



NEW LIFE: New Identity

By: Peter Bales

No. 11, January 7th, 2024

Some people get a lot of mail. Of course, much of it is advertising or credit card offers. Sometimes we may miss opening an important piece of mail and it ends up being forgotten on the bottom of the stack. But what if there was an all-access pass to incredible opportunities in that envelope that didn't get opened? It might even change your life. But you've missed out.

Sometimes our identity in Christ is like that. Maybe we glanced at it, but for some of us we didn't really open the packaging to see what was inside. We just go on with our lives. But what if there were life-changing opportunities that we were missing out on? It's like a gift that you received but never opened to see what was inside.

Let's see what the Bible says about it. We're going to explore in the book of Romans. Romans is Paul's message about the "Greatest Gift!" In Chapter 3, Paul says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Then, in chapter 4, Paul is talking about how righteousness is a gift that comes through faith. READ Romans 4:25 thru chapter 5: 1-5.

After reading that, do you notice how there is a change when a person comes to Jesus? There is a *before and after*. There is something different about us after we put our faith in Jesus.

1. What are the changes that you see in this passage?

The phrase "gained access" is very interesting in there. It's like a door is open to us that wasn't open before. What do we have access to? That's a big question. This passage says we have access to grace. But what will that mean in our life?

Think of it like a spiritual treasure hunt! God has hidden all these amazing truths for us to find! He hasn't hidden them *from* us he's hidden them *for* us! Every day with him is a day of discovery and adventure in the best ways! Think about his verse from Matthew:

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field." (Matthew 13:44 NIV)

The point is that this journey we are on is like a treasure hunt! God has hidden these truths for us to find, but these aren't Easter eggs with candy in them. They are so valuable you may want to give everything you have to discover them!

2. How does thinking about God's Kingdom as a treasure hunt mean for us?

3. If you were hunting for treasure you would need some equipment. What tools do we use on God's treasure hunt?

There are a couple of things that keep us from our Identity in Christ. First is *ignorance*. Many of us just haven't learned about what God says. We haven't been taught. The other problem is *lies*. We simply believe things that aren't true about ourselves. The Bible says that we need a "renewed mind." This means we've left the lies behind and discovered our true identity in Jesus.

- 4. What does "identity" mean to you.**
- 5. What are some lies that you've believed about your identity?**
- 6. What makes it so hard to believe what the Bible says about us?**

Knowing our identity in Christ is so important because it changes our approach to everything. It changes how we pray, because we stop asking for things we already have access to. It changes how we live, because we start having more fruit, such as peace and joy, in our lives. It also changes how we shine, because we begin to look more like Jesus. We represent him well to those who haven't met him yet. Finally, we act more like the persons we were originally created to be!

- 7. What do think are the reasons our identity in Christ is so important?**

Identity is not about positive affirmations- it's about understanding the truth. The actual reality of the situation. Let's look at Romans 5:1-5 again and think about what we have access to. Look for these:

- a) We've been _____ through faith
- b) We have _____ with God
- c) We have access to this _____ through Jesus
- d) We have _____.
- e) We can glory in our _____.
- f) Sufferings produce perseverance, perseverance, character; and character _____.
- g) We have God's _____ and we've been given _____.

All of that in just five verses! Those are things we have because we've been reconciled with Jesus. Our all-access pass gives us access to these things! We have legal access. We can have it! This is not name-it-and-claim-it. This is what God blesses us with through reconciliation with him.

And- we've just started with five verses. The New Testament is full of promises and descriptions of our new identities in Jesus.

Picture a bag that is full of holes. That's what our lives our like when we don't understand our God-given identities. We can't carry things that God wants to give us! We're not even looking for them! God has things for us, but we miss out because we aren't living in agreement with what he says about us. We miss amazing opportunities and likely struggle needlessly at times.

- 8. What are ways you could miss blessings because you believed lies about yourself?**
- 9. What is something God says about you that you find hard to believe?**

GO DEEPER> Read Colossians 3:1-17 and meditate on what it means to put on the “new self.” Ask God to show you how to “put on love” and “let Christ rule in your heart.”