

Easter Sermon Series: Philippians 3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection.

Part 1. I Peter 1:3-9 Christ's resurrection empowers us to live in hope as we await the day of our own resurrections - our inheritance.

Jon Greenberg, writer for ESPN CHICAGO wrote on April 8, 2013: "There are seven basic plot types for a story, but only two kinds for the Chicago Cubs: Ones about failure and ones about hope. When it comes to the Cubs, it's all about the past we'll never forget, the present we can't stomach and the future we'll never see."

He goes on to say, "Don't tell Cubs president Theo Epstein he doesn't care about winning this season . . . As part of the public demands of his job, he has to sell hope and patience. He does it well, with charm and . . . sophistication."

The leader that can inspire hope where the odds are not in the team's favor may not necessarily win every game or every battle, but at least the team will have the support of loyal fans even if they have a losing season, after a losing season, after a . . . For the Cubs it is true: Hope springs eternal, spring after spring after spring.

To be sure, **HOPE IS A POWERFUL MOTIVATOR**. These and thousands of stories of hope are based on human initiative, persistence, tenacity, and such hope is indeed powerful when it comes to human endeavors. It is good that when it looks like all is lost, to hold on to hope. **It is always better to live in hope, even if that hope is not realized, than to live in despair.**

It is even better if our hope is in the Lord. But **Peter**, who thought he was hopeless after denying that he even knew Jesus, knows that there are limits to human hope. He knows there is a living hope; a hope based on who God is and what He has done and what He can do; this is a hope of which the outcome is absolutely certain because it is based on the greatest event the world has ever known - the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA! Our hope is based on the One who was dead but who is alive forevermore! The One who said, "Because I live you shall live also." The Greek word for hope is ἐπιδῶ and it means certainty - not "It might be", or "it could be", or "it may be," or as they say here in Arkansas, "might-could-maybe," but certainty! Hope based the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a *living hope* . . .

. . . not a *dead hope*. In fact, hope that is based on anything other than hope in the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, is a dead hope because it is based on human power, or thinking. Dead hope buys into lies like, "If you can dream it, you can achieve it." Dead hope is hope without Christ: hope in yourself, earthly possessions. Those who believe in luck for their well being in their earthly existence have no hope beyond the grave. Living hope in Christ, in our Lord's death and resurrection He takes our pathetic hope and shows us the goal and gives us hope beyond the

grave. What looks like a dead hope to the world - hope in a man who was crucified, died and was buried, such foolishness is in fact the most solid hope there is because He also rose from the dead.

WHAT DOES A LIVING HOPE BASED ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST LOOK LIKE?

In the Gospel Reading, the disciple **Thomas** confesses, "My Lord and my God" after seeing the nail holes in Christ's hands and the gash in His side which the soldier's sword had pierced. And, Peter **AND THE APOSTLES**, after they are told "not to preach in the name of Jesus" say, "**We must obey God rather than men.**" They say they saw Jesus die on the cross and saw Him alive again and He's now at God's right hand and now along with the Holy Spirit are witnesses of the crucifixion, the resurrection, and His ascension. They cannot but **speak of what they have seen and heard**. The certainty of the resurrection of their Lord drove them to proclaim the Gospel with power and conviction. They were convicted of disturbing the status quo, they were jailed, beaten, and eventually they were all killed for preaching the Gospel because . . .

. . . their **inheritance, kept in heaven for them, is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading**. No loss we can suffer in this world can touch our inheritance. It's going to be revealed that we are children of God; that our sins have all been paid for and God's wrath has been satisfied and our inheritance is guarded by God's power. Guarded by God's power, our inheritance is more sure and our eternal destiny is more safe than all the gold in Fort Knox.

1. Christ's resurrection empowers us to confess our hope in Christ . . .

. . . **EVEN THOUGH WE HAVE TO SUFFER ALL KINDS OF TRIALS FOR A LITTLE WHILE**. When our faith is being tested and we are called on to confess the name of Jesus, it might seem like the world has stopped spinning - **like time stands still**. The long days in the hospital with intense pain do not seem like "a little while." The long days and nights sitting by the bedside of a loved one who is in hospice, just waiting for that person to die, they don't seem like just a little while. Those moments when someone belittles us for believing in Jesus Christ who was crucified for us and who rose again, telling us that's just ludicrous; those confrontations in the office, or the university classroom, or at the dining room table seem like they go on and on. As days become weeks and months become years in an Iranian prison for Pastor Yousef, jailed for being a Christian and preaching, it's a painful time of testing as his feet are held to the fire, but no less so is **YOUR OWN EPISODE OF TESTING A REFINING PROCESS SO THAT YOUR FAITH - MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD THAT PERISHES - THOUGH IT IS TESTED BY FIRE - MAY BE FOUND TO RESULT IN PRAISE AND GLORY AND HONOR OF JESUS**. The genuineness of your faith will be revealed . . .

2. . . . as the reality of Christ's resurrection empowers us to endure testing with/for Christ.

As **CHRIST'S RESURRECTION EMPOWERS** us to confess the name of Jesus and to endure testing with Him in various trials, so it also **finally DOES ONE MORE THING. IT ENABLES US TO BE WITNESSES** of our Risen Savior.

The world - our family and friends or neighbors and work associates are **watching**. They observe how we Christians cope with the trials and sufferings we encounter in life. They notice if we act as if we are people of with a living hope based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, or people of despair whose hope is dead. They notice our reaction when others put us down for confessing the name of Jesus. They notice how we cope with suffering and death. They notice how we support one another in the body of Christ, and they notice when we don't. They notice how we use our time and energy and resources to love the poor and the needy and whether we do it joyfully or not.

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION GIVES US INEXPRESSIBLE JOY THAT SHOWS!

They notice whether we are dead-hope Christians or joyful Christians whose hope is anchored in Christ's resurrection. The power of Christ's resurrection empowers us to REJOICE in the midst of those trials and sufferings. That is what the power of faith in the risen Savior does - it fills us with inexpressible joy because we know how the outcome of our faith. That's for certain! That is what hope is. We know it even though it hasn't happened it yet.

No, we have not physically seen Jesus as did Thomas and all the disciples but our hope is certain - we are obtaining the outcome of our faith - the salvation of our souls. The Holy Spirit caused the apostles to record the resurrection appearances of Jesus and "**MANY OTHER SIGNS . . . SO THAT WE MIGHT BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST AND BY BELIEVING WE MIGHT HAVE LIFE IN HIS NAME.**"

Christian hope, that is, the certainty of our faith based on the risen Jesus is not a popular thing nowadays, nor has it ever been. Such certainty . . .

- that Jesus is God,
- that our sins are forgiven;
- that we too shall rise again from the dead
- and that heaven is our eternal destiny . . .

. . . such certainty is looked at as the height of arrogance. But that is our hope! That is the power of Christ's resurrection. That is our source of joy in the midst of testing which becomes our opportunity to witness to Christ.

Our hope in our risen Savior is hope to live on now and eternally.

Amen.