

Justified



Resurrection (Part 7)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. This week I'm continuing with the theme that I commenced last week, "Resurrection." I'm sharing this week on the measureless blessings made available to us through Christ's resurrection. In my talk yesterday, I explained how we can be begotten again or born again through faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I quoted particularly the words of the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 1:3, where he says:

> "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead…" (NKJ)

I amplified the theme that we had begun to look at the previous week, the theme of our identification with Jesus. First of all, Jesus identified himself with us in our guilt and by His death He paid the penalty for our sins. Then when we are identified with Him by faith, and the primary means of identification is baptism, the Scripture says we are buried with Him by baptism, after that we follow Him, we are carried through with Him by the power of the Holy Spirit into all that follows; into resurrection and into ascension. In Ephesians 2, Paul says, "We are made alive together with Christ… we are resurrected together with Christ… and we are enthroned together with Christ…" That's the theme of our identification with Jesus. And being made alive together with Him, we are begotten again or born again. We pass out of the old order and the old creation into a new order, and we become members of a new race, the Emmanuel race, the God-with-us race, of which Jesus Christ is the Head.

Today I'm going to share how, through Christ's resurrection, we can be justified, that is, made completely righteous. That word "justified" and the noun "justification" occur many times in the New Testament. They are very important words, but I think many Christians don't really understand the fullness of their meaning. So I hope as you listen today to this talk you'll get a clearer picture than you had, perhaps, before, of what it is to be justified.

Now the great example for us as Christians of being justified by faith is provided by the great forefather of our faith, Abraham. And in Romans 4, Paul speaks about the example and pattern of Abraham's faith and then shows how it applies

to us. So I am going to read these words in Romans 4:20-25:

> "Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith [or was made strong by his faith] and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised."

That's an important phrase isn't it? Abraham was fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised. How about you? Are you fully persuaded that God has power to do what He has promised? Then Paul goes on to say and he is quoting from the book of Genesis 15:6 about Abraham:

> "This is why 'it was credit to him as righteousness.' [That is, his believing was credited to him as righteousness. Then he applies the example of Abraham to us as believers in the New Covenant.] The words, 'it was credit to him' were written not for him alone, [not for Abraham alone] but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness, for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. [Notice if we believe with the same kind of faith Abraham had, then it will be credited to us for righteousness just as it was to Abraham. And then Paul sums it up in verse 25:] He [that is, Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." (NIV)

Notice the last phrase, "[he] was raised to life [or he was resurrected] for our justification" that we might be made righteousness, that righteousness might be credited to us.

Abraham is an example of continuing to believe God's promise in spite of all discouragement or negative appearances. We, as Christians, must exercise the same king of faith concerning Christ's death and resurrection. To this transaction there are two aspects. First, by His death Christ paid the full and final penalty for our sins. So God's justice was satisfied by the death of Jesus on our behalf. God is not compromising His justice when He forgives our sins, because Jesus has paid the full penalty as our accepted legal representative.

The second aspect of this transaction is what comes out of Christ's resurrection. By His resurrection, Christ provided acquittal or justification or complete righteousness. We are acquitted of all guilt. We were justified, reckoned righteous, we received complete righteousness. I want to emphasize that word "complete": not partial, but complete. It's very, very important to see that our acquittal depends on Christ's resurrection. In the great resurrection chapter of 1 Corinthians 15:17, Paul brings this right home and he says:

> "And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; and you are still in your sins!" (NKJ)

So our acquittal, our justification, depends on the resurrection of Jesus. You see, when God resurrected Jesus, He vindicated Him, because two human courts had condemned Him to death. The secular court of Rome, the religious court of the Jewish Sanhedrin. By resurrection, God reversed those unjust verdicts and vindicated the righteousness of Jesus. But when His righteousness was vindicated, that stood also for our righteousness, too, because we are identified with Him in resurrection.

In 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul sums it up in a very beautiful and vivid way. He says:

> "For He [that is, God] made him who knew no sin [that's Jesus] to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (NKJ)

So Jesus was made sin with our sinfulness and paid the full penalty for our sin, that we, in turn, through faith, might be identified with His righteousness which was vindicated by resurrection. So we are justified, made completely righteous. And I always like to give this little definition of justified. When I say I'm justified, I mean I'm just-as-if-I'd never sinned, because the righteousness that is reckoned to me through Christ's resurrection is a righteousness which never knew sin. And that's the only righteousness which will ever be accepted in heaven.

Because it took Christ's resurrection to insure our acquittal and justification; therefore, there are two logical requirements for us to enter into salvation. They are stated very clearly by Paul in Romans 10:6-10:

> "But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, 'Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

In other words, Paul is saying, the righteousness of faith does not have to do what Christ has already done on our behalf. And if we try to do it for ourselves, we shall be total failures. We have to begin by accepting the fact that Christ has done it for us. Then he goes on:

> "But what does it say? 'The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation." (NKJ)

So you see there are two simple, logical, practical requirements for entering into the salvation which has already been obtained for us by the death and resurrection of Jesus. The first concerns the heart; the second concerns the mouth. With our heart we must believe that God raised Him from the dead. We have to believe in the resurrection. Those who do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus do not enjoy acquittal, justification, because it depends on His resurrection and our believing in His resurrection. So the first requirement is we have to believe in the heart that God raised Jesus from the dead.

But that is not sufficient. The second requirement concerns our mouth. We have to confess with our mouth Jesus as Lord. We have to acknowledge His Lordship and not just His Lordship in general over the universe, but His Lordship in particular over our own lives. There is a surrendering of our will, a surrendering of ourself, an act of commitment to the Lordship of Jesus. Some people believe in the heart, but they've never made the commitment and they've never verbalized their commitment.

So if you are one of those, I want to recommend to you that you take the second step. Perhaps you already believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. You've confessed it maybe many times in church. But have you totally committed yourself to His Lordship and have you acknowledged Him as Lord with your mouth? You see, there has to be a public, individual confession of what we believe in our heart. That is the key to entering into salvation. Believe with the heart that God resurrected Jesus, confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and the Scripture says, "You will be saved."

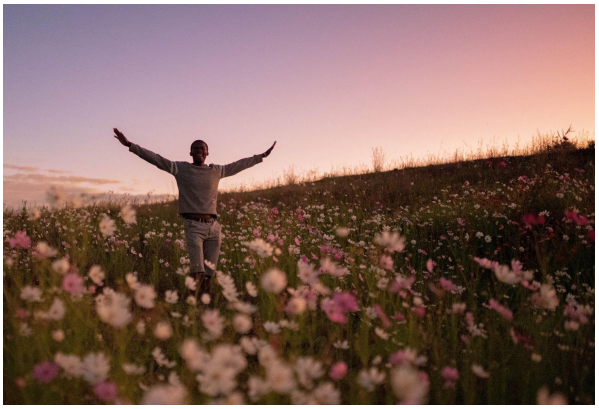
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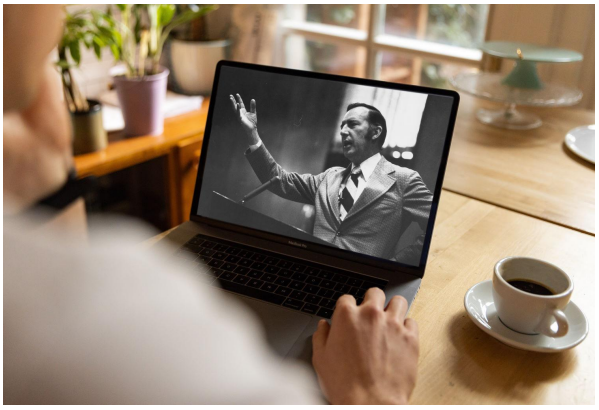
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