



Book of Ephesians *#1 Bible Study*
Experiencing Our True Identity in Christ
Ephesians 1, 2, 3

When you are on the front lines day after day its easy to let disappointment, frustration, and discouragement take root until you begin to lose sight of your true identity in Christ. It is for this reason that we need to take a closer look at Ephesians 1 through 3. In these three chapters we will see twelve powerful directives on who we are in Christ. Oh how we need to let the Holy Spirit take these truths and immerse us in them. Such a baptism into the reality of our identity in Christ will transform our outlook on life to the extent that, no longer will we see ourselves as victims but victors through the Risen Christ.

Here is what Scripture says about who you are as a new creation in Christ Jesus:

#1. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”(Ephesians 1:3) In order to experience every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm we must be in Christ. This means that as we receive the salvation, restoration and preservation that has been provided for us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we also are blessed with every spiritual blessing. These spiritual blessings are a result of knowing God through Christ, being adopted as His children, receiving the forgiveness of our sins, the gifts of the Spirit, and the certainty we shall live with Jesus forever. The reference to heavenly realms means these gifts are eternal and not just temporary here on earth. As we study the Scriptures we see that human beings are either “in Adam,” sinners condemned before God or “in Christ,” with their sins forgiven, adopted children of God.

#2. “For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.”(Eph.1:4) What a Mighty God we serve. “He chose us in Him before the creation of the world.” What a privilege but also what a responsibility. He chose us “to be holy and blameless in His sight.” This is not possible except through the grace of God working in us as we yield daily to Him and to His will for our lives.

#3. In this skeptical world we live in, it is easy for us to let the dark cloud of disbelief settle over us until we start to feel like real losers. When our expectations

are not met we start believing everyone else gets the blessings while we get the hassles and the disappointments. Discovering who we are in Christ and then believing this reality is the first step toward an attitude of gratitude. This helps us to discover that we count because God has adopted us into His family. As a result of this fact we also learn that what we do for His Glory also counts. “Long, long ago He decided to adopt us into His family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure He took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of His lavish gift-giving by the hand of His beloved Son.”(Eph. 1:5,6 The Message Bible)

#4. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.”(Eph.1:7,8 NIV) The gift of redemption resulting in the forgiveness of sins has been given to us through the blood of Jesus Christ. This is a gift we cannot earn but can only receive through faith in Christ. It has been paid for with something much more precious than silver and gold and now it is being given to us. “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”(1Peter 1:18,19 NIV)

#5. “It’s in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, He had His eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the over-all purpose He is working out in everything and everyone.”(Eph.1:11,12 The Message Bible) Our identity crisis is resolved in Christ. In Him we find out who we are and what we are living for. Yes, things often seem to go wrong. So many times I find myself crying out, “how long oh Lord?” How I must then remember, He has a design for me and the same is true for you. These things we frequently can’t seem to understand are part of the over-all purpose He is working out for us and in us.

#6. “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, Who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of His glory.”(Eph.1:13,14 NIV) The Holy Spirit is given to those who believe as a seal marking one in Christ. This living deposit marks us as being in Christ and guarantees our inheritance of abiding in His presence for all eternity. The seal of the Holy Spirit is God’s mark of ownership, making real in our lives the blessings of our coming inheritance. The personal presence of the Holy Spirit is the

embodiment of the positive life force of the Living God in a negative hostile world. In the same way that forgiveness is the result of redemption, even so, the positive fruits of the Spirit are the result of the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control.”(Gal.5:22 NIV) Along with the fruits of the Spirit we also are provided with various gifts of the Holy Spirit described in Romans 12:6-8 and 1Cor.12:4-11.

Paul knew from personal experience the dynamic hope, the glorious inheritance and the great power available to those who believe. That is why he declared in Ephesians 1:17-19, “For I always pray to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, that He may grant you a spirit of wisdom and revelation (of insight into mysteries and secrets) in the (deep and intimate) knowledge of Him. By having the eyes of your heart flooded with light, so that you can know and understand the hope to which He has called you, and how rich is His glorious inheritance in the saints (His set-apart ones). And (so that you can know and understand) what is the immeasurable and unlimited and surpassing greatness of His power in and for us who believe, as demonstrated in the working of His mighty strength.”(The Amplified Bible) It is the Holy Spirit who opens the “eyes of our heart,” our understanding and reveals to us the vision of our great calling and the full inheritance that God has provided to those who believe. This hope to which He has called us and the riches of His glorious inheritance is described further in 1 Cor. 2:9-10. ““No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him’—but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit.”(NIV) As we engage in the work of the Risen Christ, why do you feel it is critical that we tap into the power described in Ephesians 1:19-23?

#7 “But because of His great love for us, God, Who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions –it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”(Eph.2:4-7 NIV) Our true identity in Christ involves the reality that when we were dead in sin God made us alive in Christ and raised us up to sit with Christ in glory. This was the result of God’s great love for us. How critical it is that we are aware of this love in order that we may reject lies of Satan which try to make us frequently feel unloved and unwanted. Instead of seeing God as the judge who is waiting for us to stumble so He can get us, we need to know the God of the Scriptures. In the Scripture we discover that He is a God who is rich in mercy who

has made us alive in Christ in spite of the fact we were dead in sin. But that's not all. God then raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms." What a mighty God we serve! Next time the devil comes around trying to depress you, tell him, "be gone Satan in the name of Jesus. I'm a child of God. I've been made alive and have been cleansed from my sins through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Leave me alone devil. God has raised me up with Christ and now I'm seated with Him in the heavenly realms. I refuse to see myself as a victim, when God has made me a victor who is going to offer direct help and hope to those who are in need.

#8. God has done this mighty work of transforming us from dead sinners into victorious saints, seated with Christ in heavenly realms in order that "He might show the incomparable riches of His grace... in Christ Jesus. Our identity in Christ revolves around the fact that we are people of grace. "For it is by free grace (God's unmerited favor) that you are saved (delivered from judgment and made partakers of Christ's salvation) through (your faith). And this (salvation) is not of yourselves (of your own doing, it came not through your own striving), but it is the gift of God."(Eph.2:8 The Amplified Bible)

#9. When we are tempted to get down on ourselves we must remember we are God's work of art. The same is true of other people. It is for this reason that we are advocates of justice working to help the poor, homeless, and elderly. We must never forget that each person regardless of his or her social status is made in the image of God. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."(Eph.2:10 NIV) We are God's work of art, His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus and given the opportunity to join Him in the work of creation through the good works He has prepared for us to do. What a privilege it is to serve the Lord!

#10. "But now in Christ you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one, and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,"(Eph.2:13,14 NIV) "That's plain enough, isn't it? You're no longer wandering exiles. This Kingdom of faith is now your home country. You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He is using us all—irrespective of how we got here--in what He is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now He's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is

quite at [home](#).” (Eph.2:19-22 The Message Bible) Now that we are in Christ Jesus we have been brought near to God, who is now using us all in a powerful way. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we as believers are a part of God’s holy temple in which “He is quite at home.”

#11. As believers in Jesus Christ we are members together in the Body of Christ and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus. “(It is this:) that the Gentiles are now to be fellow heirs (with the Jews), members of the same body and joint partakers (sharing) in the same divine promise in Christ through (their acceptance of) the glad tidings (the Gospel) (Eph.3:6 The Amplified Bible). The Old Testament speaks of the Gentiles experiencing salvation (Isaiah 4:6), but it was never revealed in the Old Testament that Gentiles and Jews would be equal members in the Body of Christ. This happened when Jesus removed the dividing wall. “His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility.”(Eph.2:15,16 NIV).

Paul knew that this new identity, this new oneness meant much more than church membership. It revolutionized his life to the extent he became a “servant of the gospel” sharing its hope in word and deed. Paul declared, “This is my life work; helping people understand and respond to this Message. It came as a sheer gift to me, a real surprise, God handling all the details. When it came to presenting the Message to people who had no background in God’s way, I was the least qualified of any of the available Christians. God saw to it that I was equipped, but you can be sure that it had nothing to do with my natural abilities. And so here I am, preaching and writing about things that are way over my head, the inexhaustible riches and generosity of Christ. My task is to bring out and in the open and make plain what God, who created all this in the first place, has been doing in secret and behind the scenes all along. Through Christians like yourselves gathered in churches, this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels! All this is proceeding along lives planned all along by God and then executed in Christ Jesus.”(Eph.3:7-11 TMB)

#12. Experiencing our true identity in Christ means realizing that through Jesus Christ we can come with freedom and confidence into God’s presence. “This is in accordance with the terms of the eternal and timeless purpose which He has realized and carried into effect in (the person of) Christ Jesus our Lord, in Whom, because of our faith in Him, we dare to have the have the boldness (courage and confidence) of free access (an unreserved approach to God with freedom and without fear).(Eph.3:11,12 The Amplified Bible) Paul goes on to declare, “my

response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask Him to strengthen you by His Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite Him in. And I ask Him, that with both feet planted firmly on love, you’ll be able to take in with all Christians the extravagant dimensions of Christ’s love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.”(Eph.3:14,-19 The Message Bible) As you read what Paul has to say about all that God is doing through Christ Jesus in his life, what is your response? Are you truly alive in Christ, if so how is it making a difference in your life? What do “the extravagant dimensions of Christ’s love” mean to you personally?

Please join me this upcoming week in reading Ephesians.4-6. In these chapters we will discover further insights as to what it means to live as children of the light and put on the armor of God. “Now to Him Who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”(Eph.3:20,21 NIV)

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