

COLOSSIANS 1:21-23

IDENTITY

In a culture obsessed with the concept of identity, where do we, as Christians, find our identity?

Changing our identity to a Christ-follower is not as simple as being given a task to change the oil in our car. Our attitudes and our worldviews must be completely altered. It is an entire rewiring of a person.

As Christians we are called to live a transformed life. We are reborn, made into a new creation. We have been given a new identity.

In Colossians Paul speaks on Jesus as the image of the invisible God. I believe that this image is also to be shown through us. Sure mankind is made in the image of God but as Christians I want to take it a step further. As Christ now resides within us and as we show Christ's love to the world: Our Identity is now the visible image of the invisible God.

Now that Guy invented invisibility, maybe he can reverse engineer why God is invisible...

Just as Christ is the image of the invisible God, our entire way of thinking and living should be transformed to that of Jesus Christ, so that we will accurately represent this identity as the image of the invisible God.

I want you to sit on that today. Soak in the seriousness of this challenge. I don't want to make you insecure in your faith as this challenge seems unattainable on your own, because it is. We will look at how this is all possible because of Christ within us. However, I do want to stress the amount of **humility** and **reverence** that is required to truly represent the invisible God to the world.

Read Colossians 1:21-23

3 Points in understanding and living out our identities as Christ Followers

1. Recollection
2. Transformation
3. Continuation

Recollection

A message to the saved: Our Former Selves

1 Peter 4:1-3

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same **attitude**, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.²As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. ³For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.

²¹Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of^[a] your evil behavior.

- Separate from God
- Enemies of God – For whoever is not with me is against me (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23)
- Required Rewiring
- Enemies in our minds (thought, disposition, and attitude)
- It is shown through our behaviour
- We were ONCE! Not anymore!
- In the Expositor's Bible Commentary, Curtis Vaughan describes our alienation from God through the Greek text using the word ἀπηλλοτριωμένους (apēllotriōmenous) literally meaning "transferred to another owner"

Transformation

²²But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—

What does reconciled mean?

- Reconcile - to restore to friendship or harmony – Lack of oomph (so much more to the word

- To Change – From Enmity to Friendship
- This Greek word that has been translated into reconcile also elements of transformation
- Theodore Epp – Thoroughly Changed
- Thorough – Complete with regard to every detail
- Changed completely with regard to every detail from Enmity to Friendship

Eddy Story

- **BBWC Pack Trip – Ken Neufeld**
- **The theme of the trip was transformation**
- **Find Eddy the helpless big ugly bug at lunch spot**
- **Open saddle bag at supper to watch Eddy come out as a Butterfly**

God has transformed us! Completely changed with regard to every detail.

So like Eddy our identity has been transformed. But we have been transformed by Christ's physical body through the sacrifice he made on the cross. He has restored us to harmony with him and has changed us with regard to every detail.

We are transformed/reconciled by Christ's body through his death. His sacrifice alone changes us. We do not reconcile ourselves to Christ. We do not change ourselves. We do not bring ourselves to a harmony of friendship with Jesus but rather He reconciles us to himself.

We have been changed and are being changed

- to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation
- The word Holy involves both an imputed holiness and personal holiness
 - Imputed Holiness is the holiness given to you at the time of salvation
 - Personal Holiness involves our sharing Christ's life and holiness. As we grow, His indwelling power will continue to change us making us more into the image of Christ.
- We will be presented to Him without blame and without the possibility of accusation
- Say you were a pretty good person and lived to 80 years old. And say you averaged about 3 sins per day you would have a list of over 87,000 sins to come before God with.
- Being Good isn't good enough. Following the rules isn't good enough. We need to be allowing Jesus to change us.

Continuation

²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

- Max Anders writes in his Holman New Testament Commentary, “The Greek construction of the **if** is not an expression of doubt but an expression of confidence and is better translated as **since**.”
- Paul is confident and assuming the continuation of the faith of the readers.
- He uses words associated with buildings
 - Established/grounded
 - Firm/settled
 - Not moving
- This is part of our identity, if having been reconciled by Christ we will continue to live such a life in our faith. If you truly have been changed, there will be evidence of your continuing faith.

The Mistaken Identity

- The world has mistaken Christianity for the identity of the Moth.
 - Moths are erratic. They eat your clothes. Leave their nasty wing dust everywhere. They only show up when the lights are on.
- Butterflies do butterfly things. You don’t see a Butterfly trying to make a web, or carry a dead insect back to an ant hill, or push a ball of dung along the ground. The biggest thing is that it doesn’t continue to do what a caterpillar does. It doesn’t eat plants; it doesn’t inch along. They fly around, drink nectar, pollenate flowers and do their best to hide or scare away predators. But they also don’t do what Moths do
- If we are transformed and are being transformed (completely with regard to every detail) into the image of the invisible God, then we need to do things that Christ did. Not some WWJD thing where **we do what we think** Jesus would do in our situation but we do what he did in our situation.
- **Our Identity is shaped by the things that Jesus did here on earth.**

- How does this affect our Church Identity?
 - As a church we need to live out our transformation.
 - Are they a bunch of Moths?
 - Being a church known for being welcoming isn't enough
 - Our identity as a church needs to be rooted in our Image of Christ
- How does shape our personal Identities?
 - Who is Jesus?
 - To be like Jesus we have to know who Jesus is through scripture and personally.
 - We can do it.
 - John 14:2 Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.
 - Maybe we are like Eddy pushing out of our cocoon
 - We are presented as a Full Beautiful butterfly before Christ

In Conclusion – Digging Deeper

- 1 John 2:1-6

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. [2](#)He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

[3](#)We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. [4](#)Whoever says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. [5](#)But if anyone obeys his word, love for God^s is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: [6](#)Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

- As they say the proof is in the pudding, Our following of Jesus' commands and teachings are simply proof of our relationship with Him
- But if you have been transformed into the image of the invisible God, then you need to live like Christ. It is not easy. It takes a lot of letting go of our Pride and control. It will take you out of your comfortable world. “The storms, the challenges, the assignments, and the battles – These are not meant to be difficult interruptions in a life that is supposed to be comfortable. They are unimagined opportunities for each of us to be formed into more of the image of Christ, by the reality of life but ultimately by the Father Himself.

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