

Introduction

"Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen as he said." These are the words of the angel of the Lord who descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from the tomb. "Come," he said, "see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead." Oh! What a morning! Christ's followers celebrate it every day. But today is special because it is the anniversary of the resurrection from the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ! This morning I want to focus upon Christ's resurrection by turning to the first chapter of the first epistle of Peter.

[Read Text and Pray]

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a miracle that vindicates and confirms him as the Son of God. Paul asserts in Romans 1:4 that Jesus Christ "was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit . . . by his resurrection from the dead." God has demonstrated that Jesus is his Son, that every claim he made is true, by raising him from the dead. We have so much to rejoice in this morning simply because the resurrection of Jesus Christ substantiates him as the Son of God. And yet there is more to the resurrection of Jesus than simply the validation of his claims.

In actuality what Christ accomplished in his resurrection is the transmission of life to those who believe in him. And the product of this new life is hope. We are born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. In fact in our text this morning, Peter points us to that and two other aspects of this living hope. This morning we are going to start with the resurrection and we are going to look ahead to the revealing of Christ Jesus, but then we are also going to consider the application of these truths to the present. So I want you to see this morning that the living hope possessed by Christ's followers is predicated upon the past, peers forward into the future, and it pertains to us powerfully in the present.

Our Resurrection Hope is . . .

I. Predicated on the Past.

If you are a believer in Christ, there are two past events which are the foundation of your hope. The first is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The second is your own rebirth. These two events are integrally linked.

A. Last week in our study of James, we considered God's bringing us forth by the word of truth. This is the birth from above, the new birth, and what Peter calls being born again. Without the new birth, no one will savingly believe in Jesus. Anyone who is truly repentant and who is truly believing in Jesus today is doing so as a result of the new birth. It is a work of God whereby he raises the dead sinner to life. He removes the heart that is dead toward him and makes him alive, giving to that sinner perception of the offense of his sins and perception of the glorious provision of atonement for those sins in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When the sinner believes upon Christ, his sins are washed away and his despair is replaced with a living hope. Peter is telling us that if we have living hope, it is because God caused us to be born again unto it. Every believer in Christ has a new birth in their past which is grounds of a living hope.

B. And yet there is another historical event to which Peter points as the ground of living hope. Now when I say "historical event," I mean to indicate that this event actually took place on the earth in

space and in time. It is not a figment of imagination or a legend. It is not a fairy tale or a dream. It is fact. And this historical event to which I refer is the resurrection to life of the God/man, Jesus. He was in fact crucified and did in fact die, but now he is risen from the dead physically and bodily.

As theologians and their theology have drifted away from a conviction of the total truthfulness and trustworthiness of the scriptures, they have tended to poo-poo the historicity of the resurrection of Christ. Their pre-commitment to scientific theory and a skepticism of the supernatural removes from their minds any possibility of an actual physical resurrection. However, I assert to you this morning with absolute conviction that Jesus Christ is alive. And more than merely alive, he is risen. On the cross he died. His heart stopped beating. He ceased breathing. And his soul left his body. However, the soul of Jesus did not remain separated from his body when he died. No, he was raised with an immortal and glorified body. He put on bodily immortality when he was raised. His appearance in heaven today is visible and bodily and material. Christ is risen from the dead.

The ground of Christian faith, Christian hope, and Christian rebirth is the resurrection of Jesus Christ as a historical fact just as real as creation itself. It is just as actual as the events in the midst of which we are living in these times. The resurrection as a FACT impacted Jesus' first disciples. The power behind the preaching was the fact that Jesus Christ had risen. Timidity among the disciples, and Peter in particular, was replaced with boldness, confidence, assertiveness, and hope. It was a conviction for which they were willing to die.

Consider Peter on the day of Pentecost. When the Spirit of God came upon the disciples, the crowds gathered and observed. And many were supposing that the noisy commotion and the excited preachers of the gospel were the result of an early morning keg party. The crowds determined that these men must be filled with wine. Peter said, "No, no!" It is 9 in the morning, for crying out loud. No. What you are seeing is the fulfillment of prophecy through Joel that God would pour out his Spirit in the latter days. It is a sign of the nearness of the great day of the Lord.

He continued. What is of greatest significance is that God attested to you Jesus Christ by mighty works, wonders, and signs. But you rejected him. You are responsible for his crucifixion and death. But God raised him up. This resurrection David spoke of, saying he would live in hope because of it. God raised Christ from the dead and we are all witnesses of it. Jesus was raised and ascended to God's right hand. What everyone is witnessing here and now has been poured out from Jesus.

And because of the word of truth, some 3,000 persons believed in Christ that day. But the preaching was focused on the resurrection. As the days wore on, the apostles continued proclaiming Christ's resurrection. Before the Jewish tribunal, Peter said of the man who was healed that it was by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom they crucified, whom God raised from the dead. The Apostle Paul informed the Athenian philosophers that God has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by Christ and he has assured the world of it by raising him from the dead. According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, the gospel is that Christ died, was buried, and was raised on the third day. And if Christ is not raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

The resurrection of Christ validates him as the Son of God. It validates the gospel. And it is a sign that judgment is absolutely sure to come. It is part of Christ's saving work. It is in the resurrection of Christ that we ourselves have the hope of resurrection. Because he is risen we have a glorious gospel to preach. It is a compelling gospel which demands to be heard and believed. It is a gospel which calls for boldness and joy in proclaiming it.

And yet, there is more to the resurrection. I also want you to see it this morning in connection with our celebration of the anniversary of the resurrection of Jesus. I want us to look back behind the new birth to the ground of the new birth, to its effective cause. And what we should know is that the ground out of which the new birth grows is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

The Peter who proclaimed the resurrection of Christ from the dead in order to call to repentance the Jews on Pentecost writes an epistle to Christians scattered across the region. And what does he say? From the first, he focuses on the resurrection. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The two events upon which our living hope is anchored are the new birth and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And Peter shows us that they are not independent of one another. One is the cause of the other. The first cause is the resurrection of Jesus. But our rebirth is inseparably connected with Christ's resurrection. We have been born again to living hope THROUGH the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is our union with Christ that brings about in time the new birth—which itself is like unto a resurrection. It is being made alive in Christ. We are united with him in his death and also in his resurrection. God has "made us alive with Christ" (Colossians 2:12-13). Our coming to spiritual life by the new birth is an effect of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Christ's resurrection is the instrument of our new birth. It is by our identity with him that we are raised in order to walk in newness of life.

Thereby we have a living hope. We are alive in Christ and our hope is too. The empty tomb of the past is a reminder that each of us was also once without hope. We were dead and buried in our trespasses and sins. But God! Just as surely as he shattered the silence of the garden that early Sunday morning, he illuminated the darkness of our deadness and brought to life those who now are believers in Christ.

Our Resurrection Hope . . .

II. Peers toward the Future.

A. Peter looks back but he also looks forward. As he looks back there is a promise. As he looks forward, he sees what is promised. An inheritance belongs to God's people.

It is an inheritance like no other! What is it? Fundamentally, this inheritance is God himself—To have God as our God, to know him and commune with him. This is the unspeakable prize without any comparison. Often when we think of inheritance, our minds go to a sum of money or a piece of property. But what is that without the Lord? Remember when the Lord suggested he would send the Israelite people on up to the promised land, but he would not go? Remember what Moses said to the Lord? He said, "If your presence will not with me, do not bring us up from here." David identifies the one thing above all others that he seeks in Psalm 27. He says, "One thing I have asked of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in his temple." Paul identifies the one thing of surpassing value in his letter to the Philippians: "Whatever gain I had I count as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of KNOWING Christ Jesus my Lord. I give up everything to gain Christ and be found in him."

So unique and wonderful is this inheritance Peter can only describe it in the negative. It is imperishable—not destructible. It is undefiled—not corrupted or tainted. It is unfading—not

diminishing. It is Christ himself the hope of glory. This inheritance is being kept in heaven. So we will not experience this inheritance fully until we are there. But we gaze ahead and it fuels our hope.

B. Coincidentally, Peter says we gaze ahead to the revelation of Jesus Christ. The day is coming when the resurrected Lord will be revealed. This is the day of consummation. It is the day of his return. It is the day when what is kept in heaven for God's people will be handed over. We will enter into the fullness of his presence. The return of Jesus is as certain as his resurrection. As we reflect joyously on Christ's victory over death and the power of his might overcoming the curse of sin, let us also look ahead in anticipation of the glorious day when the Father will send the Son to the earth again—not in humiliation but in exaltation. All the world-view systems which have sought to shut him out won't be able to ignore him any more.

Did you hear that the Governor of Texas has found a cunning way of dealing with the flood of aliens crossing the border down there in Texas. It is a story most news agencies are ignoring. You know the current administration is doing everything it can to flood the US with illegal aliens. They are literally bussing aliens into towns in Texas and dropping them off. Well, the governor of Texas has instigated his own bussing program. He is loading busses with these aliens and transporting them to Washington D.C. And he is having them let out right on the doorsteps of the news agencies which are refusing to cover the news. In support of the administration in power at the moment, they have refused to cover it. But when the matter comes to their doorstep, the thought is they are not going to be able to avoid it any more.

This world seeks to avoid Jesus. Resurrection Day is celebrated as Easter. Santa replaces the celebration of Jesus's birth. God is shut out of science. Christianity is exiled away from government schools. But on this glorious future day Jesus will no longer be avoidable. The risen Savior and Lord will be on everybody's doorstep. His people will enter glory with him and the rest of the world will be called to account. We need ever to keep that glorious future day in the forefront of our minds. And certainly there may be those this morning that are not ready for that day. Get ready now!

Our Resurrection Hope . . .

III. Pertains to Us in the Present.

Peter says that we have been born again to a living hope. It is a present hope. It is grounded in the past. It is grounded in our new birth which is itself grounded in Christ's resurrection. And it looks to the future, but that hope is now.

We need to understand something about this hope. It is alive because the one who embodies this hope is alive. It is a living hope because Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. They were able to put him to death, but no one is able to keep him dead. The death that he died, he died once for all but the life he lives, he lives to God. Oftentimes when we speak of hope, we convey the idea of probability. No hope refers to an impossibility. Little hope refers to an improbability. Hope is a possibility. Optimistic hope relates to a probability while high hope is connected to a likely outcome.

Peter's reference here to a living hope, however, does not speak of a possibility or a probability or even to a likelihood. I hope it gets warmer soon. I hope I won't run out of gas before I get to the station. I hope the store won't run out of toilet paper. No. That is not what Peter is talking about. Rather, the living hope of which he speaks is a certainty. I like the way Alistair Begg puts it: "Christian hope is not the hope which clings to a mere possibility, but it is a . . . joyful, confident expectation, in the fulfillment of the promises of God. It is, if you like, entering into a reality that is

based on that which is verifiable, which produces a change in the present and helps us look to the future." In other words, Peter is speaking of an attitude of optimism that is based upon what we know. We have a living hope because Jesus is risen and our hearts have been born again in conjunction with that resurrection to know without a shadow of a doubt that Jesus Christ lives today. We have a living hope also because Jesus is coming back. He will be revealed. Our inheritance of Christ himself will be granted. And our persevering faith will result in high praise to our King.

Living hope looks back and is grounded in Christ's resurrection. It looks forward in the confident expectation of his return. Therefore it rejoices even now. Peter says, "in this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials." This hope sustains a joy that will not be eclipsed by hardship. This living hope is a rejoicing hope. It is also a persevering hope. It stands the test. This living hope is also a trusting and loving hope. "Though you have not seen him you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and full of glory."

The foundation of this hope is the resurrection of Jesus. If Jesus is not risen as a historical fact, then what are we doing here? Sheer religion will never help us! Let's just go out and hunt eggs.

But he is risen. The testimony of eleven disciples is profound. They went from being timid and hard-headed to understanding and proclaiming the gospel with absolute conviction. They were willing to die rather than deny that Jesus was risen. I believe their testimony and that of 500 others who witnessed Christ together after he was raised. I believe because I believe the Scriptures which together testify that Christ would not undergo decay. I believe because I have been born again, transformed in mind and possessing the light that enables me to see the glory of the gospel in the face of Christ.

Therefore, I possess a living hope. It is not a longing but a certainty. The resurrected Lord will soon be revealed. I trust this hope is yours as well. And I pray that we together grow in our joy, love, and trust. Let us obey this glorious Lord who is our glorious and unfading eternal inheritance worth far more than the purest gold.

Conclusion

The living hope of which Peter speaks does not belong to everyone. It is only the possession of those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ. By nature the population of the world is without hope because it is without God. The masses lie in a spiritual cemetery, dead in trespasses and sins. Any hope that is there is dead and dying. But Jesus died to change all that. He died as a substitute for the dead. The living God became the God/man to satisfy the demands of God's justice by his own death. He died to propitiate God's wrath and he rose to impart life to the dead.

Do you want to be among the living? Do you desire to possess a living hope? First, you must acknowledge yourself to be a sinner. You have broken the law of God. You serve gods other than the Lord. You have murdered through hate and with your ugly words. You have dishonored authority. You have committed adultery with your mind. You have stolen. You have envied and longed for this world's things. The beginning out of death is to acknowledge you are dead in your disobedience. Second, you must repent. You must turn. You must resolve to leave your life of sin. Third, you must trust in Jesus the risen Savior and Lord. Deny yourself; love and submit to him who is Lord. Those who believe in this way have been born from above. They will be forgiven; declared righteous; and they will receive an inheritance that outshines all others. It is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for them who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. To these belongs a living hope. If that hope is not yours today, please come to Christ that it might be.