

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Who are you?

If you're anything like most people, especially men, your first response to that question is probably your job title. After that, you may list off your age, how many kids you have, or perhaps even your hobbies. If I'd been asked that question a few years back, I would have answered, "I am a graphic designer." This is true, but it's not really who I am—it's just what I do to pay the bills. I might also have told you that I am a dad to the coolest (and cutest) girl in the world, I'm husband to a wonderful and beautiful wife, I like being in the mountains, and I love bacon almost as much as I love air. Here's the deal though—these things may *describe* me, but they don't *define* me. In order to figure out what defines you—your true identity—you need to understand who your Creator says you are. After all, He's the one who made you, so He is the only one with the authority to tell you what is true about you.

Who God Says You Are

As far as God is concerned, there are only two possible identities for every man, woman, and child alive today. You are either "in Adam"—the default state of all humans at birth—or, if you've trusted Jesus, you are "in Christ." You must be one or the other, and you cannot be

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both. The most important thing to understand in regard to discovering what is true about you is understanding which camp you belong to.

You are no longer “in Adam”

The moment Adam chose to turn away from God, the cancer of sin entered into the human race and changed the default identity of everyone.* Since that day, every one of us has been born physically alive but spiritually dead:

When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned (Romans 5:12).

Our identity at birth is now “in Adam,” which means we’re all born with a sin nature.

If you’re a parent, it shouldn’t be too hard to understand this. Unless your name is Mary, your sweet little kiddo didn’t need to be taught how to sin. It’s in their nature from day one to be selfish, to lie to you, to yell “NO!” when asked to do something they don’t want to do. Did you ever sit down and have a conversation with junior discussing the benefits of dishonesty and how manipulation can be used for his gain? Of course not. Any child knows these things because they’re born with a sin nature.

As long as your identity remains “in Adam,” you are separated from God because of this sin nature within you. You are spiritually dead. You can do all sorts of good things here on earth, but ultimately none of them will matter in eternity because they will be done for your own benefit and not for God’s glory. You are also forced to live your life, fight your temptations, and manage your pain using your own power. You’re on your own. This does not mean God is not actively pursuing you while you remain “in Adam” (He certainly is), but ultimately you will need to reach out to Him and accept His help.

* See Genesis 3.

Don't be discouraged by this, though. If you are reading this book, there's a good chance your identity is no longer "in Adam." Why? Because the moment you placed your hope and trust in Jesus, your identity switched to "in Christ," and this separation no longer describes you!

You are "in Christ"

Just as everyone is born "in Adam," everyone is also given the opportunity to be born again "in Christ." The moment you place your hope and trust in Jesus to rescue you and set you free from your sinful nature, you are reborn with a new nature—a new identity. Your identity is now "in Christ."

Chances are, you have a pretty good understanding that being "in Christ" means you are now reconciled to God. Even if you haven't spent much time in church, you're probably still familiar with John 3:16:

This is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes *in him* will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

When we believe in Christ, we receive eternal life in heaven with God. Most churches do a wonderful job of preaching this central truth of salvation. What is sometimes missed, though, is the truth that this life "in Christ" is available to us right now! If we understand the gospel as merely the promise of eternal life after death, we remain stuck trying to live life here on earth in our own power—living as if we are still "in Adam." We miss the reality that God has promised us His life (and all the benefits that come with it) today. It begins the moment our identity changes from "in Adam" to "in Christ."

Discovering What Is True About You Now That You Are in Christ

Throughout Scripture you will find many verses describing how

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you were changed the moment you placed your faith in Christ. In this book, I've focused on 52 of these passages to help you understand more deeply what these truths mean for you personally. Some of these descriptions of who you are may not feel true about you, but I encourage you to trust and believe that they *are* true about you—because *all* Scripture is true—whether it feels like it is or not. The more you choose to trust them, the more your feelings will begin to align with Scripture.

Meditating on what God says is true about me has been deeply transformational in my own life. It has been one of the key practices that set me free from addiction, freed me to love others more fully, and finally made my relationship with God feel real and intimate rather than merely ritualistic. For that reason, I believe this little book can have an equally large impact in your own life as well.

So, with all that being said, let's find out who you *really* are...

YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.

EPHESIANS 1:7 NASB

One of my favorite weekend activities growing up was riding my bike to the local arcade and blowing my hard-earned paper route money on video games.

We had a few different arcades in town, but my favorite was the huge one inside the mall. This arcade was not only the first place to play the latest games, it was the place you went to test your joystick skills against the best players in town.

But as much as I enjoyed beating other kids at Street Fighter II, my favorite activity was filling my pockets with prize tickets from the carnival style games. I'd dump quarter after quarter into Skee-Ball, the creepy shoot-out-the-clown's-teeth-with-a-water-gun game, and of course, Whack-a-Mole.

The better you did at these games, the more tickets you earned. And the more tickets you earned, the more stuff you could buy from the prize counter.

These prizes ranged from single-ticket items like stickers and tattoos

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all the way up to a full-on Sega Genesis console for some ridiculously huge quantity.

But what would have happened if I went to the counter and attempted to redeem real money for the Sega Genesis? I'd probably be told to come back when I had enough tickets—the only currency they accepted there.

In a lot of ways, we do the same thing when we look at the junk in our lives and attempt to overcome it by being a better person. We look at the debt of sin we've accrued and hope that by going to church, doing good works, or being a "nice enough person," we can tilt the balance sheet back in our favor.

But that's not how forgiveness works in God's eyes. You may as well be trying to buy your way into Heaven with arcade tickets.

The truth is, the only currency that can pay for your forgiveness is the blood of Jesus. It's His blood that has the power to redeem you and provides forgiveness for your sins—not your ability to be a good person.

This is great news though, because once you realize your good behavior has nothing to do with you earning forgiveness, you can rest assured that bad behavior can never cause you to lose it.

Thankfully, God doesn't dole out His forgiveness the way an arcade game distributes tickets—in small batches, and only if you win. He offers it to you solely as a gift of His grace.

Furthermore, He forgave all your sins the moment you put your trust in Christ.

You've been fully forgiven. You've been fully redeemed. Your debt has been paid.

So now, instead of trying to earn enough tickets to get to Heaven by playing Whack-a-Mole with your sin, you can relax and join Jesus over at the air hockey table—knowing that even if you lose, you will still be loved unconditionally, forgiven completely, and accepted fully.

YOU ARE RIGHT WITH GOD

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.

ROMANS 5:1

When the apostle Paul penned this verse, he had just finished writing an entire chapter explaining how Abraham was saved by his faith, not by his good deeds.

This must have been quite shocking to the original recipients of the letter because many of the Christians in Rome had grown up in the Jewish tradition. They saw Abraham as the father of their religion, which was based heavily upon following the rules to maintain a right standing with God.

But now Paul is telling them it wasn't actually Abraham's ability to be a good rule follower that saved him—it was his faith. Abraham trusted God, and that's the *only* reason God counted him as righteous.

Paul may as well have said up was down and down was up.

He could have stopped there, leaving Romans 4 as an interesting biographical lesson on the life of Abraham, but thankfully Paul continued on to write the verse we're looking at today (and likely stunning his readers even more).

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Paul wanted to make sure his readers knew that all these things he just told them about Abraham are also true for *everyone* whose faith has been placed in Christ. That includes you and me today.

In the same way Abraham's deeds had nothing to do with his righteousness, your deeds have no bearing on your righteousness either. Simply put, you can't earn God's acceptance through behavior.

At first glance, the idea that you could never do enough good to earn God's acceptance sounds like bad news, but actually it's wonderful news.

Think of it this way: If God's acceptance depended on your good works, how much good would you have to do to know that you'd earned it? At a minimum, you would need to do enough to compensate for your mistakes, right? And then, every time you messed up, you would have to do more good deeds to get back to baseline.

I don't know about you, but that sounds exhausting. Plus, you would never know for sure whether you were doing enough, so you would always doubt God's acceptance of you.

But look once again at what Paul tells us in this verse. He makes it clear that we *have been* made right with God by faith.

"Have been..." Past tense. It's a done deal.

The righteousness you received had nothing to do with your good works then, and it still doesn't today.

By trusting that you *have already* been made right with God, it will free you from the endless treadmill of trying to earn your own righteousness.

And that, my friend, will lead you to tremendous peace.

YOU ARE LOVED WITH AN EVERLASTING LOVE

"I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love.

With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself."

JEREMIAH 31:3

If you've ever seen the classic 70s film, *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, you will undoubtedly remember the scene where Wonka unveils his top-secret new creation: The Everlasting Gobstopper.

The Gobstopper, for those of you who didn't grow up pretending to be an Oompa Loompa, is a funky looking jawbreaker that never gets any smaller. In the words of Willy Wonka himself: "You can suck them and suck them and suck them and they'll never get any smaller. Never!"

A single piece of this magic candy would last you the rest of your life because it would never diminish in size...never be reduced...never shrink in the slightest.

In other words, it would be *everlasting*.

ev·er·last·ing

adjective

Lasting forever; eternal: everlasting future life.

The Lord uses this exact same word when He describes His love

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through the prophet Jeremiah, which means *nothing* will ever make His love for you stop, shrink, or be reduced in any way.

The moment you put your faith in Christ, every barrier that ever stood between you and the everlasting love of God was removed forever:

- Your bad decisions will not reduce it.
- Your stubbornness cannot stop it.
- Your sin will never block it.

Or, to (loosely) paraphrase Willy Wonka, no matter how much you feel like you suck, God's love for you will never get any smaller.