

Remembering Who We Are (ESM 2019) Pleasant Plains 3-3-2019AM NICK ANGEL

- ***READ Galatians 2:20*** It would be hard for just about anyone to read about the work that Paul did as an Apostle of Jesus and not come away with at least a small sense of awe. Surely we are all thoroughly impressed with the great number of people that he taught, the difficulties and trials he overcame, and the faith that he kept as he went through it all. In fact, we might be so impressed that we seek to figure out what it was that Paul did or had that made all of this possible. I would suggest that the answer to such questions can be found within this single verse that we read together just a moment ago in **Galatians 2:20**.
- Within this text we are told the type of mindset and attitude that Paul possessed that drove him to do everything he did as an Apostle. He taught with passion, fought through adversity, and exemplified such great faith because he knew that was what Jesus Himself would have done and actually did do during the years that He spent on this earth. Paul cared much for what Jesus did and would do because he desired nothing more than to be even as Jesus was in all things. This was Paul's desire to the point that he states that he lived his life as though Jesus Himself was living through him in everything that he did on this earth.
- In other words, Paul had a new identity in Christ, and that identity was that of Christ Himself. Paul was a Christian. He was a man who was "of Christ", and he made sure that in everything he did it could be said that Christ would do the same. As fellow Christians, we must recognize that our ability to be like Paul is contingent on our realization that we are to now live with a new Christ-like identity. If we are Christians then we must be like Christ because we are now in Christ. (**Galatians 3:27**)
- As we continue to consider how it is that we can excel still more in our faith and lives, we are going to use our time of study this morning by considering that we can become more proficient at excelling in our faiths by simply remembering who it is that we are in Christ and what that means for us. Paul knew exactly who he was in Christ. He had been Saul of Tarsus prior to the trip to Damascus, and had been completely changed following that encounter with Jesus. That doesn't mean that we must change our names, but it does mean that we are changed when we come into Jesus. We have a new identity. That knowledge of a new identity only helped Paul to succeed in his faith, and embracing our new identity and remembering who we are now that we are in Christ will only help us, as well.

I. Knowing our identity in Christ helps us to excel in our faiths.

A. In Christ, we are different than we were before.

1. This reality is most certainly seen in the life of Paul, and he was willing to be upfront with just how drastically he had changed within his own life because of Christ. In **Philippians 3:4-6** Paul writes, *"If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless."* Paul's identity prior to Christ was that of the purest of the purebred Jews. He was a model Jew, and the reality is that there wasn't anything all that wrong with simply being a Jew. However, the issue rested in the fact that his identity as Jew drove him to commit acts of violence and harm against those who were loyal to Christ.
2. Thankfully, God showed Paul great mercy by choosing him to be a great spokesman for the Gospel of Christ. (**I Timothy 1:12-16**) It was at the point of Paul repenting of his evil ways, committing his life to Jesus, and being baptized in His name that he was given a brand new life with a brand new identity. We know this is what happened with Paul because this is what happens with every person who comes to Jesus in faith and obedience. *"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was*

raised from the dead to the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3,4) These truths of receiving new life and a new identity in Christ applied to the Romans, they applied to Paul, they apply to us, and they apply to anyone who is willing to be obedient to the Gospel. **(Romans 6:17)** It is of the utmost importance that we understand who we are in Christ because that will determine what is expected of us.

B. We must know who we are so we can know and achieve Jesus’s expectations for us.

1. There is a theory referred to as “*nominative determinism*” which operates on the premise that names or descriptions given to people will cause them to gravitate towards different areas in which their names are quite fitting. For example there have been meteorologists in the past who’s names were Amy Freeze and Larry Sprinkle. Dr. Scott Pett was a veterinarian in the northeast with Dr. Kim Furr being in South Carolina. Prince Fielder plays first base in Major League Baseball, Usain Bolt is a track sprinter, and Scott Speed races in NASCAR. Oh...and this guy that your listening to preach is named Nick Angel!
2. I share this with you to simply show that names can matter! There of course is no direct correlation between what our parents name us and who we are going to be, but there is no mistaking what has been done to us through Jesus and who that causes us to be! Throughout the New Testament there are times when there are declarative statements made by different individuals either in the narrative or in the letters that clearly state what Christ has done for us and what that means for our identity. For the remainder of this lesson, we are going to considering what Christ has done for us and what that demands of us, and then we are going to look at who we are as Christians so that we might be reminded of the glorious titles we wear and the lofty expectations that come with them.

II. Through Christ we have been:

A. Called (Ephesians 4:1-6)

1. It was through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that God has called all men to Himself so that they might be reconciled to Him through the perfect blood of His Son. It isn’t that we have done something that has forced God to accept us, but it was through God’s love for us that He was willing to call to us or extend His hand of fellowship again conditional upon our willingness to obey Him in all things. How do we know that there are conditions to God’s willingness to accept us into His fellowship again? I believe this is answered in **Ephesians 4:1-6**.
2. As Paul writes to the brethren in Ephesus, he implores them to make sure that they are living in a manner that is worthy of the calling with which they had been called. Considering our understanding that we have been called through Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross then we can conclude that Paul is imploring these people to behave in such a way that they bring honor to Jesus’s sacrifice.
3. This single verse shows us that there is an expectation that comes with what Jesus has done for us. We are to walk in a way that is worthy of our calling. Let me reiterate again that this is not something that is done to force God’s accepting of us, but it is a manner of living that brings glory to Jesus’s sacrifice and doesn’t bring shame to it. **(Hebrews 6:4-6)**
4. What then qualifies as walking that is worthy of this great calling? Text indicates that it demands that we live with all humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance in love, and a diligent attitude towards desiring to have unity in the Spirit with God and our fellow brethren in the areas which are listed. Yes, God has called us through Jesus, and with that calling comes an expectation for how we are to live having received and acted upon this calling.

B. Chosen (**Colossians 3:12-17**)

1. To be chosen by God isn't to say that He has handpicked the individual that will be saved, but it is to say that he has chosen the type of individual that will be saved. Those who have been chosen are those who find themselves in Christ Jesus. (**Ephesians 1:4**)
2. This seems to be what Paul is pointing out to the Colossians in **Colossians 3:12-17**. In this text, we find out exactly who we are to be as those who have been chose by God through Christ Jesus. We are to be holy, compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient, forgiving, loving, unified, and thankful. We are to a people who allow for the word of Christ to richly dwell within us to the extent that everything we do is done in the name of Jesus. We are to be the very embodiment of Christ here on the earth. We were chosen through Him for this very purpose to be just as He would be in everything that we do. We have not just been chosen to be saved, but we have been chosen to work for Him. If we are Christians then we are chosen, and the chosen people of God are to be like Christ in all things.

C. Adopted (**Romans 8:12-17**)

1. Finally, it is through coming into Christ that we become one of His brothers and sisters which means that we are one of God's children. (**Romans 8:29 & Hebrews 2:11**) We, through faith and obedience to Christ, have been adopted as children of God in the greatest spiritual sense.
2. This is seen in **Romans 8:12-17** where Paul speaks to the Romans of their need to die according to the flesh so that they might live according to the Spirit. This was necessary because only those who are led by the Spirit of God can be called sons of God. To be a child of God means that we are led by His Spirit, and to be led by the Spirit indicates that we are children of God. Through receiving this adoption as sons we are able to cry out to God in the most intimate sense, "**Abba! Father!**" We are able to speak to God even as Jesus spoke to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. (**Mark 14:36**) Yet, let's stress again that this adoption is only possible through our willingness to die to the flesh so that we might be led by the Spirit.

To have it said that we have been called, chosen, and adopted by God through Jesus is something that is remarkable in and of itself. However, that is only part of this great story for it is through these actions of God that allow for us to wear wonderful names that will help reminds us of the excellent calling by which we have been called and the high standard by which we are to live up to.

III. Now we are His:

A. Special People (**I Peter 2:9-12**)

1. There might not be another text in the entire New Testament that contains as many impressive names for those who are God's than what is found in **I Peter 2:9-12**, and to sum them all up we will simply say that those who have been called, chosen, and adopted by God are His special people. We "*are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession.*" These are not names that we have earned in any sense, but they are names and descriptions that come from being a part of God's people in Jesus Christ.
2. Yet again, we must take note that having these names comes with expectations. We find in this text that we are to "*proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*" We are not to behave wickedly in the darkness, but we are to cut through the darkness with our righteous actions of light. We are to behave as a people who have received mercy. We are to "*abstain from fleshly lusts.*" We are instructed to "*keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles.*" I don't know about you, but to me it seems abundantly clear that God's special people are to behave in a special kind of way. We are to be different than the world around us that is overcome with darkness. We are to be the light of Christ in the darkness.

B. Followers (**Luke 9:23**)

1. We can shine that light of Christ all around us if we are willing to be fully dedicated followers of Christ. To be a disciple simply means to be a follower. Those who are disciples are those who recognize the wisdom or worthy nature of a particular person and are willing to learn from them. Certainly no one is more worthy of our devotion than Jesus for in **Luke 9:22** we read of Jesus's intentions of being rejected by the people, killed, and then raised on the third day. He was willing to do all of this for us, and it only leads us to the logical conclusion of devotion to Him.
2. What level of devotion, you might ask? The following verse of **Luke 9:23** details that out very plainly. If we wish to devote ourselves to Jesus as disciples and followers then we must be willing to deny ourselves, take up our crosses every single day, and follow Jesus wherever it is that He might lead us. This is an image of people who are willing to completely give over the reigns of their lives over to Jesus so that he might do with them as he sees fit. It is a mindset of total trust, obedience, and devotion. If we have been called and chosen as disciples and followers of Jesus, and if we are willing to accept this title then we must recognize the extent to which we are to be followers...to the extent we give our lives full over to Jesus and His will in all things.

C. Saints (**Ephesians 2:19-21**)

1. Finally, we have been called, chosen, and adopted by God so that we might be fellow citizens with the saints of God which would mean that we ourselves are saints! The idea behind being a saint is simply that we are a group of people set apart for the Lord and His kingdom. This is closely related to our being the special people of God. And yet, in **Ephesians 2:19-21** we are informed just how it is that we are made to be saints.
2. In this text, we find Paul saying that those who are saints are of God's household, and the household of God has been built upon the foundation of the Apostles, prophets, and foremost Jesus Christ Himself. This ought to impress upon us the fact that those who desire to be saints of God must be those who are fully trusting in these inspired writings that we have in our possession. If we desire to be the people of God then we must trust in the book that His Holy Spirit produced for us through the minds of inspired men. We must be a people who have prepared our hearts to be a dwelling place for God and His Spirit. We, as the saints of God, are now His temple and holy dwelling place.
3. If we fail to prepare ourselves then we cannot have God's Spirit dwelling within us and a failure to have His Spirit within us will only result in our failure to be a part of God's Saints. How sad it is for those who have been called, chosen, and adopted to fall short of such a honorable title by our unwillingness to be holy as God Himself is holy and desires for us to be. May we always strive to live in this holy manner so that we might be able to wear this holy name of saint.

What wonderful and glorious names that have been extended to us through the grace and mercy of God our Father and Jesus Christ His Son. We should be overjoyed, thankful, and even proud to be able to say that we are a part of those who have been called, chosen, and adopted by God through Jesus Christ. We should be overjoyed, thankful, and proud to be able to be called our Lord's special people, His followers, and His Saints. Knowing that these things are true should cause us ceaseless joy and peace of heart, but friends we cannot forget that these great names come with great expectations! And yet, I would dare say that not a person here this morning who did not already know that we who have been called, chosen, and adopted by God as His people, followers, and saints are to live up to this high standard. You knew that already, and yet the point of this lesson this morning was for us to be reminded of who exactly we are and to encourage us to live with this remembrance always on our minds. May we be more well suited to excel in 2019 and beyond simply because we know exactly who we are and what God expects of us as we live for Him in everything that we do.