Radiant Church, September 10, 2017

Mike Rydman

**Live in Hope**

**1 Peter 1:1-12**

Peter probably wrote this letter from Rome, in ad 62-63, during Nero’s reign

Written to the Christians scattered throughout what is now modern day Turkey

The twin themes of Peter’s letter are “Hardship” (or suffering) and “Holiness”

Though there is a lot to say about our identity in Christ, which allows us to deal with our hardships in a holy way

1 Peter 1:1-2 *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.*

Here is the first of our identity statements: We are exiles…but we are rescued

Exiles are living in a place that is not their home, not by choice

Peter is telling us that all three Persons of God are involved in our salvation:

The Father makes it possible. He knows because He determines

The Son accomplishes it through His blood (his death) that pays the price

The Spirit makes it applicable and practical

The result is that grace (what we do not deserve) abounds, therefore the peace we now have (with God) is multiplied

…but Peter says “May…” meaning, that we would really believe it’s given

Grace and peace, in order to live as exiles, in humility and confidence

1 Peter 1:3-5 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

We have hope beyond our circumstances, because of Jesus

We have an inheritance, greater than we can collect here on earth in this life

We are being guarded, so that inheritance is insured, guaranteed

1 Peter 1:6-7 *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

The people Peter was writing to were being persecuted for their faith

Probably not a State organized persecution yet, but on local levels

When we’re suffering; when we’re being persecuted, what is it we really want?

Glory to God through how we suffer well, as evidence of the gospel?

Or for God to bring us an easier time of it, a more comfortable life?

As Christians, we struggle with an internal conflict

We find hope and joy in the gospel. We like that “Jesus loves me”

But we also feel like our present lives are hard, too hard, like Jesus

doesn’t really love us enough, like the gospel doesn’t do enough

**Tim Keller: Strategies of our Discontent.** Two broad approaches – you can either live life assuming that satisfaction in life is quite possible, that “it” is “still out there” – or you can live in the conviction that satisfaction is not possible

**“It” is still out there:**

**The young**, busy trying to get to the next place where they can be happy

**The Resentful**, blaming the obstacles or people that have kept us from achieving the things we think will satisfy us

**The Driven**, fighting to achieve what they think will bring happiness…like speeding up the treadmill, only to find it doesn’t change our location, it gets harder to maintain the speed, and eventually become too tired to keep going

**The Despairing**, blaming ourselves for not achieving what we believe to be essential to our happiness, finally seeing that our lives are a long series of choices, many of which haven’t led to happiness or fulfillment

**“It” doesn’t exist:**

**The Altruistic**, helping others but for selfish gains through feeling morally superior, or disdain if our efforts are not reciprocated with respect and gratitude

**The Cynical**, who stop trying to be happy by being condescending toward others who do not agree that happiness is not attainable, resulting in a hard heart that ultimately dehumanizes us

**The Detached**, who do not hope in anything too much because nothing lasts forever, but end up undermining the people and things that can be loved

St. Augustine concluded that our discontent has both a functional cause and an ultimate cause:

The functional cause of our discontentment is that our loves are “out of order”

The ultimate cause of our discontentment is failure to love the first thing first, the failure to love God supremely. You harm yourself when you love anything more than God

It’s our hope that allows us to:

Not despair of being obedient to God

Not despair over God allowing suffering to enter our lives

We can hope in God through suffering and hardship, because we are secure

1 Peter 1:8-9 *Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

Peter’s readers believed and now rejoice over Jesus, not because they had seen him, but because He had died for them, and was now living again.

1 Peter 1:10-12 *Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

Peter is not making this stuff up. He sees the gospel of Jesus as the one thing all of previous human history has been pointing to, a story so incredible the angels themselves don’t have the capacity to fully understand

Peter said something remarkable earlier: God the Father has caused us to be “born again”

1 Peter 1:3-5 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

“Again” – We are not made to be a better version of ourselves. We are

made “new,” something different than we were before.

New priorities, new motivations, new heart’s passion

New empowerment (the Holy Spirit in us)

“…to a living hope” vs. a dead hope

We hope in ourselves, but deep down know it’s hopeless

We hope in Jesus, because He is our living hope, beyond ourselves

Here is perhaps the hardest thing to face when becoming a Christian: To be “born again” the previous version of us has to die

We die to ourselves, so we can live to Jesus. But what does that mean?

Earnest D. Martin: **A Radical Transformation of Values**

When we think of the church as a subculture in the larger culture, we may have the impression that Christian values are simply options to be added to the generally accepted values in society. On that assumption Christians may conclude that life in Christ is a matter of a few modifications and several additions to an otherwise respectable life. Of course, certain glaring social sins must go. But the assumption is that coming into the stream of Christian faith leaves much of society’s values intact.

However, if we accept the church as a counterculture, this brings a new perspective. Rather than beginning with the culture and adding on a few religious principles, we begin with the gospel of Jesus Christ and construct a life and values out of a new orientation to Christ (the things above). Orientation is the key factor. The point is not that Christ’s people size up the world’s values and then choose an inverted set of values. Instead, they begin with Christ and his values, and if they are in contrast with this world’s norm, so be it. A radical difference in values is to be expected, even though they are not different at all points. If new life in Christ is seen as a way to make a comfortable life in this world a little better, then somehow the component of dying with Christ is to be avoided.

If with Christ we have died to the world and have been raised with him, this will affect perspective, purpose, and priorities.

The song writer, Helen Lemmel, identifies what happens in a Christian:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,

Look full in his wonderful face,

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim

In the light of his glory and grace.

Since the things of earth have not grown dim for many professed Christians, should we not be concerned that we may not be turning our eyes to Jesus? Terminally ill persons frequently testify to a major rearrangement of values and priorities. The church needs to hear their testimonies and learn from them.

**Life After Death**

“Where can I find the road to life?” you ask;

“How can I fill the void that haunts my soul?”

My friend, I know that path to life you seek;

You need not suffer life that’s bland and droll.

The Good News is, abundant life’s in Christ—

The antidote to life that goes askew.

You can escape the futile fling you’re on;

With Christ, you can be raised to life anew.

Before you try to sweeten life with Christ

By thinking he’s like frosting on your cake,

I must make sure you clearly understand

The entrance gate that you must take.

Before there’s life that’s really life, there’s death.

“Not death,” you say, “I want to live, not die.”

I know, but easy shortcuts will not work;

The life you seek will come when first you die.

It’s self that needs to die, the ingrown self.

When you with Christ are dead to self each day,

And to the world of lusts that lure and trap,

Then you can know abundant life today.[[1]](#footnote-1)

If you know that Jesus died for you, in your place, then you can see His death as your death, your punishment, your atonement for your sin and rebellion against God the Father, against God the Son and against God the Holy Spirit.

As you go to the communion table, see the bread as your life taken away when Jesus’s life was taken away for you. See the juice in the cup as His blood, your blood, shed to pay for your sin.

And praise God for the hope we have, because of Jesus being made alive again. Our hope is no longer in ourselves, we can die to that; our hope is in Him!

For on the cross Jesus was treated as we deserved, so that when we believe in Him, we are treated as He deserves

1. Martin, E. D. (1993). [*Colossians, Philemon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/bcbccolph?ref=Page.p+141&off=708) (pp. 141–143). Scottdale, PA: Herald Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)