

In 1521 Dr. Martin Luther, an insignificant Monk from Germany, traveled to the Imperial city of Worms and stood before the Emperor himself. The Emperor demanded the Luther stop teaching that we are saved by God's grace alone. Luther responded, "Unless convinced by the word of God I cannot and will not recant. Here I Stand. I can do no other, God help me!"

Martin Luther stood firmly on the same rock that Peter stood on in our text this morning. What was this rock and why was it worth their lives?

1. "Here" - Rock of Revelation - Matthew 16:13-18

¹³ When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" ¹⁴ So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

A few years back when I used to live in India I was talking to my land lady one day we started speaking about scripture. "I've read the Bible," she told me, "It's very beautiful. I have also read the Koran it is also very beautiful." There are lots of books that are beautiful. There are lots of books that are inspiring and emotional. There are lots of books that seem like they are full of wisdom. So what? Something can be beautiful and inspiring and make me feel good and still be an outright lie. Such an attitude will get us nowhere. The question is not is scripture wise or inspirational. The question is can we take a stand in face of emperors and death, in the face of all eternity, can we stand solid on the word of God?

Who do men say that I am? Jesus asks. And many give him very high praise indeed: Jeremiah, Elijah, John the Baptist. Many recognized him as a prophet and as one of the greatest prophets the world has ever seen. So what? If he is Elijah he is still a man, and the word he spoke was the word of a man. We need more than the word of a man. The word of Elijah would never have been sufficient to cause Luther to stand in the face of certain death.

It is only the recognition that Jesus is the Christ, the one true God and that the word he speaks is the word of God and not of man that makes it a rock worth standing on. It is a rock of revelation, that is a foundation built by God himself, and as such it will not crumble.

What else could ever remain solid in all things and all times? Shall I build my life on the shifting sands of "what I feel is good for me?" A person's personal emotions and feelings shift hourly. Shall I take my stand on what I think I know or whatever another person thinks they know? Humans are wrong way too often for me to stake my life on the knowledge of men.

It is only Jesus as the Son of God, and his word as the very voice of God that can make Christ and the Bible the solid enduring everlasting rock which we need for all eternity.

This rock is the revelation of the eternal truth of God's word, and it is **HERE** I stand on the one true word of God revealed from heaven. It is **HERE** that Luther stood, not listening to the wisdom of men but only the word of God.

2. "I" - A Rock of Redemption - Matthew 16:19-23

¹⁹ "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. ²¹ From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. ²² Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" ²³ But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

Whose seen the movie or read the book *Life Of Pi*? I don't really like it because the meaning of the book is that religion is basically a really nice fantasy that makes life a lot better. So I didn't really like the book but there was one part that I thought was really good.

Pi is wandering in the mountains and meets a catholic Priest. He asks the priest about Christ. The Priest tells him how Jesus was born, died and rose again and through him we have forgiveness of sins. After hearing it all Pi says. "That's a great story tell me another one." And the Priest replies, "That's it, there is only this one story."

There is only one story, the story of how Christ died for my sins. That same story is retold over and over and over again in the scripture but it is always the same story: Man's sins and God's redemption.

This is the story of Adam, and Noah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Moses, and so many others, man sins and Jesus saves. This is the rock on which Peter and Luther stood **a rock of redemption**. It is this redemption that all the patriarchs and all the heroes of old and new testament stood on. "Have mercy on me O God according to your loving kindness."

Because it is a rock of redemption, the forgiveness of your sins, it is possible for even a sinner like me to stand on it. What other rock could I ever stand on? Luther knew that he could never stand on any other rock, he was much too aware of his own sins. But on this rock even I can stand, despite all my flaws and all my sins and all failings, even I can still stand on this rock, because it is a rock of redemption.

"I will give to you the keys to the kingdom and whatever you bind on earth with be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

What an amazing and wonderful thing Christ speaks here. What are the keys? "The Keys are the special power that Christ gives to his church on earth to forgive the sins of the penitent . . ."

You have a super power and it is better than invincibility or invisibility or flying or shooting fireballs out of your hands. You have the super power to forgive, and to live in that forgiveness. You can forgive and let go of all those who sinned against you, rather than living in that hatred and anger. More importantly you can be forgiven.

This is a rock of redemption, a rock of forgiveness, and therefore even I can remain standing on this rock. If I build on any other foundation, my works, my wisdom, my knowledge, my looks, my ability, I will not stand. Sins such as pride and envy and covetousness and loneliness and despair and many other things will attack me and bring me down. But on Christ such sins can attack but cannot win.

Romans 8:33-34 NKJ ³³ Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies. ³⁴ Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Here I stand, on a rock of redemption; with my sins forgiven even I can stand.

3. "Stand" 26 - A Rock of Confession - Matthew 16:24-26

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵ "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

How do you bust out of a prison? Quietly, sneakily without making a sound? Or with guns blazing? Normally you would try to find a quiet way. However there is nothing subtle or quiet about this jail break.

"On this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Why is the rock breaking down the gates of hell? It isn't breaking in, it is busting out. The church, all those who believe, will stand on the rock of Christ and death will no longer be able to hold them in, that is the point Christ is making. We're busting out ya'll! But we are not going sneakily or quietly. Christ is breaking down the front gates and we are going through.

This rock is not a cement foundation hidden away out of sight. It is not a pebble. This is a petra, a cliff face, a shelf on mountain, and those who stand on it are clearly seen by the enemy. If we stand on the Christ our Rock we stand in plain view clearly confessing Christ.

Considering all of that why are we so often quiet. Why do we so often act as though we can live our lives and blend in with the people around us and not be noticed. What are we ashamed of that we so often duck and cover rather than stand firm? Are we ashamed of a Savior who forgives all our sins? Are we ashamed that we are sinners who need such forgiveness? Are we ashamed that the eternal word of God is revealed to us?

Peter certainly was, Peter was ashamed to follow a Christ who would do such a disgraceful thing as to die. But Christ reminds us that this is what it means to stand on the Rock that is Him. It means revealing yourself. It means a public confession. It means leaving behind the things of death. If you are busting out of prison what prisoner would care about the pillows and sheets and clothes that were his in prison.

"If you wish to follow me deny yourself, take up your cross"

If you lived in California and the wildfires were headed straight for you, how long would you stay and wait? If you lived in Florida and a hurricane was on its way, would you trust cement and wood and remain in your house? I hope not.

But how long would you stand on the Word of God?

The fire and the hurricane were there in Worms all around Luther. All the forces of Satan arrayed against him coming for him, surrounding him. How tempting to abandon the rock and search for "safer" ground. But Luther stood because no matter how tempting it might be to flee there was no safer ground. Luther stood in plain view and confessed.

Standing on Christ there is much that we will lose. Just like abandoning your home to the fire will mean losing much, but is your house or anything in your house worth your life? Just so standing on Christ might mean watching everything burn around us, but is any of it worth your soul?

This rock is not hidden, and is not quiet; to stand on this rock means to be seen, and to confess Christ before the world.

Here I **STAND**, openly publicly confessing Christ and Him crucified, and all the hosts of hell and earth are arrayed against us, but who cares about that? We are busting out of death into life, what is there in this world worth taking with us?