

# IDENTITY IN CHRIST 1

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The Lord didn't want to just forgive our sins but to have intimate relationship with us, and as we have said, the only way to achieve that is to receive salvation by grace not by our own effort. If we had to produce it through our own goodness, we would never qualify. It is the grace of God that produces salvation, and once that happens, we become righteous in His sight.

We have dealt with Old Testament scriptures where it appeared that God was demanding perfection. The real purpose of the law isn't for us to keep it perfectly, but rather to show us how incapable we are of saving ourselves. We talked about repentance and that it means to turn from ourselves. We talked about putting faith in the Lord and making a commitment to Him. We have even ministered on water baptism, and hopefully by this time, everybody has received that.

I want to share now what takes place in the life of a believer. I'll start with 2 Corinthians 5:17-18, "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, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." "If we are in Christ" is a terminology that is used over 300 times in the New Testament, always referring to a union relationship with God. Once that takes place, it says you become a new creature. Some translations actually say "a new creation," one says "a new species of being that never existed before."

This leads to a critical issue that I believe is imperative to understanding your new identity in Christ: It did not take place in the physical realm. It isn't talking about your physical body, saying that it completely changes, that your looks change. If a person was fat before they were saved, they'll still be fat afterward unless they go on a diet. It also isn't talking about your mental or emotional part—what most people consider to be the real "them." If you weren't too smart before you were saved, you won't be too smart after you're saved, but you will still have a lot of the same memories and thoughts.

There is a third part, and according to this scripture, by process of elimination, it has to be the part of us that is changed—our spirit man. A scripture that verifies this is 1 Thessalonians 5:23 where Paul is praying for the Thessalonians, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." That passage shows that we have a spirit, soul, and body. The body part is very obvious, the part of me that you see, my outward person. We all recognize that there is another part beyond that, our emotional or mental part, which Scripture calls the soul. We know that even though a person may not physically touch you, they can touch you by their words, either in a positive or negative way. Most people are in tune with the physical and soulish parts, but according to Scripture, there is another part, which is the spirit.

The spirit is the part of us that is changed and is new after salvation. It is actually the life-giving part. James 2:26 says, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." That shows that it is the spirit that actually breathes life into our physical bodies. It is where our life comes from. In Genesis 2 when God created Adam and Eve, Adam's body was complete, but then God breathed into him the breath of life. This word "breathe" in Old Testament Hebrew was the exact same

word that we use for breath, and it is translated “spirit” in other places. God created the physical body and the soulish person of Adam, but then he breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul. The spirit is the part of us that gives life.

Prior to salvation, a person making a total commitment of their life, and the Lord coming into them, the spirit within them was dead. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you hath he quickened [made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins.” We know we were alive before we were born again, but this is speaking spiritually. Death in the Bible doesn’t mean ceasing to exist as some people today think of it. It literally means “separation.” When a person physically dies, they don’t cease to exist. The Bible teaches that they go immediately into the presence of God or into the presence of the devil in hell. The soul and spirit continue to live, but there is a separation from the physical body, which dies and decays.

When Genesis 2:17 says, “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” it didn’t mean they would die physically but spiritually, that they would become separated from God. The spirit, the part that God breathes into us, which actually gives life and motivation, became separated from God’s supernatural life . . . His holy and complete life . . . what the Bible calls “zoe” life or “life in an absolute or abundant sense.” Man then began to degenerate. They still functioned, but they were functioning independent, separated from God. That’s really what causes all the problems in our lives . . . all our emotional stress.

When a person comes to the Lord, they receive a new spirit and are born again, which is the terminology Jesus used in John 3:5. In the same way man is born physically with a spirit, soul, and body, his spirit was separated from God, functioning independently of Him. When he is born again, he receives the Spirit of Christ. Galatians 4:6 says, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” God literally places his Spirit inside of us and we now have a new quality of life, a new identity, and are a totally new person in our spirit.

The rest of the Christian life is learning in our soulish, mental realm what is taking place in our spirit, beginning to think that way, changing our attitudes, thoughts, and actions accordingly. The truth is, one-third of your salvation is over when you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord. Your spirit becomes completely changed. It is the exact same spirit you will have throughout eternity. It already has love, joy, peace, and is full of the presence of God. There is no lack or inadequacy in your spirit, but you have to perceive that, which is the reason studying the Word of God is so vital to the Christian life. Jesus said in 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.”

So God’s Word is Spirit; it tells us spiritual truth and reality. You can’t perceive what is taking place on the inside in your spirit through looking in a mirror, because you’re looking at your physical person. You can’t perceive it by taking an inventory of how you feel because that’s searching your soulish part. But there is a spirit part of you that, according to 2 Corinthians 5:17, was completely changed. Old things passed away and everything in it is brand new. You now have the same power, the same wisdom, the same faith, the same everything that God has, and it’s all located in your spirit. Victory in the Christian life comes through the renewing of your mind to these facts.

The Bible says that as you begin to believe this, then it begins to manifest: “According to his divine power hath given all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of

him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3). God has already deposited those things inside of every born again believer. You are a totally brand new person, but until you get knowledge you won't change. As long as you continue to think, “Well, I've never succeeded, so I guess I'll still not succeed. Now that my sins are forgiven, maybe I won't go to hell, but I have always been a failure.” Proverbs 23:7 says, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” If that's the way you think, and that's how you see yourself, that's what you'll continue to experience.

Victory in the Christian life comes when you are able to look into the Word which is Spirit and life, see who you are, see what God has done, and begin to believe it. Change your thinking and your actions so that you begin to plan for success instead of failure. As you do that, Proverbs 23:7, which usually is used negatively, will actually begin to be a positive Scripture. If you begin to see yourself in Christ, if you recognize your new identity in Him, then the love, joy, peace, and power that has been deposited on the inside of you will begin to manifest.

I pray this will help you and that God will open your heart to recognize what you have inside of you through Christ Jesus.

## IDENTITY IN CHRIST 1 (Outline)

2 Corinthians 5:17-18: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. <sup>18</sup>And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.”

In the New Testament there are many phrases describing who we are “in Christ.” There are over 300 references to our union and relationship with Christ. This new identity happens in our spirits.

According to 1 Thessalonians 5:23 you are a three-part being, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1. BODY: The part you see - your flesh.
2. SOUL: Your mind, will and emotions.
3. SPIRIT: The life giving part of your being. James 2:26 says, “the body without the spirit is dead.”

Prior to salvation your spirit was dead. Ephesians 2:1: “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Death in the Bible means separation from God. Before you’re born again, your spirit is separated from God.

When you’re born again you receive the spirit of Christ. John 3:3-8: “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup>Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. <sup>8</sup>The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

Galatians 4:6: “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” God places His spirit on the inside of you; in your spirit. This Spirit of God on the inside of you gives you a new identity, you now can identify with all that He is. You have the same quality of life that God has, with all the same power, faith, love, and wisdom. 1 Peter 1:3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

## IDENTITY IN CHRIST 1 (Teacher's Guide)

1.    A.    According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, "if any man be in Christ," he is what?  
  
          A new creation.
- B.    What changes take place in a person who has become a new creation?  
  
          Old things have passed away; behold all things have become new.
2.    What part of us becomes new? See 1 Thessalonians 5:23.  
  
          Our spirit. See also 1 Corinthians 6:17. It's not a physical change or a mental change. It is the spirit man that becomes alive.
3.    Before we are born again what is the condition of our spirit in relation to God? See Ephesians 2:1,12.  
  
          Dead in our trespasses (sin). Separated, being without God.
4.    Death in the Bible means what? See James 2:26.  
  
          Separation.
5.    In the place of separation from God, what does God offer us? See Romans 6:23.  
  
          Eternal life.
6.    According to 1 John 5:11-12, how do we receive eternal life?  
  
          By receiving God's Son.

## IDENTITY IN CHRIST 1 (Detailed Teacher's Guide)

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

<sup>1</sup> We've talked about how the Lord didn't want to just forgive our sins but that He really wanted an intimate relationship with us. We've talked about the only way to achieve that is to have salvation by grace and not by our own efforts. If we had to produce it through our own goodness, we would never qualify for it. So, it is the grace of God that has provided salvation. Once we are saved we become righteous in the sight of God.

<sup>2</sup> I want to share with you what takes place in the life of a believer. Let me start with a scripture from 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." This verse says that if we are in Christ we become a new creature. In the New Testament there are many phrases describing who we are "in Christ." There are over 300 references to our union and relationship with Christ. This new identity happens in our spirits. Some translations will actually call it "a new creation." Another says a "new species of being that never existed before."

<sup>3</sup> When a person becomes born again, he receives the spirit of Christ. Galatians 4:6 says, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." God literally places His Spirit on the inside of us and we now have a new quality of life—a new identity. In our spirits we are totally brand-new. The rest of our Christian lives we are learning what has taken place in our spirits, by renewing our minds—the soulish mental realm—to what has happened. Our spirits already have love, joy, peace, and the presence of God in them. The spirit part of you, according to 2 Corinthians 5:17, was completely changed. Old things passed away. Everything in it is brand-new.

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<sup>1</sup> How are we saved according to Ephesians 2:4-5?

<sup>2</sup> (a) 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says you were once what?

(b) According to 1 Corinthians 6:11 now what are you?

<sup>3</sup> (a) When you are born again, what happened to you according to 1 Corinthians 6:17?

(b) What happened to you according to 2 Corinthians 5:17?

(c) Where does Christ dwell according to Ephesians 3:17?

(d) Where does Christ live according to Galatians 2:20?

<sup>4</sup> Victory in the Christian life comes when you are able to start looking into the Word, which is spirit and life, and see who you are and what God has done. When you believe, you'll change your thinking—change your actions—and begin to plan for success instead of failure. You'll begin to see yourself differently.

<sup>5</sup> When you begin to see yourself in Christ—recognizing your new identity in Christ—then the love, joy, peace, and power that has been deposited on the inside of you will begin to manifest. I pray that this will help you and that God will open up your heart to let you recognize what you have on the inside of you through Christ Jesus.

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<sup>4</sup> As we behold the Lord, whose image are we changed into? (2 Corinthians 3:18).

<sup>5</sup> What has been deposited on the inside of you by God's Spirit? (Galatians 5:22-23).

## IDENTITY IN CHRIST 1 (Additional Information)

There are actually two yous: The new, born-again you, and the old unregenerate you—the new man and the old man. You should feel good about the new man. As you begin to see who you are in Christ, that revelation should give you joy, peace, confidence, and security. But at the same time, you must recognize that the old man is not godly and cannot be trusted. It should not be propped up and improved.

### See Yourself as Jesus Sees You

“Strip yourselves of your former nature—put off and discard your old unrenewed self—which characterized your previous manner of life and becomes corrupt through lusts and desires that spring from delusion; <sup>23</sup>And be constantly renewed in the spirit of your mind—having a fresh mental and spiritual attitude; <sup>24</sup>And put on the new nature (the regenerate self) created in God’s image, (Godlike) in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24, Amplified).

You can’t be a thief if you don’t see yourself as a thief. You can’t commit adultery if you don’t see yourself as an adulterer. You can’t be a liar if you don’t see yourself as a liar.

When we really are able to see who we are in Christ, we will see how holy and pure we have become through Jesus. This new image of ourselves will be reflected in our emotions and in our actions. That is powerful!

Imagine a woman who was a prostitute before she was born again. Suppose she really asked the Lord to save her—she truly put her faith in Him and believed she was forgiven. But imagine that she didn’t change her image of herself. If she saw herself as just a forgiven prostitute, eventually she would go back into prostitution, or at least into a promiscuous lifestyle. Why? Because it would be impossible for her to consistently operate differently from the way she saw herself.

On the other hand, suppose that same woman was not only born again, but renewed her mind. Suppose she could see herself as a new person—righteous, holy, pure, and clean. If she could get a vision of that, I guarantee, it would be reflected in her life. She would no longer stoop to that old lifestyle, because she would not want to take the great gift God had given her and put it back into that kind of situation.

Christians are failing in the area of controlling their actions and emotions because they don’t know who they are in Christ. They are looking at their physical circumstances and listening to what others are saying about their old person. They aren’t listening to what God says about the new, born-again part of them. They see themselves as failures, and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that Psychology and our society call low self-esteem.



## Who Are You?

We have established a basic outline of the truth—there is the new you and the old you. The new you has the mind of Christ, and all the abilities of Christ. We have the picture of ourselves in Christ; now we need to finish coloring it. It's not enough to know that there is a new you. You have to have more details before you can actually see what has happened to you in your spirit.

To get an accurate mental image of your physical features, you look in a mirror or take a photograph or video of yourself. Did you know that when you do that you are using faith? It takes faith to look at a mirror, a photo, or a video and say, "That's me." How do you know for sure that the image you are seeing is really you?

Many people think that's a ridiculous question. Yet, I remember a professor I had in my first year of college who asked that very question. He was trying to get us to drop all of our preconceived ideas and come into the class with an open mind. So he took a chair, set it in front of us, and systematically tried to prove to us that the chair wasn't there.

Of course, on the surface everyone said, "Well, that's stupid; I can see it." But then he started reasoning.

"How do you know that what you're seeing is true?" he asked. "How do you know your eyes are accurately interpreting to your brain the things you're seeing? How do you know you don't have some kind of a problem that causes you to see things that aren't really there?"

He was challenging things that most people never really think about. By the time we left his class, if we had followed his line of reasoning, we couldn't prove that the chair was there after all.

That kind of reasoning is prevalent in our society today. We have challenged basic foundational principles that we should accept by faith. God's Word is truth and we ought to accept it as such. (See John 17:17).

When it comes to looking in a mirror, most of us have never challenged the validity of what we see. We are seeing a reflection that we, by faith, believe to be us but it only represents us. For instance, we don't know for sure that we have hair on the top of our head.

Now you may say, "Oh, yes I do. I've seen it in the mirror."

No, what you've seen is a reflection of the hair on your head.

"Well, I can feel it with my physical hands."

Maybe so, but you still haven't seen it. How do you know that what you feel is accurate?

One way or the other, you are taking something by faith. The same thing happens when you look at your spirit. You can't see your spirit in a mirror, so how can you accurately view your spirit?

There are some people who depend upon their senses so much, that they can't accept there is any realm of reality except what they can see, taste, hear, smell, or feel. Because they can't physically sense their spirit, they give up trying. "It's hopeless," they say. "I don't really understand spiritual things." It's because they are looking in the wrong place.

## God's Mirror

"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

If the words Jesus spoke are spirit and life, then the Word of God is not just a book, it's a look into the spiritual realm. It's like a spiritual mirror we use to see spiritual truth.

If we want to see if our hair is combed, we look in a mirror, trusting that the representation we see is true. In the same way, if we want to see what our spirits are like, we go to God's Word and see what God says about us, trusting that whatever He says about us is the way we are - whether we feel it or not.

We may not feel like our hair is combed, but that really has nothing to do with whether it is combed or not. Someone may be able to convince us with their words that our hair is messed up, when in truth it really is combed. So we can't go by our feelings; we have to look and see for ourselves and trust that what we see is true.

It's the same thing with the spirit man. You may have read in the Bible, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). You may know this intellectually, but you don't feel it. So when you come up against a problem you feel like, "Oh, man, I don't have any power." But it doesn't matter what you feel if you are going by what God's Word says. The truth is that whatever God's Word says about you is spirit and it is life - it is spiritual truth.

"Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. <sup>23</sup>For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: <sup>24</sup>For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. <sup>25</sup>But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:22-25).

James talks about a man who looks in a mirror and sees his natural face, then goes his way and immediately forgets what he looks like. But James also says that anyone who looks into the perfect law of liberty (God's Word), and continues in it will be blessed.

Just as we look in a mirror to see ourselves physically, we can look into God's Word to see ourselves spiritually, as God see us.

When a person makes Jesus Christ the Lord of his life, there is a transformation that takes place on the inside. Most Christians know this in their minds, but very few of them have ever had an accurate mental picture or perception of who they really are in the spirit. Because they don't have the correct information about who they are in Christ, they can only operate in the information they do have, and they naturally act out of their old selves. They act out of their old abilities instead of their newfound abilities in Christ. This is where so many Christians miss God's best for them.

Most Christians have the desire to do the right things, but they feel unequipped. They feel that they don't have the ability. I know of many Christians who are praying for faith, power, and all kinds of spiritual gifts. The truth is, according to God's Word they already have them—all believers have them.

Now you may say, "But wait a minute, I don't have these things. I know because I don't feel them." It doesn't have anything to do with what you feel, it has to do with what you believe.

### You Are a New Spirit

"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

Identifying who you really are in Christ and living in accordance with that identity is the key to the Christian life. The key to understanding who you are in Christ is recognizing that it is your spirit that was born again. It is your spirit that changed.

"I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:23

According to this Scripture, we have three parts—a spirit, a soul, and a body. Paul prayed that God would keep and preserve the Thessalonians wholly, or completely, in spirit, soul, and body.

The body is very easy to identify; it is the physical part of us. The soul is the emotional part, or what most people consider to be their real personalities. It includes our thinking processes, our feelings and our will. Then there's another part of us the Bible calls the spirit, and this is actually the most important part.

In James 2:26 the Bible tells us that as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. The spirit is the dynamo of our whole being. It is the life-giving force within us.