

“He Was Delivered Up For Our Trespasses And Raised For Our Justification”

A couple of weeks ago, I read the story of Doctor Rosalind Picard. She is a professor at MIT, a scientist, an inventor, and an engineer. She holds over 100 patents. She is the recipient of the 2022 International Lombardi Prize for Computer Science Research, described by some as the Nobel Prize in computer science. She prided herself on being smarter than but tolerant of people who believed in Jesus. But she couldn't put to rest a sense of something more she couldn't quite name - a longing for something science couldn't satisfy. Through a variety of events, she began to examine the claims of Jesus Christ more seriously. She read the Bible, CS Lewis's book, *Mere Christianity*, Lee Strobel's book, *The Case for Christ*, and Josh McDowell's book *Evidence that Demands A Verdict*. In time, she concluded that the evidence strongly supported the reality of all that the gospels claimed to be true about Jesus, including his resurrection from the dead.

In an informal after-dinner talk, she gave Doctor Picard said,

The events of Christ's resurrection are well-established historically. The evidence is abundant and has stood up to the scrutiny of intellectuals for thousands of years. The problem is not 'is there enough evidence of the truthfulness' of the event; the problem is that people don't want to believe it.

She ended up not only intellectually convinced of the reality of the resurrection but also personally converted to faith in Christ. I love her story for a number of reasons, but especially for the centrality of her wrestling with the reality of Jesus's resurrection—its credibility and its implications for all of life. No theme is more important in the New Testament Scriptures than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. *There is no truth or message more important for you and for me. 1*

There is so much that could be said about this, but this morning, I want us to focus primarily on one key phrase from our Scripture reading.

Romans 4:25 *He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.* This comes at the end of a chapter about a man named Abraham from Genesis, the first book in the Bible. Abraham was chosen by God and promised that a Savior would come through him to bless the whole world. When the promise was made, Abraham and his wife Sarah were past childbearing age. Besides she had never been able to conceive. The Scripture makes a big deal about Abraham because he believed God. **Verse 22** says that *his faith was counted to him as righteousness.* God loves it when people have faith in him! Then **verses 23-24** say, *But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord.* To be righteous is to be right with God, and the important thing here is that you get that not by your own record of good deeds but by believing in Jesus as Lord and Savior. It is at this point that scholars point out that **verse 25** introduces a single phrase that is almost certainly a very ancient and traditional summary statement of the Christian faith – what it is we must believe about Jesus to be right with God. Here it is, *who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.* That's the heart of the gospel for Easter and every day! *Jesus was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*

Two things stand out here. First,

I. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS WAS AN ACT OF GOD.

Verses 24-25 say Christ was delivered up *and raised* by God. Jesus spoke of giving himself up for us. But God also wants you to know, as **John 3:16** famously says, *“God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”* God gave Jesus up for us, and God also raised Jesus up for us. Christians aren't naive about the laws of nature, as if it is no big deal to claim that Jesus rose from the dead. But we believe it. Scripture teaches it. Evidence confirms it. God *did* it!

A. The evidence confirms the truth of the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

Acts 1:3 says of Jesus, *He presented himself alive to them (his followers) after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.*

A few years ago, I reviewed two scholarly articles about the state of present-day *international* scholarship on the resurrection of Jesus. What was fascinating was that the *majority* of modern scholars, even the skeptical and unbelieving, conclude that, *on the face of it, the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is compelling.* In other words, in the last twenty-five years, scholars have acknowledged the fact that the historical evidence relating to the resurrection of Jesus is very strong.² They believe at least five things are historically documented beyond a reasonable doubt: 1.) Jesus really existed and lived an amazing life. 2.) He was crucified and really died. 3.) On the third day, the tomb was empty. The enemies of Jesus could never produce a body - it was gone. 4.) Hundreds of independent, believable witnesses gave convincing testimony that they had experiences and encounters with the resurrected Jesus after his death. 5.) These encounters with the risen Christ radically changed the lives of the witnesses. It was specifically this that launched the world-changing movement of the Christian faith and church.

If you are unaware of the strength of the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, Google “*Academics who Believe in the Resurrection*” or “*Scientists who Believe in the Resurrection,*” You will discover the weight of evidence confirms the truth of Scripture. On the third day, new life flowed back into Jesus’ dead body, and he was raised from the dead. This is a critical truth, and it has everything to do with your eternal destiny, your experience in this life, and your experience in the afterlife. It’s not just about whether you feel a certain way or don’t feel a certain way. It is about what God has done and how you choose to respond to this foundational truth of the Christian gospel.

B. A critical part of the message of Easter is that the universe exists because there is a personal God and he raised Jesus from the dead

I listened to a scholar who, for decades, debated skeptics and atheists specifically about the evidence for the resurrection. He said years ago, there would often be these alternative theories to what happened - that either Jesus didn't really die on the Cross, or the disciples had group hallucinations, or they stole the body and conspired to lie to launch their movement. He says at the present time there are virtually no credible historians arguing against the historical evidence pointing to the reality of the resurrection. The evidence, on the merits, is too strong. Opponents and critics of Christianity basically have one fallback position, which can usually be summed up by the words, *"I just don't believe it."* They'll admit the evidence points to it but say it can't be true because it's impossible, the dead don't rise, and miracles don't happen. Well, of course, the crucial thing missing with skepticism is the God factor. Christians believe God did something unique in history at one particular time, and God is able to work in his created world in ways that transcend our present understanding.³

In last week's message, Doctor Swain talked about God in the burning bush, revealing himself as a God without boundaries and without limits - He is! The question of whether God exists is not like the question of whether the Loch Ness Monster or Big Foot exists. You cannot expect to find him if you go out looking for him with sonar or radar or the scientific method. You will find evidence of Him; that's unavoidable, but you will not find him. The God revealed in Scripture exists in a completely different category. He exists in an utterly unique position relative to all of creation. There's a place in the book of Acts - **Acts 17:28** where the Scripture says, *in him we live and move and have our being*. He is not just one more being in time and space, just like us, but with superpowers. He is the source of all being. That's why so much that's intuitive to us as human beings; the desire for love and communication, the sense of morality, the longing for meaning, makes sense. It's why, try as they might, atheistic philosophers cannot explain the things that are most universally intuitive amongst human beings. God is infinite and eternal and almighty. He is the source of all life, and he chose to intervene at a particular time in history to bring Salvation from sin and utterly defeat evil and Satan.

What Scripture tells us, and what history confirms, is that God raised Jesus from the dead. I love talking about the reality of the resurrection but I especially want to talk about the relevance of the resurrection.

II. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS HAS LIFE-CHANGING SIGNIFICANCE.

Let's just look at three things: the resurrection as a seal of salvation, a sign of hope, and a source of confidence. First,

A. The resurrection seals the gift of Salvation for every believer.

The Bible says both the death and resurrection of Jesus were *for us*. **Romans 4:25** says Jesus was *delivered up for our trespasses*. What does he mean by *us* and *our*? He is not talking about all of humanity but all who believe in and have received Jesus as Saving Lord. In the ancient world, nations or armies would sometimes send out one champion to fight for them all. They would fight, and whichever champion won - the whole army won. A modern example might be a lawyer. If you have to go to court, and maybe you're not that bright, but your lawyer is a genius. So, if he wins the case, you win - right! His victory becomes yours, too. Another example might be the lottery - your wife wins the lottery! What do you say? *"We won! Here's how that idea relates to Jesus. When you say, I trust in him as my Savior, God says that His sufferings will be the payment for your trespasses. Your trespasses are every place where you have stepped across the lines God has drawn for the way we are called to live. Everything we've done that's wrong – what the Bible calls sin. Our sin receives the judgment it deserves in the suffering of Christ. But the gospel doesn't end on the Cross! It also says, and (he was) raised for our justification! The final verdict of righteousness for Jesus and for us was powerfully demonstrated when God raised Jesus. So our assurance is not only in the words "it is finished" but also in the words "He is risen"! "It is finished" means the payment for sin has been made. "He is risen" means the verdict of righteousness has been given. The fact that the Scripture says this is for us means that there's no hierarchy among us that is dependent on your performance or good works. The grace and the gift of righteousness is promised to an absolute and inclusive category of people: all who believe in Jesus as Savior.*

This is the first thing; the resurrection of Jesus seals the gift of Salvation for every believer in Jesus. Second,

B. The resurrection is the sign that points to our future hope.

The word translated *raised* here is the same word that's found in **Romans 8** and **1 Corinthians 15** where we told the risen Christ is the "*first fruits*" of a larger resurrection to come. The first fruits would be the first grapes that show up on the vine that promise a larger harvest. The resurrection images what God will do with everyone who turns to Him for Salvation *and* with the world itself at the end of history. Out of the formless darkness pictured in the Book of Genesis, God spoke and created a new world something that had not existed before. In the same way, on the morning of the resurrection, God created something new that had never existed before. Jesus was raised up with a physical but transformed body. They could touch him. He himself explicitly told them I am not a spirit touch me, and yet he had been transformed in a manner that the Bible calls glorified. **Hebrews 7:16** speaks of his "*indestructible life.*" The crucifixion wrecked the body of Jesus, but God raised him up in a renewed body that was filled with life, power, and glory. In doing so, God showed us what he will one day do with all who belong to Christ and with all of his creation as well.

The resurrection is a sign that pictures the future promise. Third

C. The resurrection is a source of confident commitment to Jesus.

One of the most influential philosophers of the late Renaissance was Tommaso Campanella. I read once where he criticized a lot of Christian art because it tended to focus continually on the theme of Jesus in weakness and suffering. Of course, that is an important part of the story, but he said this.

Why do you concentrate upon that passing episode, as if... the curtain dropped upon that horror of disaster and defeat? Paint Christ not dead but risen, with his foot set in scorn on the split rock with which they sought to hold him down! Paint him the conqueror of death! ... Paint him as what he is, the irresistible Victor who, tested to the uttermost, has proved Himself in very deed mighty to save! 4

We have a risen Savior! Jesus is often portrayed as weak, with soft, shiny hair and a little pet lamb. What kind of Christ do we look to, and from what kind of Christ do we draw strength? Listen to what Jesus himself says in **Revelation 1:17b-18**. *“Fear not, I am the first and the last, ¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.* Jesus warns us that to reject him or even remain indifferent to him is to be lost! To enter the afterlife lost, facing eternal despair, eternal misery, without hope, without God – this is what Scripture calls hell. Over against that horror, Scripture proclaims this good news: **Romans 4:25** *Jesus was delivered for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*

CONCLUSION

What is your response? I love the image Doctor Rosalind Picard used in describing her coming to faith in Jesus. She wrote:

After praying, ‘Jesus Christ I ask you to be Lord of my life,’ my world changed dramatically, as if a flat, black-and-white existence suddenly turned full color and three dimensional. I lost nothing of my urge to seek new knowledge in fact, I felt emboldened to ask tougher questions... I felt joy and freedom but also a heightened sense of responsibility and challenge.⁵

Saving grace is not a reward for good people. It is a gift received by faith. In **John 11:25-26** Jesus says, *“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”* Do You? Believe it! Believe in Him. Let's rejoice and be thankful and that we have such a risen Savior! He is worth your total devotion.

Amen

A Prayer Expressing Faith in Christ

Savior! From the depths of my soul, I thank you that I can call you my Savior, Redeemer, and Risen Lord. You are the Alpha and the Omega. You hold the keys to life, and death and all things! I know and confess I have grievously sinned in thought and deed, but I believe you were delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. I turn to you as Lord and trust in you alone for my Salvation! Your resurrection reveals your victory and establishes my assurance in grace. Thank you! Amen.

A Prayer for Spiritual Renewal

Lord Jesus, Help me to live a life of deep faith in your ultimate triumph, sacrificial love, continued presence, enthroned lordship, and overflowing goodness. Continually enable me to see, with eyes of faith, the reality of who you are, flooding my life with lavish grace from eternity past to eternity future and all through this present life as well. "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever! Amen"

1 In the book of Acts, a number of significant speeches or sermons are recorded. Someone did a statistical analysis of the major themes in those speeches and sermons. Here's what they found, 38% of them mention judgment, 50% of them mention repentance and witness, and 63% mention forgiveness and the Lordship of Christ. 88% of them speak of O.T. prophecies finding fulfillment in Christ and the death of Jesus, But 100% of them mention the resurrection of Jesus. *The Cross is not Enough* p. 20.

2 <https://www.bethinking.org/did-jesus-rise-from-the-dead/contemporary-scholarship-and-the-resurrection-of-jesus>

3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1teWa6uQzc>

4 Tommaso Campanella quoted in *The Cross is not Enough*, Clifford and Johnson p. 19.

5 The credentials for Dr. Picard are from <https://web.media.mit.edu/~picard/index.php>. The testimony section and quotes are drawn from two sources. <https://web.media.mit.edu/~picard/personal/ccc-talk.php>, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/april/rosalind-picard-mit-professor-meets-author-knowledge.html>