

Eph. 1:16-23 The Resurrection: Meditations on Hope, Inheritance, and Power (#2 preached on 4-17-2022)

One of Paul's prayers, that I try to pray weekly for you as a body, as my brothers and sisters, is found in Eph. 1:16-23. Here, Paul prays for 3 things. He prays about "hope." He prays about an "inheritance." And, he prays about the "power" of God. Let me read his prayer. **"I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."**

In this prayer, Paul prays that God would give the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the KNOWLEDG of Christ. And the specific knowledge he wants the Corinthians to know more deeply are these things: 1) The hope of their calling; 2) The riches of their inheritance; and 3) The greatness of his power. So my question is this: I want to know HOW the resurrection of Christ helps us in these three areas: Hope, Inheritance, Power. So let's begin with HOPE.

1. The resurrection brings life to our hope. I get this mainly from 1 Pet. 1:3, which is a great commentary on our passage in Ephesians. Peter says: **"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 . . ." How? "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead . . ." The resurrection gives life to our hope.**

Let's think for a moment about the concept of "hope"? *"I hope it rains on my garden."* *"I hope I get some toys at Christmas."* *"I hope Jon preaches for 3 hours today."* Hope is looking for something to come. But, it is abstract. Though we can see the "effects" of hope, we cannot see "hope." It is like a feeling, something inside of us. Have you ever thought about the fact that God created hope? It is like "faith." You can't see it, only it's effect. You can't reach out and grab hold of things like "hope" or "faith." And, God created hope FOR US. He doesn't need hope. It is the same with faith. He doesn't need faith. He sees ALL things as they are. And ALL events come to pass as He determines. God does not hope like we do. For He knows all things. And ALL He has is all that He will have. And ALL that will happen is ALL that will happen. For He is God. Hope is for us. And like faith, it will cease. One day, we will SEE him as he is. And, we will receive the promise of our salvation; no need for hope in that day!

As I thought about this further, I wondered about the Garden of Eden before the fall, before sin entered the world. Was there a need for hope? I think not. (Correct me if I'm wrong.) But, there was never a time Adam and Eve doubted whether their needs would be met, their longings

fulfilled. They did not wonder, “*Will God leave us?*” or “*Will there be a time when He does not walk with us in the cool or the garden.*” There was no need for hope. But, then, Adam and Eve sinned against their God. And EVERYTHING changed, their home, their world, their hearts, their relationship with their creator. And from THAT moment, I believe, in their minds, there was NO HOPE, no possibility to have the things they had before, only death and separation from their God. “*In the day you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, YOU WILL DIE.*”

But then, God comes to Adam and Eve. And he brings Satan along as well. And he gives the man, the woman, and Satan, the specifics of their punishment. And then, in his MERCY, as he gives Satan his punishment, He makes a promise! He introduces this reality we call “hope.” He says to the serpent, “**I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel**” (Gen. 3:15).

In these words we find a promise, a promise that God will make things right again. And belief, faith, in this promise, all of a sudden brings “HOPE” for Adam and Eve. You see, hope was given to sinful men and women, that we might find what we were created for, to know God, to be with our creator. And it is the same today. Hope is given to us as we wait for God’s promise (in fact ALL God’s promises) to be fulfilled. But Peter clarifies what real hope is, and what gives life to our hope. The resurrection of Christ is what gives life to our hope. When Jesus died on the cross, Satan “bruised his heel.” These are picture words. Looking back, we know God was primarily referring to Jesus’ death. But, He did not stay dead. He rose again. And Satan’s Head was bruised, his power was taken from him. Bottom Line: The resurrection of Christ gives life to our hope. He is alive! He has conquered death! My hope, your hope is not a dead hope. Because Jesus conquered death, so will you. Because Jesus is in the land of the living, so will you be in the land of the living, in the presence of God.

Do you remember the story of Emmaus? After Jesus death and resurrection, two men were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. And Jesus appeared to them (though they did know it). And he asked them what they were discussing. And they told him what happened in Jerusalem. Concerning Jesus, they said, “**our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.**”²¹ **But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.**” Do you see their hope? As Adam and Eve hoped for the presence of God, so these men hoped for Israel’s salvation. But, with Jesus’ death, their hope was gone. But notice what happens next. They get to their destination. They invite Jesus to their house. And when they sit down to eat, their eyes were opened. There he was! All of a sudden, their faith was alive! Because, he was alive! Living Hope!

The implication is that the world has no hope outside of the resurrection of Christ. Why? Because it’s a dead hope, and really no hope at all. If there is no belief in the resurrection. The world “hopes” in many things. But, their hopes will end in death . . . without the resurrection of Christ. Today, our hope is alive because Jesus is risen from the dead! And only those who have been “born again,” only those who have had the eyes of their heart “enlightened” (Eph. 1:18), only those who have “believed” in Christ have this hope.

Let me give one application from this truth. Since our hope is alive through the resurrection of Christ, we are able to press on in this life through trials and tribulations. This IS the context of Peter's words in 1 Peter. Those Christians were possibly living torches in Nero's gardens. They were losing their lives for their faith. Their property was being plundered. They had no rights as citizens, etc. But, Jesus was risen! And their hope was alive and well! In the same way, if you are in Christ, your hope is alive! He is risen! You can press on!

2. The resurrection secures our inheritance. The 2nd part of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is that they will know his glorious inheritance. (Now, I believe Paul is primarily talking about us as God's people being God's special inheritance. But, I also believe he is referring to our inheritance in heaven as well, which in both cases are tied to the resurrection of Christ.) Brothers and sisters, we have an inheritance waiting for us in heaven! And, the resurrection of Christ secures this inheritance! In the OT God promised Abraham (his descendants) he would give them the Land of Canaan as an inheritance. And through the years of Israel's early history, both in Egypt, and in the dessert, they looked forward to that day when they would live peacefully in the land that flows with milk and honey. This was a great motivation for them to press on in their struggles.

And, after Joshua and the armies of Israel crossed the Jordan River they conquered and God gave them this land. And even under the rule of Solomon, we see a unified kingdom living peacefully in the land of their inheritance. But, this land was not permanent. It was an earthly inheritance that would pass away. We must remember, this inheritance ALWAYS pointed to another land, another inheritance, a real and lasting inheritance in heaven. In that time, those who had faith still looked to the real inheritance that was to come. Think about it! There was no lasting security in that land. There were always wars, always strife, always hate and hostility with neighbors (so we have today). Up until that time, there was nothing that secured their inheritance. There was NO ONE who had conquered ALL their enemies, NO ONE who had conquered ALL the lands around them, and ALL the world that matter. They simply looked forward to heaven by faith.

Now, look with me to the words of Peter in 1 Pet. 1:3-4: "**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, 4 to an inheritance . . .**" Stop for a second. Here, Peter links our inheritance with the resurrection. But then he adds something very important about what the resurrection does to our inheritance. He says, "**to an inheritance, that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.**" Does this sound like the promise of an earthly land in the OT? Do you see the difference? You see, what is earthly is earthly, and will pass away, but what is heavenly will not. God is the King of heaven and He is the owner and sustainer of all things. And Who He is and What He owns is secure in heaven. And, if we go there, He will hold nothing back, but will do good to us for all eternity.

But, we need help. We are on the earth. Our inheritance is in heaven. And, not only are we on the earth, we are sinners. We will die. For the wages of sin is death, and separation from God (ie. No inheritance.) In order to get to heaven, where our inheritance awaits, something must happen. We need transport to that place! We need someone to take us there. This is why Jesus came. Do you

remember his words in John 14:1-6? **“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.”** ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and **the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**"

You see, when Jesus died on the cross, he bore our sins. He was our sacrifice. He took the wrath of God that we deserved upon himself. He atoned for our sins. But, if we simply consider his death, we still can't get to our inheritance in heaven. Why? Because simply a perfect, holy, death is not enough to take us to heaven. Why? Because death is final. If there is no life after death, there is no heaven. But, Jesus did not stay dead. Three days later, he conquered death. He rose again, victorious. In his death and resurrection, he conquered ALL sin and death. He conquered ALL the enemies of God. And because of this, there is lasting peace, both in our hearts now, and later in heaven, where He ascended and now sits at the right hand of the father. **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places . . .”** (Eph. 1:3). In Eph. 2:6 we also read: He **“raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”**

Today, the resurrection is the key to the fulfillment of God's promise to give us an inheritance in heaven. For Christ, though he descended to the earth, after his death and resurrection, he ascended to heaven, where He has secured our eternal inheritance.

3. The resurrection is the power of God to save. Finally, this morning, the resurrection is the power of God to save his people. I will only make a few comments here. In Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, he prayed, that they might know in 1:18-19: **“what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might. . .”** This is the power of God to save. But, notice how he accomplished this in v. 20: **“that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places . . .”** The resurrection of Christ is God's stamp of approval upon the person and work of Christ on the cross.

I've told this story before, but I must mention again my car registration process. We had to go get our eyes checked, our character evaluated by psychologists, our hearing checked, a detailed physical, a criminal record check, and numerous banks with payments. And at every point, they had to STAMP their approval on our official paper. And at the end, the head doctor at a particular hospital had to give his FINAL stamp of approval. Even if we were to get all the rest of the stamps, that FINAL stamp was the key to rest of them. If not, they ALL were invalid. In much the same way, the resurrection is God's STAMP upon his Son, and God's stamp upon his Son's work. Today, the resurrection is the power of God to save. There is no final salvation without the resurrection.

In 1 Cor. 15:17 Paul tells the Corinthians (and us): “**And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.**” And in 1 Cor. 15:14: “**And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.**” Rom. 4:25: He was “**delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.**” If Christ is not raised, his work of salvation has no essential power. There is “atonement,” but no life. If He is not raised, there is no application of his death. There is no FINAL victory. Rom. 8:34: “**Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that, who was raised who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.**”

Today, the resurrection of Christ is God’s power to save. Without it, there is no essential power that can effectively save us from our sins. And, there is no power to live godly in this life. And this is what Paul prays for in Eph. 1, that we will know the power of God’s salvation through the resurrection.

The Resurrection is makes our hope alive.

The Resurrection secures our inheritance.

The Resurrection is God’s power to save.

With these things in mind, what do we have to fear? Is there a sin too great we can commit as Christians? No! Is there a trial too difficult? Is there an enemy who can take your soul and snatch you out of God’s hand? When you preach the gospel, is there any weapon that will prosper against its power to accomplish what God has purposed? Is there anything in this world that you will not do for the one who holds your inheritance securely in heaven?

No! Jesus is risen from the dead! Halleluiah!