

Delivered and Raised

Romans 4:22—25

We have been studying how all people in all generations and all dispensations are saved by faith. Under some dispensations, it was necessary for some believers to demonstrate their faith by baptism, or following the Mosaic Law. One unique thing in this Dispensation of Grace is that we do not need to do any works to show that we are believers. Quite the contrary, there are no works of any kind that we are told to do, but instead we are to rest in Christ's finish work on the cross. His work negated us having to do works to show that our faith is genuine.

The problem most people have when we claim that works were necessary to demonstrate faith is that they think we mean people were saved by works. This is exactly how the Pharisees attempted to gain righteousness. They did the works thinking that that gave them righteousness. Unfortunately, they were attempting to gain their righteousness from themselves instead of from God. If they truly had come to God by faith, they would have been happy to show their faith by their works (James 2:18). Not doing the works was a demonstration that they did not have a true faith.

Paul clearly teaches that this is no longer the case when he says that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law (Romans 3:28). This is because now (in this Dispensation of Grace) the righteousness of God was being manifested without the Law (Roman 3:21). What a change from when God was dealing with Israel while the Gospel of the Kingdom was being proclaimed! These are important details to keep firmly in mind as we continue on in the book of Romans.

Righteousness imputed (verse 23—24)

As previous lessons pointed out, God imputed righteousness upon all believers in all generations and in all dispensations. When we were declared righteous, we were justified. This imputation was God crediting righteousness to our account, even though we were not righteous by nature (Ephesians 2:1—10). It was because of our faith in His finished work on the cross that it was possible for God, in His infinite grace, to declare us to be righteous. How amazing is that? As Paul showed earlier in chapter 4, Abraham was declared righteous (Romans 4:11), as was King David (Romans 4:6). This does not mean we are righteous, only that God counts us as being righteous, all because of His Son.

The Bible recorded that God credited righteousness to Abraham because of his faith (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3). This was recorded for our benefit. By studying how God treated Abraham, we can understand how God deals with us today in this dispensation. In fact, this information is relevant for all believers in any dispensation. When God told Abram that righteousness would be imputed to him, He was also looking ahead in time to use Abraham as our example.

This imputation of God's righteousness does have a condition. It is not imputed to everyone, as some wrongly believe. As Paul says, it is imputed only to those who believe (or have faith), in Jesus Christ. This goes against those who claim God's love supersedes His justice. They don't understand that God is love, yet at the same time He is just. Our loving God reached out to mankind through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ, as a demonstration of His great love (John 15:13; Romans 5:7—8). A just God deals justly (rightly) with those who reject His demonstration of His love. Would it even make sense for God to force people who have rejected Him their whole life to live with Him throughout all eternity? These God-rejectors are the ones deciding where they want to live after they die.

Delivered and raised (verse 25)

Christ's work for our redemption and justification are summarized in Romans 4:25. It was because of our sins that Christ needed to go to the cross so that our sins could be permanently dealt with. Some people may understand that sins being called offenses is a light dismissal of our transgressions. If I offend someone, it would be interpreted to be much lighter than if I had sinned against someone. However, Scripture uses the word offense as a very strong word that is condemning. Look at how this same word is used in other passages:

Ephesians 2:5 Even when we were dead in sin [offenses], hath quickened us together with Christ.

Colossians 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins [offenses] and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

These offenses were the sins that we committed against God. We were born into sin, taking on the sin of Adam (Romans 5:17), and we continued to sin, proving our father was indeed Adam. These offenses needed to be dealt with before we were able to come to God so that He could take on our sins and we could take on His righteousness. They were dealt with through Christ's work on the cross.

The reason Christ went to the cross was to deliver us from the power of darkness (Satan) who had a hold on us before we were saved (Colossians 1:13). Verse 25 is showing that it was because of our sin that Christ was delivered over to be put to death. Notice the contrast between Christ being delivered over to sinful men (Luke 24:7; Acts 2:23; 3:13) and believers being delivered from the dominion of darkness (Colossians 1:13) and from death (2 Corinthians 1:10), and from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10). All these things are past tense, we are already delivered.

It is, unfortunately, very popular to personalize His death by saying Christ died for me, even singing, as the worship song *Above All* states, "You took the fall and thought of me above all." It sounds nice, but is totally unscriptural. Instead of focusing on and elevating self, we need to elevate God. When Christ went to the cross, His focus was on pleasing the Father. He had to die in order for us to be saved, however, it was all done according to God's plan which was finalized before creation (Ephesians 1:4). This plan was followed perfectly by Jesus Christ (Acts 2:23; John 19:11). Christ was thinking only about submitting to the will of the Father and glorifying Him (John 5:30; 17:1).

While we were the cause of Christ being delivered over to sinful men and His subsequent crucifixion, His resurrection is what provided justification for believers. If Christ was not resurrected, then our whole belief system would crumble. Christ's resurrection is proof that we too shall someday be raised up (Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:14). As Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15:16, if Christ be not raised, then our faith would be in vain. This is why Paul stresses Christ's resurrection and connects it with our justification. Once we believe, we are completely identified with Christ, in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12) so that we are even now seen as being seated in the heavenly places (compare Ephesians 1:20 with Ephesians 2:6).

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