

Who Are You?

Spiritual Identity Crisis

Pastor James Bell

As we are ending this encouraging series on “Who Are You” with part 9 today, this question of our identity in Christ must continue if we are to operate in being Christ-like and bring honor and glory to the one who sits on the throne. As we have been given all of the material and every tool we need to build we must be knowledgeable of what we are building. We are building God’s custom house. Paul places emphasis in 1 Corinthians 3 that we are to be very careful or mindful of how we are building upon a foundation that has already been laid. Each of these identities that we have been given to us gives us the ability to do and perform what we have been purposed for. Let’s look at the list that Paul spoke to the Church of Ephesus.

1. Blessed - Reaping benefits from fulfilling a covenant
2. Chosen - a choice based off of a thorough examination of the situation and not an arbitrary happenstance
3. Holy and blameless - to be set apart and without defect or deformity
4. Adopted - adoption, sonship, to make one an heir
5. Graced - empowered by God to do what truth demands
6. Redeemed - purchased in full
7. Forgiven - Released from sin
8. Purposed - to fulfill the call of God

All of this together gives us the purpose of who we are in Christ. To wrap all of this up in one big package we must have one remaining question. What does all of this look like in action? To simplify the understanding of each and all of these identities we have viewed it from Who Are You, but the fullness lies with the question of Whose Am I. When this revelation hits us we will have a love, joy, and a zeal that deems us exuberant. When we realize “Whose we are” then the “who are we” becomes life changing.

The apostle John declared that as Jesus is, so are we in this world. Jesus's identity becomes our identity. But we must first know who He is. Turn with me to:

Mark 9:14–29 NLT

14 When they returned to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd surrounding them, and some teachers of religious law were arguing with them. 15 When the crowd saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with awe, and they ran to greet him. 16 “What is all this arguing about?” Jesus asked. 17 One of the men in the crowd spoke up and said, “Teacher, I brought my son so you could heal him. He is possessed by an evil spirit that won’t let him talk. 18 And whenever this spirit seizes him, it throws him violently to the ground. Then he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast out the evil spirit, but they couldn’t do it.” 19 Jesus said to them, “You faithless people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.” 20 So they brought the boy. But when the evil spirit saw Jesus, it threw the child into a violent convulsion, and he fell to the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth. 21 “How long has this been happening?” Jesus asked the boy’s father. He replied, “Since he was a little boy. 22 The spirit often throws him into the fire or into water, trying to kill him. Have mercy on us and help us, if you can.” 23 “What do you mean, ‘If I can’?” Jesus asked. “Anything is possible if a person believes.” 24 The father instantly cried out, “I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!” 25 When Jesus saw that the crowd of onlookers was growing, he rebuked the evil spirit. “Listen, you spirit that makes this boy unable to hear and speak,” he said. “I command you to come out of this child and never enter him again!” 26 Then the spirit screamed and threw the boy into another violent convulsion and left him. The boy appeared to be dead. A murmur ran through the crowd as people said, “He’s dead.” 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him to his feet, and he stood up. 28 Afterward, when Jesus was alone in the house with his disciples, they asked him, “Why couldn’t we cast out that evil spirit?” 29 Jesus replied, “This kind can be cast out only by prayer.”

There are a few things we need to notice within these 15 verses.

1. There was an argument that was taking place among the disciples, the crowd, and the religious teachers of the law. They were known to be Scribes or in a more understandable terminology, they were lawyers. So the disciples were followers of Jesus, the crowd only knew Jesus by his miracles and the Lawyers knew that Jesus was threat to their position. Arguments come from divided hearts. Groups or individuals that don’t see eye to eye. And often times these arguments bring for doubt and fear. Jesus confirms this with verse 19...you faithless people. (Fear and doubt is the opposite of faith.) Faithlessness shows divided loyalty. Notice than when Jesus showed up on the scene that how the hearts of the crowd began to shift. They were fill with amazement and began to seek His counsel. The father of the boy spoke up and addressed Jesus as “teacher”. So why is this so significant? Jesus was teacher, but the man only addressed Jesus for what he did and not who He was.

This reminds me of blind Bartimaeus. Mark 10:46-52

Mark 10:46–52 NLT

46 Then they reached Jericho, and as Jesus and his disciples left town, a large crowd followed him. A blind beggar named Bartimaeus (son of Timaeus) was sitting beside the road. 47 When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was nearby, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” 48 “Be quiet!” many of the people yelled at him. But he only shouted louder, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” 49 When Jesus heard him, he stopped and said, “Tell him to come here.” So they called the blind man. “Cheer up,” they said. “Come on, he’s calling you!” 50 Bartimaeus threw aside his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus. 51 “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked. “My Rabbi,” the blind man said, “I want to see!” 52 And Jesus said to him, “Go, for your faith has healed you.” Instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus down the road.

Notice how Bartimaeus first addressed Jesus. “Son of David”. The position of the blind beggar heart was that He knew who he was addressing. Not because of what he saw (because he was blind) but because of what he heard. His faith was built on hearing and not seeing. In verse 51 he did address Jesus as Rabbi or teacher but his first cry out to Jesus was from a positional heart of Lordship.

2. Let’s continue with our story:

Mark 9:21–24 NLT

21 “How long has this been happening?” Jesus asked the boy’s father. He replied, “Since he was a little boy. 22 The spirit often throws him into the fire or into water, trying to kill him. Have mercy on us and help us, if you can.” 23 “What do you mean, ‘If I can’?” Jesus asked. “Anything is possible if a person believes.” 24 The father instantly cried out, “I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!”

Jesus asked a question. But I want you to ponder this question. Do we think that Jesus really didn’t know the answer. Do we think that Jesus was looking for information or was the question asked to change the position of the father's heart? The question caused the man to recall the boy's childhood and how he has suffered, but the question was purposed to show the needless suffering that he was positioned in outside of Christ. This is realized because his plea for help with the words...Have mercy on us and help us, if you can.

I like how Jesus gets straight to the point, “What do you mean, ‘If I can’?” By now the father was out of answers and he realized his need for more than a teacher. Anything is possible if a person believes, Jesus said. The writer of Hebrews addressed this in Hebrews 11:6

Hebrews 11:6 NLT

6 And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

This kind of faith is not in the reliance of our ability to believe but this faith is a gift of God's grace. Humanly it is impossible to believe for something we cannot see. It is only by our reliance upon God's grace to believe for what logic says cannot happen. And it becomes ours because the gift of faith is a gift. It's not what we did to earn or deserve it. It is given by God alone. Just like Jesus asked the man the question. You have been in this situation for this long because you did not know you had another option. The father of the boy had a Spiritual Identity Crisis. This was the question that Jesus posed for the shifting of his heart. And Jesus made this know to His disciples also.

Mark 9:28–29 NLT

28 Afterward, when Jesus was alone in the house with his disciples, they asked him, “Why couldn't we cast out that evil spirit?” 29 Jesus replied, “This kind can be cast out only by prayer.”

Jesus addressed their prayer life. Faithlessness produces spiritual paralysis—not because power is unavailable, but because one hasn't submitted to the channel through which it flows. They allowed the argument of the Lawyers to bring about doubt and fear. It introduced a wayward aspect of their faith. They were moved by what their eyes didn't see and it gave way to what their ears were hearing. Just because we don't see the manifestation taking place doesn't mean that it's not happening in the Spirit. Their faithlessness was a perverted faith. It was a fundamental misunderstanding of where power originates. Jesus redirected them to prayer as the posture in which they submit situations to God's reign, challenging them to trust God's work rather than their own. Faithlessness means attempting to operate independently from God rather than in dependence on Him. It's the dependency of Whose we are. It must be in Christ alone. Pray is our submitting to his Lordship through time of meditation and conversation. It is when we submit our hearts to fully transparent and vulnerable to His leading and convictions. Prayer is our two way conversation that brings a bond our fellowship with God. It allows revelation to make know to use the mysteries of God. The revelations through prayer and sitting at His feet strengthens our faith.

So is our faith based off of what we see or what we hear?

Romans 10:17 CSB

17 So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.

Faith is hearing God and hearing God is the revelation of Jesus Christ. So just as Jesus addressed the Spiritual Identity Crisis that the father and the disciples were faced with and that they had to come to the reckoning of. Let's look at one more incident in Acts.

Since we have been addressing these identities from Ephesians 1, and that Paul was speaking to the church of Ephesus we must look at this recording from his visit to them. Acts 19 records Pauls third mission trip and guess who was visited during this trip? EPHESUS! Turn with me to

Acts 19:8–18 NLT

8 Then Paul went to the synagogue and preached boldly for the next three months, arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God. 9 But some became stubborn, rejecting his message and publicly speaking against the Way. So Paul left the synagogue and took the believers with him. Then he held daily discussions at the lecture hall of Tyrannus. 10 This went on for the next two years, so that people throughout the province of Asia—both Jews and Greeks—heard the word of the Lord. 11 God gave Paul the power to perform unusual miracles. 12 When handkerchiefs or aprons that had merely touched his skin were placed on sick people, they were healed of their diseases, and evil spirits were expelled. 13 A group of Jews was traveling from town to town casting out evil spirits. They tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus in their incantation, saying, “I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out!” 14 Seven sons of Sceva, a leading priest, were doing this. 15 But one time when they tried it, the evil spirit replied, “I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?” 16 Then the man with the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and attacked them with such violence that they fled from the house, naked and battered. 17 The story of what happened spread quickly all through Ephesus, to Jews and Greeks alike. A solemn fear descended on the city, and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly honored. 18 Many who became believers confessed their sinful practices.

Authority is inherent in our spiritual identity, not something separate from it. The connection of the authority we operate in is foundational to our identity rather than incidental.

Hebrews 4:16 NLT

16 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Jesus understood the authority He walked in because of His identity in God. Paul knew who he was because he knew whose he was. His identity was not based off of what he could do but what could be done through him. It will always be in Christ alone! Jesus possesses all authority and dwells within believers, believers access that same authority—their authority is actually His. This means you don’t acquire authority through accomplishments, credentials, or spiritual techniques. Rather, your life and identity flow from Christ as your head, and this spiritual identity carries your divine authority.

The Sceva sons’ failure in Acts 19 illustrates this perfectly. They attempted to invoke Jesus’s name as a magical tool without possessing an actual identity in Him. They had no connection to Christ, so they had no authority—the demon recognized this gap immediately. By contrast, Paul’s authority operated naturally because his entire identity was rooted in Christ. Authority exists because one is in Christ.

This explains why people cannot consistently behave in ways inconsistent with how they perceive themselves. If you don’t grasp your identity in Christ, you won’t exercise the authority that belongs to you. A spiritual identity crisis breeds insecurity and fear, and you cannot exercise authority over what you fear; if you’re uncertain about who you are and whose you are, the enemy will use fear to manipulate and control you.

The reverse is also true: clarity about your identity produces confidence in your authority. When you know to whom you belong, you can walk in security and confidence. This is why Paul's letters constantly reinforce believers' identity in Christ—not as abstract theology, but as the foundation for living out the authority Christ has delegated to His church.

And when the spiritual identity crisis was revealed in verse 17, great fear came upon the city and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ was honored. This fear brought forth repentance among believers. As the story continues these believers publicly departed from pagan worship by allowing fire to consume.

In closing I want to give you a few more identities that God has declared over you:

Romans 3:24 We are justified (declared “not guilty” of sin).

Romans 8:1 We await no condemnation.

Romans 8:2 We are set free from the law of sin and death.

1 Corinthians 1:2 We are sanctified and made acceptable in Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:30 We are righteous and holy in Christ,

1 Corinthians 15:22 We will be made alive at the Resurrection.

2 Corinthians 5:17 We are a new creation.

2 Corinthians 5:21 We receive God's righteousness.

Galatians 3:28 We are one in Christ with all other believers.

Ephesians 2:6 We have been raised up to sit with Christ in glory.

Ephesians 2:10 We are God's work of art.

Ephesians 2:13 We have been brought near to God.

Ephesians 3:6 We share in the promises of the gospel,

Ephesians 3:12 We can come with freedom and confidence into God's presence.

Ephesians 5:29–30 We are members of Christ's body, the church.

Colossians 2:10 We have been given fullness in Christ.

Colossians 2:11 We are set free from our sinful nature.

2 Timothy 2:10 We will have eternal glory.