

Series: Acts
Title: Our Hope is a Person
Scripture: Acts 23: 6-10
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The apostle Paul writes throughout his letters of the believer being no more tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. He declares that Christ has given messengers to preach the gospel that we be no more led astray by the cunning craftiness of men. His prayer for the saints was that they be not deceived from the simplicity--the single--object of faith, Christ Jesus the Lord. Paul's desire for the saints was that they be rooted and grounded and established and built up. His constant encouragement was stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free.

All of these things are accomplished by the Holy Spirit working in the redeemed of God. Our being planted is of the Lord. It is by revelation of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus the Lord.

Proposition: The believer's hope is a person. The Spirit of God unites us in Christ and Christ in us. Beholding and trusting Christ our Lord we patiently endure waiting for the return of Christ Jesus himself. Our hope is a person.

Acts 23: 6...Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees,

I. THE SPIRIT OF GOD ALONE CREATES UNITY

Paul perceived this council was divided.

What a sad thing to perceive. (Turn to Numbers 11: 16, 17.)

The first Sanhedrim was created by the LORD. The Holy Spirit was put upon that first council by the LORD. The purpose for which God created this council was to help Moses--God's messenger.

Now, in our text, Christ Jesus has come and risen again. He has set judgment in the earth. All judgment has been committed into the hands of Christ Jesus. There is no use for this council any longer.

Now, this council is made up of self-appointed men. The Spirit of God is not upon them. They are not helping God's messenger but accusing him.

This is what Paul perceived. Paul perceived that they were divided amongst themselves. They were divided over a dead-letter doctrine.

Acts 23: 8: For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

Point: Where there is only doctrine and no Holy Spirit there is only confusion. They agreed to serve together in the council. Up to this point they agreed to reject Paul. Yet, they were divided over the very foundational doctrine of the faith--the hope of Israel. Will such a council stand?

Amos 3: 3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

James 3:16: For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

Paul has just seen Ananias--the one pretending to be High Priest--order Paul to be smitten. Now Paul perceives these men are divided. He knows he will never get a fair hearing before these men; Paul knows that the Roman chief captain is looking to this council to determine whether or not Paul is handed over to them for a formal trial; and Paul knows there is no point in casting the pearls of the gospel before these men. So listen to what Paul cries out.

Acts 23: 6: But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

II. CHRIST JESUS IS THE HOPE AND RESURRECTION OF THE BELIEVER.

Paul was not saying, "I am a Pharisee" and therefore no longer a Christian. He is saying that on the issue which divided Pharisee and Sadducee, he was a Pharisee, AND in no way a Sadducee. **6:...the son of a Pharisee:** By this Paul signifies that he had been taught and knew the doctrine of the Pharisee.

The Pharisee's believed the letter of doctrine. They believed the doctrine that God had a chosen people. It was evident to them in the fact that the LORD showed favor to Israel and not the other nations. The Pharisee's believed the doctrine that God is sovereign. They had the scriptures in which the prophets declared it, they sang of his sovereignty out of the psalms, and they said here, "let us not fight against God." The Pharisee's knew the doctrine of atonement and they knew it was for a particular people. They saw it in the fact that God provided a high priest and a lamb for Israel. God declared he would receive none but those for whom the high priest made atonement through the blood of a sacrifice. And they beheld that God provided a high priest and a lamb only for Israel, but God gave it to no other nation on earth. They had been taught that the hope of Israel was the LORD. As far as the doctrine, they believed redemption would be in the Messiah. Their hope was in the Messiah. They knew the scriptures.

Ps 130:7: Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.

Jeremiah 17:13 O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.

Throughout Jewish history, the hope of Israel was a resurrection of the dead through the coming Messiah. They had Job's word:

Job 19:25: For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: 26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

Daniel 12:2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

The problem is, they had the doctrine, but they rejected Jesus of Nazareth who is indeed the Messiah, the Christ of God.

Before conversion Paul believed the doctrine of Christ the coming Messiah--but it was not until Christ called him that Paul believed Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ.

Acts 26: 4: My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; 5: Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. 6: And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: 7: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. 8: Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? 9: I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Here is the point: IN OUR TEXT WE SEE HOW UNSTABLE SINNERS ARE WHO HAVE A KNOWLEDGE OF DOCTRINE BUT WHO HAVE NOT BEEN BORN OF GOD TO BELIEVE ON CHRIST JESUS THE LORD.

Acts 23: 7: And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. 8: For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

Notice the issue for these two is not Christ: it whether or not there is: a resurrection, angels and spirits--the issue was merely a debate over doctrine. They had all regard for doctrine but no regard for Christ.

The question is not what ye think of this doctrine or that--it is what think ye of Christ. If you believe on the Lord you will believe the doctrine. But it is possible to believe the doctrine and not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Our rejoicing is not merely in God's sovereign choice. He may have chosen to pass you by. Our rejoicing is that God the Father chose his people in Christ Jesus his Son. Thereby I am confident he will never leave me nor forsake me. Our rejoicing is not merely that God predestinated. In Isaiah we have seen that those who rejected him were appointed by God to stumble over Christ, their table was made a snare to them. Our rejoicing is that God predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself. Thereby I am confident that not one for whom Christ died shall perish but shall be brought to receive the Spirit of adoption.

Illustration: I was with a group of fellows who were arguing over justification. They started out questioning me. But then they began to disagree with each other. Finally, one man who had been silent the whole time said, "You men are arguing over "When" a man is justified and have said nothing about "Who" justifies. Afterwards, those men who disagreed with each other were together in apologizing to me for that one man being so simple, and by simple they meant ignorant, not wise. The only wise thing said the whole time was what that one man said. His desire was not when but WHO! If you believe on Christ you will know the doctrine.

Acts 23: 9: And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

Note: They were not saying this to defend Paul, but in opposition to the Sadducees and in defense of their doctrine. We know that because all along, they rejected Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah. All it took to sway the Pharisee's was to hear Paul say a few key words "the hope and resurrection of the dead." "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee".

Illustration: Men look and listen for key phrases: for some it words like: Election, Predestination, Sovereignty, Particular Redemption and so on. For others: blessed, prayer, church.

Point: Brethren, do not think it strange that men float in and out of opposing parties. Every sinner is tossed to and fro until Christ becomes the Anchor and End to which all true doctrine roots and grounds the believer. Without the Spirit of God teaching us in the heart--making us a true Jew, inwardly--man's religion is nothing more than meaningless doctrine.

Our doctrine is OF THE LORD.

1. Comes from him
2. Taught by him
3. It is about him

WE ARE NOT LOOKING FOR AN EVENT BUT A PERSON--JESUS CHRIST IS OUR HOPE AND OUR RESURRECTION.

John 11: 24: Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. 25: Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

THE RESURRECTION THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

EXALTS CHRIST AS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS AND POWER OF GOD WHEREBY GOD'S ELECT ARE SAVED. EVERY TRUE GOSPEL MESSAGE IS ABOUT OUR HOPE AND RESURRECTION, CHRIST JESUS THE LORD.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is God the Father declaring him the Son of God with power. God's glory is proclaimed in raising Christ Jesus as promised: his faithfulness, his power, his justice: Christ declared the righteousness of God. He glorified the wisdom of God in making mercy and truth kiss in harmony. It was just for God to loose the bands of death. His resurrection declares God is satisfied. He was Justified in the Spirit

The resurrection through Jesus Christ declares the absolute inability for any of God's elect to save themselves.

Eph 2: 5: Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6: And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

The resurrection power is the power of God which it takes to create eternal life in a dead sinner.

Ephesians 1: 19: And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, 20: Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

I Corinthians 15: 12: Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13: But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

The gospel is concerning our resurrected, victorious Redeemer. But Paul's concern is not simply whether or not you believe in the doctrine of resurrection--that the just and unjust shall be raised--his concern is that you understand and believe that Christ is risen. Here is the problem if Christ be not risen.

I Corinthians 15: 14: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 15: Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16: For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

The object of preaching and of faith is our resurrected Redeemer. If he be not risen then our preaching is vain and your faith is vain also. Do you see how the issue is not merely a doctrine but the issue is Christ who has risen from the dead.

I Corinthians 15: 17: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

Christ put away our sin by the sacrifice of himself--he was raised again for our justification. If he be not raised you have no object of your faith and are yet in your sins. But our Living Redeemer is our hope.

Ro 5:10: 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.

I Corinthians 15: 18: Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

His resurrection declares he conquered death and hell--O grave where is thy sting! Not only is our faith vain, but the faith of all the saints who died in ages past is vain and they too are perished.

I Corinthians 15: 19: If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

Paul forsook this world. He was persecuted, hated, and bore much cruel treatment in his flesh. If his hope was merely in this life only, Paul was of all men most miserable.

To Paul--and to every believer--this is not merely a doctrine, it is a Person. Christ said, "I am the Way."; "I am the Resurrection." Paul said, "I persecuted this Way...but the Lord said to me, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Christ made Paul to believe this Way is the Person of Christ Jesus the Lord. The Hope of the believer is Christ. Our Resurrection is not event, it is Christ Jesus the Lord. The believer's hope is not heaven, but Christ the glory of heaven. Our hope is not crowns, but Christ the King. The believer's hope is not rewards but Christ their Treasure. The very Power that raised Christ from the dead had raise Paul to newness of life and taught Paul and by this Power of God, Paul was constrained to stand alone, anchored in Christ while these men wavered back and forth before him.

Conclusion: The Holy Spirit alone creates unity. Believers are united, anchored, planted in Christ Jesus the Lord. We look forward to his glorious appearing. And having this hope, we wash our hands of all that would separate us from our Redeemer.

Titus 2: 11: For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12: Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13: Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

I John 3: 2: Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3: And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

AMEN!