

Easter

April 4, 2010

*CW-S – “In Christ Alone”

1 Peter 1:3-9

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To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve His God and Father – to Him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

We Preach Christ Crucified AND RISEN!

- I. Christ crucified and risen is our blessed hope of heaven.
- II. Christ crucified and risen is our comfort in present trials.
- III. Christ crucified and risen – we love and trust Him.

Dear Christian friends,

“**Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!**” I suppose to some that **Easter greeting may seem** a bit CORNY – or **at least AWKWARD**. Maybe we should just let that tradition die a natural death. “**Good morning**” is GOOD ENOUGH.

No, “Good morning” just won’t do, **especially** for today. “Good morning” is a WISH – “May you have a good morning.” Whether you actually do have a good one we’ll have to wait and see. You CAN HAVE a “good morning” but then things can quickly go downhill from there. You’ve had those days, right?

“**Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!**” is not a wish but a statement of FACT. Go back to what the angel told those women at Jesus’ grave. “**He is not here. He is risen.**” “**Christ is risen**” is a FACT that doesn’t change as the **day goes on**. It’s a FACT that **doesn’t change even though the circumstances** in our lives may be changing dramatically. “**Christ is risen**” is a FACT that doesn’t change – but it DOES CHANGE everything. That’s Peter’s point here.

Our Lenten theme this year has been “We Preach Christ Crucified.” **Today** we end our Lenten journey NOT with Jesus “dead and buried” but with “**Christ is risen – risen indeed!**” We preach Christ crucified AND RISEN! Christ **crucified and risen** is 1)our blessed hope of heaven, 2)our comfort in **present trials** and 3)we love and trust Christ crucified.

I. Our blessed hope of heaven.

Christ **crucified and risen** is our blessed hope of heaven. “**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.**” Hope means we have something to LOOK FORWARD to. Paul once asked, “**Who hopes for what he already has?**” I don’t hope to get married someday – I’ve been married for over 25 years.

Peter calls this hope “**an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.**” Treasures ON EARTH all “**perish, spoil or fade.**” Things wear out – get broken. **Money** gets spent – or **lost**, even **stolen**. Sometimes WE wear out before the things we do. Our health fails and we CAN’T EVEN ENJOY our earthly “treasures.”

This inheritance will “**never perish, spoil or fade**” because it’s “**kept in heaven.**” Our “**blessed hope**” is eternal life in heaven – that “**mansion**” Jesus has prepared for us in His Father’s house. THINK about it! We DON’T KNOW exactly when we will die or exactly what we’ll die of – but **trusting in Jesus** we ALREADY KNOW now exactly what will happen to us when we die. We will immediately be with Jesus in His heavenly glory. Our “**blessed hope**” is that when we die we will immediately

join that **“great multitude standing before the throne of God and in front of the Lamb”** in heaven – that vast crowd **“wearing robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb.”** As the Easters roll by there are **more** and MORE FACES that I recognize in that crowd – **faces** I can put names on – **Christian loved ones** I CAN’T WAIT to see again. I sure miss them – but I’m so grateful that they are now with Jesus – and it will BE SO GREAT to one day soon join them with Jesus in heaven.

Not only that – there is ALSO **“the coming of the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”** WHAT A DAY that will be when Jesus returns **“with power and great glory”** – raises our dead bodies back to life – and then with a glorified body and soul all us Christians will live in the presence of God in that **“new heavens and new earth, where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.”**

ALL THAT is our **“blessed hope.”** We have all that ONLY BECAUSE we have Christ **“crucified and risen.”** Take Jesus OUT of the picture and then what do we have? Just us standing there ALL BY OURSELVES. **Without Jesus** how do you deal with a GUILTY conscience? **Without Jesus** how do you handle life with all its ups and downs? **Without Jesus** how do you deal with death? **Without Jesus** how do you stand before the ALL-HOLY – all-KNOWING – almighty Lord God and convince Him to let you live with Him in heaven?

With His **10 Commandments** God has spelled out EXACTLY how He expects us to live our lives. Simply put God is to ALWAYS come first. God doesn’t want A PLACE **somewhere** in our lives – He wants our hearts. Anything LESS than **perfect obedience** is unacceptable. IGNORING God – avoiding God – doesn’t make God disappear. With death God **shows** JUST HOW SERIOUS He is about this. You and I are going to die one day – die BECAUSE we have ignored and **defied** God. **“It is appointed unto men to die once and after that to face the judgment.”**

Facing up to our sin and impending death makes **“Christ crucified AND risen”** the GREATEST NEWS ever. We don’t have to FACE life – death – **God on our own**. We HAVE JESUS – Jesus crucified and NOW risen. Jesus – the very Son of God Himself born our brother – He has ALREADY taken care of **everything** for us. **In our place** and TO our credit Jesus actually lived a holy, perfect life. Bearing the sins of the world Jesus went to His cross and was punished in our place. Jesus has already paid for ALL our sins by enduring the death and hell we had coming. Because of Jesus God HAS FORGIVEN all our sins. And now we have Jesus RISEN from the dead. Our Savior who was dead **“and buried”** – has come back to life and come out of His grave victorious.

“Christ is risen – risen indeed!” IN that **risen Lord Jesus** we have God’s forgiveness of all our sins – we have a whole new relationship with God – we have the SURE and **blessed hope** of eternal life in heaven. **“Christ is risen – risen indeed”** is a blessed fact that CHANGES everything – a fact that is...

II. Our comfort in present trials.

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.” Let’s be clear here. God has promised us ETERNAL life in heaven – but He has never promised us an EASY life here on earth. Here we must deal with **“all kinds of trials”** because we are sinners living in a **sin-cursed** world. We’re NOT in heaven yet! We are going to have to DEAL WITH **“all kinds”** of sickness and sufferings – pains and problems – hardships and hassles. Life won’t always MAKE SENSE or seem FAIR. We will hurt – we will cry. We will wonder WHY.

Being a Christian ALSO BRINGS **“all kinds of trials”** into our lives. Peter talks about that in this letter. As Christians we are **“strangers in the world”** because we have a WHOLE DIFFERENT

OUTLOOK on life. Life is not all about HOW MUCH money I can make – or how much fun I can have. **As Christians** our lives are no longer ALL ABOUT ME but all about JESUS – loving Him – thanking Him – serving Him. HAVING Jesus **crucified and risen** gives us new priorities – new morals and values. That opens us up to being RIDICULED – misunderstood – even **hated**. It's NOT EASY being a Christian.

So we have **“all kinds of trials.”** We also have Christ **crucified and risen**. We have the comfort of Jesus IN CONTROL and working all things for our eternal good. Our trials **“have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold — may be proved genuine.”**

What's the one thing you could NEVER LIVE without? Your money – **family** – your HEALTH? We will eventually lose all that when we die. Our faith in Jesus as our Savior is our **most valuable** possession. WITH Jesus we have God's love and forgiveness – God's peace and **power** – His presence and **promises** – the privilege of prayer – eternal life in heaven. WITHOUT Jesus we have none of that!

God uses our **“trials”** to PURIFY our faith – just as gold is **“refined by fire.”** Refining is not a PLEASANT EXPERIENCE. Going through the fire is NOT FUN. But if we need it God WILL DO it to us. Maybe our priorities in life are screwed up. Maybe we've started drifting away from God. Maybe we're living more like an unbeliever than a Christian – we've grown comfortable with our sins and excuses. Maybe we've GROWN LAX in our prayer life – in our worship or **daily devotions**. We may NOT THINK we **have any problems** but GOD SEES them. And in love God will crank up the heat in our lives to PURIFY our faith and draw us back and closer to Him. GOD'S FOCUS is on us ending up with Him in heaven – not necessarily on us having it COMFORTABLE now. **“These trials have come so that your faith – which is of greater worth than gold - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”** The trials are NOT EASY – but we have the comfort of Jesus ONE DAY SOON coming to take us to be with Him in heaven. And in the meantime...

III. We love and trust in Christ crucified and risen.

Peter had spent three years WITH Jesus. He had heard Jesus preach – witnessed His miracles – eaten and talked with Jesus. With HIS OWN EYES Peter had seen Jesus risen from the dead. He had watched Jesus ascend into heaven. With **his own ears** Peter had heard the angel remind them, **“This same Jesus will come back.”**

These Christians Peter was writing to had NEVER **seen** or **heard** Jesus. We haven't either. We've only heard about Jesus from His Word. But THROUGH WHAT we've heard God has worked a change in our hearts – worked faith in our hearts. **“Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”**

How do you explain to someone what it MEANS TO YOU to have **“Christ crucified and risen”**? How do you put INTO WORDS the peace of **sins forgiven** – the joy of being a **child of God** – the comfort of I REALLY AM GOING **straight** to heaven when I die? To know – to HAVE **“Christ crucified and risen – risen indeed”** – that IS an **“inexpressible and glorious joy.”**

“Christ is risen – He is risen indeed!” That SAYS it all – that changes EVERYTHING. Amen.

Explanation to 2rd Article printed in bulletin