

YOUR TRUE IDENTITY

- A. Introduction: For the last several weeks we've been talking about how peace of mind comes to us through knowing that we have peace with God. We have more to say tonight. Let's review some key points.
1. Col 1:20-21—Our sin made us enemies of God. But God has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus. To reconcile means to make friendly again. We are no longer enemies of God. We are friends of God.
 - a. Through His death on the Cross, Jesus paid the price we owed for our sin. He satisfied justice on our behalf for our sin. And, God can justify us when we believe on Jesus. To be justified means to be declared not guilty of sin. Because we are no longer guilty, we have peace with God. Rom 5:1
 - b. The Cross was a means to an end. Because we are justified (declared not guilty), God can now deal with us as though we never sinned and restore us to our created purpose.
 1. We were created to become God's holy, righteous sons and daughters through faith in Christ. But sin disqualified us from our created purpose. Eph 1:4-5; Rom 5:19
 2. The Cross of Christ opened the way for transformation. The Greek word that is translated to reconcile means to change from one condition to another. Jesus' death and resurrection made it possible for sinners to be transformed into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God.
 - c. God transforms sinners into His holy sons and daughters by imparting His life and spirit to us when we believe on Jesus as Savior and Lord.
 1. Jesus' sacrifice so completely cleanses us from the guilt of sin that when we believe on Him that God can now indwell our innermost being (our spirit) by His life and Spirit.
 2. Through His life and Spirit in us, God He will ultimately transform and restore every part of our being until we are fully conformed to the image of Christ—made like Jesus. Jesus, in His humanity, is the pattern for God's family. Rom 8:29
 2. The Greek word that is translated to justify means to render innocent or pronounce righteous. The words righteous and justify come from the same root Greek word.
 - a. Because we have been declared righteous through faith in Christ, God can now impart His own righteousness to us by indwelling us. To impart means to give from one's store or abundance (*Webster's Dictionary*). II Cor 5:21
 1. Our English word righteousness comes from an older English word that means right-wise. Righteousness makes us right with God, but it will also make us right in every part of our being.
 2. Through His life and Spirit in us God restores and is restoring us to our created purposes as His holy, righteous sons and daughters who are like Jesus—fully pleasing to God in every part of our being.
 - b. This process of transformation is called glorification. To be glorified means to be made alive with the eternal, uncreated life in God. Rom 8:30
- B. God made human being in such a way that we can receive Him (His Spirit, His life, the life in Him) into our being. The New Testament calls this experience a new birth.
1. John 3:3-5—Jesus said that in order to see or enter His kingdom, we must be born again. The phrase born again literally means to be born from above or born of the Spirit of God.
 - a. Jesus made this statement to a man named Nicodemus. Nicodemus then asked how a man can be born a second time since he cannot reenter his mother's womb.
 1. Jesus made it clear that He was not talking about a physical birth, but a spiritual impartation of life that is accomplished by the Holy Spirit.
 2. John 1:12-13—But to all who believed him (Jesus) and accepted him, he gave the right to become children (sons and daughters) of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan—this rebirth comes from God (NLT).

- b. We need to make a brief comment about John 3:5 where Jesus said that a man must be born of water and of the Spirit. Jesus was not referring to the waters of baptism.
 - 1. Baptism does not save anyone from sin. Physical water does not cleanse a spiritual condition. Water refers to the Word of God. James 1:18; Eph 5:25-26; I Pet 1:23
 - 2. When a person hears the Word of God concerning Jesus and His sacrifice and believes it, the Spirit of God imparts life to their spirit (their innermost being) and they are born from above.
 - A. Titus 3:5-6—Paul the apostle later referred to this experience as the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. The Greek word that is translated regeneration is made up of two words: *palin* (again) and *genesis* (birth).
 - B. The term new birth emphasizes the communication (impartation) of life. Regeneration stresses the inception or beginning of a new state of things in contrast with the old (*Vine's Dictionary*).
- c. John 3:16—When a person believes on Jesus, he or she believes into Jesus. That's the idea in the original Greek language: believe into Jesus. The Holy Spirit unites our spirit to eternal life, the life in Jesus. Remember, eternal life is not length of life; it's a type of life. It's the life in God.
 - 1. The New Testament uses three word pictures to illustrate our relationship to Jesus once we believe on Him (trust Him for our salvation from sin): vine and branch (John 15:5); head and body (Eph 1:22-23); husband and wife (Eph 5:31-32). All convey union and shared life.
 - 2. Paul wrote that Jesus commissioned him to preach a mystery—a previously unrevealed aspect of God's plan to save and deliver men and women from sin. Col 1:27
 - A. This mystery is Christ in you or union with Christ through shared life. Many translations render it as union with Christ (Goodspeed, 20th Cent; Williams; etc.).
 - B. For this revelation means nothing less than—Christ in union with you, your hope of glory (Col 1:27, 20th Cent).
- 2. The condition of your spirit is the basis of your identity. The inward transformation produced by the entrance of eternal life through union with Christ is the basis of your identity—who and what you are. We were dead. Now we are alive through union with Christ.
 - a. In a letter written to Christians living in the city of Ephesus (modern-day Turkey), Paul reminded Christians that before they came to faith in Christ they were dead. Eph 2:1
 - 1. There are two kinds of death—physical (death of the body) and spiritual (lacking the life of God in our innermost being). Because of sin, human beings are cut off from, separated, alienated, from God Who is life. The Cross opened the way for us to receive the life in God, the same life and Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead.
 - 2. Eph 2:5—Even when we were dead [slain] by [our own] shortcomings and trespasses, He made us alive together in fellowship and union with Christ—He gave us the very life of Christ Himself (Amp).
 - b. Paul then made a number of comments about how and why God carried out this plan to save us. God did it, not because we earned or deserved it, but because of His love and grace. Eph 2:7-9
 - 1. Then Paul makes a clear statement about our identity, or what we are because of what God has done for us through the Cross and the new birth.
 - A. Eph 2:10—The truth is that we are the handiwork of God. By our union with Christ Jesus we were created for the purpose of doing the good actions which God had in readiness, so that we should devote our lives to them (20th Cent).
 - B. Eph 2:10—For he has made us what we are, because He has created us through our union with Jesus Christ for doing good deeds which He beforehand planned for us to do (Williams).
 - 2. Note two points. One, through union with Christ, made possible by the Cross, we are restored

to our created purpose. Two, it is God who has done this. We are His workmanship. The Greek word (*poema*) means product or that which is made. We get the English word poem from this Greek word. A poem is a work of art.

3. God deals with us on the basis of our identity as sons and daughters in union with Christ. He is aware that although our identity (the condition of our spirit) has changed, we are not yet fully transformed in the rest of our being. But He who began a good work in us will complete it. Phil 1:6; I John 3:2
- C. We must learn to see ourselves, assess ourselves, on the basis of our true identity. We are born of God. We are sons and daughters of God in union with Christ. God, by His life and Spirit, is in us. Our spirit (innermost being) is alive with the uncreated, eternal life in God Himself.
1. II Cor 5:15—Paul wrote that Jesus died for us so that we would not longer live for ourselves. Rather we would live to please Him. Note the next statement Paul made:
 - a. II Cor 5:16—Consequently, from now on we estimate and regard no one from a [purely] human point of view—in terms of natural standards of value. [No], even though we once did estimate Christ from a human viewpoint and as a man, yet now [we have such knowledge of Him that] we know Him no longer [in terms of the flesh] (Amp).
 1. There's too much in this verse to fully discuss now. But notice, Paul makes the point that we (he) once assessed Jesus only according to His outward appearance (His flesh).
 2. According to the flesh, Jesus was a Jewish carpenter, a mere man. But later Paul realized that Jesus was much more than that. He was and is God incarnate—God in human flesh.
 - b. Then, Paul immediately made reference to the inward transformation that has taken place in those who are born of God. We look the same on the outside, but a tremendous inward change has taken place that will ultimately show up and transform the outside completely.
 1. II Cor 5:17—Therefore if any person is (ingrafted) in Christ, the Messiah, he is (a new creature altogether,) a new creation; the old (previous moral and spiritual condition) has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come (Amp).
 2. II Cor 5:17-18—So if anybody is in union with Christ, he is the work of a new creation. The old condition has passed away, a new condition has come. This has all originated with God (Williams); So if anyone is in union with Christ, he is a new being (20th Cent); the old state of things has passed away (Goodspeed).
 2. Paul actually established the church to which he wrote this letter—Christians living in the Greek city of Corinth. Paul wrote the letter in part as a response to their reaction to a letter he previously wrote (I Corinthians), a letter gives us insight into the importance of recognizing our true identity.
 - a. Paul wrote I Corinthians to deal with some serious issues that were plaguing the church including division and strife, sexual immorality, drunkenness and gluttony at the Lord's Supper, and misuse of spiritual gifts.
 - b. Note how Paul began his letter: I Cor 1:1—To the church of God at Corinth, to those who have been consecrated (set apart) by union with Christ Jesus and called to become his people (20th Cent).
 1. Paul started out with what they are rather than what they were doing, because what they are (sons and daughters of God through new birth, in union with, filled with the life and Spirit of God, born of God), has not only given them a new identity, it provides them with the motivation and power to change what they do.
 2. In I Cor 3:3 Paul rebukes them for acting like mere men—For you are still (unspiritual, having the nature) of the flesh—under the control of ordinary impulses...behaving yourselves after a human standard and like mere (unchanged) men (Amp).
 - b. I Cor 6:9-10—Note the nature of Paul's argument about why they needed to stop behaving as they were. He reminded them that those who are unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God.

1. Remember, righteousness is a gift that is given to us when we believe on Jesus. It is imputed to us and imparted to us (Rom 5:17; Rom 10:9-10; Rom 4:24-25; II Cor 5:21). An unrighteous person is someone who has not been born of God by the Word and the Spirit (born again).
2. Next Paul listed the kinds of things that unrighteous people do, and reminded the Corinthians that that is what they were (past tense).
 - A. But that's not what you are now because you have been changed. You were, now you are. Live like what you are—not what you were.
 - B. I Cor 6:11—And such were some of you (once). But you were washed clean [purified by a complete atonement for sin and made free from the guilt of sin]; and you were consecrated (set apart, hallowed); and you were justified (pronounced righteous, by trust) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the (Holy) Spirit of our God (Amp).
- c. Then Paul added to his argument as to why they need to change their behavior, by reminding them of their union with Christ. When you sin you join Christ's body to that activity because you are Christ's body.
 1. I Cor 6:15-18—Have you not realized that your bodies are integral parts of Christ Himself? Am I then to take parts of Christ and join them to a prostitute? Never (because) when a man joins himself to a prostitute he makes with her a physical unity (J.B. Phillips). But the man who is in union with the Lord is spiritually one with him (Williams).
 2. Acts 9:4—Paul's very first revelation from Jesus was union with Christ. When Jesus appeared to Paul He referred to the persecution of believers as persecuting Him.
 - A. I Cor 6:19-20—Paul reminded them that they are the dwelling place (temple) of God and they no longer belong to themselves. God purchased them with the Blood of Christ. Paul exhorted them to therefore glorify God in their body and in their spirit which belong to God.
 - B. Notice I Cor 6:17—Are you not conscious that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost (Williams). Paul urged them to live with the awareness that God is in them. The condition of their spirit was the basis of their identity (just like us). They were in union with Christ.
- D. Conclusion: We have more to say next week. But consider these thoughts about identity, behavior, and peace of mind as we close.
 1. Because of the Cross of Christ which made new birth possible, we have been changed. We have a new identity. We were enemies of God; now we are friends. We were dead; now we are alive. We were sinners; now we are sons and daughters of God. We were unrighteous; now we are righteous.
 2. Because of the change in our innermost being, the rest of our being will ultimately be changed and restored to what God always planned for us. We will be fully glorifying, completely pleasing in every thought, word, and action. Christ in us is our hope of glorification. Col 1:27
 3. God made us in such a way that we are influenced by what we look at and where we focus our attention.
 - a. If you continually focus on your shortcomings and failures, you'll have more shortcomings and failures.
 - b. But if you focus on Jesus and what He has made you to be and is making you to be through His indwelling His life and Spirit, you'll experience more victory and have more peace of mind.