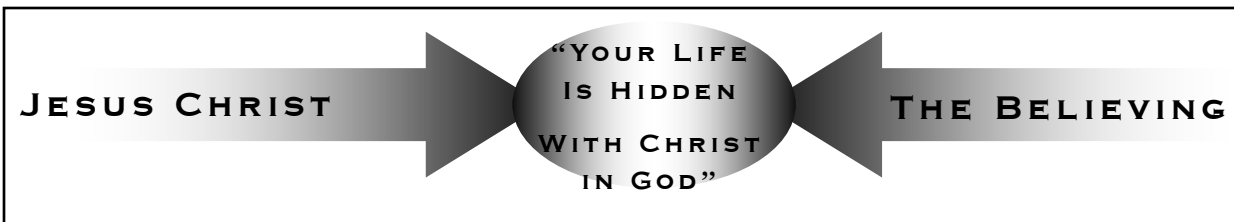


CHAPTER 5

Reigning Grace AND OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST



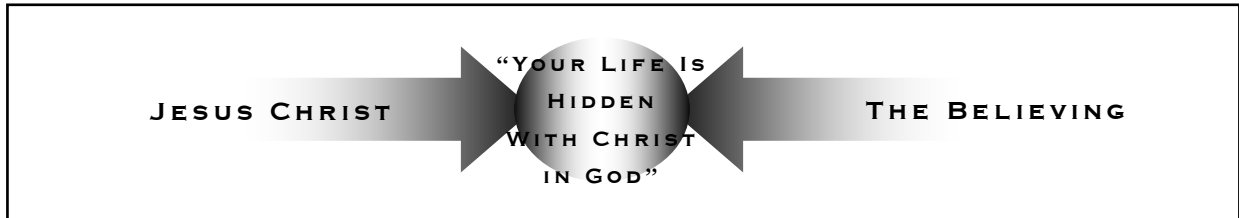
Patrick J. Griffiths @ 2009

Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

CHAPTER 5

REIGNING GRACE AND OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4).



REVIEW

Jesus Christ is enough thus He is all that we will ever need and someday all we would ever want. The marvel of His grace is against the backdrop of our complete depravity. We could not merit what grace bestowed. What we were in Adam we no longer are, but still have. Our new identity is imputed to us based on the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is who we are before the Father. This lesson seeks to establish our identity in Christ.

In our last study we sought to understand who we were **in Adam**. This study seeks to understand who we are **in Christ**.



AN OPENING THOUGHT

- Late one night at the insane asylum, an inmate shouted, "I am Napoleon!"
 - Another one said, "How do you know?"
- The first inmate said, "God told me!"
 - A voice from another room shouted, "I did not!"

Who we are and how we come to understand our true identity forms the centerpiece of this study.



INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered who you are, why you are here, and where you are heading? In the midst of these questions, how are we to see ourselves in light of creation's vastness?

- **The questions common to all**

Today we have such terms as “self-esteem” and “self-image.” Our evaluation of who we are is our “self-esteem.” Our self-esteem is how we see ourselves. In reading several secular authors, they had this to say concerning self-esteem:

Do you believe in yourself? Do you give yourself the credit you deserve? Are you accepted by others, are you cared about, will others go out of their way to ensure that you are safe and well? Self-esteem is how much you value yourself and how important you think you are. Good self-esteem is important because it helps you to hold your head high and feel proud of yourself and what you can do. It gives you the courage to try new things and the power to believe in yourself. ¹

In what way are we capable of evaluating ourselves? Such an evaluation is on our performance and acceptance in marriage, at the job, and with our children, our friendships or lack therein, and the level of comfort we live in.

- **The emptiness of life lived apart from Him**

The author of Ecclesiastes experienced all that life had to offer and came to this conclusion:

⁸ “Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men — many concubines. ⁹ Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me. ¹⁰ All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor. ¹¹ Thus I considered all my activities which my

hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and **behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun**" (Eccl. 2:8-11).

Friend, "life is an empty bubble on the sea of nothingness"² . . . if it is lived in the absence of Jesus Christ.

All the created power in heaven and earth cannot bring peace to a troubled soul.³

There are still many who know this truth, but rest has not happened. Why, how is it possible for those who believe in Jesus to still have no rest? Perhaps the breakdown lies in a failure to see all of life through Him. Christ must be viewed as all and in all.

The sun does not shine as warm through the air as it does through a magnifying glass. Take a magnifying glass and hold it between you and the sun and the glass will contract the beams of the sun so that it shall have the power of heat, even to burn again. Christ is the magnifying glass that is held between God and the soul.⁴

- **The key to resting in the difficulty is by seeing that He is who we are before the Father.**

I hesitate to make this statement; nonetheless, I am compelled to do so. I am going to give you the reason why just knowing about Christ is not going to transform your life. However, in giving the reason, let us not then conclude that these things become the key that if strictly followed produce a certain result. Neither God nor the life He gives can be reduced to a formula. God is never at the mercy of man. God, in His timing and according to His good pleasure, is the revealer of His revelation to man. Nevertheless, there are eight truths forming a foundation for moving what we know in difficulty to how we live in rest.

Self-esteem and self-image wrap themselves around us as blankets of security. **Though you have an opinion of who you are, it is often very deceptive, greatly erratic, and highly dangerous.** For some, their blankets are threadbare and moth-eaten. What people think and say consumes their security. They are fearful and anxious, for fear that they will disappoint. They do not see themselves as being loved, accepted, and forgiven.

How do we battle an enemy that is of our own doing? Learning to rest in the perceived difficulty is to see that He is who I am before

the Father.

I will be using the word “understand” in this way: To understand is to see how the various pieces fit into a seamless whole. Each of these parts must be seen as fitting into a seamless whole.

Christian growth is simply accepting what we have always been from the first day we accepted Christ.⁵

Remember that Christian growth is merely accepting what you have always had from the first day you gave your life to Christ.⁶

“In practical terms, this means that Christians are not laboring to *achieve* a life that they do not yet have or to *obtain* a victory that has not yet been won. They are *participants* in the very life of Christ and in the victory that *He* has *already* won. Christian, you are a partaker of the resurrection life of Christ, and He has already *defeated* and *broken the power of* the sin that you are facing right now - by His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension! As a participant in His life, your calling is not to try to achieve something for yourself that He has not achieved, but to *believe* what He has already done for you and to *walk* in it.”⁷

There are eight truths I would like to consider in this study.

I. We must understand what we were we no longer are, but still have (Rom. 5:12-21).

¹² “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned— ¹³ for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. ¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. ¹⁶ The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. ¹⁷ For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ So then as through

one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. ²⁰ The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:12-21).

It is essential that we see who we are in Him and that He is who I am before the Father. What we once were, we no longer are, but still have. Before salvation, our identity is in Adam. After salvation, our identity is in Christ.

II. We must understand what we were was crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:1-11).

¹ "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we **who died to sin** still live in it? ³ Or do you not know that all of **us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?** ⁴ Therefore we **have been buried with Him through baptism into death**, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ **For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,** ⁶ knowing this, that our **old self was crucified with Him**, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for **he who has died** is freed from sin. ⁸ Now if **we have died with Christ**, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. ¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ **Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus"** (Rom. 6:1-11).

In His crucifixion, I died, and in His burial, I was buried. This is no less real than what I was in Adam. I was dead in Adam to God, but I am now dead to sin in Christ.

I am legally and ethically involved. I have been sentenced to death in Christ. It is my *judicial* position. Christ's death *for*

sin is automatically my death *to* sin.⁸

God expects nothing of self but that it be crucified, which judicially it already is.⁹

The death of Christ simply means for me that when He died I died, and in God's view I am now as if I had been executed for my own sin and was now recognized as another person who has risen with Christ and is justified from his former sins because he has been executed for them (Rom. 6:7). Not only so, it is the secret of my sanctification, for on that cross of Calvary, I, the sinful self, was put to death; and when I lay myself over with Him upon that Cross and reckon myself dead, Christ's risen life passes into me and it is no longer my struggling, my goodness, or my badness, but my Lord who lives in me.¹⁰

III. We must understand we have been raised with Christ (Col. 2:20-3:1).

²⁰ “If **you have died with Christ** to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, ²¹ ‘Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!’ ²² (which all refer to things destined to perish with use) — in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? ²³ These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence. ¹ Therefore if **you have been raised up with Christ**, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (Col. 2:20-3:1).

My resurrection with Christ is no less real than my death and burial. The language of Scripture is certain. If I am saved, then I am raised. This has no bearing on whether or not you feel it. You cannot undo by your unbelief what has been done.

Your failure to appropriate or understand cannot make false what is true.

If they fail to reign, they are simply not exercising their rights. The reckoning does not produce the fact; it simply springs from the fact.¹¹

IV. We must understand we are now seated with Him in the

heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:5, 6).

⁵ “even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and **raised us up with Him**, and **seated us with Him** in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:5, 6)

My position with Christ is no less real than my resurrection. I am seated with Christ. You live your life with all of its twists and turns, but this cannot negate what is true. You are seated with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus right now.

Abundant life is not something to work for, but rather is something given to be worked from. My acceptance is not based on what I do but rather on what I am.¹²

Your life now flows in a steady stream from the throne.¹³

V. We must understand our lives are now hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3).

¹ “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory” (Col. 3:1-4).

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

Unless we can bring to God a perfect righteousness, we are undone forever. ¹⁴

My life must be hidden with Christ in God or all is lost. The means used whereby this truth becomes a reality is found in the Holy Spirit baptizing the New Testament believer into the very body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27). Our union with Him is so complete that our Lord could say to Saul in the persecution of His people, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4).

We have gone through a period in the life of our nation where many were using the phrase WWJD (i.e. “What would Jesus do?”). Though the thought is positive, there is an under-current that is deadly.

We conceive of the Christian life as an imitation of Christ. It is not, however, an imitation of Christ, it is a participation in Christ.¹⁵

The Christian life is not a life of imitation.¹⁶

VI. We must understand Christ is our life (Col. 3:4; Gal. 2:20).

“When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4).

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20).

Christianity is Christ. The Christian life is Christ living His life in and through the believer. The life of Christ is reproduced in the child of God by the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷

So complete has become Paul's identification with Christ that his separate personality is merged into that of Christ. This language helps one to understand the victorious cry in Ro 7:25. It is the union of the vine and the branch (John 15:1-6).¹⁸

Jesus is the Vine, and we are the branches. Branches have no independent life. Branches “live and move and have their being” by the life of the vine. Branches never produce fruit; branches bear the fruit that is produced by the life of the vine through them.

I can illustrate this principle by taking a beautiful new white shirt and dipping or immersing it in a pan of red dye. And when I pull it out of the pan of red dye it is no longer identified as the white shirt. It is no longer a white shirt. It has a completely new identity. It has changed its identity. It is the red shirt. The believer took on a new identity when he was baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. Our identity was changed by our union with Christ. We are now identified as Christians. We are members of Christ. We are no longer in Adam. We have a new family with new identity. Christ is the head of our new family.¹⁹

Listen carefully to what Chuck Swindoll calls “heresy.”

“What seems so right is, in fact, heresy – the one I consider the most dangerous heresy on earth. What is it? *The emphasis on what we do for God, instead of what God does for us.*”²⁰ He continues with the following, “Why not emphasize how much I do for God instead of what He does for me? Because that is heresy, plain and simple. How? By exalting my own effort and striving for my own accomplishments, I insult His grace and steal the credit that belongs to Him alone.”²¹

Listen to what Bob George calls “an affront to the cross!”

We reason that now that we are in Christ, it’s up to us to walk the straight and narrow and to name our sins one by one. What an affront to the cross!²²

Our error is in thinking we are something other than what we are in Christ. Friend, if we are saved by grace alone, why do we now believe it is up to us to get the job finished?

Another man wrote, “I claim that Christ plus my efforts won the victory – either futile without the other. I believe that God expects every man to do his part toward that salvation.”²³

I flee from such thinking. I reject it completely. Christ is my life.

VII. We must understand God the Father now sees us in the real righteousness of Jesus Christ (1 John 4:17; 1 Cor. 1:30).

“By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; **because as He is, so also are we in this world**” (1 John 4:17).

“**But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption**” (1 Cor. 1:30).

If the imputed damnation of Adam is real for those who are lost, then so is the imputed righteousness of Christ real for those who are saved. If I have His righteousness, then mine is of no consequence.

Our justification is not made up by what we have done or all that we can possibly do.²⁴

VIII. Who we are is who He is before the Father.

For whatever reason, we feel compelled to unite what we have in Adam and who we are in Christ as how the Father now sees us. If we are seen by the Father in any way other than in Christ, we are lost and condemned. For us to be acceptable before the Father, we must have the very righteousness of Christ.

Today you ask me, “Who am I?” I respond by saying,

- I am accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1)
- I am a beloved Son
- I am well-pleasing before the Father
- I am loved without condition
- I am accepted without requirement
- I am forgiven without limit

Our identity does not consist in what we do, but who we are in Christ.

APPLICATION: (Making the Transfer)

Renewing the mind is a little like refinishing furniture. It is a two-stage process. It involves taking off the old and replacing it with the new. The old is the lies you have learned to tell or were taught by those around you; it is the attitudes and ideas that have become a part of your thinking but do not reflect reality. The new is the truth. To renew your mind is to involve yourself in the process of allowing God to bring to the surface the lies you have mistakenly accepted and replace them with truth. To the degree that you do this, your behavior will be transformed. ²⁵

Christ is sufficient. Friend, learning to rest in the perceived difficulty is to see that who I am He is before the Father. Do not satisfy yourself with anything apart from Christ.

How do we battle an enemy that is of our own doing? We need to see Him. My prayer is that it would please the Father to show you who you are in His Son and what His Son is for you.

In light of what we have studied, let us consider the following questions

- Does the Father ever see me as anything other than what I am in Christ?

- Can I undo what He has done for me in Christ?
- Must I maintain by my works what I have merited by His grace?
- Why would I wish to choose what is contrary to what I am in Him?
- Can anything created be as satisfying to me as He is?
- Does the Father ever see me as wicked?
- Does the Father ever think differently of me because of my sin?
- Does the Father ever deal with me according to my sin?

¹ Source Unknown

² Jean Paul Sartre - French philosophy, play writer, and novelist (1905-1980).
http://www.christiantreasury.com/Apologetics/Apologetic_Atheism.htm

³ Jeremiah Burroughs, "Christ is All in All," in *The Saints Treasury*, 1657, 4.

⁴ Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Saints Treasury*, 4.

⁵ Michael Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness*, (Grand Rapids:Baker Book House, 1991), 109.

⁶ Michael Wells, *Sidetracked In The Wilderness*, 143.

⁷ Charles Leiter, *Justification and Regeneration* (Heart Cry Resources - www.heartcrymissionary.com, 2007), 37.

⁸ Emphasis his, L.E. Maxwell, *Born Crucified*, (Chicago:Moody Publishers, 1945), 17

⁹ F.J. Huegel, *Forever Triumphant*, (Grand Rapids:Zondervan, 1955), 19.

¹⁰ A.B. Simpson, *The Christ Life*, (Harrisburg, PA:Christian Publications, 1980), 16.

¹¹ F.J. Huegel, *Forever Triumphant*, 15, 19.

¹² Michael Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness*, 14.

¹³ Modified a statement by Huegel, *Forever Triumphant*, 57.

¹⁴ Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Saints Treasury*, 3.

¹⁵ F.J. Heugel, *Bone of His Bone*, (Sargent GA:The SeedSower, 1997), 14.

¹⁶ Heugel, *Bone of His Bone*, 15.

¹⁷ Source Unknown

¹⁸ A.T. Robertson, *Galatians*,

¹⁹ "Romans 6 The Christian's Identification with Christ," *The Exchanged Life in Romans*, Message by Wil Pounds, 1999.

²⁰ Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening*, (Dallas:Word Publishing, 1990), 19.

²¹ Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening*, 23.

²² Bob George, *Faith that Pleases God*, (Eugene:Harvest Publishers, 2001), 131.

²³ A quote in *Victory in Christ* by Charles G. Trumbull, pages 46, 47. Trumbull disagrees with the individual who wrote the statement.

²⁴ Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Saints Treasury*, 3.

²⁵ Charles Stanley, *In Touch*