

Remember Who You Are

(Summary of Romans 5 & 6)

Colossians 3:1-4

March 29th, 2009



The Duke of Windsor, who could have become King Edward the VIII of England, had he chosen, died on May the 28th, 1972. On that same night, BBC highlighted some of the main events in his life on a television program that broadcasted all over Europe. In an earlier recorded interview, the Duke talked about his childhood growing up as the Prince of Wales. In that interview, he said his father, King George the V of England, was a very strict disciplinarian. The Duke, then the Prince of Wales, recalled many times when he would step out of line. His behavior would not be conduct that the King thought was fitting for a prince. The Duke said that his dad would say to him, "Son, you have to always remember who you are." Identity was very important to the King of England.

Sometimes Hollywood gets it right, and they understand the importance of identity in our lives. Several years ago, Hollywood had a movie out called Overboard. In that movie, Kurt Russell literally made a household slave out of Goldie Hawn because she could not remember who she was.

In the classic Disney movie the Lion King, toward the end of the movie, there is a scene where Simba came into contact with two weird little creatures. When that meeting is over, his behavior is being influenced by

them. Rafiki comes back into Simba's life and said, "Simba, remember who you are."

I don't know if you have picked up on it or not, but as we have been studying the 6th chapter of Romans, the Apostle Paul has gone to great lengths to make sure we know who we are in Christ. We are going to summarize what Paul has been teaching in Romans and his other writings concerning the importance of remembering who you are in Christ.

We will begin with Colossians 3:1-4 because they summarize what Paul has been teaching in the 5th and 6th chapters of Romans.

Scripture

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

Identity in Christ

There are three principles I have already taught that will help you live a victorious Christian life, but I will go over them again in this lesson. The topic is our identity in Christ. Too many believers suffer from what I call spiritual amnesia. The Apostle Paul takes great pains to show the contrast between who we used to be and who we are now.

1. Where I live determines who I am.

You live in only one of two places. You either live in Adam, or you live in Christ. There is no other choice. If you find yourself in Adam, you are a sinner. If you know you are in Christ, you are no longer a slave of sin, but a slave of righteousness. In other places in Paul's writing, he calls us saints of God. If you are wondering whether you are in Adam or in Christ, the test is that your birth determines where you live. If you have only been physically born from your mother, you are fleshly only, according to Jesus

in John chapter 3. You are in Adam, and you are a sinner. The reason Jesus told Nicodemus that you must be born again is because He knew your physical birth did not prepare you for life in the Kingdom of God. The good news is that you can actually move out of Adam into Christ by what we call a spiritual birth, or a birth from above. Jesus said:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (KJV)

Man must not only have a physical water birth, he must have a spiritual birth from God. The moment the Holy Spirit of God takes the Word of God and opens your eyes to the truth that Jesus Christ died for you on a cross; suffered your eternal separation from God; judged your sin in Christ and you repent of a lifestyle of sin and put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ under the enabling of God's Holy Spirit; you move out of Adam into Christ and you are designated by the Bible term "born again." The moment you become spiritually reborn, you become a slave of righteousness. You are a saint of God. You are not a sinner; you are not a slave to sin anymore. Sin is no longer your master. You now come under the lordship of Jesus Christ for your entire life.

But it is possible to be spiritually reborn and yet not fully understand your freedom in Christ. It is possible to believe that at the moment of rebirth you were forgiven of your sin, yet not fully understand that you are free not to sin again. Sin's power has let go of you.

Shelby Foote wrote a massive three volume history of the Civil War. In one of those volumes, she said when the Emancipation Proclamation was signed in 1863; it literally freed, as fact, all of the slaves in the United States of America. She tells that once that proclamation was signed, the news spread from Capitol Hill out to the streets of Washington, D.C. The headlines carried the news to all of the people in Washington, but it took a little time before the news began to spread out to the valleys and fields of Virginia and the Carolinas. It took a little longer before the news carried to

the plantations in Georgia and Mississippi and Alabama. She said that during the Reconstruction of the South, there were still many, many slaves living in slavery who were free but did not know it. They continued to be yoked with the terrible yoke of slavery. She tells a story of a slave in Alabama, who best captured what many slaves during that time knew, especially on the plantations of Alabama and Mississippi. He said:

"I know nothin' 'bout a man named Abraham Lincoln, 'cept they say he sought us free, and I know nothin' 'bout that."

Can you imagine that? Can you imagine knowing nothing about your emancipation, except that someone had said you are free, but you know nothing about that freedom? Please open your eyes. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ and have been justified by the blood of Christ, sins shackles have fallen off of you, and you are free indeed. Not free to sin because you are under grace, but by God's grace, you are now free not to sin! I am not a slave to sin, I am not a sinner anymore; I am a slave of righteousness. I am a child of the King. From time to time, He has to say into my ear, *young prince; you need to always remember who you are.* It is not what you do that determines who you are. Where you live determines who you are. And it is not what you do that determines where you live; it is your birth, physical or spiritual, that determines where you live.

2. Who I am determines where I am going.

If you live in Adam, you have only experienced a physical birth. You are a sinner and you are going to Hell. I know most people do not want to talk about this. We don't want to think about our children, or parents, or spouse, or co-workers who are on the road to Hell, but it's true. It is not what you do that determines where you are going; it is who you are that determines where you are going. People do not go to Hell because they murder, or steal, or lie, or cheat, or gossip. People do those things because they are sinners. It is being a sinner that determines where you are going. You are not going to Hell when you die; you are already going there now.

You need to wake up and understand that because of your identity as a sinner, you have only experienced a physical birth, and at this very moment, you are going to Hell.

If you have responded to the gospel of Christ and have moved out of Adam into Christ and have become a slave of righteousness, you are going to Heaven. It is not because you do righteous things, but because you are right with God by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. Saints go to Heaven, not because they go to church, or read their Bible, or pray, or tithe, or teach a class; saints are going to Heaven because of who they are. They are saints.

I think we miss it sometimes. I think we are really good about studying verse by verse through the Bible, but we have a hard time putting it all together and forming a systematic theology. But the theology teaches that we are not going to work, or a ballpark, or school, or restaurant (though it feels like that sometimes); you are going to Heaven. We are on the road to Heaven, but we make a lot of pit stops; at work, the ballpark, school, etc. We are missing it in that we don't recognize that when we died with Christ, we have also been raised with Christ. Therefore, we are not to set our minds on things below; we are to set our minds on things above. We are to seek the things that are above, where Christ is, which is in Heaven. He is at the right hand of God, and He is sitting.

Is that a picture, or is that a picture? Why is Jesus sitting? Why is He not pacing back and forth like some of us; worried to death, gripped by fear and worry and anxiety? It is because when He came to the Earth to do the will of His Father, He went to a cross and perfectly completed what the Father sent Him to do. He was sent to be a sacrificial offering on the cross for the sin of the world. On that cross, by offering Himself, He paid the debt of humanity. He cried out, "It is finished!" What He came to do was finished. He came to carry out His part of the covenant that He and the Father had made before the foundation of the world. If He would die for the sin of the world, the Father would reach down and raise Him back alive

and give Him the name above all names. At the name of Jesus, every knee would bow and every tongue would confess that Jesus Christ is Lord! When He finished doing what He came to do, He stayed for a few more days and kind of showed off that glorified body that He had! When that period was over, He ascended back to His Father's right hand side. I believe the first words out of the Father's mouth were "Have a seat!" He took a seat, and it showed that our salvation is finished. There is not anything you can do. But don't let that be bad news to you; let that be glorious news to you. Everything that can and should be done for your salvation has been done on the cross of Calvary in Christ Jesus. When He took that seat, He didn't take a seat to rest because He was half through the job. When He sat down, He sat down signifying that it is finished. He is not pacing back and forth before the throne of God, worried about our salvation or whether we will come to glorification. He knows we will, because He did everything that was needed to be done for our salvation!

Now, if the Bible teaches that I am in Christ and Christ is at the right hand throne of God, then I am at the right hand throne of God. Let that sink in...I already am where I am going. Part of me just arrived before the rest of me! Do you see this? Spiritually, I am already in Christ. It is a done deal; I am already there! So what am I doing there? I am sitting. I am sitting because there is not a thing I can do for my salvation; it has already been done. When I took my seat in Christ, my salvation was over; it is complete. I am not pacing back and forth in Jesus, worrying whether or not I am going to stay in or fall out. I am in Christ, so my salvation is not dependent on me; it is dependent on Him.

Now, I am in Christ, but physically I am still here on Earth. So if Christ is physically in Heaven, then spiritually, He is right here in me. Do you get that? You see, the Bible teaches that I am in Christ and Christ is in me. That is called sanctification. The Christian life is about understanding who I am in Christ, and that Christ is in me. So, the life I live, I live by letting Him live His life through me. So, when I get up to go to work, I am not going to work, I am going to Heaven. Not many of us really think in those terms.

That is why we live such an earth-centered life. If you only believe you are going to work, everything in your life will say you are going to work. Paul teaches us not to set our mind on things down here, but to set our mind on things up there.

3. Where I am going determines what I wear.

Think how differently it would be if I dressed like I was going to Heaven. We will discover in Paul's writings that after he tells us about who we are in Christ, he will tell us we should "put off" and "put on." He will talk about behaviors and attitudes and actions. He will use the language of going to your closet. As a believer, you go into your changing room and strip yourself of everything that says you used to be a slave of sin, and put on a wardrobe that declares you are a slave of righteousness.

Usually, before you dress, you think about where you are going, and that determines what you put on. I am entering the phase of life where I am really conscience that what I am wearing fits where I am going. I don't trust myself like I used to, so I go ask my wife if it looks ok. When I ask if it looks ok, I am not talking about my socks matching my suit. I am not asking if my tie matches my suit, or my shirt matches my jeans. I am not asking what kind of shoes I should wear. I am asking if everything I am wearing signifies where I am going. I want to make sure that what I have on is appropriate for the place I am going.

Your actions are your wardrobe. Do your actions say you are going to Heaven? Parents, do your actions at home say you are going to Heaven? When you are sitting at a ballgame, or the coffee shop, does your behavior say you are going to Heaven? When you are at the frat or sorority party, or walking the campus, does your actions, words, and lifestyle say you are going to Heaven? Or, does your conduct tell others that you are deceived? You say you are going to Heaven, but the way you're dressed might make someone think that you are going to Hell. It breaks my heart when I tell someone that one of you comes to our church and they look at me like, *you've got to be kidding!* I really want to say, "You don't understand, I

only see them on Sunday. I only get one shot at them, 30 minutes at a time, 52 weeks out of the year." I can see it in their face! They don't believe that you come to Hardin Baptist Church, and they really don't believe you are going to Heaven! Your behavior says otherwise.

Now, if you are in Christ, you are going to Heaven. You have been commanded to put off those old clothes that Adam used to wear and put on the new clothes of Christ. When you got saved, God didn't clean out the closet, He commanded **you** to clean out the closet. You can go to your closet and choose those old behaviors, yet God gives you a choice of putting a brand new wardrobe in that closet. It should break your heart to still reach for that old shirt and old pair of jeans that say sinner, lost, and separated from God! In Romans 6:21-22, Paul asks:

"What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?"

Paul recognized that there are things we are ashamed of that we did while we were in Adam. He is telling us to put those things away! Throw them away, because when we get dressed, we need to dress like we are going to Heaven. Wherever we go, we need to dress like we are going to Heaven. The truth is there are some things in our lives as believers that do not match who we are in Christ. Why tempt ourselves with those? Why keep believing that is really an option? We need to look into the closet of our lives and get rid of some old shirts and shoes, suits and pants, and tell ourselves to never reach for that again. You know what you need to get rid of. *I am never going to lie, I am never going to gossip or cheat. I am not going to lose my temper.* Let's take them out of our wardrobe and replace them with clothes that God makes available to us in His Word that will come to us as we grow in our relationship with Christ.

Now, when people clean out their wardrobe, they have a tendency to give it to someone else. But I don't believe anyone else needs what you are going to lay down out of your wardrobe. Instead of having a yard sale, you need to have a bonfire. Lay it down, repent and confess it, and burn it before the Lord.