



NO MORE IDENTITY CRISIS

When you base your personal worth and self-esteem on your current circumstances and what others think and say about you, you will be susceptible to identity crisis. Many Christians go through times of self-doubt and self-condemnation, especially when they fail to meet their own ideas of what God expects from them. They mistakenly allow their personal performance, their problems, their sins, their wounds, and unmet needs to define who they are.

Paul's letter to the Ephesian church was written to tell Christians about their new identity in Christ. In his epistle, Paul introduced a new paradigm – a new way of viewing the world and oneself. He provided a unique perspective: God's. The new paradigm allows us to see the reality of God's blessings "in heavenly realms" (**Eph. 1:3**).

God called us to the position of "holy people" (**Eph. 1:4**); it is His work, not ours. We are called to a relationship of being set apart to the Lord (*saints*). And that relationship stands, even if we are still worldly and immature. He chose us for a purpose: to be holy and without guilt. First, we are guiltless in Christ in the heavenly realms through the righteousness of Jesus. Second, we are called to live holy lives on earth for the glory of God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

As saints, we have two identities. We are human beings with an earthly identity found in this world; and we are spiritual beings with a heavenly identity found in Jesus Christ. As Christians, we really operate in two spheres: the human and the divine, the visible and invisible. Physically, we are here on earth with human bodies; but spiritually, we are seated with Christ in the heavenly sphere. And it is this heavenly realm that provides the power and direction for the Christians' earthly walk. Our lives now, if it is in Christ, is in the heavenly realm. We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in heaven because of our identity in Christ.

Our sovereign God has predestined our adoption into His royal family. *Predestination* refers primarily to what God does for saved people. While *election* concerns people, predestination refers to God's purposes for His saints. God has predestined our adoption (**Eph. 1:5**), our transformation to Christlikeness (**Rom. 8:29-30**), as well as our future inheritance (**Eph. 1:11**).

Adoption was common in ancient Greco-Roman society as a means of bringing a desired person into one's family. Under Roman law, an adopted child literally became a new person.

Everything about the former family, including any debts or obligations, was eliminated as if it never existed. The adopted person then received all the rights and privileges as a legitimate member of the new family.

We do not get into God's family by adoption. We get into His family by being born again. Adoption is the act of God by which He gives His born-again children an adult standing in His family, even though they might still be immature. Why does He do this? So that we might immediately begin to claim our inheritance and enjoy our spiritual wealth. Our standing or identity in Christ is already accepted in heaven, but this is not evident to the world at present. The Holy Spirit's work in us is to reveal to the world, bit by bit, our "private" heavenly adoption.

All sins, past, present and future, have been forgiven, paid for by the blood of Jesus (**Eph. 1:7**). Because of this act of redemption, we can be adopted into God's family as His sons. The person and work of Christ is at the center of God's revealed plan. The headship of Christ is necessary if this world and its inhabitants are to be restored to God's eternal flow of blessings (**Eph. 1:10**).

Our restoration to God's family is based on who Christ is, what He accomplished, and what He represents for eternity. Adoption in Christ brings full "adult" rights to enjoy the inheritance now. We were put in Christ; our identity is based on this fact. All of the blessings of our inheritance in Christ are realized in this heavenly position of being in Christ. Christ is seated at God's right hand now (**Eph. 1:20**). And since we are in Christ, then we are also seated in heavenly places. That is our position in the spiritual sphere. This position gives us our heavenly identity as adopted sons and heirs in Christ.

Faith is the beginning of our new standing in Christ. The moment we believe, we are placed in Christ, and henceforth we can operate in our new identity. Simply stated, if you are not in Christ, God can't bless you for eternity. He can bless you for awhile, so you will turn to Him, but He cannot bless you forever by yourself. Everything that God planned, He planned to do in Christ, through Christ, and with Christ. If you are outside of Christ, then there's nothing for you.

We often identify ourselves more by what's wrong with us than what God has already made right in us. We need to tell each other that we are not our problems. We are not our wounds. We are not our sins. We are persons of radical worth and unrevealed beauty. We are sons and daughters of God!