

ONLINE 6

NEW IDENTITY: SEEING YOURSELF GOD'S WAY

To be confident in a friendship with someone, you need some idea about who they are, how they see you and how they'll respond to you. When it comes to someone as big and powerful as God, it's even more important.

How do you think God feels about you right now? Why do you think that?

Are you defined by what you do, or is what you do defined by who you are? Why?

Where in your life do you see a connection between your beliefs and your behaviour?

Our practical living must flow out of a right understanding of who we are in Christ. Becoming a Christian is about much more than just being forgiven. It's about leaving our old life behind and receiving new life, becoming a new person. Paul talks about our old nature being "*crucified with Christ*" (GALATIANS 2v20), hence baptism is a "burial" of that old life (ROMANS 6v1-4).

In contrast, Jesus describes becoming a Christian as the start of a new life. That's one reason he talks about being "born again" (JOHN 1v12-13; 3v3-7). This new identity is the basis for how God sees us and relates to us. It also needs to become the basis of how we relate to God, to the world and how we see ourselves. This is one reason why the transformation of our lives is linked to the "*renewing of our minds*" (ROMANS 12v1-2). As Jesus says, it is as we "*know the truth*" - know in a deep, personal sense, that "*the truth will set us free*" (JOHN 8v31-32).

2 CORINTHIANS 5v16-21

16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

In this passage, how does seeing people from a worldly point of view differ from seeing them as Christ sees them?

What is the old that has gone and the new that has come? (v17)

What does it mean to be reconciled to God?

How are we to share in God's purposes in verses 18-20?

What does it mean to be an ambassador?
How can we do this?

What does it mean for Christ to become sin for us?

What does it mean for us to become the righteousness of God in him?

What are the implications of this?

The following diagram attempts to express how Jesus has taken our sin upon himself and in exchange has given us his righteousness:



On the cross, Jesus took all our sin on himself. The pain of the cross isn't just physical agony, but the spiritual agony of the Son being separated from the Father, experiencing spiritual death in our place. In exchange, we've been given Christ's right standing with God, his eternal inheritance and adopted as children of God with free access to the Father.

How does God see us? What are the implications?

Consider the following verses and discuss these questions:

What do these verses tell me about my identity as someone "in Christ"?

How would my life be different if I really believed these truths?

ZEPHANIAH 3v17 The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.

JOHN 15v15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

ROMANS 6v6-7 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

ROMANS 8v16-17 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

ROMANS 8v31-33 If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

I CORINTHIANS 6v9-11 Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by

Which of these promises do you find easiest to believe? What is the hardest?

We haven't earned our new identity; it's a free gift paid for by Jesus. As we learn to trust what God says of us, we begin to see ourselves as God sees us. We're then defined by our destiny, who we're becoming, rather than what has gone on in our past. Our growing security in God's love will transform the way we relate to others.