

† Heroes of History

- *Have you ever had a historical figure you deeply admired, inspired you? Hero of history! Maybe great scientist, educator, innovator, leader, athlete, maybe religious leader.*
- *At some point in my childhood I developed a fascination in Architecture, and even though I would go the route of Landscape design, I was absolutely fascinated by Frank Lloyd Wright. He was my hero of Architecture. Part of it was his story, how he resurrected an almost dead career and designed his greatest works after the age of sixty. Part was how he defied the criticism of his peers as he refused to conform to the norms of his time. But mostly, I was awed by the sheer genius of his design, the way his structures impacted me.*
- *BUT HERE'S THE THING... As a young architecture student, I could admire, study, be inspired by, and even seek to emulate FLW. BUT, I COULD NOT...*
  - *Go back in time and get his SPIRIT... HIS MIND... HIS GENIUS... and put it into myself. I couldn't even spend time with him.*
  - *The problem was that while FLW's legacy was powerful, and good, his legacy is all there is. HE IS DEAD.*
- *MY FRIENDS, the great proclamation of the New Testament- of the Good News- is that JESUS CHRIST IS NOT DEAD. The message of Jesus Christ is...*
  - *NOT just a 2000 year old inspiring story*
  - *NOT just a person we could study and seek to emulate... although many do*
  - *NOT just a person with a powerful legacy... The Good news is not just the Judeo-Christian moral footprint Jesus left on human history. No!....*

† The proclamation at the heart of the Christian message, without which there is no Christian message, is that Jesus is ALIVE. It is the truth of the RESURRECTION.

- *The Resurrection stands as the objective historical truth that JESUS IS GOD. And AS GOD, Jesus INTENDS, and is ABLE, to do what no hero from history could ever do. HE IS ABLE to take his Life, His MIND, His NATURE, and place WHO HE IS into YOU. Into ME.*
- *In fact, Jesus isn't just ABLE to do this, HE DOES THIS in the life of ANY PERSON- when that person takes the step of surrender- the step of faith- to...*

† Responding to the Gospel

- *Can't go through Easter without telling the gospel! This is the step to:*
  - Recognize our NEED of God.
- *Like all of humanity, we enter life with a fallen nature. History, and our own stories, evidences that this is true. We have sinned, our sin has hurt us and those around us, and we are separated from God. On our own, we are powerless to overcome our human condition, and we are separated from God.*
- *THIS IS THE GREAT BARRIER of humanity... we don't want to admit this is true! We don't want to admit that we NEED GOD, because that takes us out of control, and requires we yield. BUT, BY GOD'S GRACE.. there may come a time when we...*
  - Hear and understand the Good News of who Jesus is, and what He accomplished through His death and resurrection.
- *Through his death, Jesus took the sin and brokenness of humanity upon himself. All of our offense is ultimately against him, and so HE ALONE was able to bear this offense for us.*

- **Through his resurrection, Jesus defeated death, defeated Satan, and rose to a NEW LIFE, from which He cannot die again**
- **The gospel is God's invitation... stating.. this VICTORY that JESUS WON... IT IS FOR YOU! I'll give you what this world could never give... IFY... come beyond the life that you once lived... take my hand, trade everything you are, for everything I am!**
- **This is the invitation to BELIEVE...**

- In the depth of your heart, believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, and confess that Jesus is LORD.

**Romans 10:9-11** *If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame."*

- **When we believe, we receive- right then, a gift we will not fully understand or appreciate this side of eternity.**
  - **WE ARE FULLY, AND FOREVER, FORGIVEN. But even more...**
  - **In all of who we are, God works a GREAT EXCHANGE. He takes the old person we used to be, and he joined that person with Christ on the cross... so that when Jesus died, that old person we used to be also died... THE OLD IS GONE**
  - **THEN, God takes that old, dead, prideful, fearful, self-addicted self- and EXCHANGES it for a NEW LIFE, for a NEW SELF WITH A NEW NATURE, NEW IDENTITY, by joining us together with Christ in his RESURRECTION. And now...**
  - **This GIFT we have received- not just for eternity, it is a gift for NOW.**

† Reality! In Christ, we have received:

- The PROMISE of God. **Not the promise of life the way we want it... but the ultimate promise of Eternity, that this life is not all there is. THAT SAID, this life is important! It matters! And in this life, we are NOT ALONE, because we also have received...**
- The PRESENCE of God **God isn't just the God up in heaven, he is present, here, now. And because we have the presence of God, IN CHRIST, we have received..**
- The POWER of God.

– **Turn with me to EPHESIANS 1. Paul wrote this to the community of believers in the Ancient city of Ephesus, around 61-62 AD, while in prison in Rome. V-15...**

– **THIS is scripture- and so Paul is praying under the leadership of the Holy Spirit - therefore, this is a prayer GOD WANTS TO ANSWER. It is his DESIRE for us!**

† A prayer of God's desire for you

<sup>15</sup> For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, <sup>16</sup> I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup> I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

– **God desires that we KNOW HIM.. understand and experience the good of who He is, His presence, more and more. Continues...**

<sup>18</sup> I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, <sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us

who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength<sup>20</sup> he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,<sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.<sup>22</sup> And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,<sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

– **What do we see here. God desires...**

- That we know the HOPE to which He has called us
- **God has called us to KNOW and EXPERIENCE His HOPE. To LIVE in the certain hope that HE IS GOD, HE IS GOOD, He holds the future, that He is working out everything according to his good purposes...**

**Romans 8:28** And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

– **AND SO we can trust him with tomorrow, while we live – by faith- in His presence today. IN CHRIST, we have the POWER OF HOPE.**

- That we know the riches of being His inheritance- the community of believers
- **This is an incredible statement! It's odd to think of God having an inheritance... Something you receive when someone dies, when something passes away... Think of this image! God is saying- MY inheritance- what I will fully receive when the order of this current world passes away and I fully ushers in eternity, making all things new... MY INHERITANCE... IT IS US! THE CHURCH. THE COMMUNITY OF ALL BELIEVERS.**
- **Key- when NT mentions 'The Saints' or 'God's holy people'- this doesn't just refer to all believers as individuals... it describes the COMMUNITY of believers, in relationship with each other. WE-TOGETHER- are God's inheritance.**
- **Paul prays that we wouldn't miss this! That we would comprehend and EXPERIENCE the riches – power- of being part of the community of faith, RIGHT NOW.**
- **NOW, Paul prays something, quite literally, astonishing.**
- That we know His incomparably great power in our lives! The power of RESURRECTION.
- **What does this even mean? How can I have the power of resurrection? I can't raise people from the dead! That is true, BUT...**
- **I – and YOU- CAN LIVE as if WE HAVE BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD. Because IN CHRIST, WE HAVE!**
- **TURN WITH ME TO ROMANS SIX, picking up in verse 5**

**Romans 6:5ff** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.<sup>6</sup> For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—<sup>7</sup> because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.<sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

– **The OLD HAS GONE, THE NEW HAS COME**

<sup>9</sup>For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.<sup>10</sup> The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

– **CHRIST is RISEN, he cannot die again, and death has NO MASTERY OVER HIM....**

– ***This is true of Jesus... AND in Christ, IT IS ALSO TRUE OF US!***

<sup>11</sup> In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

– ***Just as it is true of JESUS that death holds no mastery, now power, no fear over him... Count yourselves.. BELIEVE, RECKON, LIVE IN THE REALITY THAT THIS IS TRUE OF YOU AS WELL!***

– ***Paul continues... because this is true, WHY would you grant sin, deception, pride, any authority or place in your life?***

<sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. <sup>13</sup> Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness...

– ***God says to us- “don’t offer yourselves” to sin- don’t grant it any authority in your heart- because this is no longer who you are! LOT could talk about here, but now just say this:***

– ***IF WE ARE HONEST with God, our sin isn’t a mystery. God will reveal it to us- and he calls us to surrender, to let him do whatever He needs to do so that we can come to know FREEDOM from these patterns that hinder us, and the sin that so easily can entangle us.***

– ***THIS IS the power to turn away from- one step at a time- the chains that hold you captive, harming you and those around you. To live in obedience to God, his goodness.. not out of fear or obligation, but because it is WHO WE ARE...***

– ***And church, WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST isn’t just about NOT sinning! It is LIVING as people who have been made alive by God***

*but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.*

– ***OFFER YOURSELVES TO GOD - daily, conscious choice to turn to God with a spirit that says...***

○ ***I was DEAD, but NOW I AM ALIVE! God- you have given me LIFE!.. So.. THANK YOU! I AM YOURS! There’s lot’s I don’t understand- you know my struggles.... But Jesus... I’m with you. I trust you! My eyes are on you... what’s the next step?***

– ***CHURCH... MY FRIENDS... The GOOD NEWS of Easter is that..***

† In Christ, we have received the power of a resurrected life!

– ***If you have never taken the step of faith to trust in Christ, Christ is inviting you to turn to him, to enter into his life and the journey of freedom.***

– ***CHURCH... In a world that is so defined by taking sides, God calls us – this world NEEDS US- to be people of HOPE. People- believers- who demonstrate the power and great value of COMMUNITY- even with all our differences. People who love selflessly and COURAGEOUSLY. People whose lives- how we think, feel, act, our choices... express the goodness and nature of God.***

– ***THIS takes the power of resurrection. In Christ, we have been given that power in abundance.***

– ***ALLELUIA, CHRIST IS RISEN! THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED, ALLELUIA!***