

How to Win Before the Battle Begins

For the Win, Week One

Welcome to Grace Hills on Easter Sunday. This is the day we celebrate the greatest event in all of history - the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave.

The church is built on the truth of the resurrection. Without it, we don't need to exist. Because of it, we can absolutely change the world with the good news.

As a church, we make three big, bold claims, and everything hinges on these...

- 1. Jesus died for the sins of the world - he became our sin and suffered the penalty our sins had incurred so that we could be forgiven before God.**
- 2. Jesus rose again. He walked out of the tomb, gathered with the disciples, launched the church, ascended back to heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit.**
- 3. Anyone who places their full faith in Jesus Christ is born again and changed forever, welcomed into God's family forever.**

These claims aren't new. They've been the foundation of the church for two thousand years now...

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 GW

Christ died to take away our sins as the Scriptures predicted. He was placed in a tomb. He was brought back to life on the third day as the Scriptures predicted.

The question we're going to answer today is... **Now what?**

We're starting a new series today called ***For the Win***. It's all about **spiritual warfare**. And the biggest point we're making is this...

Because Jesus rose from the dead, conquering sin, death, and all darkness, all who follow him get to walk daily in his resurrection power and authority. We get to walk in victory instead of defeat!

The fact is, too many of us **live in defeat**. We have decided that we can't win, aren't winning, and have no chance of winning. So in a desperate struggle to find some kind of happiness and fulfillment, we play to "not lose" in the hopes we won't be completely miserable.

But that has never been God's intention for how we live life. His intention for how we live was captured well in Paul's prayer for the church...

Ephesians 1:15-23 NLT

¹⁵ Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, ¹⁶ I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, ¹⁷ asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. ¹⁸ I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

¹⁹ I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power ²⁰ that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. ²¹ Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. ²² God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. ²³ And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

1. God wants you to grow in your knowledge of him.. (vs. 16-17)

Not just knowing *about the Bible*, but **knowing God** through an intimate relationship with him through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3:10-11 NLT

I want to **know Christ** and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead.

2. God wants you to live with a daily experience of hope. (v. 18)

I believe Christians ought to be the most positive, hopeful people on the planet. Our joy and enthusiasm should be absolutely contagious, spreading like wildfire, because our King is alive and coming again with absolute victory over all things.

And our hope is more than wishful thinking. It's settled fact.

3. God wants you to walk in the power of the resurrection. (vs. 19-20)

There are two different words in the New Testament that can be translated as power and/or authority. Paul uses both of them in this passage. First, he talks about the **dunamis** of God - the explosive power of God that affects actual change.

You and I are **never powerless** when we follow Jesus.

- We have the power to choose joy.
- We have the power to be healed in Jesus' name.
- We have the power to overcome our circumstances.
- We have the power to win over temptation.
- We have the power to become like Christ.

In other words, **YOU CAN!!!**

4. God wants you to claim the authority of Christ over you and through you. (vs. 20-23)

Paul also talks about the second kind of power - the **exousia** of God - the **kingdom authority** of God over all of the powers of darkness.

In the message next week, we're going to unpack this verse...

Ephesians 6:12 NLT

For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

So there are authority structures in the unseen, spiritual world that are just as real as all of the authority structures in our flesh-and-blood world. BUT... **NONE** of them are above the resurrected Christ!

Jesus has absolute authority over all authorities in heaven and in earth. And he grants that authority to his people, to the church.

In other words...

When you follow King Jesus, you have already won, even before the battle has begun in your life.

You will still experience defeats, discouragement, suffering and setbacks. But you get to know, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that you're a winner because Jesus has already won!

It all boils down to this question...

Have you believed in Jesus as Savior and received him as your King? Have you placed your life under his full authority by faith?