



DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

1 PETER 1:8

OCTOBER 2016

A Missionary Mentality

When I was too young to work in the fields with my dad, I went to church meetings with my mother who was the president of the Woman's Missionary Union in our church.

For a preschool boy, this was BOR-RING! There were stories of suffering, slides of poor children, statistics about Baptist work in Brazil, etc. Needless to say, I didn't want to be a missionary. Even later while in seminary, I dreaded going to chapel when it was missions day. I guess I was still afraid God would call me to be a missionary and send me to some foreign land to live in poverty. As I have had the privilege to travel to different countries where men and women were serving the mission of our Lord, my opinion of missionaries changed. They are some of my most honored heroes. Now, I know that I too was called to be a missionary, as are all those who are citizens of the kingdom of God. We have a homeland that is native to us because we have been born of the incorruptible seed of God's word and

given an identity as sons of God. We are on assignment on earth in whichever culture we have been placed.

The Apostle Peter wrote a letter to the Christians scattered throughout what is modern-day Turkey. He used Old Testament metaphors to show the connection between Israel's status and the final status of God's people: the body of Christ. He called them "the Dispersion," spoke of their being God's elect, being born as a people, having an inheritance, fulfilling the prophets, being God's final temple, and being his kingdom of priests. Like Israel had been chosen by God to be on a mission to bless the surrounding nations, this new nation was on a mission. The church would have the message and the power to bless all

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the nations of the world. God used the persecution of the cultures to scatter the salt of the Christians so that deteriorating cultures could be saved.

They knew who they were, what they were about, and they **trusted their God explicitly.**

To be effective missionaries, we must know firmly who we are. If we don't, the culture will inevitably give us an identity. When Babylon captured the southern kingdom of Israel, they seized four young men of great promise. They were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The Babylonians changed the captives' names (in fact, except for Daniel who the Babylonians called Belteshazzar, we're more familiar with their Babylonian names: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego), changed their diets, taught them the Babylonian language and customs, and pressured them to worship Babylonian gods. This is what cultures do in order to sustain their own distinctive character. But these four would not bend. They knew who they were, what they were about, and they trusted their God explicitly. When thrown into the midst of the fiery furnace, they didn't burn and didn't even smell of the smoke. As a result of their staying on mission, they affected the whole nation and ultimately the whole world.

We are in a similar situation today even in our own country. The culture has slowly been formed around values that are contrary to those of Christ and his church. Even the churches themselves have become so much like the culture that most people can't tell the difference in American religion and Biblical Christianity. In our effort to avoid being offensive, we have become irrelevant. Our children don't really know the difference in what the Bible says about sexual purity and what the culture accepts as normal. The culture demands that there is no exclusion in our beliefs, so we have denied that Jesus is the way to the Father. The culture says that each person is his or her own authority, and so the Bible has lost any influence it had with those keen on being accepted by peers. The culture is not neutral, and it is not benign. It is aggressive in seeking to conform the unsuspecting. Parents beware! A few hours of church will not be sufficient to withstand the assault on the minds of your children.

Peter reminded his readers that they are chosen ones. God selected them for his unique purpose. They were not created to simply use the resources of the world. They were in the world on mission. They had been set apart as different and uncommon. They had been commissioned as representatives of another kingdom. They were empowered to display his glory

and endure whatever suffering their faith might incur. God knew them before the world began and set them apart to know Jesus and to be obedient to him. In doing this, they would carry on his mission of proclaiming the good news of his invading kingdom by their speech and their behavior. These resident aliens were not just exiles. They were “plants.” They didn’t belong to this worldly culture, but they did belong in it for the purpose he destined.

Israel received a parcel of land as a token of **God’s faithfulness** and a shadow of the full inheritance that was **in Jesus**.

As Christians scattered in a hostile culture, we are part of the new nation to whom Peter is writing. Peter reminds us of what is ours by virtue of our relationship to God through Jesus Christ. Like Israel was born as a nation when God delivered them from Egypt and established a covenant with them, the new people of God have been delivered from the slavery of former lusts and are in a covenant with God based on the faithfulness of our representative: Jesus the Lord. This new nation has a new inheritance. Israel received a parcel of land as a token of God’s faithfulness and a shadow of the full inheritance that was in Jesus.

Israel’s inheritance was perishable. It was lost because of their faithlessness. It was defiled by their idolatry. It was temporary and faded away like the glory on Moses’ face. Not so with the inheritance of the new nation. Our inheritance is imperishable. It is based on the performance of Jesus. It is undefiled, because Jesus is holy. It is eternal. The glory will never depart. It is secure because the powers of heaven are guarding it (1 Peter 1:4–5). And not only that, but we are being protected as well. God is working on both ends to safeguard the inheritance and to make sure we are preserved by his own faithfulness. Such knowledge is almost too overwhelming to grasp, but it is necessary when the surrounding culture insists on measuring our worth based on silver and gold.

Peter then reveals what God is doing during this time of sojourn on earth. Peter anticipates that his readers are wondering why there is so much suffering if God is that big and good. It seems like the Christians are the least valuable in society. We are mocked, persecuted, and ignored. What is God doing? The answer is truly liberating. He is making us rich in faith! The greatest pleasure possible for mankind is to live in trust. Nothing tastes as good as trust. Many people never meet anyone they can really trust, so they decide to trust only themselves, and that is shaky. God’s first test

in the Garden was to prove Adam and Eve's faith. If they would obey him by not eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, even without understanding why, then they would exhibit trust. God has always wanted us to experience the inexpressible joy of trusting someone who is totally trustworthy.

When God's people live by **trusting him**, they experience joy in **any circumstance . . .**

It is that faith that he is purifying. It is more valuable than gold, which is itself purified by fire. Gold in its ore form is valuable, but not very spendable. Faith in its most general form is valuable, but it is more spendable when purified of all the additives we put in it. Peter describes pure faith: "and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory . . ." (1 Peter 1:8 NASB). This faith rules over our emotions and impulses even when we don't fully understand, and even when there is little or no physical evidence. We have been guilty of reducing faith to leverage as if God were waiting for us to find the right lever to pull. We have viewed it as a commodity that we need to accumulate so that we could bargain

with God. We have thought of it in terms of bold confidence in our ability to stand fast, like Peter before the betrayal.

When God's people live by trusting him, they experience joy in any circumstance that is attractive to those whose taste buds have dulled by all the substitutes for joy. All mankind is hungry and thirsty for the satisfaction found in trust. As the people around us watch us live in love with the unseen but very real Jesus, they too might be open to hear the message we carry. All the while we are walking in the midst of an unjust fire but without the smell of smoke.



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