

## A Pastor's Heart

### Encouragement from Pastor McGill

#### How do you see yourself?

**Zechariah 3:2-4**...*Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Vs 3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. Vs 4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.*

In today's society we see many of our most fundamental institutions, ideals and beliefs in crisis. The financial industry is in crisis. The stock market and trade industry are in crisis. Our schools and families are in crisis. Crisis is clearly rampant and ever present. In the midst of all of these, I believe one of the most significant and often overlooked crisis that we face today, is an identity crisis. We have simply forgotten who we are and have assumed a mistaken identity manufactured by the cares of this world and influences outside of God's word.

In the above scripture, Joshua the high priest had been cleansed by the Lord. Yet, Satan did not want him to know who he was. He stood to resist him and wanted Joshua to be constantly reminded of the filthy clothes that once covered him. Satan's job is to accuse us before God. He does not want God's people to know who they truly are. In essence, if you are a believer, then he, Satan, is out to steal your identity. When a thief is on the loose, wise men will guard their valuables and protect them. Likewise, we must guard and value the identity that God has given us.

In Luke's gospel, Satan came to Jesus and tempted Him three times. He offered Jesus a Kingdom if He would fall down and worship him. I've always thought that it was very bold of the devil to offer Jesus what already belonged to Him. Jesus defeated Satan and rebuked him with the word of God. The devil is still doing this today. He will tempt us with things that we already have. How many of us have fallen prey to this age-old trick? For example, if you are a man who has a wife at home, there is no reason for you to go and look for another woman. We must not be ignorant of Satan's devices.

When we do not know who we are, devastating consequences can be produced in our lives. We cannot afford to fall asleep or be passive about securing our identity. Just as the Lord had to intervene and remind Joshua of his identity and how he is viewed in the heavens, He continues to remind us of the same thing today through the Word. How we are viewed in the heavens is far more significant than how we are viewed on earth. How we are viewed by God oftentimes differs greatly from how we feel about ourselves and how we ultimately view ourselves.

There are countless people all over the world who do not know who they are. When people do not know who they are, they begin to imitate the wrong things and follow patterns that are not true. Following a lie is a certain path to destruction. Turn on any television news program and we can clearly see the result. We see men who are out of position, led astray by the abuse of drugs, alcohol, greed and violence. We see women who are void of proper direction which leads to depression, compromise, and a lowering of standards because of desperation. Furthermore, we

witness young people who have no pattern of truth to follow, which causes them to look for their identity and value through various mediums that do not glorify God.

As believers we must be sensitive enough to realize that this is not just a secular problem, this is a human problem. God sent Jesus to resolve human problems. Jesus established the church to deal with human problems by applying the word of God and developing meaningful relationships with Him. In my walk with Christ, I have found that there are just as many people inside the church that suffer from an identity crisis as in the world. Jesus would often remind the disciples who they were, Matthew 5:13-14 “Ye are the salt of the earth... Ye are the light of the world...”. These words were a reminder of their true identity. In 1 Peter Chapter 2, we are called a royal priesthood and a peculiar people. Paul reiterates that we are joint heirs with Jesus and are more than conquerors. These men were moved by the Spirit of God to constantly and consistently reinforce the words of Jesus.

Today it is up to us to be the vessels, which are moved by the Spirit of God, to remind others of their true identity. There are many cases in our world that involve people with mistaken identities. They were never told who they really are. Somehow we have managed to mistake what we do for a living as who we are. As I shared this teaching with a group of people, I would randomly ask the question, “Who are you?” The most common response was, “I am Bob, a police officer,” or “I am Joe, a fireman,” or “Jack, an Attorney” or even “Sam, a Pastor.” They would tell me either where they were from or what they did. Obviously, the problem with these responses is that they do not accurately answer the original question. What you do and who you are not the same things. The correct response from a believer is, “I am a Child of the Most High God.” That is who you are and who you will always be. Everything else is secondary. Everything you do should be based on who you are. Who you are affects all of your actions. All of our actions should reflect that we are children of God. The positions we hold and the titles we possess may change, but who we are will always remain the same. Your identity must not be confined to what you do. If Joe the professional football player has his identity tied to being a professional football player, what happens to Joe when he can no longer play the game? Unfortunately, all too often there is a tremendous letdown when Joe is no longer a professional football player, he begins to feel useless and the downward spiral begins. This is a common problem not just in sports but in most professions. This is an example of an identity crisis.

*Deuteronomy 6:6-7 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up.*

God never intended for us to suffer from an identity crisis. In fact, he wanted there to be no doubt about our identity. In addition he wanted our children to be taught the truth. As mature believers we have a responsibility to recite these words in the ears of our children on an ongoing basis. Daniel is a great example of a young man who knew who he was and Who he belonged to. The world wanted to steal his identity, but Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. God honored Daniel’s commitment and brought him into tremendous favor with Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon despite him being a captive slave. Daniel was able to take this position first, because he was taught by others who knew who they were and they were able to pass that on to him. Secondly, he made up his mind to not allow the temptations of the world

to cause him to give up his identity. He guarded his identity and refused to sell it or compromise it. ***Daniel 1: 8*** *But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: Therefore he requested of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.*

Needless to say, today many people suffer because they have never been taught. A lack of knowledge concerning the identity of God's children is not the will of God. We must always be open to receive illumination from His word and seek knowledge on a consistent basis. If we do not know who we are according to the Word of God, we most certainly will suffer from an identity crisis. ***Hosea 4:6*** *My People are destroyed for a lack of knowledge...*

Here is a story that illustrates what the Spirit of God wants to say to us in this message:

There was an eagle's egg that fell from its nest and found its way into a barnyard with chickens. When the egg hatched, the baby eagle was raised as a chicken. When the eagle got older, he noticed that he looked different than the other chickens. However, he disregarded it because he was raised as a chicken and therefore had a chicken's mentality. One day he was walking with his head down with all the other chickens scratching for food when he saw this huge shadow whisk by overhead. He looked up and saw this huge beautiful eagle with outstretched wings soaring in the sky. He longed to soar and fly like the eagle he saw, but he knew he was just a chicken so he continued to peck and scratch for food. He could not get the image out of his mind and the next day, he saw the eagle flying again. He called to him so that he could ask him a question. The big eagle landed and asked what he could do for the young eagle. The young eagle told him how much he enjoyed watching him soar and how he wished he could do the same thing and how he admired what he did and that he could never do anything so great. The big eagle looked at the young eagle and said. "Look at my wings; now look at your wings. Do you see a difference?" "No," said the young eagle. "Look at my beak; now look at your beak. Do you see a difference?" "No," said the young eagle. "Look at my talons; now look at your talons. Do you see a difference?" "No," said the young eagle. The big eagle looked at the young eagle and said. "The only difference in us is that I know who I am and you don't." The big eagle smiled at the young eagle and flew away. The little eagle began to look at all the chickens in the barnyard. They were being chickens and doing the same things they've always done. They were confined to the barnyard. Then he looked up at the big eagle soaring in the sky, beautiful and free to go wherever he wised. The young eagle looked at himself and suddenly he began to shake off his old chicken behavior, conversation, and mentality. He started flapping his wings and all of a sudden he was soaring like the big eagle. He left the chickens in the barnyard, never to return again.

Jesus came to earth in a human body, just as we have. He looked no different than we look today. The only difference is that Jesus knew Who He was. *1John 4:7 declares that as He is so are we in this world.* God has called us to soar. It is only when we do not know who we are, that we remain in the barnyard with the chickens. How do you see yourself?

## **Blessings and Peace**

*Pastor McGill*