

## The Work of Christ Romans 4:24-25

The fourth chapter of Romans brings out and illuminates and explains more the doctrine of justification by faith, which is the whole basis of our salvation. And people regardless of whether they lived in the New Testament times or the Old Testament were declared righteous by believing in Christ alone. Now the truth was a little more fuzzy in the Old Testament as far as the coming of Christ. The example that is used in the Old Testament of faith and justification is Abraham. Abraham believed God that not only would God make him a great nation but also that through his line all the nations would be blessed through his offspring. In order for that to come to pass he would need a son in his old age, and after having his son of promise, if God commanded him to offer him up then God would have to resurrect him. Abraham believed God, and God counted him righteous for his belief in the promises of God. It does not mean that he was righteous but was credited as righteous based on what God would do with the coming greater sacrifice..

People in the Old Testament like Abraham were credited with the righteousness of Christ. They were saved by Christ alone, but the revelation of Jesus Christ was not as clear as our revelation that we have today. We are here tonight to celebrate Christ's victory through his death. And we see in the New Testament that it was a victory and not a defeat. All this was not as apparent or clear in the Old Testament. 1 Peter 1:10-11, **"Concerning this salvation (so they knew something of this salvation that we celebrate and that it would be through Jesus Christ), the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories."** The thing they did not understand is how do the sufferings of the Christ and the glory that follows relate to one another.

We see clearly both those truths and we are even here this tonight to celebrate both of those truths, and that is what I want us to see this evening. It is the whole basis of our hope and certainty of salvation. Without the truths of these two verses we are men most miserable and there is no hope and nothing worth celebrating and even nothing worth looking forward to in the future, because ultimately everything will be taken away from us. We might as well eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. There is no hope beyond this life but only fearful judgment. Tonight, I want us to look at the first half of what the prophets did not fully comprehend, and that is the need and glory of the sufferings of Christ and why we celebrate it as believers in Jesus. And I want us to see two things about the sufferings of Christ.

1. The first is, Good Friday is God's plan. V. 25.

The question is often asked: who killed Jesus? And there are various answers that are given. One is that it was the Roman authorities. It was Pilate who ultimately handed down the sentence, and the soldiers who carried out the orders. Pilate knew that he was an innocent man and even the soldiers knew that he was innocent of the charges brought against him. Others say that it was the Jews or the religious leaders.

These are the ones that ultimately arrested Jesus, and then really squeezed Pilate to condemn him to crucifixion. This view has often led to anti-semitism, or hatred and persecution against the Jews as a people. Others say that our sins are what put Jesus on the cross. And all these answers have a modicum of truth, but ultimately the reason why Jesus was put on the cross is that this was none other than the indestructible and glorious and unalterable plan of God.

And look at our verse here, **“who was delivered up.”** The “who” here is none other than Jesus, and we realize that he was delivered up. The question is not the “who” of the verse but who is doing the delivering up? And what this is - is a statement of God’s sovereign work without naming God. The text assumes the answer to the question without stating it. This is God’s gospel and this is God’s plan. God is sovereign and through Jesus not only coming but also being offered up, we realize none other than the plan of God is coming to pass. Peter says in Acts 4:27-28, **“for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontus Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.”** We see all of these gathered together but they are there by divine appointment. They act freely and therefore are accountable for their evil actions against Jesus, but what came to pass is **“whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.”** This is God’s plan and God’s gospel. And it is even said in a more personal way in Isaiah 53:10, **“Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him, he has put him to grief.”** More literally, it pleased the Lord to crush him.

Often people teach that what happened at the cross was simply evil men putting to death a good man. Bad things happen in this world, and there is no one in control and nothing that you could do about it. It just happened. It is amazing in light of Jesus’ prayer the night before where he asks God to take this cup from him, and then he prays in in Mathew 26:39, **“nevertheless,, not as I will, but as you will.”** What came to pass, and what Jesus even realized what would come to pass was the will of God the Father. God is totally in control of all these events. The Scripture could not be more clear. His purposes are what we are here tonight.

It is so incredible how applicable this is to our lives as we live in the here and now, and even as we look at the future and our future hope. We see events and they always seem like they are spinning out of control. We see it on the international scene. Politicians and evil men many times make decisions that affect us, and it seems that there is no reason or aim. We see the up and down of the economy and rising gas prices and it is incredible how unsettled we can become. And then we come back to the gospel. Here is the greatest of all evil acts that has ever been perpetrated by evil men. And think of their goal. Their goal is the total elimination of Jesus for all time. In fact, they think they are successful, and they scorn and mock Jesus as he hung on the cross in agony. They considered themselves successful. Yet here we are two thousand years later, and there are innumerable individuals that have worshiped followed and trusted Christ. What does it indicate? It indicates that although evil men plot and scheme and will be accountable for their wickedness, God is the one who delivered up Jesus. What man meant for evil God meant it for the greatest good.

And it is the same with and in our lives. The delivering up of Jesus on our behalf indicates and announces so clearly that God can be trusted with everything and anything that is going on in our lives. Are you fretting, worried, anxious or even hopeless as a believer this evening? If God controls your eternal destiny, he controls your now. This is God's gospel. It just didn't happen but was planned out by the sovereign lover of our souls. Take great comfort in the God of the gospel.

2. We need to see why Jesus was delivered up. V. 25.

Many look at the gospel and they admire that Jesus died. There are many drawings and paintings of Jesus dying on the cross. And many are inspired by his death. But here is the incredible thing: many will even gather on Good Friday or Easter Sunday morning and never even ask the question of why he either died or rose from the grave? And we celebrate glorious and grand truths here.

And if you ever want to see the love of God for those who not only do not deserve his grace but deserve his wrath it is right here in this phrase. Jesus was not delivered up because God somehow needed our worship or to be celebrated, or that he was lonely in heaven, and heaven would not be heaven without you. No. Look at what the passage says and just let those words really impact your meditations this evening: **“who was delivered up for our trespasses.”** Look at the little word “for.” It is such an important word. It is the word that connects the death of Christ by God the Father with why the Father delivered him over, and we hear those words, “our trespasses.” It is indicating the reason that Jesus was delivered up. It is indicating the reason that God sent his only Son into the world, and why the Son came and was made in flesh and dwelt among us. And it is indicating that the primary purpose is not because God had a need, but we have a desperate need that we cannot meet ourselves. We often say that God is perfect. And he is, but saying that statement means that God is in need of nothing and no one. He is self-sufficient and absolutely content and happy in himself. God is not like us. He is the unneedy God.

And the reason why Jesus is offered up by God the Father is not just for some temporal and fanciful need in our life. We often talk about our needs, but never consider our greatest need and that is I have something called trespasses in my life. You can see it in the text. If I did not have trespasses then Jesus would not have needed to come. But he came because I had a need or problem that I could not overcome. Now some will say a couple of things. One is that some people have this problem but not everyone has this problem. But look at what Paul says here because it is very personal. He says here in this passage “our trespasses.” Look at the pronoun “our.” He is talking about everyone reading this epistle and that includes none other than the apostle Paul. The scriptures record in the last chapter **“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”** And remember the scriptures are God's production. When he says “all” he means all.

And secondly, the word “trespass” is laden with meaning. We often see signs that might say about a particular parcel of land “do not trespass.” And we know what that means. We are forbidden from walking in that area or on that land. We can go so far but no farther. Well, that is exactly what we have done. God has declared there are certain prohibitions in our lives and we know them intuitively. We have trespassed God's laws. We have gone places with our words, actions and minds that we ought not

to have gone. And it seems so normal for us to do these things and say things that we ought not to say that it does not seem like that big of a deal, which speaks more about us than about God. Sin is so common in our life and in our society that it does not grab our attention. We are no longer horrified by the sights and sounds of trespasses in our lives and in the lives others. Do you ever even notice the damage of trespasses?

What would life look like if there was never any moral sin in marriage, but your marriage was a completely blissful state? There was never any discord, and there was mutual love and care and concern for one another. Divorce and hatred have become so synonymous with marriage. Even the best marriages have trespasses and sins. What would it look like if children were never neglected or used and abused, and parents really cared for their interest rather than their self interest? Children growing up in broken homes again is the norm. Many do not even know who their parents are. Homes are characterized by transgression rather than love.

What would our world look like if every employer cared about their employees more than they care about profits and the bottom line? And what if there was never any employees climbing over people to advance in jobs, and never any backbiting and gossip at work but everyone at work truly enjoyed their jobs and never dreamed about being somewhere else? Work was not endless drudgery and meaningless. Imagine a world where the political leaders really cared for the people, and passed laws that benefited all and never were involved in scandals or anything else. Imagine if there were no wars between countries where innocent people were not bombed and brutalized. Imagine the news every night reported only the truth and highlighted much of the good that was going on. The sad state of affairs today is we no longer even notice trespasses, and sadly, they have become all too common that we are not horrified by them or mourn them. This is not the way life was meant to be. There is not one person on earth who has bemoaned the fact and lamented what sin has done, what trespasses have done.

When people no longer notice trespasses and the cost of trespasses, the cross becomes so confusing. In fact, we have sanctified it. We have cleaned it up so it is not as gory and repulsive and awful. We have crosses in our homes. People have them around their neck or maybe even ear rings. They have become emblems of love and peace. But the cross was brutal and gory in the ancient world. It was not even discussed in cultured settings and society. If we ever saw the misery and horror of crucifixion it would cause us to vomit. And think of it, this is most holy man and most innocent man that ever lived. Why did this happen? Here it is: **“who was delivered up for our trespasses.”** The cross indicates how offensive are your sins, your transgressions truly are deserving of eternal punishment. Just look around you. We are not part of the solution but part of the problem. We are trespassers by nature. And this is the offence of the cross - this is what you and I deserve for all of eternity. We deserve to be delivered up by God and eternally punished for all of eternity in a cross like judgment. We deserve punishment for our trespasses because they are truly this offensive. Thinking of what our world and life would look like without transgressions and meditating on what our sins deserve show the need of Good Friday, but also show the goodness of God that God acted on our behalf.

Some will say that I believe that message about the cross but it is not for me. I am open minded and I believe there are many ways to find God and be made right with

God. The common metaphor that is often used is that there are many paths or roads that are leading to the same destination. You are on your path and I am on my path. You have trusted Jesus and that is good for you, but I am on my own particular path. But I have two questions. One is: what path are you truly on? If sin and trespasses are your greatest problem before an all holy God then what way are you trying to pay that penalty and that punishment that you deserve before an all holy God? I believe this argument is made by individuals so often that are not even trying to find God or live for him. It is a way that appease my mind and heart but truly the person is really not even seeking any other avenue where they can have sins forgiven and a right relationship with Christ. And here is the second question: how do you know there are many ways or roads to lead to heaven or to God? Just because you think it, doesn't make it right. I might believe the world is flat but that does not make it correct. Do you really think Jesus would come, God in human flesh and go through all the horrors of the cross if there was some other way to be made right or be declared right or have our sins forgiven? Listen to Galatians 2:21, **"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose."** Paul says that if I could live and make myself righteous through law keeping or any other way then Jesus Christ died needlessly. He did not need to come.

Now saying all of that, here is the glories of the sufferings of Christ that we are celebrating here this evening as believers in Christ. It had purpose and meaning, and as we will see on Sunday morning, God stamped his approval on all the work of Christ through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is an absolute and glorious victory that we celebrate and that says to us as believers that everything that Jesus did on the cross was more than enough to take away my sin and give me an eternal relationship with Christ. I can now celebrate that great truth. Jesus died for the guilty but now is alive forevermore. Praise God for our loving God who intentionally sent Jesus to die for our trespasses and meet our greatest need that we could not meet ourselves.