

Prestonwood Connection #6

Loving Yourself: Identity In Christ

2 Corinthians 5:17

Wednesday, September 9, 2002 • Dr. David McKinley

[Praise and worship led by Rick Briscoe]

[Testimony of Makala Sprig]

[Musical Praise solo by Joel Rutherford]

[Dr. McKinley, message, *Identity In Christ* <side 1 @ 209>

Thanks guys, for leading us tonight and for the wonderful music and for the new song that we learned tonight. Joel Rutherford I appreciate you teaching us that song and glad to have you back. Joel was out for a... a week maybe two and a... Joel is a brand new daddy and so Joel congratulations to you guys [applause] for your new baby and for a... the wonderful gift of life that God has given to you. And then a... Makala Sprig sharing her testimony and what God has done in her life and frankly there were so many things that she shared about the way that God has taken her on a journey a... to come to know Him and then to become a part of the Prestonwood family and to be a part of some of the very vital outreach and extension ministries of our church and I appreciate so very much her willingness to share some very deep and painful moments in her life in order that we might all together celebrate the grace of God that has touched us through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and for the power of salvation in Christ and the change that He brings. And a... I think we've seen and heard that tonight and I am so thankful for it.

One of my favorite a... writers, authors, someone that I had read maybe is what I'm trying to say a... I'm not so sure whether he's actually an author or whether he a..., a... just had his, his speeches put together. But a... is a French philosopher by the name of Blaise Pascal and many of you have probably heard one of his most famous statements that simply says:

*"There is a God-shaped vacuum inside of every man that only God can fill."*

And what an incredible observation that is in light of the many things that people use to try to fill the emptiness and the void of their life. But Pascal said something else and it is very important as we come to this table tonight. He said:

*"Not only do we know God through Jesus Christ but we only know ourselves through Jesus Christ."*

Not only do we know God through Jesus Christ but the only way that we can

ever really know who we are and what our life is really about is by knowing Jesus Christ and I believe that that is a brilliant insight. I believe it's a brilliant insight because it is through Jesus Christ that we understand our imperfection. It is when we compare our lives with the standard of perfection Jesus said, *"Be perfect as My Father in heaven is perfect."* And then Jesus came and lived a perfect sinless life and the only way that I can really know the greatest need that I have in life is when I see myself through Jesus Christ and realize how imperfect I am. But it is also true that once I receive Jesus Christ, once I confess to being a sinner and in need of a Savior that it is in Jesus Christ and in Christ alone that I discover the new identity that God wants me to know and to live because I am now new in Jesus Christ. And every person who's ever been touched by the grace of God has been changed by that grace and is being changed into the image of Jesus Christ. The Bible puts it all together in one clear concise statement. It's found in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 in verse 17 and I want to encourage you to look at that passage of Scripture with me tonight because I believe this is the passage that really crystallizes our purpose in gathering and sharing these elements tonight. It is what we celebrate. It is what we proclaim. It is what we embrace. It is what we use to express our praise and gratitude to God and what does the Scripture say? 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5 verse 17:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.*

Why don't we read that out loud together tonight? Let's just make it a proclamation of praise to God. It's here on the screen. Let's read it together.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.*

Ladies and gentlemen as we gather in this place tonight we gather to celebrate the new life that we share in Jesus Christ. And as we come together to celebrate this life it is in this life, it is in this new identity that we have, described as being in Christ that we begin to see ourselves as God would have us to see our lives. The Bible makes a clear comparison, a contrast, if you will between two lives, between two people, two categories; those who are in Adam and those who are in Christ. And tonight if you are in this room you are in one of these two categories, you are either in Adam or you are in Christ. The book of Romans chapter 5, just a few pages back from where we just were there in the book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians; Romans chapter 5 in verse 12 the Bible says:

*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all have sinned—*

That's chapter 5 in verse 12 and then we jump over to verse 17:

*For if by one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign*

*in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*

Here's the contrast, here's the comparison, in Adam, in Christ. What is the Bible saying here?

Well, to be in Adam means to be by **birth** be born as a sinner. We are all born in sin. But to be in Christ means that we've experienced a **new birth**. The Bible tells us that we need to be born again.

To be in Adam means that we are in **sin**, but to be in Christ means that we have received **salvation**, that our sins have been forgiven

The Bible clearly says in Adam **all die** and that not only means physical death, but, it ultimately means spiritual, eternal separation from a Holy God. And yet the Bible says in Christ **all will be made alive** and we receive the gift of eternal life through our Savior Jesus Christ.

In Adam we all share **weakness** but in Christ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I have **strength**.

In Adam, we are in the **old man** and it doesn't matter what your age may be the reality is, is to be in Adam is to be in the old nature, the fallen nature. But to be in Christ is to be a **new creature**, a new creation.

To be in Adam is to be judge, in **judgment** but to be in Christ is to be in the realm of **forgiveness**.

And ladies and gentlemen tonight the great desire of my heart is that if you are in Christ that you would be able to see yourself in light of how God sees you and God tonight sees you in Christ. And yet my desire also is that if you are here tonight and you are not in Christ that you would clearly understand what it means to be in Adam and you may be in church and you may know the Bible and you may have facts and figures, you may even know the facts of the gospel in your head as Mikala Sprig said tonight. But it had to get into her heart so that she became a new person in the Lord Jesus Christ and God wants you to see yourself as He sees you. That's what we talked about last week. We've been talking about the greatest commandment and in Mark chapter 12 we read that the first and the foremost commandment is that we:

*"...love the Lord our God with all of our heart and all of our soul and all of our mind and all of our strength."*

But then the Bible says:

*"the second commandment is like it: that you would love your neighbor as yourself."*

And so if we're gonna find love in all the right places it begins by loving God with everything that is within me. But then I have to be able to love me. I have to love myself and to love myself does not mean that

I'm intoxicated with self-indulgence and self-love we talked about that last week and how that our world is constantly self-focused, self-driven. But I'm to come to a place in my life where I see my value in light of who I am in Christ and to be in Christ means that I am a person of value and ultimately that I am a person of victory, a person of victory. To be in Christ means two things.

Number 1, it means the condemnation of my sin has been dismissed. I am no longer condemned in sin and the condemnation of my sin is dismissed. Everything in the past, old things have passed away. But it also means that the damage of my sin is being addressed. All things have become new and I am now being shaped and made and formed into the very image of Jesus Christ. I love that word new.

*All things have become new.*

*If anyone is in Christ they are a new creation.*

Now when the Bible uses that word new here in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians chapter 5 in verse 17 where we started just a moment ago, the Bible talking about new there is not talking about a time sequence, it's not the idea that I have an old coat and so I've gone out and bought a new one. No it doesn't mean time, it means kind. It's a different in kind and when the Bible says that we are a new creature and that all things have passed away and all things have become new it's talking about everything about us. We live by new principles. We have new motives. We have a whole new purpose in living because we've been changed from the inside out having received the very nature of Jesus Christ inside of us. In fact note how Paul addresses this comparison between the old life and the new life. Looking there in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians chapter 5 look in verse 16 he said:

*Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet we know Him thus no longer.*

He says there was a time in life when we regarded everyone and every thing according to the flesh, what we could see and touch and taste and feel. But he said now we have a new life. We live in a new world and the new world in which we live is the world of eternal life in our Savior Jesus Christ.

A. W. Tozer, a wonderful writer has said this:

*"A real Christian is an odd number. He feels supreme love for one he's never seen. Talks familiarly everyday to someone he cannot see. Expects to go to heaven on the virtue of another. Empties himself in order to be full. Admits he is wrong so he can be declared right. Goes down in order to get up. Is strongest when he is weakest, richest when he is poorest, happiest when he feels his worst. He dies so he can live, forsakes in order to have, gives away so he can keep, sees the invisible, hears the inaudible and know the one that passes all knowledge."*

That's what it means to be alive in Jesus Christ. And we are no longer shaped and formed according simply to the pattern of this world. We are new in Jesus Christ and the whole of the life in Christ is that Christ is now working and moving and changing me to make me into His perfect image. Isn't that what the Bible reminds us in several key passages? Think about a... Philippians chapter 1, verse 6 you may wanna jot that down and look at it tonight. But Philippians chapter 1 in verse 6 the Bible says:

*being confident of this thing, that He who began a new work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;*

Think again about Ephesians chapter 2. We are very familiar with verses 8 and 9:

*For by grace you are saved through faith and that not of yourself; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

But then verse 10 says:

*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.*

There's a newness of life, there's a, a whole new scheme, a whole new strategy moving by the power of the Holy Spirit from the inside out for me to live the new life in Christ. And then think about every time we see someone go beneath the waters of bap...a...in the baptismal and coming up out of those waters we quote together Romans chapter 6 and verse 4 which says:

*...we are buried with Christ in baptism unto death,...*

Have you been listening, let's see if we can all say it together.

*...and we are raised to walk in newness of life.*

A new life, that's what it's about, being in Christ and the whole identity of my life is now shaped around this fact that I am in Christ. I live an exchanged life and what I was without Christ I am no more. I am new. I am in Christ.

There's a wonderful story told about Martin Luther who one day answered his door and someone standing at the door says, "Does Martin Luther live here?" and he s...answered and said, "No, he died, Christ lives here." [pause for very slight congregation laughter] And that is true for every born again Christian is that we are now in Christ.

And so to prepare our hearts tonight for the supper let me just take a moment and just walk you through who you are in Jesus.

You have a new identity. What does it mean?

Well, number one, it means that **I am accepted**. I am accepted. The Bible says:

I'm a child of God, John 1:12  
I'm a friend of Jesus John 15:15

The Bible says:

I am crucified with Christ, Galatians 2:20  
I am a member of Christ's body, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12 verse 27  
I'm accepted in Christ, Ephesians 1:6  
I'm joined to the Lord, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:17  
I am a joint heir with Jesus, Romans 8:17  
I am set free, Galatians 5 and verse 1  
I am complete in Christ, Colossians 2:10

Ladies and gentlemen, I am in Christ, I am accepted.

But listen to this, **I am secure**. In a world that's ever changing and in a world that's ever disrupting I have a security that is, that cannot be compared to anything that could be given in this world because now I am in Christ.

I'm secure because I am no longer condemned, Romans 8 and verse 1  
I am redeemed from sin fully, finally paid for at the cross, Romans chapter 3 in verse 24  
I am sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, Ephesians 1:13 and 14  
I am hidden with Christ in God, Colossians 3 in verse 3  
I am a citizen of heaven, Philippians chapter 3 and verse 20  
I am protected, 1 John 5 and verse 18  
I am kept by the love of God for nothing shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, Romans 8 verse 35  
And I am confident that God is working in me today and for eternity, Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6

Ladies and gentlemen, we are secure in Christ. So I am accepted, I am secure, but there's something else that I want you to see and that is tonight that **I am and those of you who are in Christ are significant**. Listen to what the Bible tells us about our significance to God:

I am salt and light, Matthew th...5:13 and 14  
I am chosen to go and to bear fruit, John 15 in verse 16  
I am now God's temple for the Holy Spirit lives inside of me, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19 and 20  
I am God's co-worker, co-laborers together with God and with Christ, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 9  
I am a minister of reconciliation, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians chapter 5, verses 18 and 19  
I am a witness of Jesus, Acts chapter 1 and verse 8, not Romans, Acts chapter 1 and verse 8  
I am given access to God's presence, Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 2

And I am significant because I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, Philippians chapter 4 and verse 13.

You see tonight you are accepted, you are secure, you are significant because you are in Christ and together as new creatures we come to this place to celebrate a new covenant.

One final passage, Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 15, the Bible says concerning Jesus:

*...He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*

Tonight we celebrate the new covenant in Jesus Christ. God has shown us what He thought of us in Adam by showing us the cross. It demands death and payment, suffering and separation. But God in His grace has allowed us to become new in Christ. It is a gift that you received by faith and tonight if you have received the gift of life in Jesus Christ I invite you to join with me and to join with our pastor and with all of us as we share these elements celebrating the new covenant which is made possible through the blood of Jesus Christ. And I pray that in these moments that you will reflect on God's love for you and value for you and that tonight if you have never received Christ please do not take these elements to assume that somehow this would gain favor with God. Receive Christ who is proclaimed by these elements that you through faith and trust in Him may be a partaker of the new covenant that He has made for us.

Father in these moments we thank you for the joy of this celebration. We do celebrate the Lord tonight. We do proclaim amazing grace through our Lord Jesus Christ and in this moment we ask and seek that You would work in us Lord to show us how You have accepted us by Your blood, how you have secured us through the cross and the new covenant. Lord the significance of living the new life in Christ, oh God may be it real in us tonight in Jesus name we pray. Amen.

**[Lord's Supper by Dr. Jack Graham]**