

Title: Living from a Stable Identity: Finding Hope in Christ's Resurrection

Sermon Summary: This sermon addresses how Christians can remain stable in an increasingly unstable world by grounding their identity in Christ rather than in circumstances, self-effort, or worldly philosophy. Pastor Rick emphasizes that true stability comes not from managing life better or becoming emotionally tougher, but from knowing and living from who we are in Christ. He challenges believers to look up to God's mercy, look back at the cross, look inward at the new life given through regeneration, and look forward to their eternal inheritance. The message stresses that our identity in Christ is secure because it's rooted in God's mercy and Christ's resurrection, not in our own abilities or circumstances. Christians are called to live as exiles in this world, responding from their identity as chosen, sanctified, and cleansed children of God rather than reacting from worldly patterns.

Key Points:

- Identity in Christ comes before endurance; identity creates endurance, while identity in anything else creates weakness
- Christians must live from their identity as elect (chosen by God), exiles (not belonging to this world), sanctified (set apart), and cleansed (by Christ's blood)
- Our stability is grounded in God's providential plan and secured in Christ's death and resurrection, not in our own strength
- Many Christians carry "cut flower hope"—hope that looks beautiful but is disconnected from its source and will eventually fade
- True hope is "living hope" rooted in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead
- Look up to God the Father who planned and provided salvation
- Look back to God's great mercy revealed at the cross
- Look inward at the new life (born again) that God has given
- Look forward to an imperishable, undefiled, unfading inheritance reserved in heaven
- Christians are protected and guarded by the power of God himself
- Transformation of life is proof of genuine salvation

- We must live in gratitude for God's mercy rather than returning to old patterns and sins

Scripture Reference:

- 1 Peter 1:1-5 (primary passage)
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 (new creation)
- Colossians (Christ is our life)
- Hebrews (angels as ministering spirits)

Stories:

- The pastor's personal experience of being cut off in traffic and receiving an obscene gesture, and choosing not to let it steal his peace
- A similar incident with Terry (his wife) on the way back from Columbus with an aggressive driver in a white Cadillac
- The professor's office sign that said "keep looking down" with scripture saying to "keep looking up," explaining we are already seated in heavenly places
- Memory of his grandfather's funeral in 1969 with elaborate flower arrangements that eventually died and were piled on the grave
- His mother's pristine carpet maintenance and how he learned to walk looking down to avoid missing any dirt
- Sitting at his granddaughter Grace's graduation in Braxton County for three hours and seeing himself as an "old gray-headed dude" on the jumbotron
- His grandfather's faded driver's license and tarnished 1927 silver dollar as examples of things that fade
- Marine Corps training using Greek phalanx formations for urban riot control
- Recent personal experience with pulmonary embolism while camping, realizing God was guarding him
- The illustration of a child trapped in a burning house whose father rescues him, brings him home, adopts him, gives him his name, prepares a room, and promises inheritance—paralleling God's salvation

- Reference to the prodigal son eating husks and returning home