

**Raised for Our Justification—Romans 4:25—3/27/2016**

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We're grateful to gather today on Easter, Resurrection Sunday, to celebrate the wondrous work of our Lord Jesus.

I enjoy the pleasure of singing God's praises & focusing on the amazing accomplishments of Jesus' death & resurrection.

In the northern hemisphere, we're blessed with this celebration in the spring season when new life is blossoming all around us.

Sometimes that spring metaphor can color this holiday in themes that miss the core of its meaning.

You can find egg hunts that focus on new physical life & cute furry animals or you can find greetings that honor the cycle of seasonal life.

Or more confusing, you can find ministries that honor Jesus carrying His cross but lack biblical definition of why He did so.

They extol Jesus' suffering as an example, but don't connect it neither to the purpose of God nor to the reality of sin.

So we need to ask some why questions about this climactic event in earth's history.

Why did Jesus suffer so horrifically & publically?

If He was so good, why did God allow such injustice for Him?

And if Jesus claimed to be God, what was He doing through all this?

And what about the resurrection—does it matter or is it merely a happy ending to show that good guys win in the end?

If those seem basic, thank God for what you know from the Bible.

But I urge you to venture into conversations with those questions this week.

Tell people you were challenged to survey to see what people know & believe about Easter.

I'd love to hear what you find.

As you do so, I'm going to give you a one-verse summary reply when opportunities arise for you to offer a biblical explanation of Easter.

Today we're going to examine a one-verse synopsis of what was accomplished on Good Friday & Resurrection Sunday.

We're going to walk through 2 parts of one verse that delve into the deeper significance of the cross & resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We read Mark 15:1-16:8 for the narrative of what happened.

The Gospels tell us about this man Jesus, who was called the Christ & the King of the Jews & who had miraculously saved others from diseases & demons & even death.

The Jewish leaders of His time did not appreciate Him receiving the recognition that His wise words & wondrous works deserved, but they could not dispute that He was divine.

Even in their attempts to accuse Him of wrong, the only charge they could find was Jesus' own claim to be God.

Jesus confessed that He was the Son of Man & Son of God.

But those who hated Him rejected that truth & blamed Him for blasphemy that they twisted into a mob cry to crucify Him.

So He went to the cross, suffering as He was forsaken by the Father & darkness fell until He gave up His earthly life.

Yet despite being fully wrapped in linens & sealed in a guarded tomb, Jesus rose from the dead & appeared to many.

He did it all just as He had promised & predicted.

Though His disciples struggled to understand it beforehand, Jesus went through with it all in details that fulfilled numerous OT prophecies.

With that history as our background, turn to Romans 4:25 where we find a one-verse summary of 2 reasons this occurred.

Read Romans 4:24-25 to begin to see what I mean. [READ]

Verse 24 says this greatly matters for those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

So my prayer is that you will be among those this verse applies to, that you will trust Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

To believe means to trust, to entrust yourself to, to rely upon & rest in & follow Him who raised Jesus.

The One who raised Jesus is God the Father, the same God Abraham had trusted as able to raise his son Isaac from the dead.

The context of Romans 4 is a review Abraham's faith & how he trusted that God could raise his beloved son Isaac from the dead if he offered Isaac up as a sacrifice like God said.

But God stopped Abraham from slaying Isaac & provided a substitute.

That same God is trusted by as the One who raised Jesus.

In that same faith, Jesus is trusted as 'our Lord' as verse 24 calls Him.

Jesus is not merely believed about as a distant historical figure or past hero we honor a few times a year.

Jesus is embraced personally as Lord & Master, meaning He is the personal Ruler to whom we surrender.

Jesus is the One whose words we trust so we follow Him.

And that same Jesus died & was buried & was raised from death.

So this is not a faith like Muslims or any other religion that sees Jesus as any other prophet or that merely believes in God.

Biblical faith must trust that God raised Jesus from death.

Jesus' death & resurrection matter for every human soul because He is the Final Judge that everyone will face.

But Jesus' death & resurrection mean everything for us who trust Him.

Those who believe in God who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead are the people whose transgressions & whose justification are mentioned in verse 25.

I want all of us to be in that category.

If you are not yet in that category of Jesus-follower-by-faith, then I want you to trust Him today & enter those blessings.

And if you are in that category of believer, I want to renew your mind with joys of worshipping Him & deeper reasons to trust Him.

I want us all to clearly grasp these 2 basic reasons for Jesus' death & resurrection that are summed up in Romans 4:25.

Here's reason #1—Jesus' death paid for the sins of believers.

Those words & that concept may sound familiar, but let's allow the summary of it in Romans 4:25 to impact us.

Point #1 today—Jesus' death paid for the sins of believers.

Verse 25 first mentions that Jesus was delivered over because of our transgressions.

To be delivered over is to be given into the hands or authority of another, to be handed over.

That is what Jesus endured in being betrayed by Judas & unjustly accused by the Jews & sentenced to death by Pilate.

In all of those ways, Jesus was delivered over to death.

Yet the passive verb here does not name any of those people as the one who delivered Jesus over to death.

So we must see the ultimate one in charge of Jesus' death as God.

God the Father is the unnamed Governing Cause who planned Jesus' death and orchestrated it to the very detail.

Since God the Father is the one who raised Jesus from the dead, it makes the most sense in Romans 4:25 to see God the Father as the one referred to as delivering Jesus over to death.

These 2 parallel statements in Romans 4:25 are both about what God the Father accomplished in Christ for our salvation.

This verb is the same word used to describe what God actively did in delivering up Christ for believers in Romans 8:32.

Romans 8:32 says that God “did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all.”

Peter spoke similarly in Acts 2:23 in saying that Jesus was “delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God.”

So this is not the only text teaching God as causing the cross.

Yet Peter also said in Acts 2:23 that the Jews “*nailed [Jesus] to a cross by the hands of godless men & put Him to death.*”

So sinful people did crucify Jesus, but God had planned to use those sinful people to accomplish His good purposes.

This language flows from OT promises of God, like those in Isaiah 53 about the Suffering Servant who would die for the sins of His people.

Isaiah 53:10 says “*The LORD was pleased to crush Him*”, after verse 5 said “*He was pierced through for our transgressions.*”

God gave Jesus over to die—verse 25 says—“because of our transgressions”, because of our false steps or trespasses, our failures & deviations from truth & uprightness.

Some translations say “for our transgressions”, & that ‘for’ means ‘for the reason of’ or ‘because of’.

God chose to give Jesus up to death because OUR sins alienated us from His glory & made us deserve punishment.

Because our sins required God's just penalty, God paid that penalty in Christ's death so we could be reconciled to Him.

And that's how this verse immediately jumps throughout all of history & points the finger at every believer who ever lived.

Jesus was handed over because of US if we trust Him—because of MY sins, because of OUR transgressions.

That's how this event of nearly 2000 years ago impacts us today.

The cross was God's plan—but it was OUR fault.

When we hear that, it should be both bad news & good news.

It is bad news because it screams how bad our sins are for the Perfect God-Man Jesus to face such punishment for us.

This tells us that every failure to live up to God's moral law in our attitudes & words & actions deserves graphic retribution.

Every millisecond that I don't love God with all that I am & all that He deserves incurs guilt that demands a penalty.

So the death of Jesus shows us how fiercely our sins call for justice.

Yet that is also good news because of what God accomplished.

God accomplished atonement for our sins, which means He covered it.

Jesus' death completely paid sin's penalty for His people.

God gave Jesus to satisfy the punishment that His justice required.

God could not merely wave His hand & act like sin never happened, especially since all sin is ultimately against Him.

He could not be the Just Judge & act like good & evil don't matter.

God had to punish the sins of believers in order to freely forgive them & allow them into His holy presence.

Look at Romans 3:25-26 to see that as why suffered publicly. [READ]

Because God had passed over the sins of OT believers, He proved His righteousness by punishing their sins on Jesus.

That's what propitiation means—it means a satisfaction of God's wrath, a complete accomplishment of just punishment.

So God was proven righteous for the sins of believers in the past, the present & the future.

He is both just & the justifier of those who trust Jesus.

The first part of Romans 4:25 relates to how God is just & the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of Romans 4:25 describes more how He is the justifier.

The first part reminds us that Jesus' death paid for believers' sins.

We sing the riches of that amazing truth in many songs like those we've sung today.

In the song "*How Deep the Father's Love For Us*", we sing it by saying, "*It was my sin that held Him there, until it was accomplished, His dying breath has brought me life, I know that it is finished.*"

May the wonder that Jesus' death paid for our sins never grow old & may our worship of Him for such grace never grow cold.

Now look back at Romans 4:25 & let's read it again. [READ]

After mentioning Jesus dying because of our sins, the verse 2<sup>nd</sup>ly says that Jesus was raised because of our justification.

So reason #2 for Jesus' death & resurrection in our one-verse summary is that Jesus' resurrection proved the justification of believers.

#2—Jesus' resurrection proved the justification of believers.

1<sup>st</sup>, Jesus' death paid for the sins of believers & 2<sup>nd</sup>, Jesus' resurrection proved the justification of believers.

We should note in both verse 24 & verse 25 that Jesus' resurrection was not an optional accessory to the NT message.

The resurrection was a historical reality that actually happened.

And as with Jesus' death in Romans 4:25, God the Father is again here in view as the One who did this raising of Jesus.

Though Scripture does speak of Jesus rising in the sense that He raised Himself, most often the Bible speaks of God the Father raising Jesus.

Of course, the working of the Three-in-One God is always in harmony with each Person of the Trinity.

But it is important here to see that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead because of what that resurrection stated about Jesus' death.

Some translations may state verse 25 as Jesus was raised "for" our justification, but since the same preposition & case are used in both phrases, it's best to translate it as "because of".

The point is that God raised Jesus because of what Jesus had fully & finally accomplished for believers.

There is a sense in which Jesus' death had infinite value to make a real offer of salvation to everyone who ever lives.

But verses like Romans 4:25 emphasize what Jesus' death actually accomplished for those God planned to save.

Jesus' death so fully & finally dealt with sin that God the Father had to raise Jesus & not let Him stay in the grave.

So Jesus' death accomplished justification—He did all that was required for God to declare righteous everyone who believes.

Justification is the act of declaring a believer right with God, stating that a believer is righteous through Christ.

It is what God did for Abraham in counting him righteous, counting his faith as righteousness, as Romans 4:22-24 say.

That does not mean Abraham's faith earned him righteousness.

Instead, faith is the heart attitude & spiritual posture toward God that trusts only & all in what He promises to freely give that we can't earn.

It is resting, leaning, & banking on God's revelation of Himself and His promises.

That kind of faith is credited to every believer as righteousness.

God exchanges the sin in believers' spiritual bank account for the righteousness that's in Jesus Christ's account.

Then He can justly declare believers righteous—He can accomplish our justification—because he has given us Christ's righteousness.

So it becomes OUR justification—as verse 25 describes it—when we turn from sin to faith in God through Christ.

And verse 25 describes it as OUR justification even before many believers ever came to hear of it or receive it.

So the point is that God raised Jesus because the justification of believers throughout time was that sure and secure already.

Because what Jesus accomplished was that sure and secure, then the justification of all believers for all time was assured.

When God raised Jesus, He proclaimed that He accepted Jesus' payment for sin as washing away all believers' sins forever.

No more work, no more death, & no more payment was ever needed.

God was proving that Jesus had satisfied all that was needed to acquire and apply salvation to all believers forever.

God was confirming that Jesus had won over sin & death & the devil and that Jesus had achieved that victory for all who trust Him.

Jesus' resurrection assured that all who trust Him will one day be raised again also and spend forever with Him in heaven.

And verse 25 highlights that this has all already been accomplished through Jesus being delivered to death and raised again.

So we can trust all that Christ has done for our justification & never try to add anything to it.

You don't have to get better or work harder or feel holier or achieve more or be good enough when you trust Jesus as all-sufficient.

If you are His, then His death has already satisfied sin's penalty for you & His righteousness already fully clothes you.

You are accepted & loved & He's certified it forever so you can revel in it day after wonderful day with gratitude for His grace.

And Romans 4:23-24 says God wrote this for us to know that.

So memorize Romans 4:25 & remind your soul that this Bible is not a dead, ancient gathering of documents or a skewed smattering of past histories and mythologies.

This is God's precious book given for the good of our souls.

God wrote the Bible to awaken faith in hearts & to credit His people with His righteousness & to fuel lives with truth to live by.

Such precious doctrines as these are not stodgy and cold and fit only for ivory tower debates over finer details.

They are heart-enflaming & life-transforming truths that we will wither up & die if we do not embrace & preach to ourselves & others.

Read Romans 4:25 again. [READ]

These are the treasures of the Gospel.

#1—Jesus' death paid for the sins of believers; & #2—Jesus' resurrection proved the justification of believers.

So bank on Jesus alone & forever relish the forgiveness & security & hope & joy acquired for believers by His death and resurrection.

Jesus is the one and only Savior who fully accomplished all that is needed to rescue and forever keep His followers.

Praise Him for His marvelous work!

Worship Him for all that He has accomplished for you if you trust Him as your Lord and Savior.

And if you do not trust Him, then see the obvious and only hope that will ever be held out to your helpless soul.

See that Jesus Christ is what you truly need now & forever.

Give up on every other pursuit in life except a life lived by faith in this all-sufficient Savior & supremely gracious God.

If we can help you understand that or pray with you, we as elders would love to talk with you after the service.

We love this Good News of Jesus Christ & we pray we'll all experience the pleasures of the Gospel increasingly each day.

Only this Gospel frees us from needing success or money or control or others' approval or anything else that can enslave us.

Only this Gospel empowers us to love and serve with gladness in God that can never be taken away.

I pray that you never grow weary of applying the Gospel afresh to your soul each day as we walk by faith in this world.

Pray with me as we close.