



## STORIES OF REDEMPTION

BY SCOTT MILLER

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*Throughout 2024, the feature articles are devoted to hearing stories of God's redemption within our Rosedale Network churches. We pray these stories fuel your love for the Lord and lead you to greater service in His Church.*

~Kelsey Jurkovich, Publication & Literature Committee

### **Redemption in the Shadows**

A basic definition of redemption is “the action of saving.” When I reflect on my personal story of God’s redemption, I notice Him working progressively through my experiences and relationships. Some people, including the apostle Paul in Acts 9, have experienced God showing up dramatically. For me, God has most often revealed Himself in more subtle yet convincing forms, in the shadows.

Ephesians 1:7 makes it clear that Jesus—more specifically His blood—is my source of redemption: “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins...” (NIV).

I was born and raised in Holmes County, Ohio, within a Christian family. I prayed to accept Jesus into my heart at the tender age of six. At this age, I didn’t understand the significance of what all this meant for my life. Another key event in my preteen life happened at tent revival meetings at the age of 12. I sensed God drawing me into a more complete commitment to Him. The prayer counselor was very gracious as I confessed my sins and asked God to forgive me.

After renewing my commitment to faith in Jesus, I joined a discipleship class that was required by my church for baptism. Shortly after being baptized, Jerry Hoover took me to dinner and expressed his belief in my Christian leadership potential. He suggested that I should prepare for it by attending Bible college. William Stutzman, a traveling evangelist from my church, also recognized my potential when he invited me to join him on a mission trip to Haiti. God used both men to encourage me over the following years as champions in my journey of following Jesus.

During my teenage years and into my 20s, I had numerous impactful international experiences with Western missionaries and local Christians. These experiences ranged from worshiping with the underground church in Chengdu, China, and being part of a desperate healing prayer service in a poor area in Cambodia, to worshiping with a group of young people in Ephesus, Turkey, and witnessing a miracle as literature

was moved into the church in Vietnam. Through these life experiences, God continued to draw me into His love by reaching out to me from the shadows.

The seed that Jerry Hoover planted when I was 15 would eventually grow and inspire me to apply at Columbia International University (CIU). During my time at CIU, God used the faculty and staff to provide me with a better theological foundation for life and ministry. During my graduate degree, I did a 2 ½ week study tour in Italy, with three faculty and several students. I was in awe of the monumental pieces of art that I saw firsthand; I was impressed by the persistent influence of the Bible on even humanistic development during the Renaissance. This reminded me of my story: God persistently keeps showing up in the shadows of my broken life and inviting me into a deeper relationship with Him. Paul E. Miller in his book, *A Loving Life*, comments, “By keeping Himself in the shadows, appearing at only the edges of life, God creates space for real relationship with Him. He doesn’t overwhelm our vision, so we emerge, and He emerges in our lives at the same time” (134).

In my journey of redemption and sanctification, I often think that my life parallels the experience of the Israelites. They were bound for the Promised Land, and yet they wandered in the wilderness due to their lack of faith. God persistently and graciously revealed Himself with just enough manna for the day. In my current ministry platform, my faith is being strengthened as I watch God calling out to especially my Chinese friends in the shadows of their lives. 🙏

Header photo credit: Submitted by Scott Miller



Scott serves as lead pastor at City on a Hill Church in Morgantown, West Virginia. Scott and Crystal have four children and are committed to increasing the worship of Jesus everywhere.



# Growing Our Hope

BY PRESTON YODER

I recently met with a group of pastors to plan a community sermon series on hope in Christ. The conversation ultimately turned towards fears arising for God's people as we near the presidential election. Maybe you or someone you know can relate. Perhaps you fear being sued or imprisoned for your beliefs. Maybe you fear abortion legally ending millions of unborn lives. Perhaps you fear politicians disregarding the truth, failing to show basic respect for others, the national debt spiraling out of control, or the collapse of democracy. Maybe you fear a secular ideology of gender confusing your children and grandchildren in their schools. Perhaps you know an immigrant whom you fear will be mistreated. Maybe you fear the church of Jesus Christ compromising our witness by getting too invested in politics, or missing an important opportunity to influence politics. Perhaps you fear civil war, mandatory military service, or the collapse of the United States. The list of fears could be endless. What fears do you have? Take a minute to jot down additional concerns on paper.

## The gates of Hell don't stand a chance against the Church that Jesus Christ is building around the globe.

When King Hezekiah was surrounded by a military power that greatly exceeded his own, he received a threatening letter from a general, ready to destroy God's people with a vast army. What a terrible moment for King Hezekiah; both his life and all he loved would soon be destroyed! Upon reception of the letter, King Hezekiah took these violent threats "...up to the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord" (2 Kings 19:14 NKJV). He then prayed and laid out his fears to God, who made the heavens and the earth—the Lord of all. God soon sent a message through a prophet, "...I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake" (v. 34). No army was a match for the creator of the universe.

I encourage you to share aloud your list of fears to God. If you wrote out your list, lay it before Him. Let Him know exactly what you are afraid of right now. As we follow the example of

Hezekiah and the words of the Psalmist, our fears will shrink and our trust in the Lord will grow:

*I lift up my eyes—  
where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
the Maker of heaven and earth (Psalm 121:1-2 NIV).*

As you give your concerns to God, ponder how vast the universe is that God made. Remind yourself that the Lord is the maker of heaven and earth. He can do far more than any candidate, party, or nation can ever do—He created and runs the universe! Take some extra time to gaze at the stars and imagine what the glory of God must be like. The God who set up the total solar eclipse is now building His Church. The gates of Hell don't stand a chance against the Church that Jesus Christ is building around the globe.

Regardless of our reasons to fear, our hope in Christ can grow. When our fears lead us to prayer, *our hope will grow*. When we continue to gather with brothers and sisters in Christ to turn our eyes on Jesus, *our hope will grow*. As we dwell in His Word, *our hope will grow*. What's growing in your heart?

It's human nature to have fears. It's a supernatural work of Christ to have hope. May Christ's Spirit cause you to grow in such hope: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13 NIV). 🙏

Header photo credit: *Jenell Shrock*



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# Expressive Individualism

BY MATT MULLEN

This year, RBC is running a series of articles in the Beacon examining books that might be especially helpful to the life of the Church. We hope you will benefit from these book descriptions and suggestions.

## **Strange New World** by Carl R. Trueman

The world has changed. We've all sensed this, but statistics say it's true. In 1970, the number of unmarried cohabiting couples was 500,000. In just thirty years, that number skyrocketed to 5,000,000. In 1960, only 5% of births happened out of wedlock; in 1970 the number rose to 11%, and by 2024, around 40%.

Folks over 40 years old can remember a time when chastity was seemingly a cultural virtue, albeit a fleeting one. Now, the whole month of June is dedicated to the celebration of sexual deviancy against the created order. How have things changed so rapidly?

Carl Trueman investigates this question in his book, *Strange New World*. He makes the high and lofty theories of deceased philosophers and psychologists understandable to everyday people. Trueman shows how these ideas and theories—which may seem irrelevant—have impacted our thinking, beliefs, and practices. If we want to proclaim and defend our faith against ideas that are incompatible with it, we must first *understand* those ideas.

### **Cultural Idea: I Am the Highest Authority**

Trueman begins by using the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Romantics to show how they created a framework that views society as corrupting and one's inner voice or instinct as an authentic authority. Why should someone live in accordance with society if it contradicts how they feel about themselves internally?

Trueman writes, "...we can see why the foul-mouthed politician has supplanted the polite and reserved one, because in a world where the inner voice is key to the real person, the former is authentic while the latter presents a public image..." (47). The pressure to conform to external expectations ceases if we can create our own.

If we no longer conform to an external authority such as the Bible, then "our god is our belly"; our desires are our authority. This was quite literally the case for Friedrich Nietzsche and Karl Marx. The two men share a common rejection of the idea that human beings as human beings have a transcendent, stable, moral nature to which they need to conform to flourish. For

Marx, morality is historically conditioned and designed to justify and maintain the current (unjust) economic structure of society. For Nietzsche, morality is a fiction invented by one group to denigrate and subordinate another. For both, moral codes are thus manipulative and must be transgressed to find true freedom (69).

Nietzsche and Marx see morality as oppressive while self-expression is liberating because it defies conventional norms and allows the individual to obey their internal instincts rather than an external authority. For Marx, morality must be erased to declass society and create the "leveling" of communism. For Nietzsche, morality restrains an individual from self-creation: "...we are to be whatever we want or choose to be" (64).

### **Cultural Idea: I Have Sexual Freedom**

How does self-creation lead to sexual expression? Meet Sigmund Freud. Freud held self-expression to be paramount and sexual desire as fundamental to being human. Therefore, sexual desire is the key to self-expression: "If the fundamental form of human happiness is the genital pleasure derived from sex, then we can conclude that for Freud human nature is at its deepest level sexual, and that human beings are therefore defined in a basic way by their sexual desires" (73-74). Freud believes that sexual desire is the core of human happiness, shifting it from an individual's behavior to their identity.

Again, folks over 40 years old can remember a time when homosexuality was spoken of as a private behavior. Now, LGBTQ+ is a constituency that politicians, sports teams, and celebrities laud in the public sphere. Moreover, the community identifies themselves by their sexual desire, rendering the biblical sexual ethic bigoted because it no longer strikes at an individual's behavior but the individual, making the offense personal.

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Header photo credit: *Esther Snyder*



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# Living Sacrifices

BY ROSEDALE INTERNATIONAL

## **From the Mother of a Rosedale International Worker**

God first commanded the people of Israel to make a daily burnt offering in Leviticus 1. This sacrifice atoned for the nation's unintended sin, inviting them to draw near to God. God no longer requires daily burnt offerings to atone for sin—Christ already bridged that gap for us through the cross. But what is our responsibility in response to His awesome gift and sacrifice? What can we offer? Romans 12:1 tells us, *ourselves*; our bodies, our lives—everything we have and are.

In Daniel 11:31, speaking of a future when the enemies of Israel would take control of Jerusalem and oppress God's people, Daniel prophesied, "[They] will abolish the daily sacrifices..." As in Daniel's time, the enemy's scheme for our lives today is to abolish this practice of sacrifice; that is, to convince us that we don't have to give up anything in order to connect with and have a relationship with God.

## **...we cannot present our lives to God as a living sacrifice and be selfish at the same time.**

How does he aim to do this? The apostle Timothy gives us the answer: "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy," and the list goes on (2 Tim. 3:1-2 ESV). All of these characteristics can be found under one heading: *selfishness*. Our enemy urges us to seek after what makes "me" happy and comfortable; but, we cannot present our lives to God as a living sacrifice and be selfish at the same time.

This daily practice of sacrifice can look many different ways and may change depending on our stage of life. Living far away from family and friends is one type of sacrifice. When we were younger, my husband and I moved across the world to serve in East Africa for a couple of years. I may have thought that I was done sacrificing—that those years had fulfilled the requirement for giving to the Lord. *That was enough, wasn't it?* But following Jesus doesn't work that way! No, I must continue daily giving my life to God, laying aside my agenda to be willing to serve others

(some days I excel at this, and other times, I fail miserably).

Recently, I've encountered another aspect of giving to the Lord that has the potential to rip one's heart out—children and grandchildren! For a parent, one of the most difficult realities of sacrificial living is giving our children to the Lord (they are already His, by the way!). We must be willing to let God fulfill His purposes in their lives. For my husband and me, this has meant releasing our son, his wife, and our granddaughters to serve God overseas in a hostile environment—releasing them not begrudgingly, but with blessings and support.

This sacrifice is not without pain and tears. We miss them terribly! Releasing them to follow Jesus is a daily practice of sacrifice to Him, and pride, fear, and loneliness become all mixed up in our hearts when we think and pray for them. Will it get easier as time goes by? Perhaps. But now, there is joy in knowing that they are in the palm of God's hand. They are fulfilling the call that God has placed on their lives.

In these last days, as our enemy does his best to abolish our daily sacrifices and time spent with God, my prayer is that I can surrender all that I have to God freely and with joy—that I won't let my selfish desires come in the way of what God wants to do in my life and in the lives of the ones I love. I invite you to join me in this prayer. It will all be worthwhile in the end, when we stand before God and can say that we have given all to Him. 🙏

Photo credit: Askar Abayev: "Elderly Woman Hugging a Boy", <https://www.pexels.com/>



RI is the mission arm of Rosedale Network of Churches, working to take Jesus to the ends of the earth by fully engaging Rosedale Network churches in maturing and multiplying disciples. especially among the least reached.

***Cultural Reality: Disciples and Pilgrims***

Yet, the gospel call is to forget ourselves, is it not? We're called to look to Christ, the cosmic redeemer, the Kingdom proclaimer, and the personal savior: "And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11 ESV).

In stark contrast to our "strange new world," Christians have an external authority. Jesus Christ is Lord and His Word governs our lives. Our fundamental identity is in Him. And we have a hope—the resurrection of our bodies to our eternal home. For this, we are deeply grateful. 🙏