

Eleutheros Newsletter

June 2019

News of Interest

The next book in the Eleutheros Book series will be entitled *19th Century Influences on 21st Century Christianity*. Research for this book has begun, and God willing, it will be in print by the end of this calendar year.

Please pray for the Eleutheros Books Global Fund! Requests come in almost every day from all over the world, and we need support to meet the many needs.

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Continued Thoughts on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Acts 26:23. *That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.*

Now Paul is standing in front of another political leader known as "King Agrippa."

Festus and the king had determined to let Paul speak for himself even though Paul had already appealed to Augustus Caesar in Rome.

Paul showed some respect for Agrippa by saying, "I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews."

Then Paul begins to explain to the King that he is a Pharisee and declares, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead" ([Acts 26:8](#))?

Paul goes on to point out how Jesus saved him while on the road to Damascus ([Acts 26:8-18](#)) and that "he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" ([Acts 26:19](#)).

The heart of his message to all who would hear is found in [Acts 26:23](#) quoted above.

Festus, standing nearby, "said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make the mad" ([Acts 26:24](#)).

Paul asserted that he was not mad and invited Agrippa to believe in Jesus Christ, based on the truth of His resurrection.

Agrippa responds with a rather arrogant remark ([Acts 26:28](#)), suggesting that he would not be persuaded to become a Christian with so few words. The AV translation does not give the proper sense here.

Paul urgently said, “I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds” ([Acts 26:29](#)). Paul would not be dissuaded from his urgent presentation of the Gospel. He heard Festus call him crazy; he heard Agrippa react negatively; these responses were sad but not to be unsuspected.

The truth is what mattered to Paul, and the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ were the ultimate messages that he delivered that day!

Summary of the record in Acts. Several things stand out. 1. Peter and Paul, the two leaders of the early church, emphasized the resurrection of Jesus Christ at every given opportunity. 2. The Jewish leaders were not open to the soul-saving message. As this author often says “Religion kills, but Jesus saves! 3. The resurrection empowered the Apostles to carry on the mission Jesus had given to them.

In the book of Acts, we can see what the Apostles preached to people in a number of places and situations.

Now we will look at some of the amazing ramifications of the resurrection as we move into the epistles of the New Testament.

[Romans 1:4](#). *And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*

Luke emphasized the *historicity* of our Lord’s resurrection very early in the book of [Acts \(1:3\)](#); Paul is here emphasizing something of the *theological significance* of His resurrection quite early in his epistle to the Romans.

The verb “declared” in this verse is quite interesting. It comes from the Greek *horizo* (to “mark off a boundary”). It is obvious that the Father values His relationship with the Son and that relationship is quite secure.

He was the Son of God in His preincarnate state ([II Corinthians 8:9](#); [Philippians 2:6](#)) and still is after His birth from the womb of the virgin Mary.

Paul points out Jesus’ humanity in verse 3: “which was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh.”

He is virgin born and He is of a kingly line.

Most important, it was the resurrection from the dead that clearly marked Jesus off (note the reference to the Greek *horizo*) as God’s Son because of His claims about Himself as God’s Son and His prophecies that He would rise on the third day. This event, emphasized so strongly in [I Corinthians 15](#), gave God’s seal (note again the reference to the Greek *horizo*) with power (see [II Corinthians 13:4](#)).

It is vitally important that we understand two truths in verses 3 and 4.

First, Jesus became the God/man. We celebrate this miracle every Christmas. One might ask why it makes any difference that He came to this earth in such a body.

In order to offer the perfect sacrifice that the Father required to pay for sin, Jesus had to be holy. Since mankind is full of sin ([Romans 3:23](#)), no mere man could successfully do the job. If any of us gave our life for some other individual it would be a nice gesture, but because of our sin it would not cause the other person to be saved.

Jesus, of course, is the Son of God and is therefore sinless. It was the Father's plan that He come to this world and live that kind of life so that when He shed His blood on the cross the payment would be sufficient.

Just as important, in order to die for sinful man, Jesus had to be human. He did not come to die for angels or animals! He came to "seek and save that which was lost" ([Matthew 19:11](#)), and that means sinful mankind.

Simply put, in order to legitimately offer salvation to man, Jesus had to be God in order to be sinless. He also had to be man in order to die for man, and He is indeed the unique God-man! Praise Him!

Second, by all rights (notice the words "according to the spirit of holiness" in verse 4), Jesus' deity was powerfully (note "with power" in the same verse) demonstrated by His resurrection from the dead.

This was the theme of every sermon in the book of Acts; and it is a very important element of the Gospel that is highlighted throughout the New Testament.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the miracle of all miracles, and it is His resurrection only that declared Him to be Who He truly is!

[Romans 4:24-25](#). *But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him Who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.*

There are many factors to consider in these two verses.

First, having dealt with the universality and awfulness of man's sin ([Romans 1-3](#)), Paul is explaining how God saved Abraham.

"For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith" ([Romans 4:13](#)).

God spoke to Abraham in a vision and explained to him that "he that shall come forth out of thy bowels shall be thine heir" ([Genesis 15:4](#)).

Sarah, Abraham's wife, was unable for many years to bare any children; so, she insisted that he have a child through her maid Hagar. In due time a son named Ishmael was born of that union. Ishmael, however, was not the child of the promise that God had given to Abraham.

About thirteen years later, when Abraham was ninety-nine years old, God again appeared to him and said, "I will make My covenant between Me and thee, and I will multiply thee exceedingly" ([Genesis 17:4](#)).

Then in [Genesis 17:15-16](#) God revealed to him that he would have a child through his wife Sarah (formerly called Sarai). Abraham laughed, asking God, "Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear" ([Genesis 17:17](#))?

Abraham had an honest conversation with God, even laughing at first, but he believed Him! "And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness" ([Genesis 15:6](#)).

"And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age..." ([Genesis 21:1-2](#)). Isaac was the one through whom God's promise would be fulfilled. Paul refers to this period in Abraham's life in [Romans 4:18-22](#) and points out that "being fully persuaded...it was imputed to him for righteousness."

In short, Abraham was saved because He believed God.

Second, salvation by faith was not offered to Abraham only, but also for all who place their faith in Jesus' finished work (His death, burial, and resurrection). "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him" ([Romans 4:22](#)).

Jesus, a descendant of Abraham, offers propitiation (=removal of wrath that was originally caused by our sin) to all: "And He is the propitiation for our

sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" ([I John 2:2](#))!

Third, *righteousness* was imputed to Abraham when he believed God. This brings us to justification, one of the greatest truths about salvation.

Justification is closely associated with sanctification, particularly *positional* sanctification. The word "sanctify" means "to make holy."

Explanation: there is a sense in which believers are already sanctified the moment they believe. Probably the clearest verse on this important subject is found in I Corinthians: "Paul, called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, Unto the church of God which is in Corinth, *to them that are sanctified* in Christ Jesus, called to be saints..." ([I Corinthians 1:1-2](#)).

Notice these important points from this passage.

First, "to them that are sanctified" is a perfect tense in the Greek. This tense indicates action which is already accomplished but also indicates results that continue to abide. This universally completed action is something that happened the very moment the people in the church at Corinth were saved. The continuing *result* of having been made holy is a PERFECT standing before our holy God!

How amazing! Jesus bore our sin in His sinless body ([Isaiah 53:4-6](#)) and gave us His holiness so we could have a perfect standing with the Father! That has to be the most unfair trade in all of history, totally of grace!

Second, notice the phrase “called to be saints” here. A believer does not have to “wait” to be honored by some ecclesiastical body in order to be a saint. It is one of many miracles that happens at the moment one accepts Christ as Savior.

Third, this holy standing is accomplished in Christ. We cannot save ourselves, and we surely cannot make ourselves holy, but in salvation the holiness of Christ is imparted. When God the Father looks at a believer, He does not see his sin but rather the sinless blood and sinless life of Christ applied.

What an amazing salvation Christ provides, but believers are not only positionally sanctified, they are also *justified*. Paul speaks of this in [Romans 4:25](#): “and was raised again for our justification.”

Key to the doctrine of justification is the verb *logizomai* in the Greek of [Romans 4:22](#). The idea of this verse is to “place on an account.” It is actually a legal term, indicating that God the Father keeps a record of the miracle of salvation in the lives of believers.

Here is the picture we should get when we consider justification. We are in God’s courtroom. Satan is our accuser, Jesus is our attorney ([I John 2:1](#)), the Father is the Judge. Having considered our case, that we have been saved and made holy through positional sanctification, the Father *declares* us to be absolutely holy!

This is much better than being “not guilty.” Holy means *sinless!*

Consider how magnificent such a truth as this is! God legally declares us to have a perfect standing and records it in the courtroom in heaven! When He declares such, we can be sure that it is right and that no creature in the entire universe can overturn such a decision!

We will continue these thoughts in the next newsletter.