adam—that primal crossing of a line that set all of humanity on the wrong track: [“One trespass led to condemnation for all men...”](#) (v. 18a).
 - a. The tree was forbidden by God as a test of man’s allegiances, but it looked [“good for food, and...it was a delight to the eyes, and...\[it\] was to be desired to make one wise”](#) (Gen 3:6). So he crossed that line and he ate...and he died.
 2. And we, his progeny, have been trespassing ever since. We keep thinking that life will be found just beyond the next line. God is keeping the good life from us!
 - a. It’s just fudging one number on my tax report; it’s just one more drink with a buddy; it’s just one more look on that website; and away we go, chasing life while moving further and further away from the very Author of life Himself.
- D. We are as Paul would say in Eph: [“dead in our trespasses”](#) (Eph 2:5). We’re not right. We’re all wrong. We’re not justified. We stand condemned and we feel it in our bones, though we’d never admit it.

Jesus Was Delivered Up

- A. Now, Good Friday: [“Jesus was delivered up for our trespasses...”](#)
1. The one line we so desperately need to cross is the one line we now can’t. It’s the line that God drew around His presence in the Garden of Eden upon Adam’s fall. Because of our sin, we couldn’t get back to a holy God even if we wanted to.
 - a. But God, rich in mercy, sends His Son out from His presence, across the line, into our fallen domain, to make a way.
- B. [“Jesus was delivered up for our trespasses...”](#) What are we to understand by this [“delivered up”](#)? The reference is clearly to Christ’s being delivered up to death on the cross. But [“delivered up”](#) by whom? The answer is not as simple as one might first think.
1. Taken from one angle, the delivering of Jesus up to death on the cross would seem not to answer to the problem of man’s trespasses but to increase them. For it is man who delivers Him up.
 - a. The same Greek word is used to describe the betrayal of Jesus by Judas: [“Judas, would you betray \(deliver up\) the Son of Man with a kiss?”](#) (Luke 22:48). Judas delivered Him up to the leaders of Israel.
 - b. And they wanted blood, but only Rome held the authority to execute. So Jewish leaders put together a mock trial before the Sanhedrin, where they falsely accuse Jesus, so that they can then deliver Him up to Rome: [“²⁹ Pilate](#)

went outside to them and said, 'What accusation do you bring against this man?'³⁰ They answered him, 'If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you.'" (John 18:29–30).

- c. So Pilate sits down on what was called his "judgment seat" (Joh 19:13), and he presents Jesus to the people and asks what they want to be done with Him. And "¹⁵ they cried out, 'Away with him, away with him, crucify him!'...¹⁶ So he delivered him over...to be crucified" (John 19:15-16).
- C. Jesus was delivered up by Judas, to the Jewish leaders, who delivered Him up to Pilate, who delivered Him up to death. Mankind is just increasing trespass here! This is no solution to the problem, or is it?!
1. Paul would use this same Greek word again later in Rom 8:32, and when he does, a new unexpected angle from which to see all of this emerges: "He (God)...did not spare his own Son but gave (delivered) him up for us all."
 - a. In an ultimate sense, God is doing this. He is delivering up His Son "for our trespasses". How amazing! He uses our horrific trespasses against Him to accomplish the forgiveness of our trespasses against Him!
 - i. This is why Paul would later say: "Their trespass (in rejecting and killing Jesus) means riches for the world..." (Rom 11:12a). They thought they were killing the Son of God. But God was, in their trespass, truly opening a treasure chest for the nations! "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom 5:20)!

(2) ...And Raised For Our Justification (v. 25b)

Christ Is in the Courtroom

- A. As we move now to consider the second half of our text—"Jesus was...raised for our justification"—we must recognize precisely what it is we've been witnessing up to this point.
1. There is a final day of judgment coming for all men at the end of the age (Rev 20).
 - a. God "...not wanting that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Pet 3:9), has been postponing that final day of judgment since Adam's fall. And He made a promises throughout the OT of One who would come in advance of the end and overturn the guilty verdict due men for their sin.
 - i. God would postpone final judgment for us but bring it in early for His Son, that He might save sinners.

- B. This is what we're witnessing, particularly in the last days of Jesus' earthly life. He is stepping into the heavenly courtroom for us, and enduring the end-time judgment in advance for us.
1. Above the Sanhedrin, above the judgment seat of Pontius Pilate, is the Great White Throne of God. And the Son of Man is being called to give an account, not for His own trespasses, but for ours.
 - a. God wrote onto Jesus the long list of yours and my sins. They were carved into His skin, with the rods, the thorns, the nails, and the spear. He was convicted, condemned, and crucified, consumed by the fires of God's holy wrath for us.
- C. But, based upon the second half of our text, we know that if Paul were there watching His beaten and bloodied body being taken down off that cross and placed in a tomb, he would somberly conclude: "This is not yet good news."
1. "He was raised for our justification." The resurrection is a critical part of this judicial equation. As he would write elsewhere: "If Christ has not been raised...you are still in your sins" (1 Cor 15:17).
 - a. It's as if the jury is still out on Jesus and us. It's as if the bank is still processing the payment of our debt. It's as if the crimson garments of our sin are still in the wash cycle. We're not yet sure how this thing is going to turn out.
- D. But in the early morning, on the first day of a new week, when a few of his disciples approach the tomb, to their utter amazement and joy the stone is rolled back and the body is gone! He isn't there. He is risen!
1. In His resurrection the jury has issued their verdict on both Him and we who are in Him: justified, righteous. In His resurrection, the bank has declared: the check cleared. The debt is paid in full. There will be no collection agency sent after those who trust in precious blood of the Savior. In His resurrection, the crimson stains that have clung so stubbornly to our garments have been finally and forever washed white.
 - a. Here is God's final answer to Adam's trespass: "As one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men" (Rom 5:18).

Walking Out of the Courtroom

- A. Part of what so dogs us about our pursuit of justification is that it never feels stable, sure, irreversible. We can never leave the courtroom.
1. Even if we feel we are in the right with our boss, there's always another project on the horizon, another opportunity to screw it all up.

2. Even when we feel today like we are measuring up to the standards of Hollywood beauty, we can never let our guard down. A few extra spoonfuls of ice cream, a few lazy days of sleeping in instead of hitting the gym, and it all starts to slip.
 3. Even if we feel like we are doing good with God, like we're doing our devotions, we're discipling, we're evangelizing, what happens when you fall into that same sin you pledged you would never commit again? Your justification before God just crumbles to the ground.
- B. If your justification is dependent upon you, you can never rest. You can never leave the courtroom. Until at last you see it: *"Jesus was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification"*!
1. Christ goes to the end of it all, beyond all the what-ifs, the instabilities, the ups-and-downs of the future. He goes to the Last Day, He enters the highest possible court, and He deals with justification there, once and for all: *"³³ Who 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"* (Rom 8:33–34).
- C. He lives to make intercession for us in that courtroom so we don't have to! The resurrection of Christ is an invitation for all who would trust in Him, to walk out of the courtroom and start truly living freely as His child, His heir! You don't have to prove yourself, justify yourself, labor for acceptance, and so on. You already have it in Christ.
1. The Christian is one who no longer labors for justification but from it. There's a restfulness, a peace, a love that can characterize all of our labor on this earth because we already know how it's going to end: Justified in Christ, accepted in the Beloved!
- D. The key to all of this is writing your story into Christ's—so that His judgment day becomes yours, His death counts for your sin, His resurrection life counts for your justification. And the only way God gives us for doing this is repentance and faith.
1. Whether you've been running from or walking with Jesus your whole life, the process is the same: repentance and faith. Turn from self-justification whether before men or God, and receive the justification accomplished for you by Christ.