

# Raised for Our Justification

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right.

If you've got your Bibles, make your way to Romans chapter 4. Romans chapter 4 is where we're going to be this evening. I hope that you are ready to get after it. In fact, I stand corrected. Last week I said that the last song was the loudest I've ever heard you sing. That was until this week. Y'all tore it up on Because He Lives. And what a way to end our time in congregational worship.

Well, Romans chapter 4, we started a series last week, kind of a two-part series, called Justified. And basically we're just looking at the core truth of what Christianity is, of what the good news of the gospel is, with Good Friday as well as Easter Resurrection Sunday.

And so we're going to finish that up tonight. But let me just kind of give a quick plug on where we're going next week. We're going to start a new series next week that I'm calling Anxious for Nothing.

[ 1 : 23 ] How many of you show of hands have ever been stressed? Okay. If every hand is not up, the next question is how many of you are liars? All right. Or how many of you have ever been worried about something?

Like you're worried about your finances or worried about your job or worried about your kids or ever dealt with anxiety or struggled with things? Like this is a very real struggle that all of us have.

And yet the Bible teaches that there is a peace of God, the very peace of God, that surpasses all understanding, that can guard our hearts in times of stress and worry and anxiety.

The Bible actually has a lot to say about that. And so starting next week for several weeks after, we're going to be talking about being anxious for nothing. And so if you think that applies to you, you should come back, which means every one of you should be back next week as we look at that very important subject in God's Word.

But tonight we're going to finish up Justified here in Romans chapter 4. And if you've found Romans 4, now please stand if you're able to do so as we honor the reading of God's Word.

[ 2 : 35 ] Romans chapter 4 and verse 23, though really the main focus is verse 25. Paul is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

He says, This is God's Word.

Would you pray with me and pray for me? And let's ask God to talk to us tonight as we look to His Word. God, You know my heart more than anybody in this room.

You know how right now it is just leaping for joy and excitement. I feel like I've been given the opportunity to give the best news in the entire world.

Because it is the best news in the entire world. So just help me calm and focus to teach those gathered here this evening the truth of the gospel, the good news of the resurrection.

[ 3 : 50 ] And so I ask, Lord, that You would be so gracious over these next few moments to open our eyes to see this glorious truth and to rest in it and that You would set us free, that You would call us out of our graves and into glorious light.

We pray this in Jesus' name. And God's people said, Amen. You can be seated. Amen. The Scarlet Letter is a classic image in American literature written by Nathaniel Hawthorne back in 1850.

The Scarlet Letter is a story, many of you know it, about a Puritan-era mother who was punished by her neighbors because she had a child with a man that was not her husband.

And the punishment for her was that she was forced to wear a scarlet letter on her dress so that everywhere that she went and anybody that she came into contact with, her shame would be carried with her.

I thought about that story when I came across an article about the state law in Tennessee, my home state, that was implemented several years ago for first-time drunk driving offenders.

[ 5 : 05 ] Under the law, those convicted of driving under the influence face jail time, loss of license, fines, educational classes, probation, and in addition to that, they have to do three eight-hour days of roadside litter cleanup.

But what struck me about this was what they had to wear while they were doing the roadside cleanup. You see, those that were a part of this program were forced to wear a bright orange vest that reads, I am a drunk driver.

When the law was put into place, the congressman at the time explained the reasoning for doing this. And I quote, You caused them to go out and pick up trash in front of their friends and neighbors wearing the orange vest.

And the embarrassment is going to be such that they're never going to want to do that again. Close quote. Scarlet letter.

Now, don't misunderstand me at all. I'm not questioning the intent of the law, nor, hear me, would I ever suggest that someone guilty of drunk driving shouldn't be fully punished. In fact, my issue today isn't why the state of Tennessee makes people wear a vest.

[ 6 : 37 ] My issue tonight is why you wear one. You see, I don't know everything about you, but I know this about a lot of us.

It's that deep down, we tend to clothe ourselves in our worst mistakes. We tend to don the robe of our regrets.

Many of us have a closet full of guilty garments. And even though we look nice on the outside, the truth of the matter is there is a scarlet letter embroidered on the sole.

And if you don't wear the vest, or make yourself wear the vest, you know you live in a culture that cannot wait to dress you in your worst moments.

One of my favorite theologians throughout all of church history is a man by the name of Merle Haggard. And I don't know, Faith Family, if you're appreciative enough that you have a pastor that would quote Merle Haggard on Easter weekend.

[ 7 : 47 ] That, like you won't find that anywhere else in the South Metro, I assure you, alright? Merle Haggard wrote a song called Branded Man. The lyrics go like this, When they let me out of prison, I held my head up high, determined I would rise above the shame.

But no matter where I travel, the black mark follows me. I'm branded with a number on my name. I'd like to hold my head up and be proud of who I am, but they won't let my secret go untold.

I paid the debt I owed them, but they're still not satisfied. Now I'm a branded man out in the cold.

Scarlet letter. And the reason why this concerns me, Faith Family, is listen to me, listen. If we're not careful, notice this on the screen, the vest we wear will become the identity we believe.

The vest we put on ourselves, the vest that others put on ourselves, will become the identity we believe. And I wonder what your vest says this evening.

[ 9 : 07 ] Maybe it says, I'm a liar. I'm divorced. I'm a drunk. I'm a dropout.

I had an abortion. I'm religiously self-righteous. I'm an addict. I'm prideful.

I'm a failure. What is the scarlet letter that is embroidered on your soul? If you are here tonight and you have ever struggled with your identity, I'm glad you're here.

You know why I'm glad you're here? Because the good news of Easter is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ gives you new clothes.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ gives you new clothes. Jesus offers us a new and true identity that cannot be removed ever.

[ 10 : 23 ] And I'm going to be like Southern preacher tonight because I'm already sweating and so I'm just going to preach like I'm in the South because I'm from the South. Listen to me. I think one of the aspects of the resurrection that we rarely talk about in Easter messages is this reality.

In other words, if you go listen to a lot of Easter messages, what you're going to hear is sermons on all the reasons why you should believe in the resurrection, and there are many. Or you'll hear sermons like how we have hope over death.

We just sing about that. And that is true. Or you'll sing about, or you'll talk about how the resurrection offers salvation. And there's nothing more important than that. But so often we don't realize how the resurrection of Jesus changes our identity forever.

And I'm not making this up. I didn't pull this out of thin air. This is actually what the Apostle Paul ties the resurrection to here in Romans chapter 4.

Look back at verse 23. But the words that it was counted to him, that is Abraham, they were not written for his sake alone.

[11:34] No, no, no. They were written for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him, who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Now, last week we took the first part of verse 25, namely that Jesus was delivered up for our trespasses. How many of you remember that? Okay, thank you.

I was like, please remember last week, okay? And we talked about the fact that you and I are trespassers. We are trespassers. And we know what a trespasser is.

A trespasser is somebody that crosses the line. If there's a no trespassing sign, you can't come on my property and if you come on my property, you're trespassing, you're breaking the law.

The point that Paul was making is that when it comes to the law of God, when it comes to the commands that God has given, you and I consistently and repeatedly cross the line.

[12:38] We wear a vest. Our vest says, I am a sinner. I am a trespasser. And our trespasses have put us in a very difficult situation, namely that you and I have incurred a debt to a perfect holy God that we cannot pay.

But the good news of the cross is that God didn't ask us to pay it. He paid it for us.

How? By delivering up Jesus for our trespasses. It's why, we talked about last week, Jesus says on the cross, to telestai, it is finished.

That is, Jesus by his death is offering the full and final payment for our sins.

It's like back in 1987, Northwest Airlines flight that crashed, taking off from Detroit Airport, killing 155 people.

[13:48] There was only one survivor, only one survivor. It was a four-year-old girl by the name of Cecilia. Cecilia was saved because of her mother's response.

As the plane was going down, her mother unbuckled her seatbelt. She got down on her knees and she wrapped her arms and body around her little girl, separating her from the force of the fall.

And her daughter was the only one on the plane that survived. In a sense, that is what God did for us. Here's what I mean.

Are you listening, Faith Family? Rather than making us feel and face the wrath of God for our sins, God took it upon himself by sending Jesus to be our substitute, to take our place.

And because it is finished, because Jesus took our place and paid for our trespasses and was the full and final payment for our sins, we can take the vest off.

[14:58] Whatever it is, whatever you feel guilt about or shame about, whatever has become your identity, whatever is the scarlet letter of the soul, you can take that vest off.

You can toss it out. You can burn it for all I care because it is finished. But, that's only half the story. That's only half the verse. Notice this on the screen. Listen, forgiveness doesn't make us perfect, it only makes us neutral.

Track with me. Taking off our vest of sin is great news. Amen? But all it does is leave you naked.

Right? You don't have anything in your account. Jesus paid your debt, but there's nothing in your bank account. Forgiveness pays the debt, but you're still neutral.

[16:03] You don't have the perfection God requires. So, Jesus is delivered up for our trespasses and now look at the rest of verse 25.

Who was delivered up for our trespasses and say this with me, and raised for our justification.

Question number one, what in the world is justification?

Justification is a legal word. To be justified is to be made right. And let me just say this to you tonight, Faith Family, there is nothing more important in all of life than being right with God.

Nothing. Being right with your kids, that's important. Being right with a spouse, that's fantastic.

Being right with a boss, that's important too. But nothing is more important than being right with God.

That's what this idea of justification means. In fact, there's another biblical word that goes along with the idea of justification and that's the word of righteousness. That is, to be justified is to be righteous.

[17:15] And for us to really understand the totality of this righteousness, I want to break it down in three different ways. First of all, there's righteous behavior. You know what righteous behavior is.

That's simply doing the right thing. That's obeying. And so part of righteousness is simply doing what you're supposed to do. But then all of those individual actions of obedience make up a righteous life.

You can think of it this way. All the righteous trees make up a totality of a righteous forest. So it's not just enough that you have a few righteous trees.

The whole forest has to be righteous. The entire life has to be righteous. And then thirdly, it has to be according to a righteous standard. That is, you could have all the money in the world, but if it's in the wrong currency, it doesn't matter.

It isn't worth anything. Let me see if I can explain this because I think if we understand it, we're going to understand how big and deep this is. Imagine that you're applying to be accepted in college.

[ 18 : 23 ] And there's a judge who's going to make the final determination as to whether or not you are right. to be accepted. So the judge looks at your behavior at school.

Some of you are getting really nervous, all right? Your behavior at school, like, did you show up for class? Did you behave when you were there? Did you skip class?

That's your behavior. Then they're going to look at your total record. Did you make A's? How many of you all A's? Braggers, Neil, whatever, right?

How many of you, how many of you C's? How many of you are like a C student? Anybody have a few F's sprinkled in? Right? So there's your record, like what you, the totality of your GPA.

And then lastly, your overall resume or the standard you're trying to apply to. In other words, listen, listen, listen. You could have perfect attendance and all A's at beauty school, but that wouldn't get you into the engineering program.

[ 19 : 23 ] Like all your righteousness is in the wrong category. You say, what's the point of all this? You've got to have right living. You've got to have a totality of a righteous life.

And the totality of that righteous life has to be according to the right standard. And if you don't have all three of those, you are not righteous or just before God.

You say, I'm in trouble. I know you are. You're in the same trouble I am. And here's why we're in trouble is because when it comes to the school of righteousness, I don't show up all the time.

Amen? And I have more F's than A's. Amen? And even what I do occasionally get right falls short of God's righteous requirement.

The Bible talks about it this way, that even our best efforts are like filthy rags. Jesus, on the other hand, lived the perfect life, got an A on every test, fulfilled the law of God at every level, and therefore became the very righteousness of God.

[ 20 : 34 ] God. And watch, I didn't even do the good part yet, watch what happens the moment you believe.

Verse 22. That is why faith, believing, was counted or accredited to Abraham as righteousness. But the words, it was counted, it was reckoned to Abraham, weren't written for his sake alone. They were written for our sake also. Listen, it, that is, righteousness, will be counted to us who believe in God who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord.

Did you hear that? If you don't get excited, I'm going to get excited for you and I'm already really, really excited. Listen, listen, do you know what that means?

It means that when you put your faith in Jesus, His righteousness, that is, His righteous obedience, His totality of a righteous life, and all of that according to God's perfect standard was accredited to us.

[ 21 : 55 ] His life became our life. That's what's happening here. That's what's going down here. That is, He puts all of His righteousness into our account.

Watch, He was delivered up for our trespasses, makes our debt neutral. But He doesn't just make our account neutral, He deposits in it the full righteousness of His Son.

Notice it on the screen. Jesus takes our sinful life and gives us His righteous life and that's what makes us say it justified before God.

2 Corinthians 5.21 For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

1 Corinthians 1.30 and because of Him you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God righteousness and sanctification and redemption so that as it is written let the one who boasts boast in they know there's no boasting in West tonight there's no boasting in my life there's no

boasting in your life we are boasting in the life of Jesus who has become for us the very righteousness of God one more Galatians 3.27 for as many of you who were baptized into Christ Jesus have put on Christ I told you you get new clothes you get new clothes and the new clothes is the very life of Jesus in other words notice it on the screen Jesus not only removes our vest Jesus gives us his vest which means which means when it comes to your identity when it comes to who you really really are listen none of the scarlet letters apply did you hear that none of the scarlet letters apply here's why because the only label that apply to you are the labels that apply to [ 24 : 36 ] Jesus because he is now your life everything that is a part of his life has been accredited It has been accounted to you because of faith and that means that whatever label the world puts on you whatever label the culture puts on you whatever label your boss puts on you whatever label your kids put on you those labels fall right off because the only true label that applies to you is the righteousness of Jesus and just like you can't pay off your sin debt you can't earn his righteous life look back at verse 4 of chapter 4 verse 4 of chapter 4 says this now to the one who works his wages are not counted as a what a gift but as his due and to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly his faith is counted as righteousness in other words here's what

Paul was saying is that the righteousness of Jesus his righteous life is a gift to you when you believe you don't earn it you don't work for it you work for a wage you don't work for a gift let me give you three quick things here first of all we can't earn his righteousness we can't earn his righteousness listen your paycheck is not a gift is it it's a wage you go to work you work your hours you get a paycheck that's not a gift that's what Paul was saying here but instead when it comes to God giving you the very righteousness of his son we need to understand it's a gift a whole gift and nothing but a gift why because God's not obligated to give it he freely because it's just the kind of gracious God he is when you turn to him and believe in his resurrected son un obligated whatsoever to do so says

I gift you my son's life forever what a God we serve it's not just amen absolutely listen it's not just that we can't earn his righteousness but secondly we don't deserve his righteousness we don't deserve it it's hard for us to understand this because we live in an entitlement society yes we do most of us are more entitled than we realize and we know this because of the way we think about gifts okay so let me give you an example most of us whether we're willing to admit it or not kind of expect a birthday gift do we not most of us expect a birthday gift or at least some type of acknowledgement on our birthday and here's why you know is because when somebody that's really close to you forgets your birthday and doesn't give you a gift you feel a little bit hurt like you kind of expected that or if maybe that doesn't apply to you take the reverse do you not feel bad when you forget to give someone a gift for their birthday right and if you don't feel bad they make you feel bad right and so here's what you end up doing you end up giving a belated birthday gift there's a biblical word for that it's called a guilt offering okay you know that's what it is you're! giving a guilt offering because you feel bad because you were obligated to get them something or maybe it's not with a birthday gift maybe this happens to me all the time I'll go out with some of you we'll have lunch or whatever and you'll pay play along okay you'll pay and inevitably I'll say something like this I'll get next time because I'm not viewing that as a gift I'll earn it back is next time I'll pay play along okay here's the point here's the point I'm making listen listen we're terrible at receiving gifts notice this on the screen gifts are things you don't deserve don't expect and don't try to repay why cause it's a gift and the very idea that you can try to repay it is actually offensive to the giver think about it those of you with kids let's say you do something really generous and gracious and you give a gift to your children and they come to you and they say man you know what like I just feel really bad that you gave that to me and I just you know it was just such a gift and I'm so thankful for it but I feel bad never given to you with the obligation that you were going to do something back for me I just gave it to you because I wanted to be gracious to you because I love you listen you don't deserve the righteousness of Jesus it is purely and entirely a gift and you do not have to pay it back because you can't you can't God just simply graciously gave you the life and righteousness of his son so you didn't earn it you don't deserve it and lastly you can't lose it you can't lose it listen listen listen listen because his righteousness is a gift that you didn't work for it is also a gift you can't lose why because the gift wasn't based on your life in the first place see this is where

[ 30 : 52 ] I think people that think you can lose your salvation get it wrong namely the gift of Christ's righteousness wasn't based on your life on the front end and it's not based on your life on the back end it's based entirely on his grace in fact here's what's crazy God actually gave you the gift of his son's righteousness knowing full well who you were who you are and who you will be it's not as though there's anything you're going to do in the future that's going to surprise God and this should blow our minds this should absolutely blow our minds like it's amazing enough that God would give you the gift of his son's righteousness knowing all your past sins but he gives you the gift of his son's righteousness knowing all your future sins which means this he's not going to take it back the gift is yours forever through faith notice this on the screen faith family your righteousness before

God is based on the perfect life of Jesus so the only way you can lose his righteousness is not if you sin but if Jesus sins because it's all based on his life Paul is saying at the core of the gospel is that Jesus put on your vest he was delivered up for your trespasses and in return he gives you his vest and I'm going to just stop here for a moment I only have six more points so just hang on all right teasing listen listen very serious moment if you're here tonight and you're not a Christian how can you not run to him upon hearing what I have just declared to you on the basis of the authority of God's word not my own how can tonight you not bow your knee to him and believe it's like it's all right here for your partaking for your enjoyment for your life changing moment and yet you're going to walk out and say no thank you

I beg of you that tonight you would believe and trust in Jesus that his life would become your life forever now some of you are saying is he ever going to get to the resurrection like write a note walk it up to the stage that says it's Easter num num right talk about the resurrection like what in the world does this have to do with the resurrection okay this and I'm done this and I'm done look at verse 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses he took our vest and raised for our justification raised he was resurrected for our justification so here's the question and it's this how does the resurrection of Jesus and our justification go together I've spent all this time trying to explain what our justification is namely receiving the very righteous life of

Jesus accounted to us accredited to us in our account so that we are justified before God but how does that or what does that have to do with Jesus walking out of the grave I'm really glad you asked that question and I need you to hang with me because I want to take you to a few verses in Hebrews that I think will help make this point and then we'll wrap it up okay look at Hebrews chapter 7 verse 20 it was not without an oath hang with me for those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath so the author is talking about the sacrifices of the old system in the Old Testament and the priestly 21 but the one that is Jesus who was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind watch you are a priest how long forever this makes

Jesus the guarantier of a better covenant watch the former priests were many in number why were there so many of them because they were prevented by what death from continuing in office but he holds his priesthood how long permanently why because he continues forever consequently he is able to save to the utter most those who draw near to God through him why is he able to save to the utter most those that draw near to God since he always lives he always lives to make intercession for them so here's the point you've zoned out how could you zone out at any point tonight are you insane listen listen here's the point what was the problem with the

[ 36 : 39 ] Old Testament sacrifices they ended in death what was the problem with all of the priests and why were there so many of them in the Old Testament because they all ended in death why could you and I not pay for our own sins because we were dead in our trespasses here's the point notice it on the screen therefore if Jesus dies and remains in the grave he is no his life is no different than yours if Jesus dies and remains in the grave his life is no different than yours that's not me saying that that's the apostle Paul look at 1st Corinthians 15 and verse 16 for if the dead are not raised not even Christ has been raised and if Christ has not been raised your faith is futile and you're still in your sins but here's the good news of the gospel faith family but in fact

Christ has been raised from the dead! God which means which means the resurrection of Jesus justifies Jesus the resurrection of Jesus justifies Jesus it justifies his perfect life it justifies that he is the full and final payment for sin it justifies that he is the righteousness of God and notice this on the screen because the resurrection justified his life the resurrection is the only thing that can justify your life none of this truth is true if Jesus is still in the grave but he is alive and he was raised for your justification he justified himself and that he is the perfect one he is the ultimate sacrifice for sin

and as his life became justified in terms of what he offered up to the father that very life is what justifies ours if there is no resurrection there is no justification of Christ's life and consequently no justification for us before God but because

Jesus is alive because he is raised from the dead our justification before God is alive forever why because he is never going to stop interceding for you that's what makes Jesus different than everybody else he is forever and he lives forever making intercession for us that's why Easter matters that's why I'm sweating like crazy up here that's why I'm giving you every ounce of every bit of energy I got tonight because this is the best absolute best life changing news in the entire world so I'm asking you and I'm asking you sincerely notice this on the screen are you banking your hope before God on your life or the resurrected life of Jesus and you need to answer that question what are you going to bank your life on before

God your life your attendance the totality of your life living up to the righteous perfect standard of God or are you going to go all in by faith on the life of Jesus forever and I will tell you to put a stake in the ground that's already been driven deep within this faith family we are a church that has banked it all on Jesus alone I assure you that we ain't we ain't banking it on the man on the stage and we ain't banking it on y'all in the pews I know they're not pews play along we have banked all of this on that Jesus is enough and I'm terrified at the idea that some of you are going to walk out of these doors in just a moment and you're going to walk out banking your right standing before God on that you'll do enough

God help you two applications and we're done first is this the resurrection changes our identity it changes our identity listen our identity before God is now the righteous life of Jesus forever and no matter what labels anybody wants to put on you peel them right back off that the only one that would stick is that it has been accounted to you the righteousness of Jesus and here's my hope here's my prayer is that every morning when you open your closet that rather than putting on the guilt garments you'll robe the righteousness of Jesus that is already yours in Christ and that that would change your mindset as you enter your day the resurrection changes our identity and secondly the resurrection changes our eternity

[ 42 : 28 ] Paul says in Romans 4 that all of this hinges on belief on faith and so I ask tonight do you believe have you trusted the Lord Jesus as your savior have you gone all in on his life I tell you it will change your eternity forever for you will pass from death to life and you will have the guarantee of eternal life with God some of y'all it's like either clap or don't clap all right so I close with this sincerely I close with this it's about a story of a man and if I mentioned his name if I mentioned his name many of you in this room would know who I'm talking about but what would come to your mind if I mentioned his name is not his 22 year successful baseball career batting batting batting title batting title the fact that he played in an all star game if

I mentioned his name the very first thought most of you would have is this so the winning run is at second base with two out three and two to Mookie Wilson little roller up along first behind the bag it gets through Buckner here comes night and the Mets win it that's the legacy of Bill Buckner it was the 86 World Series the Boston Red Sox were leading the series three to two it was game six Mookie Wilson hits an easy roller down the first baseline and Bill Buckner pulled a Buckner the Mets went on to win the game and they went on to win the World Series and listen to me that moment that one single moment defined

Bill Buckner's career in fact he passed away in 2019 listen to the headline in the LA Times the headline read this quote Bill Buckner a hitting machine known for a fielding error dead at 69 it became the vest the world would make him wear all his life scarlet letters we all have them those garments of guilt tucked away in the closets of our soul and if we're not careful the vest we wear will become the identity we believe and that is why every single one of us in this place tonight needs the hope of the gospel and it is this

Jesus was delivered up for your trespasses and he was raised for your justification and because of that you don't have to wear your vest anymore in fact you get to put on his and all God's people said amen let's pray let's pray Lord thank you for this great and glorious truth this is the gospel this is Christianity and there's nothing like it because there's no one like Jesus who was delivered up for our trespasses!

He was raised for our justification and that changes everything He not only paid our debt He gave us a new life a life completely and fully righteous a life justified before God let that sink in help us rest in this reality help us see that we are celebrating an empty tomb and in celebrating that empty

tomb it's more than just a man got up and walked out but a perfect life walked out of the grave and that life has become our life forever and I pray as I have pleaded already this evening for the person in this room that has never believed never put their faith in

[ 47 : 58 ] Christ I pray tonight they would trust him and bank their life on him that tonight they would by faith be justified before you oh God we love you Lord we celebrate this great truth tonight we our hearts are just overflowing with what great news this is so help us continue to celebrate tonight tomorrow and even Monday morning when we open that closet and remember that the robe we wear is a righteous one a gift that you gave us through faith in Jesus name we pray amen