Vital Lessons from How God Justified Abraham

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Studies in Romans

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...for that message in song and especially for that piece. That is one that he has always asked to sing when he comes back to Greenville. The only miracle is that he has got here this long on this trip before being required to sing it. It is a great song. It is a great testimony and I trust that it is your testimony to be able to say, "I have Jesus. I have Christ. What want I more?" So we do appreciate that.

For those of you who have been asking we in every occasion we can we keep you up to date with our sister Beth. My wife was able to speak to her for a few minutes just before the service and she is sinking a little, feeling very bad at the moment, a lot of nausea. And, but the pain is under control. She is beginning to sleep a lot more. So we trust that you will keep Beth much in your prayers in these days. But I know that many of you do pray for her and you do want to know what is happening in her life at this point in time.

Now we are going to get to a letter or two of one of the words of one of those verses of Romans that Dr. Barrett was talking about. He is such a very short winded preacher, you see. He can afford to do that sort of thing. He never preaches for longer than he has to. Just ask the folk in New Hampshire.

Where is Rich? Rich are you here tonight? Where are you? Was it two or three hours for the first sermon? Just seemed that way. Well...

[off mic voice]

It is enough to say that when Rich wakened up again he had lost a week's work.

So you have heard the old saying about the cat calling the bottle... That is a new one. The cat calling the bottle black. Oh here. Let it not be said that I called Mike Barrrett a cat. It was a ket. The cat calling the bottle black. That is a new one.

You see, Frank McClelland is in town. He has actually gone to Columbia, but every time he and the Toronto brigade come into Greenville they cause this sort of verbal paralysis and he says I am the master of that sort of slip up and I say he is. He infects me, but whoever is to blame we now have a new one to add. That will rank right up there with

what he calls my triple spoonerism when I was preaching years ago in Ballymoney on something in Exodus and I was talking about what I thought I was talking about was the thunder of the hooves of Pharaoh's chariot horses. And Joan had the audacity to write this down to make sure I wouldn't be allowed to forget it. I talked about the thunder of the hooves of Harioh's phariot chorses. So the cat calling the bottle black will get right up along beside that.

I think maybe we should postpone my further administrations until about two or three weeks from now till I get my head back.

Romans chapter four. We will be reading verses 23, 24 and 25.

So I please to get this portion in its larger context all the way from chapter three verse 29 the apostle Paul has had one great theme. And that is that God is the God of both Jews and Gentiles and that his people whether Jews or Gentiles are all saved in the same way, justified by grace received through faith without the merits of their own works.

Throughout chapter four his great illustration of that theme has been the case of Abraham. Now Abraham features very largely here not because he was the first person in Scripture to be justified, but he is the first person in Scripture whose justification is detailed for us and recorded with enough detail so that we may discern the Lord's method of justifying the ungodly. That method is clearly expounded in the life and experience of Abraham.

Throughout this chapter Paul has been showing Abraham that he was reckoned righteous. That is just another way of saying he was justified. Not on the ground of personal righteousness or holiness. God did not declare him righteous because he achieved a level of goodness and godliness in his life. God declared him righteous by imputing righteousness to him. That righteousness imputed was received by faith without works as the first part of the chapter makes clear. And then without sacrament as the next part of the chapter makes clear.

The faith that justified Abraham accepted God's promise about one who was called Abraham's seed.

You will remember that the Lord gave Abraham a promise of a son and through that son who in due time would be called Isaac he promised him a very numerous seed. There would be many descendants. But that term, "the seed of Abraham" we are told in Galatians three is peculiarly and ultimately a title of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul says it definitively. That seed was Christ. This was the promise that God gave to Abraham and Abraham by faith accepted that promise. He trusted God to fulfill that promise even though he and Sarah were so old that they were as good as dead.

We have looked at the terminology used in this chapter already so I am simply going to state that in summary fashion. He looked at himself, an old man, almost 100 years old,

Sarah not far behind him. Both of them looked at their bodies. They were as good as dead. By every natural law they would never have a son. But Abraham trusted God to fulfill the promise despite all that appearance because he believed in the God who raises the dead and calls those things that be not as though they were.

Now because he is the great prototype of all who believe, he is called the father of them that believe because all other justified people are justified in exactly the same way that he was.

And that is the background to what we are now going to read in verses 23 through 25.

Remember that it was stated to Abraham that his faith was counted to him for righteousness, Genesis 15:6. Referring to that statement Paul says:

> Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.[1]

This is a brief, but the more you look at it, a wonderful portion of Scripture.

Charles Hodge, I think, stated the argument of these verses as clearly as any, having emphasized that Abraham was justified by faith according to verse 22, he says, "Hence, it is to be inferred that this is the true method of justification. For the record was made to teach us this truth. We are situated as Abraham was. We are called upon to believe in the almighty God who by raising Christ from the dead has accepted him as the propitiation for our sins."

That is the argument, the whole thesis of these few verses at the end of Romans chapter four.

What I want us to do tonight is to look at them, at least to begin to look at them, couldn't let Dr. Barrett down, but as we look at them to learn what we must learn from how God went about justifying Abraham. Vital lessons on this matter of justification from this prototype in Scripture of all justification and all justified men, how God went about justifying Abraham.

Now if you have been with us for any of these studies at all, you should by now know that Paul was a great theologian. I said before, I love the book of Romans probably more than any other book in the New Testament. That is sort of a foolish thing to say because at certain times you will find that the Spirit of God uses one portion of Scripture specially to your heart more than another. But an ongoing basis I think this book certainly stands out as the greatest constant, consistent, in depth exposition of the gospel of free grace.

[1] Romans 4:23-25.

I love how Paul is inspired to write this. There is a flow of logic in this book that sweeps you along with it. Yet there is a passion with it that is not the cool logic of somebody who is talking theory. This is the burning heart of a man who lived with God. Paul was a great theologian, but he was more than that. He was also a great preacher and a great pastor. And by that I mean he was not content merely to set truth out to inform the mind, but Paul sought to take that truth and make it throb with the heartbeat of divine love so that it touches the hearts of men and of women.

So having worked out this prolonged illustration from the case of Abraham he now brings his argument to a climax by doing two things. First, he gives us a brief but important interpretation of the illustration he has already given. The interpretation. And then he moves on to bring home to the heart the entire subject by means of a strong application.

By the way, for all young preachers here, there is an inspired lesson in homiletics. There is how to preach. He has been setting out great truth. All preaching should be based upon the presentation of great truths.

When it was my job to teach homiletics the only reason I had that, of course, was I could objectify for the students every mistake that could possibly be made. And so they learned if they did everything that I didn't do and didn't do anything I did do they might make it. But I used to tell them something I remember reading in Dr. W G T Shedd that preachers should take great texts. Preachers should deal with great truths. The only originality that the pulpit demands is not the originality of human genius or human inventiveness. It is the originality of the great truth of divine revelation. Our churches are filled with people who are starved of great truth.

While preachers fiddle with insignificant human opinions. Preaching should start with great truth.

And then it should have clear biblical illustration. After all, this has to be more than theory. It has to be more than theology. It has to be more than mere theoretical, philosophical, high sounding truth even. It has to be something that touches people where they sit.

The prophet Ezekiel says, "I sat where they sat." There is a sense in which every preacher has to know that. "I sat where they sat." And the great truth illustrated according got the Word of God is brought home to the heart to make people understand. This is for real life flesh and blood people.

Then there comes interpretation. Then there comes application. And a preacher who can't apply what he is preaching may as well not preach at all. But that is a digression. And I had not intended to say any of that, but there are enough preachers and budding preachers here that we need to know what our work is according to the Holy Ghost.

Tonight I want us to look at the interpretation. I don't know that we will ever get as far as the application. But we will see as we go along. The interpretation in verses 23 and 24, the first part of 24, Paul says:

"Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed."[2]

And so on.

Now this is one of the most deceptively simple statements that you will find in the Word of God. Read it again.

"Now it was not written for [Abraham's] sake alone,"[3] but for ours.

I must say that caused me to stop and look at that again and again. You see, if it said, "It was not written for Abraham's sake, but it was written for our sake," I could understand that. But it doesn't say that. It says it wasn't written for his sake only.

In other words, it was written for his sake, but not for his only.

But that is the question. How could something written by Moses hundreds of years after Abraham had died, how could that possibly be written for his sake?

It seems that here we are dealing with what is called an anachronism, something that is displaced as to the chronology of history. This is something taking place hundreds of years later, this writing, and yet it is attributed to Abraham.

But it is not an anachronism at all. It was written for his sake.

We will have cause to note that there is a proposition here that is translated "for his sake" or "for our sake." And later it is translated simply as "for."

Four times this occurs in our text. And the meaning of it is simply because of or on account of. Thus, what Paul is saying is what Moses wrote was not on account of Abraham only. That is, it was written not only because Genesis 15:6 is applied to Abraham, but it is written on our account it is written because it is applied to us just as truly as it is applied to Abraham. In fact, it is applied to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus, Paul says, "if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,"[4] God will impute to us the very same righteousness that he imputed to Abraham because he delivered the Lord Jesus Christ, because of our sins or on account of our sins and raised him again from the dead because of our justification or on account of our justification.

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[2] Romans 4:23-24.
[3] Romans 4:23.
[4] Romans4:24.

Now I have emphasized that in this text this for this "for" the sake of" this "because of" or "on account of" occurs four times. The first two really speak of the same thing. It was written for our sake. It was written on account of us, because of us.

Then Christ was delivered because of our sins. And Christ was raised because of our justification. And when you are interpreting Paul's words here, when he gives a construction like that, it must not be overlooked. We must not impose our own structure on something upon which the Holy Ghost has already set his structure. And I want you to look at these "because of's."

First of all you will see that Paul deals with the reason for the record given to us in Scripture. It was written because of us. It was written on account of us.

Now this is not only a valuable insight into Paul's attitude to Scripture, something vastly more important. It is an insight into God's purpose in writing the Scriptures. I want you to see this. It is so simple and you could pass over it. God wrote Genesis, Paul says, because of us. God inspired this Bible because of us. He had us in mind. There is a reason in Scripture and that reason is intimately, personally, individually related to us.

What goodness there is in the Lord here. We have God's book written by the inspiration of God's Spirit, preserved by the constant overseeing grace and power of the same Holy Spirit brought down to us in our own language even to address us where we are as we are with all the needs that we have. We have God's Word and even in the writing of it he had us in mind. It is written because of us. It is written to give us a completely reliable revelation.

Do you see that he is talking about what Moses wrote? Moses gave word for word what God said to Abraham even though Moses wasn't there. And I would just say this to you. Forget about all the philosophical pseudo scholarly opinions that are now even being accepted among so-called conservative commentators that Moses had before him various documents that had come down through tradition and he was weaving his way through them and picking this and that and the other. Let me tell you. Moses was not dependent on myths or fable or tradition or opinion. Moses had his word directly from God. Moses was inspired to write what he wrote and he gave us by inspiration not by his own predilection, not by his own prejudice, not even by his own training as one of the learned men of Egypt. He gave us by divine inspiration and insight a completely reliable revelation.

I really shouldn't take time on this except because I am fulfilling Mike's prophecy, except that even among people who ought to know better, the Word of God is under attack. The kind of thing you used to expect in liberal journals is now turning up in so-called conservative circles. People who pretend to be committed to Scripture are actually undermining Scripture, denying Scripture, questioning Scripture. I want to tell you that this Old Testament is not a collection of Jewish myths and fables and traditions. It is

God's own book. And here we have God given truths of continuing power and authority. And you can rely upon it. What this Bible presents as history is history.

Now let's nail that. It doesn't matter how improbable to the minds of men. It doesn't matter how remote from the current experiences of men. What this Bible records as history is history. And because in British history or in American history there is nothing comparable to the dividing of the Red Sea is no argument why God did not divide the sea as the Bible says it. The fact that nobody knows of someone who has been able to have the experience Jonah had—although actually there are people who claim similar things have happened—but the fact that no one else has been a Jonah does not say one word against the historicity of what God says happened.

I want you to understand this. This is a completely reliable revelation. That is why God gave it. You see, you and I are in a course to eternity. We are immortal souls that are going to live forever. We need more than the opinions of the philosophers of the world.

How many people today study Plato? How many people study Aristotle? And of those who do, have any understand anything about them?

But say you studied them all and you had at your fingertips all the schools of philosophical thought of all the ages, what certainty could you have concerning God and your soul?

You would end up where Plato ended up, in a great dark cave with no light.

But God has given us his Word, totally reliable.

"All scripture," Paul says, "is given by inspiration of God,"[5] breathed by the mouth of God, "and [therefore] is profitable for doctrine."[6] It will teach you truth. It is profitable for reproof. It will correct your conscience. It will correct your life. It will instruct you in the way of righteousness in order that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

God gave us his Word.

It was written to give us a message that is perpetually relevant.

When you read the old histories of the Old Testament remember that here you have more than history. This is a living book. This book is vibrant. The Bible says that it is quick. That is, it is alive and it is powerful. This is a living book. It is like no other book on earth. Never forget that.

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[5] 1 Timothy 3:16.
[6] Ibid.

It is tragic the way we treat our Bibles. It is tragic the way we read our Bibles. We come to a book of life and we read it like a bunch of zombies or corpses. And every one of us is guilty of this. There is none holier than the other.

But this is a living book. You come to the histories of the Old Testament and you will find that they are relevant to you and me today.

What does the Bible tell us? Paul says later in Romans chapter 15 verse four, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."[7]

When he was writing to the Corinthians in chapter nine of 1 Corinthians, verse nine he says, "For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn."[8]

And then he asks the question: "Doth God take care for oxen?"[9]

Now he is not denying that God had a plan that they should be dealing justly even with their beasts. But is the real purpose of this the highest purpose, is it stuck at the level of the ox?

"Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written."[10]

So he is going back to the histories of the Old Testament. He is going back even to some of the enactments of the Old Testament that seem to us on first sight to be so removed from our lives today and he says, "Listen. This was written for you."

There is a message here that is relevant. When you start the day and you get before God, you cry to God, "Lord, speak to me."

And as I said this morning at the communion table, let us nail forever as heresy this new brand of Calvinism, well, not tall together new, except in other days it was called by other names, this vicious onslaught in the name of Calvin, getting into the Church to deny that there is such a thing as the Bible speaking to you, to deny that it is possible to know the will of God for your life or be guided through the Scriptures or through the Spirit using the Scriptures. Is it any wonder we have a bunch of dead and dying churches when we have pinhead preachers who know philosophy and theology, but they know nothing of the will of God?

Men and women, let me tell you tonight, this is written for you. God can speak to you through his Word. God can take this Word and write it indelibly upon your heart and

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[7] Romans 15:4.
[8] 1 Corinthians 9:9.
[9] Ibid.
[10] 1 Corinthians 9:10.

guide your life and fill your mind with light where others are wandering around in the morass of darkness. It is always relevant. God has written it for us.

And he has written it to us to show us that the message of salvation is uniform in all ages.

Go way back to Abraham, around 2000 years before Christ. Come to us 2000 years after Christ. How shall a man be just with God? God gave the answer in Abraham's day. And what is his answer today? It is exactly the same, exactly the same. It is not just similar. It is exactly the same. Justification by grace, through faith alone.

And as you see this is one of Paul's big aims and objectives here, throughout this not only this text, but throughout this book one gospel. There is one way of salvation. There is one way of justification. In fact, do you remember when he was defending himself, Acts chapter 26 verses 22 and 23, defending his life and ministry he said, "I say none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come."

And what did they say should come?

"That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles."[11]

Paul says, "I preach what Moses preached."

In 1 Corinthians 15 he makes it clear. I preach what Peter preaches and Peter preaches what I preach. There is only one gospel. There always has been only one gospel.

I don't want to take time in repeating what I have done some of the earlier studies that we had in Romans, but I want to make this clear to you. The notion that God in the Old Testament saved people by keeping, by their keeping the law, whereas now he saves them without the law, is a fallacy. The idea that in the Old Testament God tried the legal way and now since man has failed that way he has instituted another way is a fallacy.

As soon as Adam fell if God had ever said to man, "Salvation is by doing," he would have damned him irretrievably. But God has always saved by grace and he has always saved through faith. And the object faith ahs always been Abraham's seed, the promised seed, the seed of the woman, the coming Messiah, the Son of God come in the flesh.

Oh, they... the revelation has got clearer as it has progressed, but it has always been at hear the same revelation.

But put it all together. Why did God write this record? To provide us with an objective and verifiable Word that is good for our souls.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy."[12]

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[11] Acts 26:23.
[12] 2 Peter 1:19.

More sure than what? Peter has just said, "I stood in the mount of transfiguration. I saw what only two other people on earth were privileged to see on that mountain. I saw Christ transfigured. I saw the glory of Christ. I heard with these ears, I heard God speak from heaven, addressing us and saying, 'This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.'"

None of you have ever seen that. None of you have ever heard that. None of you ever will see that. None of you ever will hear that, at least this side of heaven. But we have a more certain word of prophecy. We have something more confirmed than the seeing of my eyes and the hearing of my ears, something that is objectively verifiable. What is it? It is the written Word of God. It is a light that shines in a dark place. It is a word that you should take heed to. This Word is given to be aimed at us to do us good.

Oh, this is God's gift for us, to do us good, to give us an assurance of our acceptance with God by emphasizing the ground in which God accepts us.

It is very easy for me to say that. But I want you to understand it because here is where most people have their trouble with assurance. They want to root assurance in their experience. They want to root their assurance in their performance. They want to root their experience in the level of their joy. But when the Scripture deals with assurance it roots it in the performance of Christ. It roots our assurance and grounds our peace in the all sufficient merit of Jesus Christ. And the more by Scripture our minds are filled with the all sufficiency of Christ, then the more our hearts will be filled with the assurance of his grace.

You cannot enjoy fullness of assurance when your tank is running on empty as far as understanding the all sufficiency of Christ is concerned.

Put that another way. You can't be filling your mind with all the stupidities of the world and not taking time to fill your mind with the beauties and the glories of the person and the work of Jesus Christ. You can't do that and have the enjoyment of full assurance.

Full assurance is a perfection of faith. Faith is always intimately, immediately related to Jesus Christ. You cannot have assurance while your heart and soul are not grounded in the all sufficient merits of the Savior.

But that is why he has given us this book. You can take this book. You can take this book. You don't need a doctor of theology degree or even a bachelor's degree in Bible. Those may help you. But you don't need them. You can take this book and you can read of the deity of Christ, but there are Christians here, some of you have been saved maybe for 10 or 20 years and you couldn't establish the deity of Christ from that book.

What is wrong with you? You wonder why you are not enjoying the assurance you ought. You can take this book and you can study the perfect humanity of Christ, the perfect obedience of Christ. You an study the atoning death of Christ. You can see him as your prophet, your priest and you king. You can see him as the great propitiator, the

great appeaser of the wrath of God, the great satisfier of the law of God. You can take this book and you can trace the history of the gospel from eternity to eternity. It is all there. It is all there.

And there is more there than 100 lifetimes would allow you to study. There are depths that no mind can plumb. There are heights to which no human intellect can soar.

God has given us this book to give us assurance of our acceptance by grounding it all in Jesus Christ. And he has given us this book to strengthen us that we may walk by faith as Abraham did. And as we read last time, not to stagger in unbelief.

How do you go through life walking with purpose and resolution? How do you go through life without staggering in unbelief? You do it by means of Scripture.

Paul wrote to the Colossians in chapter three verse 16 and he said, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."[13]

Isn't it tragic how little we as God's people know of God's Word? Isn't it tragic how little we think of God's Word?

The excuse is, "I am not a preacher."

So what? It is true of preachers, too. We live in a day when most preachers are ignorant of God's Word.

So what if you are not a preacher. I don't read here it was written for preachers. This book is not a textbook for sermons, at least certainly not only that. This book is written because God had you in mind.

Doesn't that start every day rather differently? Doesn't that give us a new outlook on each day? God has a word for me. God wrote this book with me in mind. God made statements to Abraham not just for Abraham's sake, but because of me.

Here is the reason for the record.

Then he goes on to give us the reason for the death of Christ. And it says he was delivered because of our offenses?

What does that mean? It means he died because our sins were imputed to him. It is not just that he died for us. That is a wonderful truth. But he died because of our offenses. He died because of our sins.

Now what is the relationship between our sins and the Lord Jesus Christ? Peter says, "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree."[14]

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[13] Colossians 3:16.
[14] 1 Peter 2:24.

Paul says to the Corinthians, "God made him to be sin for us."

God imputed our sins to Christ. This is one of the great mysteries of the covenant of grace that in appointing Christ to be the saving head of redeemed people God took all the guilt, all the sin, all the wickedness, all the vileness of those people and he made Christ accountable for it.

Now the Lord Jesus was not personally guilty of sin. The Lord Jesus did not become morally corrupted, morally transformed in an evil way because our sin was imputed to him, but he took all the liability of that sin. He made himself personally responsible for that sin and God in making him to be sin for us, it is as if he took all the sins of all his people from all ages and he put them in one mighty heap in the soul of Jesus Christ and he dealt with Christ almost we could say as our sin personified. He imputed our sin to Christ.

I am not explaining some passages of Scripture, for example, the 40th Psalm, which is undoubtedly a messianic psalm and yet some of the statements in it seem so far removed from the Lord Jesus where he is confessing sin. But he has no sin.

Ah, but here is the thing. He has. He has. Not his, but mine. Why did he die? Because God imputed our sin to him.

Why did he die? Because he made an atonement for our sins. He died because of them. But he didn't die a helpless victim. He didn't die a defeated victim. He died and it was an act of saving obedience on his part. He died. But in dying he slew death. In dying he bore away our sin and our guilt because he is the Lamb of God that beareth away the sin of the world.

Bless God, here is the reason for the death of Jesus Christ. Here Paul pulls back the curtain and he says, "God imputed our sin to Christ. He accepted the burden. He accepted the legal responsibility. He took upon him all the sins of all his people."

You think of that. God has saved... I will look at 1 Corinthians chapter six. You have got a list there of every kind of vile and filthy, wicked sinner you could possibly think of. God has saved liars, thieves, murderers, adulterers, fornicators, idolaters. He saved sinners of every kind. And when the Lord Jesus took the cup of the wrath of God, God said, "Put that in the cup and put that in the cup and put that in the cup."

Take all our sin. Jesus took that cup. He took it willingly. And in the words that are certainly not mine, but they express it beautifully, the words of an old time hymn with one almighty draught he drank damnation dry.

Why did he die? Because of our sins.

Why did he rise? The reason for the resurrection. He rose again. He was raised for, because of our justification.

That is another one of those apparently simple statements.

I must say that I like the way John Brown of Edinburgh dealt with that text, a great Scottish commentator and theologian. John Brown believed that this is what would be called an elliptical statement. Now don't get worried about big word. It simply means that there are some necessary ideas that are left unspoken, but that must be supplied to get the full force of the antithesis here. He was delivered because of our offenses. He was raise again because of our justification.

Let me put it this way, paraphrasing John Brown. He was delivered on account of our offense which were the ground of God's action in condemning us. He was raised again on account of his own righteousness which is the ground of God's action in justifying us.

As Brown says that he was raised on account of that which justifies us, that which is our justification, the only ground of our justification, the substantial righteousness of Jesus Christ on account of which we are treated as righteous. He was raised because of the obedience to death of Jesus our Lord.

I think that goes to the heart of it, you know. Why did God raise him from the dead? Because he deserved it. He merited it. Death couldn't hold his prey. It was impossible that he should see corruption. Why? Because he was the holy one of God. He couldn't see corruption. He deserved to be raised from the dead. He merited that resurrection. He was raised again because of the righteousness which justifies us.

The usual way of dealing with the text and, perhaps, the most straightforward is to say he died in order that our sins may be expiated, purged and put away. He rose again that we might be justified.

In other words, the resurrection proved that his death had been accepted.

How do I know that my sins are put away? How do I know that Jesus Christ died an atoning death? How do I know that God accepted what he did as a sacrifice for our sins? How do I know that?

Well, Paul said it.

Well, I am glad Paul said it.

Paul believed it.

Well, I am glad Paul believed it.

The apostles all went around preaching it.

Well, I am glad they did.

So what?

Let me tell you. On the third day God raised Christ from the dead. And that is it.

How do I know that he is who he said that he was? Because God raised him from the dead.

How do I know his blood is atoning blood? Because God raised him from the dead.

How do I know that he suffered and bled and died vicariously and victoriously? How do I know that there is acceptance with God through the merits of his blood? Because he rose the third day from the dead.

As I said a few weeks ago, Mohammed's tomb is occupied. Buddha's tomb is occupied. Confucius' tomb is occupied. Why follow a loser?

Christ is risen. That's it. It proves that his death has been accepted.

As Paul said, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."[15]

But also that resurrection inaugurated, it was the very first step in his glorification that gave him entrance to heaven as our high priest to sit at the right hand of God thereby securing for all his people the application of all his merits to us.

The Bible speaks, you will find this in various places. I have already quoted one from Acts 26. There is another one in 1 Peter chapter one verse 12. The Bible speaks of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. But what was the first step in that glory?

Mark 16 verse 19 tells us.

"So then..."

The "then" refers to post resurrection.

"...he was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God."[16]

Risen from the dead he ascended to the right hand of God.

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[15] 1 Corinthians 15:17.
[16] Mark 16:19.

Ephesians four says, "He When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."[17]

In the first chapter of Ephesians we have got one of the most wonderful passages in the New Testament when Paul is having his great prayer for the Ephesians Christians, praying things that they might know, things that they might be able to grasp. And he wants them to grasp:

> And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us–ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named.[18]

Why did he do this?

He "gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."[19]

God raised him. God exalted him. God set him at his own right hand for the Church.

Here is an exalted Savior. You see, a Savior who was conquered by death could never secure our justification. If Christ had remained in the tomb, we would have remained in our sins. If Christ had stayed in the grave we would spend eternity in hell. There is no two ways about this. But a risen Savior secures for us the application of all he accomplished by his blood.

Why did he rise? He rose because of our justification, to secure to us infallibly the action of God his Father to declare us righteous, acceptable.

What does that mean? Can I dare to put it this way? Christ rose from the dead to secure for us the action of his Father to say, "You are perfectly worthy of a place in heaven."

Worthy? Worthy? Yes, worthy. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done,"[20] but just as God took all the demerit of our sin and laid it upon his Son making him worthy of death, so he takes all the merit of his Son and his obedience and he lays it on us and that righteousness is worthy of the highest heaven.

There used to be a little sort of country and western hymn slash song slash something else that we will not go into. It used to be very popular in Ulster and people would sing it. You know, people will sing anything. And they get up with twanging guitars and they would sing, "Lord, build me a cabin in the corner of glory land."

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[17] Ephesians 4:8.
[18] Ephesians 1:19-21.
[19] Ephesians 1:22-23.
[20] Titus 3:5.

I understand the idea. If I could just get into heaven and no more, I would be satisfied. It is a lot better to be in a corner of heaven than in the midst of hell. I can understand that feeling, but the late John Wiley, one of the earliest ministers in the Free Church he would fume when people would get up and sing that hymn. He fumed. And John would say, "There are no cabins in God's heaven. Jesus didn't say, 'I go to prepare a cabin for you.' He says, 'In my Father's house are many mansions.' There are no cabins in the corner of glory land."

There is nobody creeping into heaven to get into the corner and they don't really deserve to be there. Every one of them in heaven could say, "I don't deserve to be here because of all that I am. But when I look at Christ who took all my guilt and gave me all his righteousness, if he deserves to be here, then so do I."

It is a great salvation.

Why did he die? He died because of our sins.

Why did he rise again? He rose again because of our justification.

And all whom he justifies are as certain of heaven as he is on the very same basis, namely his perfect righteousness.

Now this is Paul's interpretation of that statement. "It as imputed to him for righteousness."[21]

Abraham was justified by faith. That is the statement illustrated in the life of Abraham. Now this is Paul's interpretation.

As I sort of figured we will await a little longer for his application because we only have dealt with this great and wonderful passage of Scripture. The application takes the whole thing and seals it to our hearts. And in the will of God two or three weeks from tonight we will look at that.

In the meantime go home with this. This was written because of me.

God means you to hear his Word tonight. God means you to get the message tonight. God means you to be benefitted and blessed tonight. God does not mean you to come to his house and sit like a zombie and go out as a critic unphased, untouched, unmoved, unblessed. Thus was written for your good.

God save us from evil hearts of unbelief. God give us hearts that are open to receive the good, the wonderful good that he has for us in the doctrine of free justification.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Let's all pray.

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[21] Romans 4;22.

In just a moment the meeting will be closed with prayer. Even now as we bow in prayer you cry to the Lord, "Lord, yet speak to me. Lord, take your Word and write it on my heart. Lord, give me a sight of Christ. Lord, show me the all sufficient merits of they dear son and my Savior. Lord, quicken my heart to see and trust in Jesus."

Cry to the Lord tonight to speak to your heart. If you have never been saved you can be saved by looking unto Christ. Look and as Spurgeon said you will feel that you could look your eyes away. Your eyes can never behold a sweeter vision than that of the blessed Savior.

If we can help you to Christ, Dr. Barrett and Mr. Brame and I are here to do so, your servants for Jesus' sake. Make sure you know him. Make sure you know him. Trust him.

Father in heaven, bless thy Word. We thank thee for writing it. We thank thee, oh God, for writing the Word with us in mind. We thank thee, our God, for writing it for our benefit, to do us good. Father, we bless thee tonight and that there are innumerable blessings for the people of God in the reading, contemplation of thy blessed Word. Father, forgive us for the cavalier attitude we have so often had to Scripture. Forgive us for the crime of dealing with God's book much as we would deal with any other book. Lord, this is a living Word. Forgive us for reading it in a dead or perfunctory manner.

Oh, Lord, give us eyes that penetrate to the truth, ears that are open to hear the Word of the Spirit of God. Give us hearts that are open to the direction of the Holy Ghost. Lord, we pray, bless thy Word to our hearts. Show us Christ. Oh, we thank thee that the central message of the book of God is Jesus Christ. Lord, we bless thee that from Genesis to Revelation he is the message. Show us Christ in his all sufficiency.

We think of young people setting out in life, graduating from college, going out to find their way in an ungodly world. Oh, Lord, thou hast said that it is this Christ who is the anchor of the soul, Christ our hope. Oh, we pray that tonight thou wilt settle their days upon Christ and God grant that they may never lose sight of Jesus. Father in heaven, deal with the doubts that afflict so many of thy people. Oh, God, we pray, get them beyond the question concerning did they weep enough or pray enough or say the right words when they came to Jesus. Lord, we pray, get their hearts and minds fixed trustingly upon the all sufficient merit and righteousness of Christ. Lord, we thank thee he is the very substance of our assurance.

Bless thy Word, therefore, to every heart. Grant that thou wilt give lasting fruit for the ministry of the gospel.

Part us now with thy blessing. Keep us in thy fear. Be the abiding portion of all thy blood bought Church tonight and evermore. We pray in Jesus' precious name.