Christian Crusaders

7401 University Ave., Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613
(319) 277-0924
info@christiancrusaders.org
www.christiancrusaders.org

An Unshakable Identity, Part 2

Matthew 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew says this: As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went out from the water, and at that moment heaven was opened. Baptism is a symbol of a person coming into Christ and being given a new nature, a new life. The old identity in us, the old nature in us, is crucified with Christ. As a person is baptized, that's buried with Christ, washed away, and then were raised to new life. If anyone is in Christ, they're a new creation. The old is gone; the new has come. They have a new identity.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went out from the water. And at that moment, heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God. It's a spiritual identity awakened by God Himself. When a person is born again, was descending on him like a dove, alighting on him, and a voice from heaven said, "This is my son. This is my son." God is saying two things here about Jesus and anyone in Christ. He is saying that person there came from me and belongs to me or with me.

The first leg in an unshakable identity is a deep sense of belonging. We long to belong. When I was first married, I spent a lot of time with my wife's family, and we would talk about a lot of different things that we were involved in. And I would describe, as a young man, different things that I was getting invited to be involved in, and my father-in-law would often say to me, "Well, Tim, you know something? Everybody likes to belong to something."

Everybody likes to belong to something. We have a deep need to belong. Christianity meets this need in the sense that God invites us through spiritual rebirth into his eternal family as sons and daughters of his. At the very core of our identity is not what we claim to be true about ourselves in a worldly sense, but when a person comes into Christ, they become a son or daughter of the Most High God.

And this is even greater than discipleship. Discipleship leads us to the point where we start to understand we have a Heavenly Father who cares for us. We are children of the Most High God. John wrote about it this way: "See what great love the father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God."

At the very core of who we are. You and I were made to be in God's family forever. If you're born again into the family of God through Christ, friend, you belong to the greatest group ever, to the eternal Kingdom of heaven. And when you have a sense of this settling in on your heart, the need to belong in so many things in this world just sort of fades away as this gets stronger and stronger in a person. They just know, "I am his forever. I belong. He's adopted me into his family." And this changes the way a person lives.

If we're children there. Paul wrote to the believers in Rome, "Then we're heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ. The firstborn." Friends, to be a Christian is to know that you know that you know you're his. No one can snatch you out of his hand. You belong. Sonship and daughterhood is greater than discipleship. And I would say it's greater than any other identity we may claim.

Christian identity, one author writes, can be defined as identity in Christ. God sees a believer through Jesus Christ and His redemptive work. And it's the creator's authoritative answer to the believer's question, "Who am I?" Christian identity is divinely proclaimed reality. It supersedes all other identities or identity markers.

If our children have a sense of belonging like this to God, they will avoid a lot of hurt and heartache in the world.

Secondly, as Jesus was baptized in heaven, opened up a voice from heaven said, "This is my son." For ladies, it's daughter, whom I love. Whom I love. John would write this: "The love of God surpasses all knowledge." When the love of God is sprinkled in a heart here, it supersedes human wisdom. And it grounds us in something that we can know and rely on in any situation, at any time.

When a person starts to develop an identity in Christ, they start to have a sense that I'm a child of God. He's paid an enormous price to make me his own because he loves me.

We want this to go beyond head knowledge into the depths of our soul, where it's sprinkled there. So we live like we know this is true. Unshakeable.

The value and worth of something is determined by what someone is willing to pay for it, or what someone is willing to sacrifice for. My grandson was in the store just last night here at the mall, and he was looking at something he wanted to purchase, and he has his little billfold, and he has some cash in there. And this item that he wanted to purchase was over $20. Now, he's got a lot of bills in there, but a lot of them are ones. And so that was going to take a lot of his bills. So he decided that was too much to pay for that item. He kept his money in his billfold.

When God looked down on the earth, he had to decide: Was he going to purchase humanity back? What price was he willing to pay for humanity that he created that went astray? What sacrifice should he make to claim people as his own? To redeem the world? To buy it back? Giving us freedom.

God decided to make a massive spend for you and for me. For God so loved the world. That he took his son and spent him. On our behalf. You understand, in our old nature, we are unworthy. But God has declared us of great worth and value through the blood of Jesus.

If the world of people understood this, we would treat each other far differently. We belong to him. There's only two camps in the world. Those who have God as their father and those who don't. And they have a different father. But the Fatherhood of God is available to all through Jesus and His work on the cross and his shed blood.

The second leg in an unshakable identity for a person to grasp as they grow in Christ is their intrinsic, eternal, transcendent worth and value apart from anything they do in this world. When our children know this, their lives will be different.

Finally, this voice from heaven said, "This is my son." Belongs. Daughter belongs. Whom I love, with whom I am well pleased. Or with whom I delight in.

You may not think that God is pleased with you or delights in you. But if you're in Christ, I just want to assure you his word says different. He loves you with an everlasting love, and he has created you with a very unique purpose, not just here on the earth, but for all eternity. You're his. And as a family member of his, if you've come to faith in Christ and are in Christ, He has plans for you and me. Forever. Forever.

The writer of Hebrews said, "Who rules the world to come? It's God's people." Eternal, transcendent. Each of us. Utterly unique purpose.

It's our great hope that more and more of us will not be confused by all the identities we can take hold of in this world, and not even be boastful.

I was with a gentleman yesterday, and we were conversing. Another friend of mine was there, and as we were conversing, I noticed he kept dropping titles and worldly accomplishments that he has in his portfolio. And yes, they were impressive, but I was only looking for one because everything that he mentioned to me is going to fade away. And I was wondering if he was rightly related to God through Christ as a child of his forever.

And when you know this, friends, you are free. You're free to be who God created you to be. Money or no money, title or no title. Whatever kind of feelings you experience when you mature in an identity in Christ, life gets a whole lot better.

And where does all this come from? Recently, I heard that Billy Graham was asked near the end of his life if he could preach one more sermon. What would he preach on? His response was this: "I would preach on Galatians chapter six, verse 14. Far be it from me." It says there to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Those who have ears, let them hear.

Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we live in a world that is filled with lies and false, fleeting identities that people who are hungry and thirsty and hurting look to grab on to as their true core identity.

Many of us in this room have probably struggled with who we are over the course of our lifetime. Even the Pharisees. I think of them who thought their identity was in their great religious heritage and their great religious knowledge. I think of people who have been trapped in great sin and think their identity is their confusion.

Thank you, Father, for sending your son and then inviting us into the work of rebirth to come alive with a new nature and a new identity as sons and daughters of yours. I ask that you would rivet this into our souls. The dignity of who we are. Made in your image, adopted into your family, loved by you with value and purpose and meaning forever.

Guide us in this, Father. And Father, if there are some here today who haven't experienced this rebirth and come alive in the new nature, as you call all of us out of the old nature, I pray that you, in your kindness, draw them out of their false identities, of their old nature. Help them find forgiveness in the crucifixion of that nature through your son Jesus. And then help them through a faith that you breathe into them to come alive in you, and to surge in their spirits with your spirit, crying out, "ABBA, Father!"

Thank you for this time, Father. Now be pleased with our celebration of you in song. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.