

Fear Not, Little Flock

Rick Peterson

We might as well admit it: we live in perilous times. The apostle Paul warned of times in which religion would lack any genuine substance, but instead be a powerless form of godliness serving only as a cloak for rampant moral depravity (II Timothy 3:1-5). He said, “But realize this . . .” (NASB). So I am suggesting here that it is time to realize we are in such times, and admit to our reality. Until now, I have resisted this reality. With so many churches in my area, I continued to hold out hope that there would be many faithful churches which rejoiced in the truths of the historic faith. But I am prepared now to admit that this is hardly the case. And I am not alone. I often talk with people who have given up on the “Seeker Sensitive”, entertainment-driven, business model oriented religious activity centers we call churches these days. Many believing people, including myself, are tempted to despair. But there is no payoff in despair. In fact, it is sin. So what are we to do?

I have recently found myself prompted by the Spirit to rejoice in the blessing of knowing and understanding the gospel. And as I have done so, the Lord has increased my well-being. So I want to encourage you to do the same. I want to invite you to join me in a lifestyle of gratitude for the mercy we have been shown. Jesus once told his disciples, “It has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God” (Luke 8:10a). This means to comprehend spiritual truth comes to us as a gift of God. It is not something we can invoke. It is not something we can earn, nor can we ascend to it; rather, spiritual truth comes only to the mind, heart, and will of those whom God chooses to give it. This is necessary because fallen mankind has hardened their heart against the truth. What knowledge of God they possess through creation and conscience, they actively suppress, and by doing so, make themselves objects of wrath (Romans 1:18-19). For even though light has come into the world (Christ), men loved darkness rather than the light for their deeds are evil (John 3:19). What a horrific state!

But Jesus told his disciples, “But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it (Matthew 13:16-17). Most people will not see what you see and hear what you hear, for the simple reason they do not want to. And to those who respond to the gospel with chronic, unrelenting unbelief, God allows

to continue in their hardened and blind state. But to some, to a remnant of people, God mercifully acts to open their eyes and ears to understand the gospel of the kingdom and the glories of the new covenant in Christ. Not because of any good works we have done, and not because we are better than anyone else, but solely on the basis of mercy. If you are in Christ, you have been shown a great mercy in receiving the gift of saving faith (Ephesians 2:8). And this means you have the Spirit of truth indwelling you; that same Spirit who has sealed you for the day of salvation (John 16:5-15; Ephesians 1:13). If you are in Christ, this means you walk in the light as he is in the light, and you enjoy fellowship with the Father and the Son, by the Holy Spirit (cf. I John 1:1-7). If you have been justified by faith (which is the only way you can be justified) then you have peace with God — unconditional, objective peace with God (Romans 5:1-2). These are all things for which we ought to rejoice, daily.

So in the present crisis, we can go to despair, or we can rejoice that while few in number, that we who comprehend the gospel are recipients of a great mercy, and for that we ought to rejoice and give thanks. “Fear not little flock,” said Jesus, “for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). You are among Christ’s sheep and he knows you by name (John 10: 3). To be few in number does *not* equate to a lack of favor by the Father. It is better to be named among the remnant, and to rejoice in this intimacy with our Shepherd, than to be among the many who will one day hear him say, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” (Matthew 7:23). Christ’s flock is little in this present time. But you belong to a family that is collectively greater in number than the stars. Therefore, rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice! (Philippians 4:4).

Finally, this does not mean we ought to circle the wagons and hold on until Jesus comes back. On the contrary, we ought to be all the more ready to give an account for the hope which is in us, and to do good to all people, especially those in the faith (I Peter 3:15; Galatians 6:10). The world needs the light that you are in Christ. They may not all want it, but God may use you to bring the mercy of regeneration to someone’s heart and mind. For though few, we are nonetheless called to “Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may be blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:14-15). **AMEN.**

