

How the Resurrection is Good News for Today

Romans 4:23-25

Introduction

If you are here today, it is likely that you know that Easter has at least something to do with Jesus and His resurrection. As the story goes, Jesus was crucified on Good Friday, spent three days in the grave, then rose again from the dead. This morning, on Easter Sunday, we are celebrating the news that after three days in the grave, Jesus rose again from the dead.

The temptation, at this point, might be to ask, “Yea, well, good for Jesus, but what difference does that make for me and my family?” Now, someone might hear you ask that and say, “Well, Jesus’ resurrection guarantees that those who have trusted in Him will be raised from the dead as well one day, when He returns.” So, for those people, the benefits of the resurrection are almost completely isolated to the future. They believe that Jesus’ resurrection means that one day they will be resurrected as well. And, to be sure, that is absolutely true. Jesus’ resurrection guarantees the resurrection of His people. Everyone that has trusted in Him will be raised from the dead like Him in the future. This is wonderful news.

But how does Jesus’ resurrection, the event that we have gathered to celebrate this morning, how is it good news today? Not just for the future, but today? Is there any present benefit and blessing today for you that the tomb in Jerusalem is empty? That the question I want to briefly consider this morning. How is the resurrection good news for you today, and not just in the future?

Romans 4:23-25

²³ The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, ²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

While it might not be immediately obvious, our passage begins by referencing Abraham. Abraham was the father of the people of Israel. His offspring would eventually become the people of Israel. God promised to make Abraham a great nation, yet the problem was that Abraham was an old man without any children. Abraham and his wife were nearly a hundred-years old, childless, and God was promising to make Abraham’s offspring a great nation. That would appear to be a problem.

At first, Abraham attempted to fulfill the promise through his own effort by having a child with his servant, Hagar. But God essentially said, “The child that you had with Hagar will not be the offspring through whom I will fulfill my promise.” Instead, Abraham’s wife Sarah would be the one to bear the child through whom God would fulfill His promise to make Abraham a great nation. That child’s name was Isaac. And as we would see, God fulfilled the promise to Abraham, and through Isaac, a great nation would grow.

So, what does this have to do with Romans 4:23-25? The first words in verse 23 say, “It was credited to him,” refers to how God related to Abraham. When verse 23 speaks of “it” being “credited to him,” it is speaking of Abraham’s faith in God that He would fulfill the promise that He made to Him.

As a result of trusting in God, God counted Abraham as righteous before Him. In other words, God accepted Abraham as righteous, and this was not a result of a good work or deed that Abraham performed. No! Abraham was regarded as righteous before God based on faith. Abraham trusted God and was accepted by God. This is what our passage is referring to in verse 23.

From here, the apostle Paul, who wrote the book of Romans, tells us that these words, “it was credited to him,” that is, “his faith was credited to him,” were not written simply for **Israel but for us**. So, wow are these words significant for us? They are significant because they teach us that God relates to us based on faith, not performance. If we would be accepted before God as righteous, it is not by our effort, but through faith in the promise that God has provided for us through Jesus Christ, which we will consider in more detail in a moment.

For now, however, we need to see that just as Abraham was declared to be righteous before God based on faith in His promise, so we also, if we believe as Abraham believed, we too will be counted righteous before God, not based on our works, but based on our faith in Him.

Now, who does this apply to? It applies, as Paul would say to those “who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.” In other words, if you want to stand righteous before God, then you must believe in “Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.” You must place your trust in God alone if you are going to ever stand before God.

And deep down, we know that we will all stand before God one day to give an account of our lives. We will stand before God who knows everything that we have ever thought, every deed we have ever committed, and we will give an account to Him. He knows every conversation you’ve ever had. He knows every text message that you’ve ever sent. He knows every word that you have ever spoken. He knows every search you’ve ever performed on the internet. Nothing is hidden from Him. He knows everything.

But not only does God know everything about us, He is also absolutely, completely holy. God hates unrighteousness. And you and I will stand before Him one day to give an account, to answer for everything that we have ever thought, said, or done. Who will be able to stand before God on such a day? Isn’t the thought alone almost crushing? How does it feel to know what your deepest, darkest, most hidden sins could be exposed by God in Heaven’s courtroom? Where the evidence of your guilt would be overwhelming?

Deep down we know that there will be an account to be giving. The very fact that some things in this world outrage you and you respond with a great sense of justice is just further proof that God has stamped eternity on our souls and embedded within each of us a sense of right and wrong. We crave for wrongs to be made right and for justice to be served. A reckoning for sin and rebellion against God is coming. Is there any hope to escape such a day of judgment? Is there any hope for sinners like you and me?

As we continue to look at Romans 4:23-25, we find that there **is a way for us to escape the judgment of God**. Verse 24 tells us, “but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.” If we, like Abraham, place our trust in God’s provision, in the promise that He has made to us in Jesus, then God will regard us as righteous before Him.

In other words, our escape from the wrath to come does not come by us cleaning up our lives with a greater resolve to be better people. We do not make ourselves fit to stand before God by our own efforts. No. If we would stand righteous before God, then it must be by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, who has been raised from the dead. And if we place our trust wholly in Him, as Romans 4:23-25 says, “God will regard us as righteous.” God will treat us as Sons and Daughters who belong to Him by faith. He will declare us to be righteous before Him. Not because we have behaved well, but because we have believed.

And, because of believing and trusting in what God has done in Christ for us, we will be saved from God’s judgment. But how? Wouldn’t it be unjust for a judge to forgive us of sins and crimes that we have committed without punishing those sins and crimes? Wouldn’t God be unjust if He didn’t deal with our sins in some way? He would be unjust if He didn’t deal with our sins. Yet, He has dealt with our sins. That is the point of Romans 4:25, which tells us that Jesus “was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”

In other words, the penalty, the judgment that your sins and my sins deserve, which is death, has been paid by Jesus Christ for us. The eternal prison sentence that our crimes of treason against a holy God deserve has been served by Jesus Christ in our place. What we deserved, Jesus took upon Himself so that we might be forgiven, if we place our trust in Him.

Wonderful news, right? That someone has paid the penalty of our sins so that we might go free! But here’s the thing, how do we know that God really accepted Jesus’ work on our behalf? How do you know that Jesus really did pay the debt that you owe because of your sins against God?

We know that this blessing comes through faith and not by our works, but how do even know that the offer is valid? I mean, this is almost too good to be true, right? Someone else paid for your sins. Someone else did your time. Someone else gave their life in place of yours. I mean, how do we know that God actually accepted Jesus’ sacrifice for us? It seems like that would be an important detail to work out before we end up standing before God to give an account for our life, right?

Here I am telling you this morning, that if you place your trust in Jesus Christ, one day, when you stand before God the Judge, if you have truly trusted in Christ, then God the Judge will look at you, regard you, consider you to be righteous on the basis of faith. But how can you know today that when you stand before God the Judge on that day that He is not going to say, “What do you mean that Jesus died in your place? What makes you think that sacrifice was acceptable? What makes you think that Jesus was able to atone for your sins?”

How can we know for certain today that Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf was acceptable to God? How can we know that God truly is pleased with us as those who have placed our trust in Jesus Christ? Is there any indication that God accepted Jesus’ work in the place of sinners?

There is. If you continue reading Romans 4:25, you will find that it says, that Jesus “was delivered over to death for our sins **and was raised to life for our justification.**” Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is, at least in part, God’s declaration of His acceptance of Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf.

Let me see if I can illustrate this relationship between sacrifice and acceptance:

In the Old Covenant, the people knew that God had heard and accepted the sacrifice of the priest if the priest returned to them from the Holy of Holies. They would tie bells onto the High Priest's garments to announce His arrival into the Holy of Holies and to signal to the people that priestly work was underway. But they were not always sure if the priest was fit for the service. They were not always sure if the priest would re-emerge from the Holy of Holies. If the priest was unfit or offered an unacceptable sacrifice, He would die before the presence of God and the offering would not ceremonially atone for the people.

Yet, with Jesus, as the Great High Priest of a better covenant, made with better promises, He enters into the holy of holies with his own blood. And as the priest, he offers himself as the sacrifice. Yet, the sacrifice, who is also the priest, cannot remain dead. He must live again to ever make intercession for the people whom He represents.

And Jesus, after making atonement for our sins through His death, emerges victoriously from the tomb, forever granting God's people access to the very presence of God.

And because Jesus did not remain in the grave, because He did not remain dead, we can know for certain that God has accepted His sacrifice for our sins. For, "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."

You and I do not have to wonder or worry about whether or not Jesus' work on my behalf was sufficient or effective to save us from our sins. His resurrection from the dead testifies to this reality. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is the Lamb who takes away the sins of the World. Jesus is the Great High Priest who makes a full and effective atonement for all who place their trust in Him. And we know that God has heard Him and accepted Him as our Great High Priest, because He emerged from the grave victorious over sin, death, and hell.

And this is precisely how the resurrection is good news for you today. The resurrection which we celebrate this morning not only guarantees our own resurrection from the dead when Christ returns, but it also gives us confidence that God is pleased with Jesus, and if we are in Jesus through faith, He is pleased with us too. It reminds us that because God has accepted Jesus' sacrifice for us, that we are no longer condemned. The penalty of our sins has been paid completely. Those who have placed their trust in Jesus do not have to fear standing before God on the final day because they already know God regards me as righteous through faith in Jesus.

This is one of the lessons that Romans 4:23-25 teaches us. Our only hope of standing on that day is if we place our trust in Jesus Christ, the one who "was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." Your sins deserve the judgment of death, but God, who is rich in mercy, made a way for our sins to be dealt with forever through Jesus Christ. Jesus was "delivered over to death for our sins."

The payment that our sins deserved was paid for by Jesus for everyone who places their trust in Him. The debt you owe because of your sins has been paid for by Jesus Christ, if you trust Him, if you receive Him as your Savior and Lord.

This morning, every sin you have committed and will commit can be paid for through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, if you believe! Would you believe? Would you place your hope in the One who died in your place and rose again that you might be declared a child of God by faith?