

FBC POWELL, 6-17-18 AM
"Union with Christ – A New Identity"
Various Scriptures
3 in Series, "The Christian's Union with Christ"

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NASB) "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

Colossians 1:27 (NASB) "to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Philippians 1:21 (NASB) "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

1 John 5:20b (NASB) "... the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are **in Him** who is true, **in His Son** Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

Galatians 2:20 (NASB) "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 (KJV) ⁵⁵"O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? ⁵⁶The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. ⁵⁷But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

John 10:28 (KJV) "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand."

I. In Christ, We Are Justified

Romans 3:24-26 (NASB) ²⁴"being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

A. The Source of Justification (v. 24a)

Justification – An act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous in Christ on the basis of the finished work of Christ on the cross.

B. The Price of Justification (v. 24b-25)

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NASB) ¹⁸"knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ."

C. The Means of Justification (v. 25b)

Forsaking
All
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Trust
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D. The Justice of Justification (v. 26)

“How is it possible for the righteous God to declare the unrighteous to be righteous without compromising His righteousness or condoning their unrighteousness?”
- John Stott

Romans 4:5 (NASB) “But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.”

II. In Christ, We Are Sanctified

John 17:14-19 (NASB) ¹⁴“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil *one*. ¹⁶They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. ¹⁸As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.”

1 Corinthians 1:2a (NKJV) “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be saints*...”

Psalms 31:5b (NASB) “...You have ransomed me, O Lord, God of truth.”

John 14:6 (NASB) “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.’”

John 14:17 (NASB) “*That is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”

III. In Christ, We Are Adopted

Romans 8:15 (NASB) “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’”

“In the Jewish culture of that day, only males were eligible to receive a part of the family inheritance. So, far from putting down women or ignoring them, he is actually making them equal with men in sharing the family inheritance.”
- Jerry Bridges

“In the Roman world of the First Century AD an adopted son was a son deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate; he was no whit inferior in status to a son born in the ordinary course of nature, and might well enjoy the father’s affection more fully and reproduce the father’s character more worthily.”
- John Stott

In Roman culture and the legal system, there were at least four consequences of being adopted:

1. The adopted person lost all ties with his old family.
2. The adopted one became an heir of his new father and a joint heir with the other siblings.
3. The adopted person’s past was forgotten, his legal debts cancelled, and he was given a new name.
4. The adoption was a permanent transaction; it could never be reversed.

Ephesians 1:5b (NIV) “...in accordance with his pleasure and will.”

Psalms 115:3 (NASB) “But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.”

Sermon 3: Union with Christ – A New Identity

Various Scriptures

One of the most difficult but also one of the most helpful doctrines in the New Testament is the Doctrine of the Christian's union with Christ. Our union with Christ can be broken down into two amazing truths. Those who have repented of sin and savingly believed on Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sin are both *in Christ and Christ is in them*. One of the verses that shows that glorious truth that the Christian is "in Christ" is 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if anyone is *in Christ*, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." One of the many verses that Christ is in us is Colossians 1:27: "to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory." Allow me to repeat something I said in the last message: "We emphasize the sacrifice of Christ (as well we should), we emphasize our salvation through Christ (as well we should), we emphasize our joy in Christ (as well we should), but we almost never hear a testimony that emphasizes our union with Christ!" That is what led me to this series.

In this third message in the series, we are focusing on the Christian's *identity* that is based on the fact that we are in Christ and He is in us. The world tells us that our identity is determined by how we rate, how we "stack up" compared to others in three areas.

The first determiner of our identity in the world is how we look physically. Even if a person is dumb as a board, but they are physically attractive, they find acceptance in the world through their coveted identity of being pretty or handsome. The world accepts them. The second determiner of our identity in the world is intelligence (IQ). A person may be lazy, warped in their beliefs and worldview, but if they are intelligent, the world says they are valuable and thus they are accepted. The third determiner of our identity in the world is our performance. Even if we look like we've been hit with an "ugly stick" and our IQ is about the same as the room temperature, but we are proficient at something (especially sports) the world accepts us, and we are considered valuable. Now if a person is handsome/beautiful, intelligent, and very proficient at something, the world not only accepts them, the world adores and even worships them. Here is the problem with seeking your identity in looks, intelligence, or proficiency in doing something well: When it comes to looks, age can take away your identity; when it comes to intelligence, age or a stroke or dementia robs you of your identity. When it comes to performance, one injury, ageing, or somebody better coming along can rob you of your identity. However, when your identity is in Christ (you are in Him and He is in you), age and time simply means that you are getting closer and closer to seeing the One you love face to face! When your identity is in Christ you can say with the Apostle Paul in Philippians 1:21: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

It is such a tragedy to see a born-again person live, struggle, and die being ignorant of their identity in Christ. Oh, what riches they miss. Charles Spurgeon, the great preacher of London in the late 1800's tells of a pastoral visit to an elderly lady in one of the poverty-stricken areas (slums) of London. In those times, if children or the church didn't care for people like this lady, they would have no help. Spurgeon asked the lady if there was anyone, such as a child that could help her. She answered that she had a son, but he lived and worked far away in South America. Spurgeon asked if there was any help she could get from this son. She said that all she ever heard from him was when she got a post card from him every month, but they were written in Spanish and she couldn't understand them. Spurgeon asked what she had done with these "post cards" and she told him that she had used them to cover the walls since there were large cracks wall that allowed much cold air in. Spurgeon asked to see one of the postcards and discovered that they were not postcards at all but currency from the country where the son worked. The money covering the cracks in the wall was worth a small fortune, but the woman lived in poverty. What

a picture that is of the average Christian life. Most Christians are totally unaware of the great wealth they have been given in union with Christ. As a result, they live like spiritual paupers.

If you are “in Christ”, then there are four things that are true concerning your true identity:

First, His life is now your life. In the New Testament, His life is called “eternal life”. 1 John 5:20b: “... the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are *in Him* who is true, *in His Son* Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

Second, if you are “in Christ”, His past is now your past. I am specifically speaking of the cross. Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ...”

Third, His victory over sin, Satan, and death is now your victory. 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 (KJV): “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” You are in Christ!

Fourth, His future is now your future. In Christ, there is no future in hell for you. John 10:28: “and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch (pluck KJV) them out of My hand.”

In this third message in this series, we are going to focus on three of the specific truths concerning our identity that flows out of our union with Christ. These three truths are just scratching the surface of our blessings that flow out of our union with Christ. My desire is that you are motivated to search the Scriptures to learn what riches are yours in Christ.

I. In Christ, We Are Justified

Romans 3:24-26: “being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

A. The Source of Justification (v. 24a)

In my opinion, justification is the very heart of the Gospel. What is justification? Here is the official definition. Justification – “An act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous in Christ on the basis of the finished work of Christ on the cross.” Let’s look at that definition a little more closely. Justification is “an act of God”. It is not experiential (something we “feel” or can “see”). It is a legal declaration that God makes. It has nothing to do with our merit or deservedness. We cannot justify ourselves. It is God declaring that the demands of the law have been met on our behalf.

Justification is not a process; it is an act that takes place at a point in time. That point in time is when the spiritually dead sinner is born again and savingly believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. The phrase “being justified” is passive. That means that the subject is acted upon. God does the justifying. Let me make a distinction between justification, forgiveness, and justice by use of an imperfect illustration. Suppose a young woman incurs a huge debt at a clothing store that she will never be able to pay back. If the store demanded payment, that would be justice. Now suppose that the store sees her circumstances and realizes she will never be able to pay the

money back and just cancels her debt. That would be forgiveness. Once the debt is forgiven, she is no longer liable for it, but her conscience would still bother her, and she would never feel comfortable going back to that store. Suppose however that while she was awaiting justice for her nonpayment, she met and married the store's owner and he personally paid her debt in full. Now there is no legal claim against her and if she was taken to court she would plead "not guilty" and the court would determine that she was justified in that plea and the case would be dismissed. That is justification! Yes, our sins are forgiven, but we have also been given the righteousness of Christ so that we stand accepted, righteous before God in Christ's imputed righteousness. Justification has only one explanation – the grace of God (see verse 24)!

B. The Price of Justification (vv. 24b-25)

God could not just arbitrarily declare a sinner righteous and be consistent with His attributes – with who He is. We are justified freely by His grace, but our justification came at a great cost. That cost is summarized in two words – redemption and propitiation. Whereas justification is a legal term borrowed from the courtroom, redemption is a commercial term borrowed from the slave market. Redemption has the idea of paying a price to set someone free who is a captive or a slave. Redemption is God paying our bill through the sending of His Son so that we might be free, and He might remain just. God can justify us because the redemption price has been paid. Peter describes it in 1 Peter 1:18-19: "knowing that you were not *redeemed* with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ." The cost of justification was first redemption.

The second word describing the cost of our justification is propitiation (v. 25). The cross where our sins were propitiated (to propitiate someone is to appease or satisfy them) demonstrated to all that God takes sin seriously but He also loves us amazingly. At the cross, the wrath of God and the love of God are perfectly demonstrated. The Father is angry over the sin of mankind. As a matter of fact, His wrath burns against sin and sin has separated man from God. If there is ever going to be a reconciliation, God must be appeased, satisfied, propitiated. What could propitiate the wrath of God for sin? It could be propitiated only by that wrath being poured out on a substitute. Jesus' death was that atonement, that propitiation to satisfy God's righteous wrath for our sin, thus enabling Him to forgive because the price has been paid and justice has been served.

C. The Means of Justification (v. 25b "through Faith")

Since justification is provided freely by God's grace, it is received by faith alone. Faith is not a work, it is a means that we connect with Christ's provision, Christ's propitiation which saves us. The means of justification is faith. In TELL we use *faith* as an acrostic to describe it:

Forsaking All I Trust Him.

D. The Justice of Justification (v. 26)

From a human perspective, God faced a dilemma. In reality God has no dilemma, but from the human way of seeing things He did. Here is the dilemma: How could God Justify sinners and still be righteous? To put the dilemma in other terms, how is it possible for the righteous God to declare the unrighteous to be righteous without compromising His righteousness or condoning their unrighteousness? [From John Stott, page 112]

If a judge rules that a guilty person is not guilty, he is an unjust judge. How can God save sinners and still be a righteous judge? Do you see the dilemma? We see a startling statement in Romans 4:5: “But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.” The answer to this dilemma is *Christ crucified!* The cross is the vindication of God. He can justify the ungodly and yet continue being just because Jesus took the sins of the ungodly and suffered the wrath that justice required and then in addition to forgiving the sins of those who believe in Him, He clothed them with his righteousness. Now, God is just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Our union with Christ is possible because of the finished work of Christ on the cross.

II. In Christ, We Are Sanctified

The words “sanctification” and “holy” are from the same root in the Greek language. To sanctify means to set apart from sin and set apart to God and His purposes. We were baptized into union with Christ and given all the equipment we need to live a life that pleases God. Sanctification involves reckoning on what happened to us at the cross and appropriating all that we’re given when we came to Christ. Sanctification is a continuing process that lasts from salvation until glorification when Christ returns, or we go to be with him at physical death.

Our sanctification was a prominent focus in Jesus prayer that He prayed for His disciples on the night before He was crucified. John 17:14-19:

I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil *one*. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

You can quickly see that the key words in these verses are “sanctify” and “sanctified”.

The word “sanctify” is from the same root as the word “holy”. A simple definition of sanctify is to set apart or make holy. To sanctify something is to set it apart for the Lord’s special use. For God’s people, to be sanctified is to be set apart from sin and the world system and being devoted completely to God. Thus, a sanctified life and a holy life are the same. There is a sense that we are already sanctified and another sense that we are being sanctified.

At salvation, we were taken out of the Kingdom of darkness (Satan’s domain) and transferred into, set apart to the Kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13). The Bible sometimes presents sanctification as something that is done. 1 Corinthians 1:2 (NKJV): “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who *are sanctified* in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints [sanctified ones] ...” Most of the Corinthians were not set apart in their behavior, but they were set apart in their position, their standing before God. The goal of the Christian life is to line up our daily practice with our position. The Word of God is the means of the disciple’s sanctification in the world (v. 17).

How can we live day by day and week by week in a world system that denies God’s truth and match our practice with our position of being sanctified? We must know, engraft into our heart, and apply God’s perfect truth found in His written word. The written Word of God does not just contain truth; it is truth in its entirety! God is all about truth.

God the Father is truth. Psalms 31:5b: “You have ransomed me, O Lord, God of truth.”

God the Son is truth: John 14:6: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.’”

God the Holy Spirit is truth: John 14:17a: “*that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”

Satan, the god of this world, is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). Our triune God is truth and this God of truth has given us His Word and His Word IS truth. His Word is the means of our sanctification. As we renew our minds in the Word of God and appropriate our true identity in Christ as we are taught in the Word, we stop being conformed to the world and are progressively set apart from sin and we more deeply love, worship and glorify God. That’s a good description of spiritual growth.

III. In Christ, We Are Adopted

When we are placed in union with Christ, we become adopted sons of God. Romans 8:15: “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’” “Abba” was the Aramaic word for father, and it was perhaps a little more endearing than the Greek word for Father. Why did he not say, “sons and daughters” or just “children”? Why “sons”? Paul is not being gender specific here and ignoring females. In Galatians 3:27-29 he makes it clear that both males and females are included in the category of sons. Let me give you an explanation by Jerry Bridges. “In the Jewish culture of that day, only males were eligible to receive a part of the family inheritance. So, far from putting down women or ignoring them, he is actually making them equal with men in sharing the family inheritance.” [Jerry Bridges, *Who AM I*, page 43]

Our relationship with the Father is not characterized by the fearful response of a slave to his master, but by the love of a child for his father. Let’s examine this thing called adoption. What Paul is referring to is the Roman customs and laws regarding adoption. The Jews had no concept like this of adoption. New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce described the customs of Rome regarding adoption: “

In the Roman world of the First Century AD an adopted son was a son deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate; he was no whit inferior in status to a son born in the ordinary course of nature, and might well enjoy the father’s affection more fully and reproduce the father’s character more worthily.

[Quoted in John Stott, *Romans*, page 232]

To summarize, in a Roman adoption, the one adopted was chosen by the father to receive a name and an inheritance. When we say that we have been adopted by the Father, we are saying that He chose us to bear His name and to be His heir.

In Roman culture and the legal system, there were at least four consequences of being adopted:

1. The adopted person lost all ties with his old family.

2. The adopted one became an heir of his new father and a joint heir with the other siblings.
3. The adopted person's past was forgotten, his legal debts cancelled, and he was given a new name.
4. The adoption was a permanent transaction; it could never be reversed.

Why did God predestine and adopt us? Ephesians 1:5b (NIV): It was "...in accordance with his pleasure and will." It was simply according to the good pleasure of His will. That really needs no comment; He is God. Psalms 115:3: "But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases."

Conclusion

Oh, this glorious truth of our union with Christ! How marvelous it is; how blessed are all those who are "in Christ".