

# Who I am in Christ

## Do you know who you are?

John Newton was born in England in the early 1700s. His mother, a devoted Christian, taught him Scripture and planted seeds of faith in his young heart. But when she died tragically at the age of seven, Newton's world was shattered. With no spiritual anchor, he was sent to sea— young, angry, and alone. As a sailor, Newton spiraled into a life of rebellion. He rejected everything his mother had taught him. He pursued money, power, and pleasure—and eventually became a captain in the transatlantic slave trade. His reputation was infamous. Even among the roughest sailors, Newton stood out for his blasphemy, profanity, and cruelty. He had completely lost his sense of identity—adrift in sin, hardened by shame, and far from God.

But everything changed in 1748.

Caught in a violent storm that threatened to sink his ship, Newton—desperate and terrified—cried out to God for mercy. That cry became the turning point. It didn't result in instant transformation, but it sparked a journey of repentance. Slowly, he began to seek the Lord, read Scripture, and remember the gospel his mother once shared. Eventually, he left the slave trade, became an abolitionist, and answered God's call to preach the gospel.

Years later, reflecting on the grace that pursued and redeemed him, Newton wrote words we still sing today:

*“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see.”*

Those lyrics didn't come from a theologian seated in an ivory tower—they came from a man who had searched for his identity through storms, sin, and sorrow... and finally found it in the grace of Jesus Christ.

Your identity shapes how you live, how you love, and how you respond when life shakes you. Without a secure identity, we drift—tossed by the waves of comparison, the weight of expectations, and the ever-changing tides of culture. “Am I enough?” becomes a haunting question when we don't know whose we are. It's terrifying to build your worth on other people's opinions, performance, or even your own feelings. That's like sailing through a storm with no compass and no rudder. But when your identity is anchored in Christ, you have something unshakable.

Today's message is about this very anchor—who we are in Jesus Christ. Who but our Creator has the right to define us?

- You are chosen, holy, and dearly loved – *Colossians 3:12*
- You are God's workmanship, created in Christ for good works – *Ephesians 2:10*
- You are fearfully and wonderfully made – *Psalms 139*

At the foot of the cross, we discover that our value is not defined by what others say about us—but by what God has declared over us.

He formed you.

He knows you.

He calls you.

Through Christ, we are born again—not of flesh and blood, but of the Spirit. And as we walk with Him, our identity is continually shaped, rooted, and refined—so that our lives point not to ourselves, but to the glory of the Father in heaven.

So here's the question we'll wrestle with today:

### **Where is your identity anchored?**

Is it drifting with the winds of culture... or secured in the unchanging grace of Christ?

Let's go to the Word and discover who we truly are.

## **I am Made New and Forgiven**

If our identity apart from Christ leaves us lost and adrift—like John Newton—then our identity in Christ begins with this glorious truth: we are made new. When we invited Jesus Christ into our hearts, a radical transformation took place. Like the Israelites led out of exile, God made a way through our wilderness—causing streams of living water to flow where our hearts were once dry (Isaiah 43:18–19). No longer do we define ourselves by the shifting standards and shallow values of a world that lives as if this physical life is all there is.<sup>1</sup> Just think about our world today. A teenager posts a picture online and waits for hearts and comments to decide if they matter. A businessman measures his worth by the number on a screen. A young mom wonders if she's doing enough because everyone else looks perfect on social media. We're still chasing identity in all the wrong places—until grace interrupts the storm, just like it did for John Newton.

Through the new birth—born of water and the Spirit—we have been reconciled to God through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18–19). That means the old systems of status, success, and self-

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<sup>1</sup> Scott J. Hafemann, [2 Corinthians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 242.

worth have been judged and left behind.<sup>2</sup> We are no longer who others say we are. Instead, we are masterpieces of God’s grace—eternal children of the King, divinely crafted to walk in the good works He prepared for us (Ephesians 2:10). And as we live out this new identity, our lives shine with the light of Christ, pointing others to the glory of our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

Not only are we made new in Christ, but we are also completely set free from condemnation—because our new identity is no longer rooted in guilt, but in grace. The law of God, though holy and good, was never meant to save us. It served as a roadmap pointing us toward holiness and the life of a living sacrifice. But as Paul explains, the law was powerless to transform the heart because it was weakened by our sinful nature—our fleshly desires (Romans 8:3). Even if we failed at just one point, the consequence was the same: spiritual death, the just wages of sin.<sup>3</sup> But God intervened. He did what the law could not do—He sent His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to bear our sin, to satisfy the demands of justice, and to reconcile us to Himself. The cost was immeasurable—the lifeblood of the sinless Son of God, poured out on the cross in our place.<sup>4</sup>

Where once our identities were shaped by shame, condemnation, and spiritual death, we are now—through the new birth—eternally reconciled to the Father. And as His children and heirs, God has given us His Spirit. The Holy Spirit not only leads us into all truth but empowers us to resist the devil, and in Christ’s authority, the enemy flees (James 4:7). Christ is the Son by nature; we are children by grace. Yet we are fully His—forever welcomed, fully known, and eternally loved. Praise be to God! In Christ, my past is gone, and my soul is made new.

## I am God’s Child and Heir

But God didn’t just rescue us from sin—He welcomed us into His family. Through the Spirit of adoption, we are not only forgiven but are now called sons and daughters of God, and co-heirs with Christ of all that belongs to our heavenly Father (Romans 8:14–17). This new identity empowers us to “put off the old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires”

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<sup>2</sup> Mark A. Seifrid, [The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Second Letter to the Corinthians](#), ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2014), 251–252.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [Romans](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 248.

<sup>4</sup> A. Skevington Wood, [“Ephesians,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 25.

(Ephesians 4:22)—because we no longer see ourselves as slaves to sin, but as beloved children, fully equipped with the resources of our Father’s kingdom.<sup>5</sup>

In Jewish law, truth is established by the testimony of two witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6; Matthew 18:16). And when doubt creeps in—when we feel spiritually slow, dry, or discouraged—Paul reminds us that both our spirit and the Holy Spirit testify that we truly belong to God. We are not abandoned. We are not imposters. We are family. Therefore, we do not need to fear the devil, nor live under the bondage of sin. In Christ, we have been given the power to present our bodies as living sacrifices—holy and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1). As theologian James Edwards beautifully writes:

“Sin abducts, God adopts.

Sin makes slaves, God makes children.

Sin provokes fear, the Spirit evokes trust.

Sin foments rebellion and hostility, the Spirit leads believers to appeal to God in the most intimate and urgent cry: ‘Abba, Father.’”<sup>6</sup>

This is who we are now: not only redeemed—but embraced, empowered, and eternally loved as God’s children.

As Paul declares in Ephesians 1:4–6, God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world—not reluctantly or randomly, but in love and according to His pleasure and will. Our salvation was not an accident, nor was it an afterthought in response to human failure.<sup>7</sup> Before the world was formed—when only God existed—He already had a plan. Rooted in the depths of His love and holiness was His desire to draw people near to Himself, to set them apart as vessels of His glory and righteousness. Just as He chose Abraham to bless the nations (Genesis 12:1–3) and Israel to be a light to the world (Deuteronomy 7:6–8), God’s ultimate plan from eternity past was to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us—so that through faith, we might be adopted into His family as sons and daughters.

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<sup>5</sup> Everett F. Harrison, [“Romans,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 92.

<sup>6</sup> James R. Edwards, [Romans](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 207.

<sup>7</sup> Klyne Snodgrass, [Ephesians](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 49.

This truth—that we are chosen—should never lead to spiritual pride or complacency. While it’s gloriously true that those who are saved are eternally secure, this assurance is not a license to sin (Romans 6:1-5), but a grace-filled invitation to be conformed to the image of Christ. Knowing we’ve been chosen by God should stir us to live with deep humility and overwhelming gratitude, joyfully serving in His kingdom not as fearful slaves, but as beloved children, trusted friends, and co-heirs with Christ—forever (John 15:15). I am not who I was; I am who He says I am.

## I am Set Apart for a Purpose

Not only has God chosen us and adopted us into His family—He has also set us apart, calling us to live with purpose as His royal priesthood and holy nation (1 Peter 2:9). God's act of bringing believers out of darkness and into His marvelous light was not simply a rescue—it was a commissioning. We were set apart to be representatives of His holiness, truth, and mercy in the world. Israel was originally called to fulfill this priestly role, to be a light to the nations. But when they consistently turned from God's commands, He expanded His covenant promises—not by abandoning Israel, but by redefining His people through Christ. Now, the church—the “new Israel”—is made up of both Jew and Gentile, forming one unified people of God.<sup>8</sup> As Peter describes, this holy nation is without geographic borders, unbound by culture, ethnicity, age, or language. It is a spiritual kingdom, global in scope, and anchored in the heart of God.<sup>9</sup>

Our identity, then, is inseparable from our calling. We have been chosen not just for belonging—but for becoming. Set apart to live lives of goodness, holiness, and purpose, we are called to let our righteous deeds point others to the glory of God (Matthew 5:16). We are infinitely loved, purposefully chosen, and deeply treasured by our Creator—not for our sake alone, but that through us, His light would shine in a dark world.

If we are God’s chosen and holy people, then every part of our lives must reflect that truth—for we are not our own but have been bought with a price. While postmodern culture urges us to define our own identities and pursue whatever our hearts desire (1 Corinthians

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, [1, 2 Peter, Jude](#), vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 114.

<sup>9</sup> Norman Hillyer, [1 and 2 Peter, Jude](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 68.

6:12),<sup>10</sup> this mindset stands in direct contrast to God’s design. Our identity, purpose, direction, and meaning flow not from self-expression, but from our relationship with the Lord—the One who created, redeemed, and now indwells us.<sup>11</sup> Apostle Paul reminds us:

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.”

— 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (NIV)

As believers, we are not autonomous beings, set free from sin only to become enslaved by it again. Being God’s temple means living under His rule and presence, refusing to defile what He has made holy. To honor God with our bodies is to invite His will and power to shape our every word, thought, and deed—and, ultimately, our very identity. Like Paul, we can boldly declare: “I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” The life we now live as born-again believers is one of complete surrender and joyful obedience to the One who purchased us at the cost of His own life (Galatians 2:20). I am chosen not just to belong—but to become.

## I am a Citizen of Heaven

As God’s chosen, forgiven, and set-apart people, we must never forget where our true home lies—our citizenship is in heaven, and our lives here on earth are meant to reflect the kingdom to which we belong. To be a colony of heaven in a fallen world<sup>12</sup> is not mere wishful thinking or distant hope; it is a present reality grounded in the finished work of Christ.<sup>13</sup> Though our earthly bodies are frail and perishable—sown in dishonor and weakness (1 Corinthians

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<sup>10</sup> Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [The First Letter to the Corinthians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 265.

<sup>11</sup> Marion L. Soards, [1 Corinthians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 133–134.

<sup>12</sup> G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 269.

<sup>13</sup> G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 268.

15:42–44)—we are not without hope. The same Lord who purchased our redemption will one day complete it, transforming our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body. Even now, as all creation groans like a mother in labor, longing for renewal (Romans 8:19–25), we wait with confident expectation for the day when faith becomes sight and Christ returns in glory.

For though we were once born in the likeness of the earthly man, we shall soon bear the likeness of the heavenly man—Christ Himself. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet, we will be clothed in incorruptible life—free from sorrow, sin, pain, and death forever. Until that day, let us live as citizens of heaven—worthy of the gospel of Christ—so that through our words, our worship, and our witness, the world might catch a glimpse of the One who is coming again: our Lord, our Savior, and our King! I live on earth, but my heart belongs to heaven. We were sown in sin, raised in righteousness, and crowned in glory—all through Jesus Christ, our Lord. And so, brothers and sisters, this is who you are in Christ:

“You are made new in Christ.

You are His child and heir.

You are set apart for His purpose.

You are a citizen of heaven.

So go, live as those who belong—not to this world, but to the kingdom that cannot be shaken—

until the day we see our Savior face to face, and hear Him say, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant.’”