



IMMANUEL  
BAPTIST CHURCH

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**The Resurrection of Jesus and Justification**

**Romans 4:25**

**March 31, 2013**

**Easter Sunday**

**Nathan Carter**

**Text**

*He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

**Introduction**

This week many in our church participated in a media fast – voluntarily giving up TV, movies, internet, etc... in order to focus on meditation and prayer. It is a special week as we remember the central events of not only our faith but world history – the death and resurrection of Jesus. For those of you who did the media fast, how has it been? It's surprising how much free time we really do have once we take those things away, isn't it? I pray that our reengagement with it this week can be somewhat different than before, perhaps.

Well, before this last week I had watched a good bit of March Madness and there is this overplayed beer commercial where a guy and a gal are on a blind date. He toasts to her actually looking like her profile picture. Has anyone seen this? The story is that they found each other through an online dating service and were just meeting for the first time. And what stands behind that joke is the common practice of people misrepresenting themselves on the internet. It's one of the temptations of social media – you can edit yourself; you can be selective; you can highlight your accomplishments, overlook your negatives; you can put your best face forward; you can try to be somebody you're not. Why is this such a lure? Why is there so often a discrepancy between your status updates and your browser history?<sup>1</sup> Between who you present yourself to be and who you really are?

A few years ago there was a story leaked on the internet about a lady who 'winked' at a guy on Match.com. The guy's screen name was 'IvyLeagueAlum'. He replied with the following email:

I live in a 31 story high rise condominium, right in the middle of the Buckhead nightlife district [Atlanta]. Do you ever come to this area of town to shop/go out/visit/explore?

I went to an Ivy League school – the University of Pennsylvania – for my undergraduate degree in economics and my graduate degree in management (Wharton School of Business). Where did you go to school?

What activities do you currently participate in to stay in shape? I work out 4 times a week at LA Fitness. Do you exercise regularly? I am 6 feet tall, 185 pounds – what about yourself? I am truly sorry if that sounds rude, impolite or even downright crass, but I have been deceived before by inaccurate representations so I prefer someone be upfront and honest on initial contact...

I do mergers & acquisitions (corporate finance) for Limited Brands (Bath & Body Works, Victoria's Secret, etc). Enjoy any of our stores/divisions?

Do you have any other recent pictures you care to share? I have many others if you care to see them.

Regards,  
John

When she replied that she was not interested. He snapped back with more shameless self-promotion:

[I hope] you don't blow it with the next 8.9 on Hot or Not, Ivy League grad, Mensa member, can bench/squat/leg press over 1200 lbs., has had lunch with the secretary of defense, has an MBA from the top school in the country, lives in a Buckhead high rise, drives a Beemer convertible, has been in 14 major motion pictures, was in Jezebel's Best dressed, etc. Oh, that is right, there aren't any more of those!<sup>2</sup>

Now that's funny... kind of (I find it extremely sad to be reminded of the dearth of noble men out there). Granted, it's a bit extreme, but what really is going on here? It's something we all struggle with. And it involves a deeply theological concept – justification. This is self-justification. We all desperately yearn to be justified, to be declared and recognized as 'righteous'.

I don't ever buy it when someone says that ordinary, everyday, unchurched people aren't concerned with theological concepts like justification. Sure they are. Everybody is. We're all, in some way or another, trying to justify our existence. We're obsessed, consumed, and occupied with this pursuit almost all the time. Our modern secular culture may use other terms for it, like 'performancism' 'self-esteem' or whatever, but we all recognize that we're flawed and fear being exposed and seek to find our cover, our identity in our accomplishments or knowledge or experience or relationships or being right. It's self-justification... and it never really works.

But the Bible so graciously and compassionately takes up this human problem and points us in a different direction. It speaks of being justified by Christ through faith. It says we can stop hiding from who we are and striving for an impressive resume to be noticed by other people. Instead we can admit not just our inadequacies, but our sins; rest in the work of Christ for us, and be affectionately approved of by the supreme Being in the Universe, the one who made us and can alone satisfy us. That's divine justification. It is the sweetest, dearest truth I know.

Today I want to talk about the resurrection of Jesus and justification. I'll be focusing in on one verse of the Bible – Romans 4:25. It's a verse that has always intrigued me, and so I wanted to give it some attention. It says, "He [that is, Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." What does the resurrection have to do with justification?

Now there are many different ways you can go with an Easter sermon, and I've done many of them.

- You can go through the logical arguments for the historicity of the resurrection of Christ. It really happened!
- You can then show how that proves Jesus was really divine. This isn't all just a game!
- You can assert that the resurrection proves that the atonement worked. It is the Father's "AMEN" to the Son's "IT IS FINISHED!" So there's forgiveness.
- You can show how it brings new spiritual life to us here and now. There is power at work in this world to create life from death!
- You can show how it guarantees a future, physical resurrection and glorification of those who trust in Christ. We have unshakeable, substantial hope for the future!

There are many different angles from which to look at this event and implications of it. We could spend the next 70 Easters together without a repeat sermon. This year I just want to connect the dots between Christ's resurrection and our justification. In short, what I want you to see today is just this: **Jesus was declared righteous by his resurrection and if you are in him then you are too.**

*Let's pray...*

### **Delivered Over to Death for Our Sins**

First off, let me say something about the beginning half of this verse. "He was delivered over to death for our sins." This is referring, of course, to the crucifixion of Jesus, Good Friday. The resurrection, Easter, is dependent on the fact that Jesus was crucified. The death of Christ is utterly necessary for our salvation.

*He... that is, Jesus, a human who lived 2,000 years ago in Palestine who claimed to also be divine... was delivered over...* the Jewish leaders handed him over to the Roman authorities, but an even deeper reality is that this was God's sovereign plan and doing (cf. Acts 2:23)... *to death...* he fully experienced the pain of death, but it wasn't just any death... *for sins...* his death was on account of, because of sins, to pay the price for sins, it was a capital punishment; but even more it was for *our* sins, it wasn't for his own sins; it was substitutionary, in the place of someone else, taking on and identifying with the sins of others, suffering the penalty on behalf of someone else.

There could be no salvation apart from Jesus stepping in and dying for our sins. Justice required that judgment be executed and the wrath of God toward sin poured out. That's what we all deserve. This part of Romans 4:25 is an allusion to Isaiah 53:12 in the Greek OT – delivered over to death. Jesus fulfills all of Isaiah 53. He is the one who "was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him" (Is. 53:5). We are sinners and our sin demands that

God justly punish us with terrible punishment. But if you are with Jesus, you believe in him, you're united to him by faith, then when Jesus died on the cross, you were crucified, you paid the full price for your sins, through Christ's awful death on the cross. That's what the Bible offers as the solution for the guilt and debt that you have incurred.

We're in the middle of preaching through the book of Leviticus as a church right now. A few weeks ago we looked at the 'guilt offering' described there and said that this particular sacrifice was more specifically talking not about legal guilt but economic debt. It's referring to a particular aspect of our sin, namely that it robs God of his due and requires reparation, restitution, payment. After I preached that sermon I saw another connection that I could have used, but missed at the time. So why don't I make it now.

Isaiah 53:10 says that Jesus is our ultimate 'guilt offering'. He pays for our sins. Colossians 2:13-14 says of Jesus – "He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the [record of debt; cf. ESV]... that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross." I found this quote from another pastor that paints the picture this way:

God took the record of all your sins that made you a debtor to wrath (sins are offenses against God that bring down his wrath), and instead of holding them up in front of your face and using them as the warrant to send you to hell, God put them in the palm of his Son's hand and drove a spike through them into the cross. It is a bold and graphic statement: He canceled the record of our debt... nailing it to the cross (Col. 2:14).

Whose sins were nailed to the cross? Answer: *My* sins. [And *your* sins]. The sins of all who despair of saving themselves and who trust in Christ alone. Whose hands were nailed to the cross? Jesus' were. There is a beautiful name for this. It's called a *substitution*. God condemned *my* sin in *Christ's* flesh.<sup>3</sup>

Oh, it's a wonderful and glorious and indispensable truth – Christians: Jesus was delivered over to death for our sins. The wrath is exhausted. The punishment is completely meted out. The debt is paid.

### **Raised to Life for Our Justification**

But there's more. There's more to the salvation Jesus provides than just removing the guilt and condemnation and debt of our sin through the substitutionary death of Christ. So much more. And one of the other glorious aspects of the salvation that Jesus provides is that he doesn't just take our sins away so that God has nothing that he can hold against us, he gives us his righteousness so that God is thoroughly for us! This is justification. We are not just atoned for, we're not just declared not guilty, we are declared to be fully and completely righteous!

Jesus "was raised to life for our justification." How does this work? Maybe you're more accustomed to thinking of justification being linked to Jesus' death (cf. Rom. 5:9). But here we see that his resurrection is listed as the cause of justification. How does that work? You see Jesus, when he was dying a shameful death on the cross was being declared a sinner, he was bearing the curse of a sinner. He was suffering as an unrighteous man and absorbing the full fury of divine justice against unrighteousness.

And all who are in Christ get in on that. We get the full benefit of Christ's atonement credited to us as he represented us there.

Likewise, when Jesus was raised from the grave three days later he was "declared with power to be the Son of God" (Rom. 1:4). This was a demonstration to the whole world that Jesus was indeed himself innocent and completely righteous. The Father, through the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 8:11), was announcing his favor and delight in his Son. "God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:24). Death had no legitimate claim. 1 Timothy 3:16 says that Jesus was "vindicated by the Spirit." That's the same word that's translated elsewhere as 'justify.' Jesus was justified, vindicated, declared to be righteous... because he really was!

Theologian Richard Gaffin says that "the unexpressed assumption in Rom. 4:25b is that Jesus's resurrection is his justification."<sup>4</sup> Greg Beale adds, "Accordingly, when believers are identified with Christ's resurrection, which justified him, they also are justified and declared to be just as righteous as he was."<sup>5</sup> Just to make sure you're getting this, let me read to you the way the ESV Study Bible puts it in the notes for this verse:

Both the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are necessary for forgiveness of sins and justification... When God the Father raised Christ from the dead, it was a demonstration that he accepted Christ's suffering and death as full payment for sin, and that the Father's favor, no longer his wrath against sin, was directed toward Christ, and through Christ toward those who believe. Since Paul sees Christians as united with Christ in his death and resurrection (6:6, 8-11; Eph. 2:6; Col. 2:12; 3:1), God's approval of Christ at the resurrection results in God's approval also of all who are united to Christ, and in this way results in their "justification."<sup>6</sup>

Jesus was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. In Jesus' death our sins are paid for. In Jesus' resurrection our righteous standing is secured. That is, if you are joined to Jesus by faith, you're trusting in him as your only hope, "you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). God didn't just raise Christ from the dead. That was just the first step in his glorification. His resurrection led to his ascension. The resurrected Christ has ascended to heaven and been welcomed into the Father's presence, seated at his right hand, reigning, fully accepted. And if you're in Christ, though you're a sinner and as unbelievable as this sounds, you're right there too. It is impossible to be any more accepted and approved by any higher court.

That's justification. That's yours if you acknowledge your sins and put your faith "in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead" and says this is all so. Stop hiding your sins or minimizing them or excusing them. And then stop trying to find an alternative righteousness that you've constructed on your own. It doesn't matter if you're an Ivy League Alum and can bench press twice your weight, not before God. Amassing a resume like that to earn your righteousness just makes you all the more unrighteous. Listen to the Apostle Paul, who once played that game and had quite a profile. He said:

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection...<sup>7</sup>

## Conclusion

I hope you can you make the connections from these verses and this theological concept to your life? For me, the reality that Christ counts for me, I'm with him, Jesus has me covered – his death was my punishment, his resurrection was my justification – I'm good, I need nothing more, I'm loved and accepted and crowned with glory... this is life, this is freedom, this is joy, this is peace, this is good news.

I can still be tempted to self-justify, and Christ died for even that. I can be tempted to go back and see how many people ♥ my Instagram photo so I can feel good about myself. I think about what I look like. My eyes go right to me when I scan through a photo album.

As a preacher I can work hard to finally preach the sermon that will settle in everyone's minds that I am a good preacher, but I'll have to do it again next week so people don't think I'm slipping. Len Barker threw a perfect game in 1981 and who's ever heard of him now? It's self-justification, and it's terrible.

I can get down that only 79 people 'like' my church on Facebook. I can compare myself to other pastors with envy or self-deprecation. I work harder and say to myself, "Well at least I can rest assured knowing I was faithful and busted my hump." But I can't rest assured.

I can try to console myself over having a small church by fantasizing about my funeral when all these people will come out of the woodwork to say what an impact I had on them. Then they'll see how great of a guy and pastor I was. So if I can't be successful in this life, I can finally be justified by my legacy and what people say about me after I'm gone. But I can't. I can only be justified (fully, finally, and forever) by what God says about me. And he says that if I'm in Christ, what he's said about him he's said about me.

"By observing the law no one will be justified" (Gal. 2:16). You can never achieve enough or build a strong enough case to quiet the accusation that you don't measure up. There is a relentless pressure to perform. What is it for you? Now my mama will be proud of me? Now that my house is clean, the dishes are done, the kids are sleeping, and all my to do list is checked off I can feel good about my day? Once I reach this level in my career? Once everyone understands me and what I've been through? Once I get a boyfriend or girlfriend or wife or husband or kids... or once my kids turn out okay? Once I get into this school? How are you tempted to build and grasp for your own righteousness so that you feel justified?

These are all symptoms and signals of the deeper problem – we stand condemned before God on our own. But wouldn't it be amazing to know that you are justified by God instead? You can. Believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He

was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. There is no other way.

If you've never experienced this, if you've never put your faith in Christ as your atonement and justification, then don't delay. And if you have, you can never rehearse your speech too much. What am I referring to? Your speech before God, because you are going to stand before him someday. I officiated my first funeral right here a couple weeks ago. Friday the 22<sup>nd</sup> while I was watching a movie a 19 year old was playing Capture the Flag at the college I went to out in the suburbs and collapsed and soon after died.<sup>8</sup> This Monday the father of one of my childhood friends, my childhood wrestling coach and favorite high school math teacher was walking with his wife and his daughter-in-law pushing his 10 day old, first grandchild when a drunk driver plowed into them and killed him and his wife immediately. The mom and baby are still in critical condition.<sup>9</sup> Just like that. Thursday night Lizzy's close friend's brother was a State Trooper and had stopped to help a motorist on 294 and his car was struck by a semi and burst into flames. Dead on the scene.<sup>10</sup> I was at a conference once when a speaker said that some of us wouldn't be back at that conference in two years and two days later a conference attendee died in a house fire.

It's coming for some of us sitting right here soon. It's coming for all of us eventually. "It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27; ESV). What will you say before God? What's your speech you've been rehearsing? If it's some form of "Don't you hear what they're saying about me down there right now?" you're screwed. It can't be "I was a wrestling coach and math teacher and dedicated pillar of the community?" That won't cut it. It can't even be that you went to church every Sunday or that you were a pastor who tried your best to be faithful.

The only thing that will get you through the scrutinizing judgment of God that is coming is if you bow your head in contrition knowing that you deserve eternal hell but you see out of the corner of your eye the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ and recognize him and run to him and say, "I'm with him. I don't deserve it, it's utterly amazing that it's possible, but you said that he was delivered over to death for my sins and was raised to life for my justification and I trust in that." And he will say, "Welcome, my righteous child. It's all yours!"

And the only way you'll say that then is if you've rehearsed that here and begun to experience it.

### **The Lord's Table**

One of the ways we rehearse this message is through eating the Lord's Table. We acknowledge our sin. We remember his body broken and blood shed for us. We proclaim his death until he comes again in the same body that rose from the grave. And when he appears, we shall be like him (1Jn. 3:2), for he will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (Ph. 3:21).

### **Benediction**

"What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus,

who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:31-39).

This sermon was addressed originally to the people at Immanuel Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois, by Pastor Nathan Carter on Sunday morning, March 31, 2013. It is not meant to be a polished essay, but was written to be delivered orally. The mission of Immanuel is to be a multiplying community that enjoys and proclaims the Good News of Christ in the great city of Chicago.

End notes:

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<sup>1</sup> I benefitted from watching David Zahl’s talk at the recent Liberate Conference on “Grace and Media” where I got this phrase and others used here – <http://liberatenet.org/2013/03/12/watch-david-zahl-at-liberate-2013/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://gawker.com/309684/>

<sup>3</sup> John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 45.

<sup>4</sup> Richard B. Gaffin, *Centrality of the Resurrection: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 123.

<sup>5</sup> G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 496-97.

<sup>6</sup> *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 2165.

<sup>7</sup> Philippians 3:7-10.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.wheaton.edu/Media-Center/News/2013/03/Wheaton-College-Saddened-by-the-Loss-of-Student-Graham-Stevens>

<sup>9</sup> <http://fox59.com/2013/03/26/kokomo-couple-killed-in-suspected-drunk-driving-accident/#axzz2P7ieJYPm>

<sup>10</sup> <http://abclocal.go.com/wls/story?section=news/local&id=9045383>

The resurrection of Jesus is the Christian religious belief that, after being put to death, Jesus rose again from the dead. It is the central tenet of Christian theology and part of the Nicene Creed: "On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures". In the New Testament, after the Romans crucified Jesus, he was anointed and buried in a new tomb by Joseph of Arimathea but God raised him from the dead and he appeared to many people over a span of forty days before he ascended into The Resurrection of Jesus is the Christian belief that Jesus Christ came back to life on the third day after his crucifixion by the Romans in approximately AD 30-33. In Christian theology, the death and resurrection of Jesus are the most important events, a foundation of the Christian faith, and commemorated by Easter. For Christians, his resurrection is the guarantee that all the Christian dead will be resurrected at Christ's second coming. The bodily resurrection was the restoration to life of a Just before Easter, Jesus experienced the definitive moment that crowned his coming to earth: he realized he would be condemned for the sins of humanity, even though he was absolutely innocent of all evil. This took place in Gethsemane (Matthew 26: 36-50). As Jesus was meditating and praying, he felt anguish. Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." Since Jesus had predicted that on the third day he would be resurrected, the chief priests and the Pharisees came before Pilate to ask him to seal the tomb. "Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead" (Mt.27: 64). The Resurrection. Romans 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; Romans 5:6-8 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly; Romans 8:3,32 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: and was raised. Romans 8:33,34 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? The distinction should be carefully observed between the bearing of these two acts, the death and the resurrection of Christ, on the doctrines of justification and sanctification respectively. For the latter see especially Romans 6:2 et seq. Lawrence Hummer discusses the scripture readings for Easter Sunday March 31st, 2013. This variety of accounts of the resurrection narratives shows that the Church was content to live with the variations. No one testimony can do justice to the one account that all Gospels agree on; namely, that Jesus is risen from the dead. The how is not important in these New Testament accounts. The what is essential. All of the Gospels speak of the empty tomb, which becomes the symbol the disciples' faith in his victory over death. Critics of the women's testimony, beginning with the apostles that their story seemed like nonsense and they did not believe them, were not limited to the New... 25th Sunday of Ordinary Time. Uploaded by. St. Mary Church Chillicothe Ohio.