

IDENTITY IN CHRIST 2

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In our last lesson we discussed what it meant to be born again, that in our spirit, our heart is changed. We used 2 Corinthians 5:17, which says, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God.” We began to see that when a person is born again, a total transformation takes place in their spirit, and the only way to know what has transpired in your spirit is through the Word of God. You can’t perceive it through external things, and you can’t perceive it through your emotions because that is in the soulish realm, but in the spirit part of you there is a total transformation.

Ephesians 4:17-18 says “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord; that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” This is saying to believers that we aren’t supposed to act like unbelievers, people who don’t have God in their hearts, walking only in the vanity of our minds.

Do you know God changes your heart? You don’t have to operate just from your mental ability. You can operate out of your spirit where there is an untold reservoir of God’s ability, power, and wisdom, but first of all you have to know that these things have been deposited in you. Verse 18 says if you walk in the vanity of your mind it will darken your understanding. Knowledge is talking about your mental ability, but when you start talking about what’s been placed in your heart and spirit, there is understanding, it is the supernatural wisdom of God. If you are walking in your mind, your understanding is darkened and you are alienated from the life of God, which is in you, through blindness or hardness of heart. We have to stop perceiving things based only on our mental ability, begin to understand, and let our spirits speak to us.

To repeat the scripture used in John 6:63, “the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” God’s Word is how we perceive what has taken place in our spirit. Let me use a few scriptures which show the things that took place when a person received Jesus into their life. Ephesians 4:24 says, “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” When a person is born again, their spirit becomes righteous and truly holy. The Bible actually speaks of two types of righteousness.

There is a righteousness we produce through our own actions and thoughts, and you must maintain that type of righteousness in relationships with other people. If you don’t live right and do right, your boss may fire you or your spouse may divorce you, so you need to have your own self-righteousness. God, however, doesn’t deal with you based on this external righteousness.

There is also a righteousness that took place in your spirit, where God literally gave you His righteousness. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 it says that God the Father made the Son to become sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. So in your spirit there is a righteousness which goes far beyond your external righteousness, based on what you do, and is based on what God did for you. You literally received the righteousness of God, which is what this verse is talking about. You were created in righteousness and true holiness. You aren’t growing into being righteous, but in your spirit you are already

righteous. A simple definition is that you're already in right standing with God.

God is pleased with you based on the spirit, not on anything else. A verse that really makes this come alive is John 4:24, where Jesus was speaking to the woman at the well in Samaria. He said, "God is a spirit: and them that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Again, our spirit is where the change took place. We're already created in righteousness and true holiness and are brand new creatures. According to Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." In your spirit you are perfect and complete. There is no sin or inadequacy. Also it says in Ephesians 1:13, "after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."

Some of you may think, "Well, when I first believed on the Lord, I did believe I was totally forgiven and cleansed and everything was fine, but since that time I have sinned, I have failed God again." If you did, you failed in your actions and your mental and emotional part, but your spirit did not sin. It was sealed just as a woman puts fruit into a jar and then puts paraffin over it to make it airtight and keep all impurities out. God sealed you, so when you were born again you received a new spirit and, when you sin, that sin does not penetrate your spirit. You have a new identity. John 4:24 says God is a spirit, and He looks at your spirit. For you to have relationship with God, you have to fellowship with and worship Him, based on who you are in your spirit, not in your flesh.

This is really the great transformation in the Christian life; that a person has to change their identity. You have to relate to God based not on what you do in the physical realm, not what you think in your mind, but by who you are in the spirit based on what He has done for you. That's a completed work, something that does not fluctuate (change back and forth). You were created in righteousness and true holiness. That is the spirit part of you and to fellowship with God, you have to worship him in spirit and in truth. You have to stand in this identity of who you are in Christ.

Another related scripture is 1 John 4:17, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world." This is saying that as Jesus is, so are we in this world. Some people read a Scripture like that and say, "The Bible is so hard to understand." You look at yourself, and you know you aren't like Jesus. You know you aren't acting perfectly, you still get upset and irritable, and you have times you just blow it. This isn't talking about your physical body. Your physical body isn't like Him. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:44 that we now have a mortal body, but we will have to change it for an immortal body. Our corruptible body will have to become incorruptible, so the physical body is not yet changed and your soul is not completely changed.

In 1 Corinthians 13 it says that we know in part and prophesy in part, but some day we will know all things, even as also we are known. Your mind isn't completely changed, but in your spirit you're a new creature. Everything in the spirit has been changed, and as 1 John 4:17 states, "as he is so are we in the world." It didn't say so are we going to be someday in the future, but so are we in this world. Some people sing songs about when we all get to heaven, that farther along we'll know all about it, in the sweet by and by. Praise God for heaven, but one-third of your salvation is complete right now. Your spirit is as saved as it will ever be. When you get to heaven, it won't be changed again. It won't have to be refurbished. It's not going to be infused with more power, more life. You have living inside you right now God Almighty in your spirit. That is why this verse can say that as he is so are we in this world.

The only way to understand this is to know that it has to be talking about your spirit man. Romans 8:17-18 states, “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.” Notice it didn’t say the glory which shall be revealed to us. Some people think when they get to heaven, God will suddenly change them into somebody who has victory and power and all these things. It is more accurate to say that when we get to heaven, this glory will be revealed in us; it was in us all along. If you have been born again and made Jesus Christ your Lord, you have God Almighty living on the inside of you. He didn’t come in partially—you didn’t get just a little bit of God—but in your spirit you are identical. In 1 Corinthians 6:17 it says, “But he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit.” The Greek for the word one used there is *heis*, which means a singular one, to the exclusion of another. In other words, it is not saying we are one in purpose or there is a unity, but that there is a singular one to the exclusion of another.

Your spirit has been recreated. It is totally new, and everything that is true of God is true of a born-again believer’s spirit. You have the same power, the same knowledge, the same joy, the same peace, the same everything. The rest of the Christian life is an education of your brain so that you begin to believe it and act accordingly. As much as you believe and act according to who you are in the spirit, you will see it manifested in your life. That’s what many Christians are missing, and what I want to leave with you today. You have a new identity. I pray God will open up your heart and show you that you are a new person, that you will get into the Word of God and begin to find out what is truly yours in Christ Jesus, believe it, act like it, and release this life of God through you.

IDENTITY IN CHRIST 2

(Outline)

Ephesians 4:17-18, 24: “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, ¹⁸Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. ²⁴And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

God changes your heart so that you don't have to operate out of just your mental ability, but you can operate out of your spirit where God's ability, power and wisdom have been deposited. You have to stop perceiving things based only on your mental ability and begin to understand and let your spirit speak to you.

Looking into and believing God's Word is how you will perceive what has taken place in your spirit. John 6:63: “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

When you receive Jesus into your life, the spirit part of you becomes righteous and holy. In your spirit you are perfect and complete. You are not growing into righteousness. Ephesians 4:24: “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

God gave you His righteousness which means right standing with Him. God is pleased with you based on the spirit. 2 Corinthians 5:21: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” John 4:24: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

After you believed, your spirit was sealed with the Holy Spirit similar to when a woman puts paraffin on top of a jar of fruit to seal it and keep out all impurities. Sin cannot penetrate your spirit and make it unholy. Ephesians 1:13: “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”

The great transformation in the Christian life is that you change your identity. God looks at you in your spirit. For you to have relationship with God, you have to fellowship with Him and worship Him based on who you are in your spirit, not in your flesh. John 4:24: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

What God has done for you is a completed work. It doesn't fluctuate.

If you are born again, you are identical to God in your spirit right now. Your spirit has been recreated and everything that is true of God is true of your spirit. 1 John 4:17: "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world." 1 Corinthians 6:17: "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."

As much as you believe and act according to who you are in the spirit, you will see it manifested in your life and the life of God in you will be released.

IDENTITY IN CHRIST 2

(Teacher's Guide)

1. The only way we can know that total transformation has taken place in our spirits is by the Word of God.

What does 1 Corinthians 6:17 say has happened to us?

Our spirits have been joined unto the Lord.

2. A. According to Ephesians 3:17, where does Christ now dwell?

In our hearts.

- B. How does this happen?

By faith.

- C. According to 1 John 5:12, who must we possess to have salvation?

The Son (Jesus Christ).

- D. What is the mystery that was hidden from ages and generations but is now made known? See Colossians 1:26-27.

Christ in you, the hope of glory.

3. According to Ephesians 4:23-24, what part of us was made righteous?

Our spirits.

4. According to 2 Corinthians 5:21, whose righteousness do we possess?

Christ's.

5. According to Ephesians 1:4, what is the standing of the believer before God?

Holy and without blame.

6. According to Ephesians 1:6, how were we accepted?

In the beloved (Jesus Christ).

IDENTITY IN CHRIST 2

(Detailed Teacher's Guide)

Note: The following information may be read out loud (a numbered section at a time) with the person(s) being discipled. After each numbered section is read, pause and ask the question(s) that correspond to the paragraph(s), and then discuss them.

¹ In our last lesson, we discussed what it meant to be born again—that in our spirits, our hearts are changed. We used 2 Corinthians 5:17 that says, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” When a person is born again, there is a total transformation that takes place in the spirit, and the only way a person can really know what has transpired in the spirit is through the Word of God. You can't perceive it through external things. You can't perceive it just through your emotions, because that is the soulish realm. In the spirit part of you, there is a total transformation.

² Did you know that God changes your heart? You don't have to operate just out of your mental ability; you can operate out of your spirit. In your spirit there is an untold reservoir of God's ability power and wisdom, but you first have to know that it has been deposited in you.

³ Let me use a scripture to show you some things that take place when a person receives Jesus into his life. Ephesians 4:24 says “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” When a person is born again, the spirit part of him becomes righteous and truly holy. The Bible actually speaks of two different types of righteousness. There is a righteousness that we produce through our own actions. You must maintain that type of righteousness in relationships with other people. If you don't live right and do right, your boss may fire you, or your husband or your wife may divorce you. So, yes, you need to have your own self-righteousness. When it comes to God, He doesn't deal with you based on this external righteousness. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that God the Father made the Son “to be sin for us . . . that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”

¹ When God says something, is it the truth? (Romans 3:4).

² What has been deposited on the inside of you according to Colossians 1:27?

³ (a) According to 2 Corinthians 6:16, you are the “what” of the living God? The temple.

(b) Where does God dwell according to this verse?

(c) How do you live the Christian life according to Galatians 2:20?

⁴ There is a righteousness that goes far beyond your external righteousness (which is based on what you do); this righteousness is based on what God did for you. You literally receive this righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ.

⁵ When you look at yourself you know you aren't like Jesus. You know you don't act perfectly. You still get upset, irritable, and have times when you just blow it. Jesus took our sin and became sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). If you accept the first part of this verse, that Jesus became sin for us, then you have to accept the next part, that we received His righteousness. Many Christians miss the point that we have a new identity—we have a new spirit. I pray that God will open up your heart and show you that you are a new person - that you will get into the Word of God and begin to find out what it truly means to be in Christ Jesus.

⁴ What is the Bible saying in Romans 3:22?

⁵ (a) How were you accepted before God, according to Ephesians 1:6?
(b) What are we according to Ephesians 2:10? Does God create junk?
(c) Who was Saul persecuting according to Acts 9:1?
(d) Who did Jesus say Saul was persecuting? (Acts 9:4-5).

IDENTITY IN CHRIST 1 and 2 (Discipleship Questions)

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17

1. If anyone be in Christ, he is what?
2. What happened to the old things?
3. What things have become new?

Read Ephesians 2:1-2

4. What was the condition of your spirit before you were born again, or made alive?
5. How did we walk?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
6. How did we conduct ourselves?

Read Ephesians 2:4-5

7. What is God rich in?
8. What did God do for us while we were still dead in trespasses?
9. Why did He do this for us? (verse 4b)

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

10. Will the unrighteous inherit the Kingdom of God?
11. Can you relate with many of the descriptions on this list?
12. What three things are evident in your life now because of Jesus according to verse 11?
 - A. You were _____
 - B. You were _____
 - C. You were _____
13. Notice the word “were.” Is this a A. Past B. present or C. future condition?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:15, 17, 19-20

14. Who is your body a members of now?
15. "He who is joined with the Lord is _____ with Him."
16. (Verse 19) What is your body now?
17. Who resides in this temple?
18. For what were you bought?
19. In what two ways are we to glorify God?
A. _____
B. _____
20. To whom do our bodies and spirits now belong?

Read Ephesians 3:17

21. Where does Christ now dwell?
22. By what act on our part is He able to abide in our hearts?

Read Galatians 2:20

23. "I have been _____ with Christ."
24. If you no longer live, who is it that now lives in you?
25. By what do you now live the life you live in the flesh?
26. Faith in Whom?
27. What two things did Jesus do for you?
A. _____
B. _____

IDENTITY IN CHRIST 1 and 2
(Discipleship Answer Key)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. A new creation | 19. A. In body
B. And spirit |
| 2. They are gone | 20. God |
| 3. All things | 21. In my heart |
| 4. I was dead in trespasses and sin | 22. Thru faith |
| 5. A. According to the course of this world
B. According. To the prince of the power
of the air
C. In the spirit of disobedience | 23. Crucified |
| 6. In the lusts of our flesh | 24. Christ |
| 7. Mercy | 25. By faith |
| 8. Make us alive together with Christ | 26. The Son of God |
| 9. Because of His great love with which He
loved us | 27. A. Loved me
B. Gave Himself for me |
| 10. No | |
| 11. Yes | |
| 12. A. Washed
B. Sanctified
C. Justified | |
| 13. A. Past | |
| 14. Christ | |
| 15. One spirit | |
| 16. A temple | |
| 17. Holy Spirit | |
| 18. A price | |

IDENTITY IN CHRIST 2 (Additional Information)

2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

(2 Corinthians 5:17) One of the greatest differences between the saints in the Old Testament and those in the New Testament is the indwelling presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. The victorious New Testament believer is not living for the Lord, but it is actually the risen Christ living through him. Paul described this beautifully in Galatians 2:20 when he said, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

There are over a hundred scriptural references to the indwelling presence of the Lord in the life of a believer. Following is a list of just a few of these.

“and I will put my SPIRIT WITHIN YOU” (Ezekiel 36:27),

“Even the Spirit of truth . . . he dwelleth with you, and SHALL BE IN YOU” (John 14:17),

“and ye in me, and I IN YOU” (John 14:20),

“I IN THEM” (John 17:23),

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the SPIRIT OF GOD DWELL IN YOU. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” (Romans 8:9),

“And if CHRIST BE IN YOU” (Romans 8:10),

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLETH IN YOU?” (1 Corinthians 3:16),

“But he that is joined unto the lord is ONE SPIRIT” (1 Corinthians 6:17),

“What? know ye not that YOUR BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY GHOST WHICH IS IN YOU, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”
(1 Corinthians 6:19),

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but CHRIST LIVETH IN ME”
(Galatians 2:20),

“That CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS by faith” (Ephesians 3:17),

“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY” (Colossians 1:27),

“That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the HOLY GHOST WHICH DWELLETH IN US” (2 Timothy 1:14),

“But the anointing which ye have received of him ABIDETH IN YOU” (1 John 2:27),

“And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and HE IN HIM. And hereby we know that he ABIDETH IN US, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” (1 John 3:24),

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I WILL COME IN TO HIM, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

(2 Corinthians 5:17) The New International Version translates this passage as, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come!” The new creation that Paul is speaking about is described in scripture in the following ways: The new birth (John 1:13; 3:3), the new creation (Galatians 6:15), His workmanship created in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10), newness of life (Romans 6:4), a spiritual quickening (Ephesians 2:1, 5), a spiritual resurrection (Colossians 2:12; 3:1), a new heart and spirit (Ezekiel 36:26, and Romans 7:6), the putting on of the new man (Ephesians 4:24), the inward man (Romans 7:22), the circumcised heart (Romans 2:29), the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), regeneration (Titus 3:5), and so forth.

The fruit of the new creation is righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24, and 1 John 2:29), being conformed to the image of God’s Son (Romans 8:29), a heart that knows God (Jeremiah 24:7, and Hebrews 8:11), God’s law written within the heart (Hebrews 8:10), a hatred of sin and a love for righteousness (1 John 3:7-10), works of faith, that is works produced as the by-product of faith (James 2:18), good fruit borne unto God (Romans 7:4), brotherly love (1 John 4:7), an active faith in Christ (1 John 5:1), and so forth.

(2 Corinthians 5:17) This is a key passage of scripture that explains many other passages of scripture. The Bible presents salvation as a life transforming experience. Change is one of the distinguishing characteristics of a true believer. Much confusion has been caused by a failure to understand that this change takes place first in the spirit first and then is reflected in the outward thoughts and actions, proportional to the way one renews his mind. This verse makes it very clear where change takes place. It describes this change as total and complete (all things become new, not just some things). Therefore this change has to take place in our born-again spirits. Why is that? If you were fat before you were saved, you will be fat after you are saved, unless you go on a weight loss program. Your body doesn’t instantly change. Also, your soulish or mental realm doesn’t instantly change. If you were uneducated before you were saved, you will be uneducated after you are saved. Begin to renew you mind. The only part of you that is left is your spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

It is your spirit that is instantly changed at salvation. It is perfect (Hebrews 12:23). It cannot sin (1 John 3:9). Everything that is true of Jesus is true of your born-again spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17, Ephesians 1:3, 15-23, Colossians 2:9-10, and 1 John 4:17). Your spiritual salvation is complete. At salvation, you receive the same spirit that you will have throughout all eternity. It will not have to be changed or cleansed again. It has been sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13) and is therefore sanctified and perfected forever (Hebrews 10:10,14, and 12:23).

The rest of the Christian life is not trying to obtain faith, joy, or love, and so forth, from God, but rather a release of what we already have in our spirits (Galatians 5:22-23) into our souls and bodies. Failure to understand this has caused some people to despair when they don't see sufficient change in their lives after coming to the Lord for salvation. It must be understood that the change is internal in our spirits and the outward change will take place as we renew our minds to the Word of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

(2 Corinthians 5:21) This verse says that Jesus paid all the wages of our sin. Whatever that required, Jesus paid it. The scripture does not make a major issue of how this payment for sin was accomplished, so there's no need for us to do so. It suffices to say that Jesus became what we were and suffered what we should have suffered, so that we could become what He is and experience what He has for us.

(2 Corinthians 5:21) The typical Christian has accepted the first part of this verse, but rejected the second half. Many believe Jesus bore our sin for us, but few believe He actually made us righteous. They relegate that to something that happens in the future, in eternity.

However, Paul makes the forgiveness of our sins and our becoming righteous a package deal. That is to say, if one part is true, then the other part is true. It's like a coin. Coins have two sides. You can't have only "heads," or only "tails" All coins have both. Likewise, any person who accepts that Jesus paid for his sins also has to accept that He made him righteous.

Ephesians 4:17: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind."

(Ephesians 4:17) Verses 17-20 describe the lifestyle of the unbeliever in an orderly progression. In this example Paul admonishes that Christ and His doctrine do not in any way reflect this kind of evil conduct. To the Ephesians he states, "But you have learned nothing like that from Christ."

Such evil conduct is the result of: (1) the vanity of the mind (v.17), that is the absence of any purpose; (2) having the understanding darkened (v.18) [purposelessness is the direct result of darkness]; (3) separation from God's life (v.18), which is spiritual death; (4) blindness or hardness of heart (v.18); (5) being past feeling (v.19), that is having no conscience; and (6) given over to lasciviousness, uncleanness and greed (v.19).

Ephesians 4:24: "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

(Ephesians 4:24) The Greek word that was translated "put on" in this verse is "ENDUO," which means "to sink into (clothing), put on, clothe one's self" (Thayer). This is a word picture describing the way we should wear our new born-again self on the outside, through our actions, in a way that all can see. In the same way that people see our clothes instead of our nakedness, so our new attitudes and actions should be visible to everyone, instead of our flesh—carnality.

The New International Version translates this phrase “which after God” as “created to be like God.” Today’s English Version translates this same phrase “which is created in God’s likeness.” That’s the point Paul is making. Our new man was created just like Jesus. In our spirits, we are right in this world, as Jesus is (1 John 4:17).

Notice the use of the word “created.” The believer’s righteousness and holiness are not things that he grows into. We were created that way when we were born again. This righteousness and holiness are in our new spirits, which we received from God. We are still working out this righteousness and holiness in our actions, but our born-again spirits were created that way.

By Paul specifying “true holiness,” he is implying that there is false holiness. False holiness is the good we do. While it is important to act holy in our relationships with men, we need to remember that anything other than the “true holiness” which is the gift of God, is inadequate when relating to God. God is a Spirit (John 4:24), and we must worship Him in spirit and in truth (true holiness). God sees our spirits and deals with us based on this true holiness which is in our new man.