


Resurrection the Incarnation of Our Justification

 Romans 4:18-25

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In Romans 3-4 we are studying the doctrine of justification. What's justification? It's a legal declaration of righteousness made by God's grace through human faith apart from works so that it is a free gift. What did we learn in 4:13? The gargantuan truth that tied up in the legal declaration of righteousness is a clause that states that we are heirs of the world to come. The world to come is the millennial kingdom. God has a program and purpose for history that culminates in a kingdom. However, the kingdom being established on the earth has been God's purpose from the beginning of creation. He purposed that man would rule the earth for His glory. And so the doctrine of premillennialism is embedded in Genesis. This isn't something we get from Rev 20, this is something we get from Gen 1-2, that God's purpose for man is to rule an earthly kingdom under God for His glory. Adam was to do this, he was the first king in the garden kingdom but through the Fall he forfeited his right to rule to Satan. God covenanted to restore that kingdom through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the tribe of Judah. The kingdom came to rest upon David and reaches its zenith in the golden era of Solomon but the kingdom failed and with the Exile and vacancy of the throne of David the times of the Gentiles began. The times of the Gentiles are the times when Gentile kingdoms are given divine authorization to exercise sovereignty over the world. The first of the four Gentile kingdoms revealed in the book of Daniel was Babylon. It rose suddenly, made its contribution of fractional reserve economics and declined passing on fractional reserve economics to Medo-Persia which rose to power, made its unique contribution of globalism and declined passing on both fractional reserve economics and globalism to Greece which rose rapidly, made its distinctive contribution of rationalism and declined passing on fractional reserve economics, globalism and rationalism to Rome which rose, made its contribution of military might. Jesus Christ came during the kingdom of Rome and restored man's right to rule through His substitutionary blood sacrifice but Israel did not receive Him and therefore the kingdom did not come but was postponed temporarily until Israel receives Him as their King. During the postponement the Church began during this fourth kingdom of Rome and Jesus sits in heaven at the right hand of the Father as the heir apparent. Rome gradually declined during its first phase, dying in the West in 476 and in the East in 1453 and has since been gradually re-forming and will soon take form as a ten nation confederacy that will ultimately be

ruled by the anti-Christ who will combine fractional reserve economics, globalism, rationalism and military might. At that time the heir apparent, Jesus Christ, will return and destroy this final kingdom of Rome and in its place establish His kingdom in the earth. All who have faith in Him will be resurrected to be heirs of the kingdom and will rule in varying capacities for 1,000 years. So Rom 4:13, we are heirs of the kingdom to come. There is no kingdom of God now, we are the Church and as members of the Church we have citizenship in the kingdom to come but right now we are in training for our future reign. That's why every day is a trial; every day is a test to see how we will handle the difficulties that are thrown at us. Do we count it all joy knowing that every trial has a purpose? Or do we become weary? The purpose of our trials is to strengthen our faith so that we will be prepared for ruling in some capacity in the coming kingdom. But we are today heirs of that kingdom because heirship in verse 13 is simply by faith, "For the promise to Abraham or to his seed that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith." If you have had faith in Jesus Christ then you are an heir of the world. Verse 14, "For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified;" Abraham was given the promise based on his faith and not on keeping the Law which was not given until 430 years later. Further, verse 15, "the Law brings about wrath." Why? Because no one ever kept the Law perfectly, "but where there is no law, there also is no violation. For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the seed, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham." Okay, so you see there was no other way to guarantee the promise of kingdom rule in history other than by faith. Why? Because no man has sufficient works. If you're depending on your works you're in for a rude awakening. Your good works are like filthy rags. The only work God is interested in is the work of Jesus Christ. His work satisfied God's holiness once for all. Further if your works were brought into the equation then it would not be in keeping with grace because works are meritorious and grace is non-meritorious. So Paul is showing that whether one is a Jew or a Gentile, the only basis of acceptance with God is faith. And when we have faith we are of a different species. There are actually two species of the human race; the natural species and the supernatural species. Those who have faith are the supernatural species. We come from every tribe, tongue, people and nation on earth. As verse 17 says, (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU")." Abraham is the father of all these nations because he had faith and became the first member, so to speak, of this supernatural species. It's not saying, of course, that no person had faith before Abraham. Of course there were people before the Flood who had faith; men like Abel, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, et al. But the first person in Scripture who is explicitly said to have believed is Abraham and therefore Abraham is chosen to be a father of all who believe. Verse 17 goes on to say, "in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist." Abraham believed what? That God would give him a son supernaturally because you see Abraham was far advanced in years, he was about 100 years old and Sarah's womb was dead and so this is impossible.

But you see verse 18? **In hope against hope he believed.** Abraham believed against hope upon hope, that's how the Greek reads, Abraham "Who against hope upon hope believed..." It sounds like a contradiction. How could he believe against hope and yet upon hope. Abraham believed against hope in that from a purely human standpoint it was impossible to have a son when he was 100 years old and his wife Sarah 90. Give me a break! And even if you could who would want to? He was an old man and here's his wife, she's already gone through menopause and now all of that is going to be revitalized and we're going to have a son? From a human standpoint that's impossible. That's what it means, **against hope he believed.** He believed against the impossibility of it happening from the human standpoint. Abraham had a big view of God that was well-founded on the promises of God. You see, when God speaks it's more certain than when I am speaking to you. There's no question when God speaks what is being said or who is saying it. And this is what Abraham was concluding. It was more certain that what God said would happen than for what usually happens from the human standpoint to happen. It was more certain that he and Sarah would have a son than not because God said so. God calls into being that which does not exist. With God all things are possible and therefore Abraham **against hope upon hope believed.** As Lopez says, "...Abraham's *hope* (=faith) was *contrary* to anything that can possibly be achieved on a purely human level...Abraham's faith to have a child was "beyond" reasonable "hope" if it rested on his physical ability. But since his *hope* rested on God's promise, his hope was secure (cf. v 19-21)." I.e. God's word is absolute! Now it's interesting that Abraham's faith was what opened the door to the realization of becoming the father of many nations. In other words, human faith plays a role in history. God made the promise but apart from Abraham's faith the promise would never have been realized. Faith is like a trigger that when pulled releases the hammer. Our faith unleashes God's promises to be fulfilled in history such that things come into existence that are completely contrary to anything that can naturally occur. This is why we are called to trust in the promises of God. Only through trust do His promises become realities. Of course this means trusting the promises of God in Scripture and so we have to understand the promises of God, what exactly God has promised us because I don't think God's going to divide the Red Sea for you if you believe or cause the religion of Islam to fall down because of your faith. That's ridiculous and that's the name it and claim it Word of Faith movement. But what we do mean is that God has called us to live by faith in His promises, to claim what He has promised us and if we do then He will accomplish something supernatural through it. And if you want to continue living a meager existence like the old man then you are only going to get natural results. But if you live like the new man that you are on the basis of faith then His promises will become realities, usually in some kind of supernatural way that is just not what you would naturally expect. It doesn't mean its going to be an Abraham and Isaac thing. It just means that God is going to bring something into your life by divine fiat; peace, for example, in a very tumultuous time. It may not seem natural to turn to Him and trust Him in such a time but when you do peace results. That's believing **against hope upon hope** and that's what Abraham did when he believed that God would

make him **a father of many nations**. He reasoned that God said it and anything God says is more certain than my experience so it will happen.

As verse 18 goes on to quote, **"SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE."** Where is that quote taken from? Gen 15:5. What is Gen 15:5? Where God said that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars. Are there a lot of stars? A whole lot. We know there are over 100 billion stars and there are probably more and still Abraham is getting more and more descendants every day. Yet how old was Abraham when this promise was made? This one he was about 70. And did he and Sarah have any children? Not one. They probably tried for decades but when he became old and his body was as good as dead and her womb was dead and they were 100 and 90 respectively, what's the point of even trying now? They couldn't have children. Yet they had this promise hanging out there and so they continued to try.

Verse 19, **Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb;** Abraham was thinking about this, it had been 30 years and he's thinking, man alive, there is no way left to my old decrepit body and loss of reproductive capacities that I can have a child naturally, I'm **about a hundred years old**. And he was also thinking about **the deadness of Sarah's womb**. She had already undergone menopause. This was impossible from the human standpoint, utterly impossible. And he was contemplating it, meaning he was reflecting upon it, "Man, I can't have any kids left to myself." But yet what was his response to that thought? He did not become **weak in faith** with regard to the promise. The promise was still there and the promise was you will have many descendants, a father of many nations. Now **weak in faith** does not refer to a faith that doubts since faith is the opposite of doubt and we want to be clear on faith. Faith is not an I hope so, faith is supreme confidence in the reliability of someone or something, in this case the promise of God and indeed in God Himself to do what He had promised. So when it says Abraham did not become weak in faith it means he did not fail to rise to the occasion even when **he contemplated his own body** at about age **a hundred**. How could he doubt? God had spoken! God said it and God's word is more certain than any experience you ever had or will have. He believed God over the condition of his body. Some think that God waited until they were this old in order to challenge them to trust Him over their circumstances. That certainly is possible. Our ability to believe in various circumstances does have to grow and now that Abraham and Sarah had been trying for thirty years and they were definitely beyond the years of childbearing do you think you might start to doubt? Abraham didn't. Abraham was fully confident that in the right time they would have a son, had to.

Verse 20, as he was thinking about their bodies it says, **yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God**. Note that the verse does not say that Abraham never failed to believe. It says that **with respect to the promise of God** in view here,

which is that Abraham would be a father of many nation, **he did not waver in unbelief**. The word **waver** means “to divide.” Abraham was not divided on the issue. This is another way of saying he did not doubt. Again, since any doubt is the opposite of belief then we do not say that we believe in percentages; 30%, 50%, 80%, 90% believe, either we believe or we do not; 90% belief is doubt! Abraham had no doubt. Abraham believed fully **the promise of God**.

The expression **but grew strong in faith** stands in contrast and comes from the Greek word which means “empowered.” Abraham was empowered to believe. It is in the passive voice and so God was the one who empowered him to believe. So Abraham was not divided because God had empowered him to believe and we don’t know how exactly that occurred, we only know that it did occur.

This firm faith, confidence in God gave **glory to God**. How exactly and what exactly gave **glory to God**? Because they kept having sexual relations for thirty years. He was 100 and she was 90. That brought **glory to God** because it reflected his faith that what God said would take place despite the condition of his body. You see that God is greater than our circumstances. If He wasn’t why would you worship Him? Why would you continue to have relations with your wife till age 100 unless you trusted God? You wouldn’t. So continually trying to have a child gave God glory.

Verse 21 describes Abraham’s faith as full assurance. **And being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform**. You see that it is one thing to make a **promise**, it is another thing to be **able to perform it**. Abraham was fully assured that God was able to do it. He knew God. God had spoken to him and he was totally convinced that God was able to do it. He had no doubt. We’d say he knew the attributes of God and the ways of God; he knew who God was and what God did and he was convinced that God could overcome any weakness in their human body and would give them a son. So here faith is defined as becoming convinced that something is true. You can’t make yourself believe. No one can make themselves believe; they have to be convinced that something is true. “Even at a basic human level faith is a conviction that something is certain, reliable, or true.” Remember how Paul set out to persuade men. You don’t convert by the sword, unless your pen is the sword, you convert men by persuading them. Persuading them of what? The truth. You’re trying to convince men of the truth. Men do not naturally want the truth. Some men don’t even think truth exists, “What is truth?” Asked Pilate. Truth is reality as the Bible describes it and we seek to persuade men. When they are persuaded they are in agreement with the truth. That is, they have faith in it. Hence what God did for Abraham was convince him of the truth of the promise that he would be a father of many nations.

Thus, verse 22, **it was also credited to him as righteousness**, another quotation of Gen 15:6. Gen 15:5 is what we saw in verse 18 and that is where God promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars of the heavens. Gen 12:2 is the original promise since there God promised that he would be the father of a great nation. Either way he would have to have a son. Abraham thought intelligently

about the nature of God and His promise and was fully convinced that God was able to perform this promise. Therefore Abraham's faith was **credited to him as righteousness**. This is now the fourth time that Paul has stated that his faith was credited to him as righteousness and this is bringing the argument of the chapter to a close. What is the key to the whole passage? This is now the fourth time that he has stated it? Faith is credited as righteousness. He said that in verse 3, "IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." He said that in verse 5 "his faith is credited as righteousness." He said it again in verse 9, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." And he says it here again in verse 22, "IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

McClain concludes, "Now then, what is the conclusion of this matter? Did Abraham get anything by works? Not a thing! He got his righteousness by faith; his inheritance by faith; his posterity by faith. Abraham did not get a single thing by human works, and yet the Jews looked back to Abraham and said, "We are walking in his steps," while trying to keep the law. At this point Paul not only answers the argument, but he also turns it against them. This is the great faith chapter of the Bible. The word *faith* or the word *believe* occurs no less than sixteen times in the chapter. Everything that Abraham had was by faith."²

Now if that is so then how are you going to get anything by works? You're not going to get by works? You get by faith. What do we get? If we have a faith like Abraham then we get to be his children, we get righteous before God and we get to be heirs of the world in the kingdom to come. Abraham didn't get any of those things by works and we don't get any of them by works either. We get them all by faith. Why? Very simple, verse 16, "so that it may be in accordance with grace." You see, there can't be any merit involved on our side. It must be entirely unmerited so that God gets all the glory.

Now verse 23 is concluding and his conclusion is to make application of Abraham to us. Paul is saying this is not just true for Abraham but it is true for us too. **Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, 24but for our sake also.** God wants us to know that it is credited to us in the same way that it was credited to him. Put another way, "God has but one way of saving men in all ages. It is by faith, apart from works." There are not multiple ways of salvation. Dispensationalism has never taught more than one way of salvation. There have been some unfortunate statements made at times but Covenant Theologians have been just as guilty.³ Salvation is always by grace through faith. There has been a progress of revelation such that the object of our faith has become more refined, "but down through the ages, salvation is through faith in God! Back with Abraham, He came and said, "You are going to have a son" and Abraham believed Him. Now that was looking forward. The Messiah was to come through that son Isaac, and so Abraham's faith, in a way, was in the Lord Jesus Christ, because without the son Isaac we could not have had Christ." "Today we do not look forward to a promise; we look back to an accomplished" promise and believe in Him. "But it is faith just the same." Paul could not

be clearer in this chapter. "The only way we can apprehend and secure the benefits of redemption is by simple faith in God, for without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb 11:6). That is the argument of the chapter."

Observe that in verse 24 the NASB translates with a future tense, **it will be credited**. However, in the original it is in a present tense and not future. Therefore it truly says, "to whom it is credited," **as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead**. We believe in God who raised Jesus from the dead. Abraham looked forward to Jesus who would come through Isaac; we look back to Jesus whom God raised. Abraham believed that God would supply him a son contrary to what is natural; we believe that God raised Jesus from the dead contrary to what is natural. Faith is not in what is natural but in what God has said He will do. There is no reason to doubt. God called the universe into existence by the spoken Word and He is therefore totally sufficient to make 90 year old women bear a child or raise a person from the dead. There is nothing that is too hard for God.

Verse 25, **He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification**. The Greek word **delivered over** is *παραδομι* and refers to the crucifixion. Why was He crucified? Not because of His own transgressions but **because of our transgressions**. It is an allusion to Isa 53:12 ("because He poured out Himself to death"). He had no transgressions to be crucified for. He had done nothing wrong. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh, not in sinful flesh. He walked through the world in human flesh but was not subject to the temptations of the flesh; He faced the temptations of the world and the devil but did not succumb to the. He was a true human and yet just as truly without sin. Therefore, to err is not human. It is said that all humans err. Jesus was a human and did not err. Jesus shatters every psychology standard generated by analysis of fallen humans. Jesus is the true standard of a human. He is the second Adam; the firstborn of the dead; the bright and morning star; the son of David; the heir apparent to the throne; the heir of the world; the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And He was crucified for us; not because of what He had done but because of what we have done.

In like manner He **was raised because of our justification**. In other words, God raised Him because He was satisfied with His payment for our sin. As MacArthur says, "The Resurrection provided proof that God had accepted the sacrifice of His Son and would be able to be just and yet justify the ungodly." God was justifying men *before* the cross prospectively, on the basis that His Son's sacrifice would be acceptable; God is justifying men *after* the cross retrospectively; on the basis that His Sons sacrifice was accepted. The resurrection is the incarnation of our justification. If Christ is not risen we are not justified. We are still in our sins. To deny the resurrection is to deny the cornerstone of the Christian faith. This is the most powerful truth because with this truth you are undefeatable. Pilkey says, "In Christian apologetics, the greatest of all doctrines is the resurrection of the dead, an idea so powerful that it, rather than sex, holds the key to the mystery of human existence. Wherever it is clearly conceived as a

metaphysical reality, resurrection annihilates every premise and every conclusion of the Marxist, Freudian, and Darwinian schools of thought. It erases the premise of Marxism by positing a version of humanity independent of the natural food chain, it cancels the premise of Freudianism by furnishing a degree of vitality so absolute that temporary sexual euphoria loses all meaning, and it destroys the whole point of evolution by bringing mankind to absolute physical perfection in an instant of transformation." The argument is over. Christ is risen. We are justified. The world to come belongs to us. We are more than conquerors in Him who conquered death.

¹ Rene Lopez, *Romans Unlocked*, p 96.

² Alva McClain, *Romans*, p 119-120.

³ See Cairns, Alan, *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 1998), p 103.