Our Identity In Jesus Christ 3 (Ephesians 1-3) sermon for 10-09-16

**Identity**

* Identity is who you are, why you are that, what you are capable of, and what you ought to do with those capabilities.
* Your identity determines where you can and should go, what you can and should accomplish, and what you can and should expect.
* The level of your understanding of your identity will determine how far you go where you should go, how much you accomplish what you should accomplish, and how much you get what you should expect.

Ephesians 1-3 has much to say about who we are because of what Jesus has done for us. It reveals to us our identity in Jesus Christ.

Two weeks ago, we focused on Ephesians 1 which taught us about our identity as individuals in Jesus Christ.

* We learned that because God blessed us, chose us, predestined our lives, and accepted us, we now have redemption, forgiveness, and an inheritance.
* We learned that we must have the Holy Spirit open our eyes to the hope of His calling, the inheritance in the saints, and His power that is available to us.

Last week, we focused on Ephesians 2 and learned of our collective identity made up of all the believers around the world.

* We learned that we are part of a spiritual nation who have a covenant with God. A special relationship with Him that expresses our dependence on and worship of Jesus Christ that guarantees us favorable treatment from God.
* We learned that this relationship was attained through Jesus’ work on the cross to join us to the spiritual Israel—the true descendants of Abraham.
* And that means that our identity as Christians is linked with the identity that God formed for Israel. Therefore, the whole Bible is relevant to us Gentiles even though it was written by Jews.

Today, we will focus on Ephesians 3. Paul shows us more of the identity of the church of Christ in chapter 3, but he also reveals to us his personal part in the church.

I believe that God would have us know His will for us so intimately that we could all write an Ephesians chapter 3 for ourselves.

**Meaning we should be able to teach about the power and function of the church in the world while stating clearly the unique part that we are playing within God’s church.**

(like being able to pick yourself out of a picture of a crowd of people)



**Ephesians 3**

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—

* Here, Paul is referring to his imprisonment in Rome from where he is writing this letter to the Ephesians. He is also referring to the reason for which he is in chains.
  + Paul’s imprisonment was instigated by Jews who were angry with him for preaching that God wanted the Gentiles to share in the blessings of Israel through the Messiah Jesus Christ.
  + Notice though that Paul does not credit the Jews for his imprisonment—he says that Jesus bound him.
    - This is how Paul introduces his part of the world church. His destiny in Christ included being imprisoned.
    - Instead of being angry, embarrassed, confused, or hurt by his horrible circumstances of life, he instead gave credit to God for working good things from his suffering.

**2**if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, **3**how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, **4**by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), **5**which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: **6**that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, **7**of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

* Paul understood that God had entrusted him with a very important message that would change the whole world.
  + **The mystery that was entrusted to Paul to disseminate among the world was that God had decided before the world began to create a way for the Gentiles to be included in the special relationship that believing Jews have with God.**
  + This message was simply this: **everyone—no matter their heritage—can be saved from eternity in hell and the wrath of God if they have faith in the saving grace of Jesus Christ.**

**8**To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, **9**and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; **10**to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places,* **11**according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, **12**in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.

* No matter how insignificant you are, God wants to use you for big things. Your identity is not determined by your level of greatness!
  + We are all to see our part in spreading the message of the gospel. That is the “fellowship of the mystery”.
    - A part of our identity in Christ is God’s expectation of us to work with the truth of Jesus in telling it to others.
      * **We are to be dispensers of the message that everyone can now have forgiveness of all their sins and live forever with God in heaven.**
    - We as the church are charged with the responsibility of sharing the Gospel with others.
* **Our identity as God’s mystery-speakers impacts the angels all around us as they listen in to hear the revelation of the wisdom of God that the Holy Spirit has revealed to us.**
  + **Demons are hindered by us walking in our calling of mystery speaking and angels of light are encouraged by us proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.**
    - Do you now see the cosmological implications of your understanding of who you are in Christ? You have capabilities that even angels do not have. You can tell everyone the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And God expects you to use those capabilities.
  + **When you understand the heavenly consequences of your message, then you will walk boldly and have access in heavenly realms.**

**13**Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

**14**For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **15**from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, **16**that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, **17**that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18**may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height— **19**to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

* Just as Adam clarified the identity of animals as he named them in the Garden of Eden, **everyone’s identity and purpose in the family of God has been clarified by God the Father; He has named everyone in His family.**
* **You can only know the width, length, depth, and height of the love of God if you are drawing your sustenance from it.** 
  + Are you drawing strength and emotional direction from love or are you drawing on something else for your strength and motivation?
* When you draw your life from the love of God, then you are filled and filled with peace—namely Jesus Himself.
  + **Colossians 1:19-20**

For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

**20**Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, **21**to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

* God is able to help you well beyond the help you need in your current situation. He longs to use His limitless strength on your behalf!
* I do not have an identity of weakness; I identify with power!
  + **His power that helps in every situation is working not from the “great beyond” down to earth but from inside the very depths of my being.**
* The reason for everything is God’s glory.
  + **Who we are and what we are capable of because of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection are to bring Him glory in the church forever.**