

Easter Sunday

BOOM, Bob

Romans and 1 John, various passages

Dr. Matt Cassidy ---- April 5, 2026

Good morning, Grace! Happy Easter! Better still, Happy Resurrection Sunday. It's a great day. He is risen!

[Congregation]: He is risen indeed.

Billions of people today are celebrating with that greeting because that greeting changes everything. It changes the definition of every man and woman who ever existed. It changes the definition of life. It changed the definition of death. It changes our calendar. It changes everything. He is risen.

[Congregation]: He is risen indeed.

So, I thought for this Resurrection Sunday during our teaching time ... I've been nostalgic lately. I was down at the University of Texas campus a lot this semester, so I thought we would re-enact one of my favorite conversations I've had with a classmate forty-five years ago. So, if you imagine us down at the University of Texas on the West Mall right in front of the student union building—I was not dressed like this. I had on a ratty t-shirt and moccasins, my standard operating outfit for back in those days.

And this friend had witnessed somewhat of a dramatic change in my own life because of Resurrection Sunday. And I had come to have a deeper and much more personal understanding of that day of Christ's death and His resurrection. And because of that, it altered me. It was like, what happened and why?

So, here we are, if you can just imagine Bob and me having this conversation. This is usually how it rolls out on that day.

I said, "Bob, the resurrection answers the three most important and consequential questions that every human being should spend their life pursuing and knowing those answers. The questions are, 1) If you were to die this very moment and were to stand before the Almighty God and He said, 'Why should I let you into my heaven?' what would you say?

“The second question is, ‘What are the odds of you going to heaven and having eternity with God?’

“The third question is, ‘How would you know? How do you know?’

“So, Bob, what are your answers?”

And Bob said, “Well, why would God let me into His heaven? Because I do my best most of the time. I’m good to other people. I rarely miss mass. I go every chance I get, most of the time.”

I said, “Okay, what are your odds?”

And he said, “Uhh, fifty-five percent? There’s a fifty-five percent chance I’m going to make it.”

I said, “Well, how do you know?”

He said, “You know, I’ve never thought about that. How do I know? I don’t know.”

So, at that point I broke out this booklet that I used to have. *[Shows a tract entitled “Would You Like to Know God Personally?”]* It transformed my life. It’s changed my life. And they’re still available. Actually, they’re available right now at the visitors’ center if you want to come by and get one of those.

I open it up and I said, “Okay, here’s the problem in our relationship with God.” (Let me draw this graph.) “There’s this great chasm between us and God. And what you’ve done in your description is shown an intuitive sense of justice that is within all of us. And what you described what we would call in our culture ‘the scales of justice.’ And we all know it to be true. We know God is just. He has to be. We know that we’re supposed to live a just life. And the scales of justice are simple. If you do bad, this side weighs down. And if you do good, it tilts the other way. And you live your life hoping that at the end your good outweighs your bad. And every day you have to wonder which it’s going to be.”

[Drawing shows two partial upright rectangles with a large divide between them. In that divide is are scales with two balances.]

“And Bob, here’s the problem with the scales of justice: absolute righteousness. There are three problems that I have. And they’re profound. And the first one is that the scales of justice force you to live in slavery. It has to. You are enslaved. You should have a life that’s all-consuming, but compulsive, constantly taking an assessment of where you are. Are you doing and thinking more good than bad, or more bad than good? And why would you be so

compulsive? Because all of eternity is at stake. It's a relationship with God in this life, and it's eternity after life. And so, you're in this moment-by-moment, giving an account for where the scales of justice are in your soul.

"Now you add this—motive. Not just what you think or do, but the motive. Aristotle, Augustine, Shakespeare, and we all know it as well in our hearts—that it's not just the action, it's why we do it. And motive is almost impossible to tame--our vanity or our jealousy. And the biggest beast of all is our pride.

"We can find ourselves doing something as simple as picking up trash (doing something good), and then looking up to see if anybody finds us doing it. Because we want to look good. And the motive throws the whole justice part of the event into the negative.

"And here's another factor in this servitude. It's this fact that the more sensitive you become spiritually, the more you understand deeply how bad you are. In other words, there's a saying: Sinners often think themselves saints, but saints know that they're sinners. There's a paradox: that the closer you get to God, the more you realize how far away you are from Him. And the more you find yourself thinking you're on the good end of this justice, you realize you're farther than you ever knew or enjoyed before.

"A second consequential aspect of the scales of justice, absolute righteousness, is what I would call the angst of uncertainty. Not only do you live each day and every moment in slavery, trying to keep the scale on the positive end, but at the end of your life you never know. That's the second question: what are the odds of you going to heaven? You don't know. You can't be certain. And you don't know until it's too late."

Fast forward now: as a pastor, I can tell you that I have been at the bedside of numerous people in this state of anxiety where they're terrified. And then when you consider that Jesus said that unless your righteousness and justice is greater than the religious leaders that have dedicated their entire lives to being spiritual; unless it exceeds those men that surround you, you will not, cannot have intimacy with God in this life and in the next.

And so, we live this life impulsively enslaved by the scales, and then we go to our death in terror, not knowing for certain.

And the third part consequence of living life under the scales of justice is what it says about the nature of God. What you believe about God is the most important thing about you. And with us living with this, it puts God in the place of a boss—or even better, a slave owner. And we

are in a perpetual, constant performance review—all the time. It's not just what we do and what we think but what motivates us.

And then, again, you harken to the gospels where Jesus was asked what your performance review is going to be based on. The answer was the great commandments: to love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind. Oh, yeah, wait—and love your neighbor as yourself. There.

He has us living this life, and then we present ourselves before Him at the moment of our death saying, *Did I make it?*

And God says, *You missed it by two.*

Can I go back and get those two?

No, no. And there's no curve.

And there's not a thing you can do about it. That's where we are.

And so, how can God be just? He has to be. He can't compromise His righteousness in any way. That's the nature of the scales of justice. But how can he leave all creation in this state of existential angst? Pause.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death ...

And I say, “Bob, this gulf, this chasm, is far worse than we allow ourselves to imagine. Because in the Bible the gulf is called sin. And from cover to cover the Bible says that sin costs death. Here's a simple sentence. Remember the address here where it says Romans 6:23. ‘For the wages of death is death ...’ Sin costs death.

“In other words, our violations against God, our crimes against God, are not *Okay, you did this. Now do ten good things or one hundred good things.* We're not like community service type criminals here. We're capital punishment criminals. And so, we're in such a terribly bad predicament, because of the nature of true justice, that we can't fix what we broke.

“So, Bob, God fixed it. You've probably seen it in football stadiums, sometimes the players say it. Here's what John 3:16 says: ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son to die ...’ He gave His only Son to die. God didn't send His Son to give us a first-round

version of *Atomic Habits* so that we could live a better life by the scales. Right? No, Jesus came to die. So, sin equals death. So, Jesus dies.”

[Draws a cross that bridges the gap between the rectangles.]

“And what happens is the scale of justice is honored. It’s glorified in His death. His death on the cross is to pay the price and make justice prevail. It is a gift. He does it, and then He gives us the payment—His righteousness. Justice wins. And God maintains His holiness.

Romans 3:24-26

... all are justified freely by God’s gift through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice through the shedding of His blood—to be received by faith...²⁶ God did it to demonstrate His righteousness: so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

“Look at these sentences in Romans 3: ‘We are justified’—there’s the justice part—‘freely by God’s gift through the redemption’—the death—‘that came by Christ Jesus.’

“Verses 25 and 26: ‘God presented Christ as a sacrifice through the shedding of His blood’—His death—‘to be received by faith. God did this to demonstrate His own righteousness: so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus Christ.’

“We receive the gift of the righteousness of Jesus because He made the scales work for us. That’s why ... Bob, what do we call the day that Jesus died, this day? Good Friday. That’s why it’s good—because now God can maintain His justice and righteousness and we don’t have to do this.

“Here’s a summary of it.” I just said, “Bob, someone is going to pay for your crimes against God. It’s going to be you or it’s going to be Jesus. Because the scales must be satisfied.”

I said, “Here’s what changed my life. I understood a lot of this, but it didn’t stick with me until I realized that ‘us’ was ‘me.’ It became personal to me because I realized that Jesus died for me. I put Jesus on the cross. Those were my sins that He was dying for. If I was the only person in the world that ever existed, He would come. I would nail Him to the cross. I would beat Him to death. And He would be raised again so that I would know that I’m forgiven. That’s what changed in my life. It wasn’t ‘us.’ It was ‘me.’

“And Bob, when this becomes ‘you,’ then you’ll have that relationship that I have, in this life and in the next.”

Romans 5:1-2

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this gift in which we now stand.

I said, “Look, watch what happens. This is the result.” So, we went to Romans again. “Look at this in Romans 5:1-2: ‘Therefore, since we have been justified’—there it is, made just—‘through faith’—just believing in the gift—‘we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this gift in which we now stand.’

“I have gained faith. I have gained access to God through the faith in the death of Jesus Christ making me righteous. That’s how I have a personal relationship with God now. That’s how I will spend eternity with Him later.

Romans 8:1

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

“Romans 8:1 says, ‘Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.’ How much condemnation? None.’

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“So, do you remember that verse before in Romans 6:23? ‘For the wages of sin is death ...’? There’s more. It gets better at the end. ‘... but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus.’ It’s a gift. You can’t earn it.”

So, I just said, “Bob, who’s going to pay for your sin? Where are you going to put your hope to achieve justice? Are you going to put your hope in your works? Or are you going to put your hope in the works of Jesus Christ?”

And he said, “I’m in. I want to put my faith in the fact that Jesus Christ died for me. And He rose again to prove it counted.”

So, I said, “Boom, Bob! Boom!” Pause. I said, “Listen, we’ve covered a lot of profound content here. In your world we’ve changed the very definition of the nature of God and what He’s doing. It’s going to change your whole life. It’s going to change your eternity. So, I want us to pause and think through those three consequential questions that you have to seek an answer to.

“The first one: If you were to die this very moment, and God would say, *Why would I let you into my heaven?* You would say?”

And Bob said, “Because Jesus died for my sins.”

“Great. Okay. Question two, Bob. What are the odds of you going to heaven?”

He said, “Well, it’s got to be around seventy-five percent now, right?”

I said, “Well, that’s an answer, you know. Here’s the thing, Bob. One of the men that wrote one of the biographies about Jesus, John—later on in his life and the early life of the Christian church, Christians were persecuted unto death. And on the death bed and the imminent death that many of His followers received, they were beginning to suffer again under this angst of uncertainty, this anxiety of uncertainty. Because it’s all good and well when you’re taking the test, but now it’s life and death. And so, their deathbed experiences were becoming rather traumatic.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is righteous and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

“And so, John wrote a letter for this very purpose. This is like a summary of the Easter message, the resurrection message. This is the Resurrection Sunday in one sentence. He said, ‘If

we confess our sins, He is righteous and just’—He keeps those scales operational—‘and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all of our unrighteousness.’ That’s your story, right, Bob?”

He said, “It is now, yeah.”

1 John 5:11-13

And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. ¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.

I said, “Well, wait, there’s some other stuff later on in chapter 5. He says, ‘And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.’ That’s you, right?”

He said, “Yeah.”

I said, “Then what are your odds of going to heaven?”

“What did I say last time? Eighty? Eighty-five percent.”

I said, “Okay, let’s go back and look at this other verse. Let’s just read it again. ‘If we confess our sins, He is righteous and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from’—what, Bob?—‘all unrighteousness’—all of it. Okay?”

So he said, “Here’s the thing. You don’t know what I’ve done and the way that I’ve hurt the people that I’ve loved the most.”

I said, “Oh, Bob, here’s what is happening to you. You’re starting to feel the weight of the sins that you had calloused over before. And now they’re wearing on you—wow. And it sounds humble, but it’s actually proud. Because if you think about it, you’ve got to be careful here, Bob. Because what you’re saying is that your sin is greater than the price that Jesus paid to make you righteous. And when Jesus died for you, He didn’t die in His sleep. He was beaten to death slowly. And it was done so that all the created world, the seen and the unseen, would all know that all the sin was paid for. It was paid in full. Bob, if Jesus’ death was not enough to pay

for your crimes against God, God wants to know what it will take to make you right. Because He's paid everything He has."

And Bob said, "Yeah, I'm sorry. I understand that. But I just can't forgive myself. I know God will forgive me."

And I said, "You know, Bob, let's be careful again. Because again, while that sounds humble and it sounds like you're doing a spiritual inventory, and your soul is feeling that, but this is pride. What you just said was that your standard of holiness, your standard of righteousness, is greater than God Almighty. And I don't think you meant to say that, right?"

He said, "I did not mean to say that. I am sorry."

I said, "I think what you're trying to say is that you can't believe this. This is too good to be true."

He said, "That's what I mean. In light of what I've done, yeah."

"Bob, the last words Jesus said while He was dying for your sins were, 'It is finished.' Because it was. It's over. Bob, what are the odds of you going to heaven?"

"Matt, they're, like, ninety-something percent now."

I said, "I mean, that's awesome. Let's read this sentence again: 'If we confess our sins, He is righteous and just.' God's going to stay righteous and just. He won't compromise. 'But He will forgive us of our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.' Did you remember this sentence? 'We are witnesses to this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life in in His Son. He who has the Son has life, and He does not have the Son of God does not have life.' Bob, do you have the Son?"

"Yeah."

"Then you have the life, right?"

"Right."

"Okay. So, 'These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God in order that you might KNOW that you have eternal life.' So... well... give me those odds, Bob."

"Ninety-nine percent."

"Okay. All right, Bob, you read it this time out loud: 'He will purify us from all unrighteousness.' You read this part out loud again."

And he said, "Oh, okay. Wait ... wait ... 'KNOW' ... oh."

“Bob, give me a number.”

Bob says, “One hundred percent.”

And I said, “Boom, Bob! Boom! I can do this all day.”

He said, “Hey, is the test over?”

“No.”

He said, “I want to go to lunch.”

I said, “There are three questions, Bob. Why do I let you into my heaven?”

And Bob said, “Because Jesus died for my sins. That’s where my faith is. It’s all there.

I’m not going to work for anything. He did it all for me. That’s where my faith is.”

“What are the odds, Bob?”

“One hundred percent.”

I said, “Well, how do you know?”

He said, “I don’t know how I know. You told me.”

I said, “Hey, let’s read this verse again: ‘If we confess our sins, He is righteous and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.’”

He said, “Yeah, uh-huh.”

I said, “Well, how do you know?”

He said, “I don’t know.”

I said, “Let’s read this verse again: ‘And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.’ Bob, how do you know?”

He said, “I don’t know. It’s just written right there.”

“Boom, Bob! Boom! Because it’s written there. Don’t trust me. I’m not a trustworthy person. You come in here, we have our conversation, you’re at fifty-five percent, and now you’re at one hundred percent. How did that happen? It’s written in the Bible. One of the primary purposes of the Bible, the reason we have this literature from God Almighty, is so that we will know God and will know how to have a person, intimate, relationship with Him in this life and in the next. And Bob, I didn’t grow up in a church like this, and you didn’t grow up in a church like this. But there are some kids out there who grew up as a little kid learning this song that we’re

going to learn right now. And it goes like this: *‘Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.’*”

I taught him how to sing it. And we both sang it together right there under the tower by the Union. And we’re going to sing it right now. Everybody, right now—just the first part, okay?

Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

“Boom, Bob. Boom. What does this say about the nature of God? What you think about God is the single most important thing about you. What does this say about the nature of God? He cannot (not just will not) compromise His righteousness and His justice. And for the sake of love, He will not leave us in slavery and in anxiety with some kind of performance plan. He will not be our boss. He is not our slave owner. He’s our Father, granting us unconditional love. And that is what motivates us. That is the fuel we live on. That is the reason we want to become like Christ in all of life. It’s love that motivated Him to do this. It’s His love in us that compels us to become like Him and to live the life of a saint.”

So, I said, “Bob, are you ready, buddy? Are you ready to pray and just thank God and make this transfer of ownership from having all your faith in you trying to figure out a way to get this scale of justice to work on your side, to transfer that to Jesus Christ doing all the work for you and receiving that gift just by faith? Are you ready to do that, Bob?”

Do you know what Bob said? He said, “No.”

We looked at the bell tower and it was ten minutes until noon. And Bob said, “I want to pray the prayer, but I want it to be when the bells go off.”

I said, “Bob, you’re kidding me, right?”

He said, “No.”

I said, “Well, I hope you live that long, Bob.”

This is one hundred percent a true story. So, while we wait for Bob to pray this prayer, I’m going to ask you if there are any Bobs out there. Because of what we just went through and this survey of understanding the real reason for Resurrection Sunday, is anybody here hearing it for the first time? Or understanding it and making it personal? And you’re going to want to transfer this hope from where you are on the scales to Jesus distilling the righteousness of these scales on your behalf. Do you want to transfer your works for God’s gift? Today you can pray with Bob in just a few minutes.

Change the source of your hope and where you put your faith. This is Resurrection Sunday: that justice had to prevail, and God provided it. And the Father made it so clear in the death of His Son and the proof of His resurrection, because He wanted us to be absolutely certain that we would know, that we would say one hundred percent. And not only that, but that He would leave us with Holy Writ so that we could open that book up in times of desperation, in times of fear, in times of doubt. We could open that book up, knowing that it's a love letter from our Father that says, *Yeah, justice was satisfied. It is finished.* And now we can have intimacy with God in this life, and absolutely in the next.

Jesus is risen.

[Congregation]: He is risen indeed.

Join me in prayer.

Lord Jesus, we are grateful that You would follow the commands of the loving Father and come and take our place on that scale—to freeze it to our advantage if we put faith in Your death and believe in Your resurrection.

Lord, I pray on the behalf of every person here that is new to this and wants to transfer their hope and faith from their own good works to Your good works. You lived the perfect life and You died the death we were supposed to die. So, we claim that on this Resurrection Sunday of 2026, and we celebrate that.

Lord, we thank You, Holy Spirit, that You would live within us now, and that we would be motivated by Your love—that that would be the fuel that we live our life on; that we want to make our Daddy proud in the way we live our lives, the way we take responsibility for our sins, the way we apologize, the way we serve others, the way that we sacrifice the things that You give us. Because we just want to make You proud—not so that You'll love us, but because you already have.

Lord, I'd ask that this Resurrection Sunday would be transformational for each and every person that has a greater understanding of what took place—not just on Friday—but on that amazing Sunday. You are risen. You are risen indeed. And all God's people prayed in Jesus' name, Amen.

