



Message Transcript

My New Identity In Christ

Jon Gaus

Thank you. Okay. I know what you're thinking. You're thinking I got my sorry self out of bed in the freezing cold, drove on those dangerous, treacherous, deadly roads to get to church, and I don't even get Pastor Jeff. What's up with that? But seriously, it is a real honor and a privilege to share God's word with you this morning.

I've been praying for you all week and I've been praying for me all week, specifically that God would do a supernatural work in each one of our hearts, right where He knows that we need it by the omniscience of the Holy Spirit, so I want to pray right before we get into the word that God would do that very thing. Let's pray. Father, we thank You so much for bringing every single person who You brought here for this service. This is a divine appointment. You brought every person here safely because You have a very unique word through the omniscience and the wisdom and the power of your Holy Spirit. Father, we thank You for giving us Jesus, our Lord and Savior, our Master, our Redeemer and our Friend, and Jesus, we thank You for Your Holy Spirit.

He's our Counselor and our Comforter, our Convictor when we need it, and Holy Spirit, You have brought into us Your power, the power of the resurrection of Jesus to say no to sin and temptation. Spirit, You are the perfect Teacher and we worship You as that. We ask You now to take Your word and to feed us not just the milk of the word, but the meat of the word. We pray that we would gladly ingest it so it would become part of our spiritual fiber, our spiritual being, and it will affect the way that we walk out the daily Christian walk, that we would see much more victory, because what You're going to give us today. Now, we ask this in the name that's above every name,

Jesus. Amen.

Amen.

Amen. Church, the teaching this morning, we are going to begin in Genesis 3, and then we're going to go to a linking passage in Colossians 3, so get ready for that. You know, whenever we want to find Jesus in the Old Testament, you and I have to ask ourselves the theological question, "Where's Waldo?" Now, you've all seen the Where's Waldo? picture books. You open them up, and there are these complex drawings of all of these people and figures and shapes and colors, and the object is to find this guy named Waldo in the midst of all of this busyness.

Now, that would be impossible, except for they show us what Waldo looks like. He's the skinny dude in a striped sweater with a stocking cap and round glasses, so now that we know what Waldo looks like, we can go back and look at this complex picture with these hundreds of characters and people and shapes and colors, and if we study it careful enough, we can find Waldo. Well, you and I have the great privilege of being born on this side of the cross, so we know what the life of Jesus looks like. We know what the redemptive ministry of Jesus looks like, so now you and I can go into the Old Testament with all of its complex prophecies, typology, foreshadowing, and because we know what the ministry of Jesus looks like, we can study the Old Testament and we can find Jesus all over the Old Testament. Think about the story in Genesis 22.

We have a father Abraham with his son, Isaac, and Isaac is going up a mountain

to be sacrificed in obedience to his father, and on Isaac's back is a bundle of wood on which he will be sacrificed. Now, on the surface of that, we look at that story and we know that that is an amazing story of Abraham's faith and obedience in God, and it is, but because you and I know what Waldo looks like, we know what the redemptive ministry of Jesus looks like, we look at that story and we say, "Isaac is a foreshadow of Jesus." In fact, this whole scene, Genesis 22 is a foreshadow of how one day Jesus will sacrificially give His life on a cross for you and me. I mean, think about it. We have a son who is walking up a hill to be sacrificed in obedience to his father, and on the son's back is the very wood on which he's going to be sacrificed.

Because you and I know what the redemptive ministry of Jesus looks like, we can find Him all over the Old Testament. We're going to look at a powerful picture in Genesis 3. This is a powerful foreshadow of Jesus, and it's connected to the very first recorded killing in the Bible. Now, when you and I hear the very first recorded killing in the Bible, we often think of Cain and Abel, but there was actually a killing before that. God kills an animal, and it is a foreshadow of our new identity in Christ, where in Genesis 3, let's set up the historic context of what's going on in this chapter.

God has created the first man and the first woman in His image, and they are living in total unity and harmony, in beauty with God and with each other. They are thoroughly enjoying God and they are thoroughly enjoying each other, and God has given them the power of choice. Then, one day, Satan snakes his way into the garden, and he tempts Adam and Eve with the sin of pride. Now, tragically, they choose the way of sin, which always leads to death, instead of choosing the way of God, which

always leads to life, so God, because He's holy and righteous and just, He pronounces a righteous judgment on everyone who's involved, but because God is also kind and merciful, He graciously provides a covering for Adam and Eve's sin, and shame, and nakedness. Let's pick up the action of this account in verse 14.

"The Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field. On your belly, you shall go and the dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I'll put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring, he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.'" Okay, that's the very first proclamation of the gospel. God is promising that a Messiah is coming. He'll be born of a woman and He will defeat Satan.

Verse 16, "To the woman, He said, 'I will surely multiply your pain and childbearing. In pain, you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband and he shall rule over you,' and to Adam, He said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat. Cursed is the ground because of you. In pain, you shall eat of it all the days of your life, thorns, thistles, it shall bring forth to you, and you shall eat the plants of the field.'"

"By the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread till you return to the ground. For out of it, you were taken for you are dust and to dust, you shall return." The man called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living, and the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. Church, did you

see Him? Did you see the redemptive ministry of Jesus foreshadowed in that last verse, verse 21? "And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them."

That animal that was just killed is a foreshadow that one day, the Lamb of God is coming, and He too will be slain, but His blood will not just cover sin, His blood will actually cleanse sin, and anyone who turns from their sins and trusts in Christ to save them will not be clothed with animal skins, but clothed with the very righteousness of Christ. That leads to teaching point number one in your outline. Biblical truth number one, when Jesus saved me, He gave me a new life, a new eternity and a new identity. The apostle Paul describes our new identity this way in 2 Corinthians 5:17. He says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation."

"The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come." The apostle Paul loved that phrase, "In Christ," to describe our new identity. He uses it 160 times in the New Testament to describe our new identity, that now we are in Christ, because he wants us to picture the fact that we are clothed in Christ's righteousness, completely surrounded by Christ. Now, 100 times in the New Testament, the phrase, "Christ in us" is used to describe our new identity, and that's true.

At the very moment that you and I turned from our sins and trusted only in Christ to save us, the Holy Spirit of the living God came in us to live in us, to indwell us, to empower us, never to leave us or forsake us, so our new identity described in the New Testament is we are in Christ, and Christ is in us. Paul uses another word picture to

describe this new identity. It's in Galatians 3:27. He says, "For as many of you were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Do you see the word picture that he wants us to get, that we are now robed in Christ's righteousness?

We have put on Christ. The first century here would've gotten that because they wore robes and cloaks and tunics, so the apostle Paul wants them to know, wants us to know that we have put on Christ, and that we are completely enveloped in the righteousness of Christ to the point that if this bottle cap was us now that we are in Christ, Christ's righteousness so covers us, that whenever the Father looks at us, all He sees is the righteousness of Christ and our identity in Christ. Now, this truth has all kinds of major implications for you and I. First of all, it means that now that we are in Christ, we are perfectly and eternally loved by the Father. Now that you and I are in Christ, we are perfectly and eternally loved by the Father.

That means that you and I can't do anything to make God love us anymore now that we're in Christ. It means that you and I cannot do anything to make God love us any less because we are now in Christ. In fact, in John 17, Jesus said that now that you and I are in Christ, the Father loves us with the same quality and quantity of love with which He loves Jesus. Okay, if Pastor Jeff was here, I think he would say, "That was a great time for all." Whoa, so I'm going to give you another chance.

In John 17, Jesus said that now that you and I are in Christ, the Father loves us with the same quality and quantity of love with which He loves Jesus.

Whoa.

Whoa is right. Second, because we are in Christ, we are fully and eternally accepted by the Father. That means there's nothing we can do to make God accept us anymore. He fully accepts us. It means when you and I fall into sin, we are not less accepted by the Father because we are in Christ, we are fully loved and fully accepted.

Church, sociologists say like Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, sociologists tell us that every human being has this deep yearning to be loved and accepted, and that we are constantly searching for that need to be filled. That's why in our past, before we came to Christ, we were looking for love in all the wrong places. Isn't that true? Don't leave me hanging up here. Was that true of you?

That was true of me. I mean, they should write a song about that, because we were looking for love in all the wrong places, and before we came to Christ, we were looking for acceptance from all the wrong people, but now, because we are in Christ, you and I can finally get off this religious treadmill that's exhausting and never goes anywhere, the one where I have to earn God's love. We can get off that. He fully and eternally loves me. We can get off the treadmill of trying to be accepted by all these different groups of people in my life because God fully and eternally accepts me, and I can finally just rest in my new identity in Christ.

Amen.

Sadly, many Christians have never been taught about their new identity, and I think that's why we have so many Christians walking around, saved yet miserable,

saved yet defeated, saved yet filled with anxiety. That's why I'm really encouraged that one of the core values of BRAVE Global and BRAVE Church is we are resolute in our identity in Christ. That means we're going to teach it, preach it, model it, and exhort one another in it. Okay, biblical truth number two, and this is a warning that we need to be aware of. Biblical truth number two, one of Satan's schemes is to divide believers from our identity in Jesus.

One of Satan's schemes is to divide believers from our identity in Christ. Once we have repented and received Christ as our Lord and Savior, Satan knows that he has lost us for eternity, so he tries to attack our identity. Once you and I have repented of our sins and received Christ as Lord and Savior, Satan knows he's lost us for eternity, so he tries to attack our identity with constant lies, constant confusion, and constant discouragement. It's because Satan knows how dangerous and how powerful a born again, blood-bought, spirit-filled, co-heir with Christ, son or daughter of the King is when we know our new identity, when we rest in our new identity, when we walk in our new identity, and when we minister in our new identity. One of Satan's major schemes against God's people is to try to divide us from our identity in Christ.

He's been doing this for thousands of years. Think back to Daniel 1. We have the satanically-infused, evil king, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and he goes into Israel and he kidnaps the best and the brightest of God's people, and he brings them over into Babylon to indoctrinate them, and the very first thing that he does is he attacks their identity. He changes their name. They have been given a God-given name as God's chosen people by their parents, and the first thing he does is he changes their name

because he's an evil genius, and he knows the power of identity, so he takes their God-given name, which glorified God, and he changes them to Babylonian names that give honor to Babylonian gods, Nabu and Aku, and he gives them names like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

You ever hear of those guys? Every time we say their name, those words are giving honor to the Babylonian gods, Nabu and Aku because he attacked their identity. He knew the power of the identity. Satan, who is the ruler of the world system uses all kinds of subtle attacks against our new identity in Christ because he knows how dangerous we are to the dark side, how powerful we are to the kingdom of Christ when we know who we are in Christ. Listen to this from Time Magazine, 2017. It's an article entitled Why Instagram is the Worst Social Media For Mental Health.

Okay, it got quiet in here really fast. Like, okay, you get a medal with our Instagram, don't do that, okay, but we know that social media is a neutral medium. It could be used for good things. I follow my nieces and nephews on Instagram. I can watch their piano recitals halfway across the country, but we have to admit, Satan has co-opted a lot of social media. Listen to this.

"Social media posts can set unrealistic expectations and create feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. This may explain why Instagram, where personal photos take center stage, can strongly perpetuate anxiety in its users." Another recent report states, "Research has shown that using social networking sites, namely Facebook, can increase people's stress levels, produce anxiety in comparison, and negatively affect a person's sense of self." This is why you and I are exhorted in

Romans 12:2, to renew our mind daily on the truth of God's word, because God's word is really a love letter to you and I, and when we renew our mind daily on God's word, it reminds us of who Christ is and who we are in Christ. I'm really excited that at BRAVE Global, we're going to have a bunch of young church planters come in for four months of residency and training to think that we're going to be able to train them in who they are in Christ to make sure that they're solid in their identity in Christ as the basis for their ministry, and then when they go out and plant their churches, when they're discipling others, they will know how to disciple them in their true identity in Christ.

All right, Church, biblical truth number three, my new identity comes with new authority. My new identity does come with new authority. Before we were in Christ, we were all slaves to sin, and Satan was our spiritual father. Let me say that again. Before we were in Christ, we were all slaves to sin, and Satan was our spiritual father.

That's what Jesus said in John 8, but now, that has all transformed because we are in Christ and clothed in His righteousness. It's nothing we did. Christ did it all for us. Look at this passage in Romans 6, where the apostle Paul talks about our new relationship to sin. Verse 6, "We know."

That's an important word, know, not conjecture, not we surmise, not we're pretty sure of this. In fact, that Greek word there, know, is the Greek word [foreign language 00:20:48], which means a closer relationship than a husband and a wife have in marriage. What Paul is saying is we know we are so connected and we are so certain

of this truth. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin, for one who has died has been set free from sin. In our new identity in Christ, you and I have the power finally to say no to sin.

In our new identity in Christ, you and I finally have the power to resist sin. In our new identity in Christ, you and I finally have the power to flee from sexual sin. 1 John 4:4 tells us we have a new authority. Listen to this. "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them for He, the Holy Spirit, who is in you is greater than he, Satan, who is in the world."

This is an amazing transformation. Now, Satan who was once my spiritual father can only come against me if he gets permission from my heavenly father. Think about that. Satan, who is once my spiritual father can only come against me if he gets permission from my heavenly Father, and if my heavenly Father ever gives Satan permission to come against me, it will always be for my good and God's glory. I like what Dr. Tony Evans said.

We've all watched a football game, and every football game you watch, there are 22 men on the field, the different shapes and sizes and positions, but really, they're all in shape and they're all really powerful, but no matter what football game we are watching, the most powerful person with the most authority on that field is always that one guy. He weighs about 150 pounds. He's usually a retired insurance salesman. He's the referee. With those 22 behemoths on that field, always the most powerful person on a football field with the most authority is the referee.

You can have those big linemen rushing up to the referee because they want to passionately argue a penalty call, but they won't touch him. They won't bump him, not because he's physically stronger than them. He's not physically stronger than anyone on that field, except maybe the kicker. He's not stronger. The reason why they won't touch him and they won't bump him is because of what he's wearing.

He's wearing the stripes in authority of the referee shirt. Satan used to be my spiritual father, but now when he comes against me, you know what he sees? He sees that I am wearing the righteous robes and stripes of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Whoa, whoa.

Whoa.

Okay. Biblical truth number four, my new identity leads me to new activity. If I really have a new identity in Christ, it is going to lead me to new activity because the Holy Spirit who is now in me is always making much of Christ and always pulling me toward obedience. Why does God call us to obey His commands? Because it blesses Him, it honor Him, and it blesses me and blesses my family.

They're all good, so my new identity leaves me to new activity. We must get it in that order, Church. Identity first, then activity, because if I start with activity, I'm going to jump back on the religious treadmill of trying to earn God's love and be good enough to get to heaven and get on that performance plan, and it never works, so it always has to be my new identity leads to new activity. When the Holy Spirit led the apostle

Paul to write the letter to the church at Ephesus, and Ephesus had a very carnal culture, very demonic culture, much like the culture we're living in right now, that letter that he wrote to the church at Ephesus, we now have broken into six chapters. The first three chapters are all about the believer's identity in Christ.

In the first three chapters of the book of Ephesians, we're not told to do one thing. There is a one bit of activity for us to do. Paul says, "Just sit down and let me soak you in who you are in Christ," so you're completely drenched and you've appropriated your new identity. Now that you have your new identity, chapters four, five and six are all about our new activity, how are we to live in a way that honors God and blesses us? It's always new identity leading to new activity.

Church, let's look at Colossians 3, our second passage, verses 5 through 10. Colossians 3:5-10, and we will see that the new activity that we're called to be a part of is always based on our new identity. Colossians 3, starting at verse five, the spirit through Paul says, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you." Do you know how to put something to death? You don't feed it, you don't exercise it, you ignore it, and you walk away from it. I know.

I used to have house plants. I know how to kill things. You don't feed them. You ignore them and walk away from them. That's the same way that we kill sin.

"Put to death therefore what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these, the wrath of God is coming. In these, you too once walked, when you were living in them,

but now, you must put them all away, anger, wrath, malice, slander and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and you have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator." That whole passage just says there's a whole bunch of new activities that God is calling you to be a part of, but it's all based on the fact that you have put on the righteousness of Christ.

It's all identity. You know what this passage is literally saying? When you and I choose to sin, when you and I fall into sin now, we're acting like somebody else. We're not acting like ourselves, because in my new identity, I'm a born again, blood-bought, spirit-filled, co-heir with Christ, child of the King. Those old sins don't fit me anymore.

Amen.

When I walk into those old sins that were fit for my old identity, which has been crucified, and I'm tempted by these old sins, I look at who I am, and I'm like, "Whoa, I've got royal robes on. What am I even doing in this neighborhood? I shouldn't even be here. This is not fit for me. I'm dead to that, and I've been given the power to walk away and to flee from sin."

Amen.

That's what that passage is saying, is when you and I choose to sin, we're not acting like ourselves. We're acting. We're acting like our old self. When my beautiful wife, Beth, who you'll meet in a few weeks, she's still back in North Carolina, closing everything up, and she really is the beauty and the brains behind the operation. You'll

find that out.

When we were parenting our kids when they were younger, and trust me, we were not perfect parents, we made so many mistakes, we did so many things wrong, if it wasn't for the grace of God to fill those gaps, we'd be in big trouble. Amen.

Amen.

Parents, amen.

Amen.

I like to say parenting makes cowards of us all. Isn't that true? It's true. It's only by the grace of God, but we were learning about our identity in Christ and how important identity is, and when our oldest daughter, Libby got saved, we started using her identity with her to encourage her to obey us and to obey the Lord, so if she was acting like a real brat, I would never say, "Libby, you are such a brat," because that's an identity issue. What I was doing was I was placing an identity on her that, "You are a brat," but she wasn't a brat, because she was saved.

She was a born again, blood-bought, spirit-filled, co-heir with Christ, daughter of the King, so I would separate that activity that did not fit her new identity. I would say, "Libby, you're not a brat. Why are you acting like one?" Because she was acting. That's what she was doing.

She was acting like her old self. Why are you acting like that? The power of identity is so important. My mom understood the power of identity. When I was growing up in our neighborhood in Flint, Michigan, let me just say that the kids in that

neighborhood were a mix of the good, the bad and the ugly, okay?

That's the kind of kids I grew up with, and I'll never forget how many times, when I was sitting there eating dinner in the summer and I couldn't wait to bust out that screen door and play until the street lights come on. This was before video games. How many of you ever remember that before? You're really old if you remember that, okay, because I'm old too, and I would be sitting there and I couldn't wait to bust through that screen door, jump off that porch and go play with the neighborhood kids, and many times my mother would be yelling at me as I was running out of the door and she would say, "Don't forget you're a Gaus." That's our last name.

She would say, "Don't forget you're a Gaus." Do you know what she was doing? She was using the power of identity to affect my activity. What she was saying is, "You're going to come into contact out there with a lot of different kids, and they're going to make choices that our family would not make, and they're going to be tempting you to get involved with things that our family, the Gaus family doesn't do. Some of them may even want to do a criminal activity, and that certainly doesn't fit who you are in our identity."

That is the power of identity. It affects our activity. Let's look at this last teaching point, which is extremely important so we don't fall back into legalism. In fact, coming here this morning, braving the cold, in my opinion was worth this teaching point right here because it brings liberty to the believer. In my new identity in Christ, I'm obeying Him increasingly, not perfectly.

Amen.

In my new identity in Christ, I'm obeying Him increasingly, not perfectly. Even the apostle Paul said in his later age in Philippians 3, that he had not arrived and he had not obtained perfection. That's so important for you and I to remember, that in our new identity, which will lead us to new activity, there are times that you and I are still going to fall. The mature Christian life kind of looks like the stock market, a good stock. It goes up and you might fall here, and then it goes up some more, and you fall again.

It goes up like this. The key is now. When you fall, do you get up a lot faster, and you run back into the forgiving arms of the Father, that's Christian maturity. That's the mark of the true believer, that I'm obeying Jesus increasingly, not perfectly. Well, to put kind of an exclamation point on this teaching, I would love to pray for two specific groups of people.

The first group are those Christians who find themselves saved yet miserable, saved yet defeated, saved yet full of anxiety and worry, and I just really want to pray for you that you will not only acknowledge who you are in Christ, but you will appropriate it today, that in your new identity, you have everything to walk a victorious Christian life. You won't believe the lies of the enemy. The second group I would love to pray for is anybody that God brought here this morning, who maybe you've heard about Jesus, but you've never really received Him as your Lord and Savior by faith. You've never received His free gift, a forgiveness of sins and a guaranteed home in heaven when you die. You're not here by chance, luck or coincidence.

Jesus pursues lost people in love. He brought you here because He loves you, He wants to spend eternity with you, and He has this free gift that He already has earned for you. Would you stand with me and let's pray? Father, I thank You for answering our prayer earlier, that You would use Your Spirit to be the perfect teacher to give us clarity in this supernatural truth, and that You would put some handles on this beautiful theology of who we are in Christ so it would become a reality for us and we could carry it home into our families, we could carry it home into our thought life, we could carry it home into our everyday life. Lord, I first want to pray for those dear brothers and sisters who have fallen into saved yet miserable, saved yet defeated, saved yet full of anxiety.

Lord, I pray that Your Spirit will plant into their hearts the reality, that because they are now in Christ, they are completely and eternally loved by You. There's nothing that they could do that would make You love them any less, You love them the same way that You love Jesus. Lord, I pray for those brothers and sisters of mine who are always seeking the approval and the acceptance of people around them. Lord, You told us that we are fully accepted by You, fully accepted, eternally accepted by You. That's the relationship that really counts, so I pray, Lord, that You would help them get away from that needing to perform to be accepted by other people, and they could just rest in their new identity in Christ.

Lord, I pray for those brothers and sisters of mine who are saved yet defeated because we often run back to the sins of our old life. When we have stress, when we have pressure, when we have anger, many times, we go down that well-worn path, to

that one besetting sin of our old life, and we're miserable because we're not living the abundant life in Christ. I pray for those brothers and sisters of mine and for me, that we will believe, receive and walk in the fact that the Holy Spirit of the living God lives in us, the most powerful power in the universe. Spirit, You promised us in 1 Corinthians 10:13, that every time we're tempted, even with the most powerful temptation from our past, You always give us a way out. You are our 24/7 Spiritual Bodyguard, and if we just call on You, You will rescue us from that sinful situation.

Lord, I'd love to pray for somebody who came here that You brought here, who maybe has heard about Jesus, but Jesus never admitted to You that they're a sinner and that they can't save themselves. They've never turned to You and received You by faith. If that's You, I pray the Spirit is speaking to You, that the Holy Spirit has been working in Your heart. The Bible says today is the day of salvation and you can receive Christ in a new life by a prayer of faith. Would you pray this prayer with me?

Jesus, thank You for bringing me here today. I admit to You that I am a sinner. I have sinned against You in so many ways and I know I cannot clean myself up. I know I cannot save myself, so Jesus, I turn from those sins and anything else I've ever trusted and to get me to heaven, and I turn to you, Jesus, and I believe. I believe You are the God Man who came to earth, lived a perfect life, suffered and died on the cross in my place, and You rose three days later, defeating sin, Satan and hell, and now, You have a free gift with my name on it called an eternity in heaven and forgiveness of sins, and by faith, I reach out and I receive that gift into my life.

Jesus, thank You for saving me. Thank You for bringing me here. It's in your name I pray. Amen.