

Text— 1 Peter 1:3-12

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Today is Easter, the feast of the resurrection of our Lord. Nevertheless, it's sad that the wicked world has perverted the Easter holiday's true focus by urging folks to concentrate on bunnies, eggs, candy, parties and sports events, rather than on the glorious bodily resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

However, we Christians should not be surprised, for every Christian holiday is perverted by the wicked world, while the same people do not dare adulterate or supplant the pagan holidays of the Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and the like. Indeed, it's as Romans 8:5-9 relates, "they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye [that is, all true Christians] are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Therefore, let us regularly pray for widespread repentance.

Despite it's detractors, Easter day remains a joyous occasion for us Christians as we celebrate the fact that Jesus our Lord and Savior is He, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," as Romans 4:25 informs us. Yes, because Jesus lives, we Christians can take comfort in knowing that we too shall be resurrected on the Last Day and live for ever in heavenly bliss when Jesus visibly returns in power and great glory.

Our sermon text emphasizes the wonderful future awaiting all sincere believers in Jesus, for our Scripture selection tells us of:

"THE CHRISTIANS' LIVELY HOPE"

With that as our theme, may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) What the Christians' lively hope consists of
- 2) How the Christians' lively hope was made a reality
- 3) Why the Christians' lively hope is truly amazing

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Verses 3-5, ----- (1 Peter 1:3-5)

In our sermon text, we Christians see what our lively hope consists of, that being, *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven* for us. Think of it: we Christians have the *lively hope* of everlasting life in heaven, according to soul and body, since our Scripture selection assures us Christians it is *reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

Observe that the heavenly inheritance awaiting all Christians is incorruptible, undefiled, and never fades away. So, because it's an *inheritance*, it is obviously something we Christians will receive by God's grace and mercy, and not because we in whole or in part earned it by our own works. Furthermore, our inheritance in heaven is holy, perfect, and never-ending. Thus, we Christians have the hope of salvation – everlasting life in heaven – according to soul and body, which will be revealed in the last time, that is, it will be revealed when Jesus visibly returns in glory at the Last Day.

Verses 6-9, ----- (1 Peter 1:6-9)

Our text is speaking to all true Christians and ONLY true Christians – those who *are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time* – when it says: *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more*

precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Hence, while life in this world for Christians is NOT easy-street, since we are plagued with numerous temptations, we Christians still have great joy in knowing that a wonderful future awaits us in heaven.

Therefore, fellow Christians, our lively hope includes the knowledge that our earthly tribulations are but temporary, “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”— declares Romans 8:24-25. “For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”— adds Hebrews 13:14. Yes, it’s as Colossians 3:4 plainly states, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

Accordingly, the Christians’ lively hope is assuredly knowing that Jesus Christ will visibly return in glory to usher His Christians into never-ending glory in heaven, “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” (1 Corinthians 15:53-54) Let us be ever grateful to the Lord for the Christians’ lively hope.

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As we continue to ponder our sermon text, let us see how the Christians’ lively hope was made a reality.

Again, verses 3-5, ----- (1 Peter 1:3-5)

First, let’s especially focus on the following words: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

Notice that ALL CHRISTIANS are blessed in that God the Father according to His ABUNDANT MERCY has caused ALL CHRISTIANS to be begotten again, born-again, unto a lively hope. And how is it that God caused us Christians to be born-again? The answer is found in 1 Peter 1:23, which informs us Christians that we are, “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” Yes, God through His Word – the Gospel of Christ in particular, when preached and attached to the waters of Holy Baptism – gifts folks with faith in His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Savior of sinners.

It’s as we read in Romans 1:16-17 and 10:17, “...the gospel of Christ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” 1 Peter 3:21-22 adds, “baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.” And 1 Corinthians 1:21-24 states, “after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

Note it well: God’s Word, the Gospel of Christ in particular, is the MEANS God uses to gift folks with

faith in Jesus as their personal Savior and living Lord. And, such faith in Christ personally receives the forgiveness of sins and salvation which Jesus has earned for the whole world by His perfect keeping of God's Law and His paying for ALL the sins of ALL people with His holy and precious blood that He shed while nailed to the cross of Calvary. It's as we read in 1 Peter 1:18-21, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." Yes, Jesus lives! Jesus' bodily resurrection is positive proof that His supreme sacrifice of Himself has been accepted by God the Father for full payment for all the sins of all people.

My friends, Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," reports Hebrews 4:15. And, concerning Jesus Christ, Galatians 1:4-5 informs us it is He, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Thus, true Christian faith is God-given faith in Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior and living Lord, for Acts 4:12 relates, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Hence, the Christians' lively hope was made a reality by the atoning work of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, and by God gifting folks with faith in Him, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed

in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18) "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Romans 3:23-26) Accordingly, it is surely by God-given faith in the living Lord Jesus Christ and His work that THE CHRISTIANS' LIVELY HOPE WAS MADE – AND THEREFORE IS – A REALITY.

In verse 5 of our sermon text, we observe that we Christians *are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*. Hence, not only did God gift us Christians with faith by means of the Gospel of Christ, He also by His power working through His Word keeps us in the faith of Jesus Christ unto salvation, the very salvation which will be revealed in the last time when Jesus visibly returns in glory. Yes, God graciously keeps us in the faith by means of His Word, for in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 we are informed, "the word of God... effectually worketh also in you that believe." Fellow Christians, let's never forget that Ephesians 2:8-10 tells us: "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." The Christians' lively hope was made a reality because it depends on God's works and NOT on our own works. God does the saving, all of it.

Verses 6-9, ----- (1 Peter 1:6-9)

We Christians are Christians because God has gifted us with faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and living Lord; and, God sustains us in that faith; so, we greatly rejoice in the sure hope of everlasting life which Jesus has earned for us. Oh, we all have troubles during our life in this world, for in Acts 14:22 we learn, "we must through much

tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”

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Nevertheless, God uses temptations and tribulations to try us and strengthen us in the faith, because our faith in Christ is far more valuable than gold which will perish when this old world comes to its end, for 2 Peter 3:10 relates, “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” Oh beloved, God loves us and desires that we persevere in the faith of Jesus Christ until that great day when Jesus visibly returns in glory to take us to Himself in heaven.

My friends in Christ, let us never forget *the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls*. The soul is what sets human beings apart from the animals, for Genesis 2:7 reports, “the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” So, Ecclesiastes 3:21 asks, “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” An animal’s spirit is nothing more than its life-force which simply perishes when the animal dies; on the other hand, man’s spirit is his soul, which upon death goes either to heaven or hell depending upon whether the person had faith in Christ or not.

Therefore, when we Christians experience temporal death, our soul goes to be with the Lord in heaven; and, when our Lord Jesus visibly returns to earth on the Last Day, He will raise our body back to life in perfect glory and our living soul will be reunited with that body. Thus, salvation of our soul is as important as the salvation of our body, since it is both soul and body that make-up a human being. Let us never forget that Jesus once promised His followers in John 14:19, “because I live, ye shall live also.” Jesus’ promise stands firm for ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS. Jesus is our living Lord! The Christians’ lively hope was made a reality by the wonderful works of our living Lord, for Christ is one with God the Father and God the Holy Ghost.

As we ponder our sermon text to its conclusion, let us see why the Christians’ lively hope is truly amazing.

Verses 10-12, ----- (1 Peter 1:10-12)

The Old Testament prophets were moved by *the Spirit of Christ which was in them* to pen the words which they wrote, such as the wonderful prophecies concerning the Messiah, the Christ and His redemptive work, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”— declares 2 Peter 1:21. The prophets wrote of Christ’s sufferings, death, and bodily resurrection.

For example, David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, by inspiration of God wrote vividly of Jesus’ death by crucifixion in Psalm 22, where we read many details in very descriptive words, such as, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.” (Psalm 22:1, 7-8, 13-18) And, the same psalmist, David, in Psalm 16:10, prophesied of Jesus’ bodily resurrection, for we read, “thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” Other prophets, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, likewise wrote of the Messiah, Christ Jesus, in whom they believed.

The Old Testament prophets searched the Scriptures which they wrote by inspiration of God, earnestly desiring to behold the grace of God in Christ Jesus, *Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*

Accordingly, the Old Testament prophets believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior who in their day was yet to come. On the other hand, the New Testament preachers, particularly Jesus' apostles and evangelists, proclaimed the Gospel of Christ as they were empowered to do so by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven on the day of Pentecost; and, they are still preaching through the New Testament books they penned by inspiration of God the Holy Ghost.

Take it to heart that so wonderful is the Gospel of Christ that the holy angels desire to look into it, being astonished by all that Jesus Christ accomplished— His perfect keeping of God's Law, His bitter sufferings and death for all the sins of all people, and His triumphant bodily resurrection after three days in the grave.

Oh beloved, the Christians' lively hope is truly amazing because Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, has rescued ALL of us undeserving sinners from never-ending ruin in hell. God's grace and mercy shown to us in Christ Jesus is truly amazing! "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not

only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." (Romans 5:7-11) Yes, fellow Christians, we are now reconciled, we are now at one, with God because of the redemptive work of our living Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Let us therefore daily and sincerely repent of our sins. Let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord. And, let us go forward with joy of heart, knowing the Christians' lively hope! Amen.

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