

Equip OCC Class # 3 | Identity | Pastor Zack Beck

Ephesians 1:3-14

Day 1: Awakening from Gospel Amnesia

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:3-6 *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."*

The morning alarm sounds, and like Leonard Shelby in the film Memento, we awaken with a form of spiritual amnesia. We have forgotten who we are. We stumble through our day seeking approval, security, and love from sources that can never satisfy, all while possessing the very things we desperately seek.

Paul begins this magnificent passage not with what we must do, but with what God has already done. The phrase "has blessed us" appears in the past tense because our identity in Christ is not a future possibility but a present reality. Before the foundation of the world, God chose you. Before you took your first breath, He adopted you. Before you ever sinned, He planned your redemption.

The Greek phrase "en Christo" (in Christ) appears 164 times in Paul's writings because it captures the essence of Christian identity. You are not merely a sinner saved by grace trying to get your life together. You are someone who has been placed "in Christ" and therefore shares in everything that belongs to Him.

Consider this: when God looks at you, He does not see your failures, your struggles, or your inadequacies as the primary truth about you. He sees you through the lens of Christ's perfect righteousness. This is not positive thinking or motivational speaking. This is the bedrock reality of the Gospel.

Reflection Questions:

- What false sources of identity have you been pursuing lately?
- How might your day change if you truly believed God sees you as holy and blameless?
- What would it look like to wake up tomorrow remembering who you are in Christ?

Prayer: Father, forgive me for the times I have forgotten my true identity. Help me to wake each morning with the knowledge that I am chosen, adopted, and beloved in Christ. When the world tells me I am not enough, remind me that in Christ, I have every spiritual blessing. Amen.

Day 2: The Mystery of Union with Christ

Scripture Reading: John 15:1-8 *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*

How can we live "in Christ" while Christ lives "in us"? This profound mystery has puzzled theologians for centuries, yet Jesus makes it beautifully simple through the metaphor of the vine and branches. The branch does not strive to produce fruit through sheer willpower. It simply remains connected to the vine, drawing life, nourishment, and strength from that vital union.

The Holy Spirit serves as the divine bond that unites us to Christ across the chasm of time and space. What Jesus accomplished two thousand years ago becomes present reality in our lives today through the Spirit's work. As Romans 8:9-10 reminds us, if Christ's Spirit dwells in us, then Christ Himself lives in us.

This is not mere theological abstraction. When you face temptation, Christ's victory over sin is available to you. When you encounter fear, Christ's perfect peace dwells within you. When you struggle with shame, Christ's righteousness covers you. You are not trying to become like Christ through moral effort. You are learning to live out of the union you already possess.

Think of it this way: a branch never questions whether it belongs to the vine. It does not work to earn its place or fear being cut off due to poor performance. The branch simply abides, and from that abiding comes natural fruit-bearing. Your relationship with Christ operates on the same principle.

The difference between religion and Gospel becomes clear here. Religion says, "Do better, try harder, measure up." The Gospel says, "You are in Christ; now live from that reality." The Christian life is not about achieving union with Christ but about living from the union we already possess.

Reflection Questions:

- In what areas of your life are you striving in your own strength rather than abiding in Christ?
- How does understanding your union with Christ change your approach to spiritual growth?
- What might "remaining in Christ" look like practically in your daily routine?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for the mystery of union with You. Help me to stop striving and start abiding. Teach me to draw my strength, identity, and purpose from my connection to You. May the fruit of my life flow naturally from this divine union. Amen.

Day 3: Sealed by the Spirit, Secured in Love

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:11-14 *"In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory."*

In ancient times, a seal represented ownership, authenticity, and security. When Paul writes that believers are "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit," he is declaring that God has placed His own mark of ownership upon us. You belong to God not because of your performance but because of His eternal purpose and unchanging love.

This seal is both a present reality and a future guarantee. The Holy Spirit within you serves as God's deposit, His down payment on the full inheritance that awaits. Just as an engagement ring signifies a promised marriage, the Spirit's presence signifies God's unbreakable commitment to complete what He has begun in you.

Consider what this means for your daily struggles with doubt, fear, and condemnation. The enemy may whisper lies about your worth, your future, or your standing with God. But the Holy Spirit within you stands as an eternal testimony to the truth: you are chosen, secured, and sealed by God Himself.

This security does not lead to carelessness but to confidence. When you know you are permanently sealed by God's Spirit, you can take risks for the Kingdom. You can love boldly, serve sacrificially, and step into your calling without fear of losing God's approval. Your inheritance is not dependent on your faithfulness but on God's faithfulness.

The phrase "deposit guaranteeing our inheritance" uses commercial language from Paul's day. When someone made a large purchase, they would give a deposit as proof of their intention and ability to pay the full amount. God has given you His Spirit as proof that He will complete your salvation. What He has begun, He will finish.

Reflection Questions:

- How does knowing you are sealed by the Holy Spirit change your perspective on spiritual security?
- In what ways might fear of losing God's approval be holding you back from bold faith?
- What inheritance awaits you as God's possession, and how should this hope affect your present choices?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, thank You for being the seal of my salvation and the guarantee of my inheritance. When doubt creeps in, remind me that I belong to God permanently and completely. Help me live with the confidence that comes from being His secure possession. Amen.

Day 4: Living from Approval, Not for Approval

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:1-4 *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."*

One of the most destructive patterns in human experience is the endless pursuit of approval. We exhaust ourselves trying to prove our worth to others, to God, and even to ourselves. But Romans 8:1 delivers a stunning declaration: there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. None. Not a little bit. Not on bad days. Not when you fail. None.

This verse does not say there is no condemnation for perfect people or for those who have their lives together. It says there is no condemnation for those who are "in Christ Jesus." Your position in Christ, not your performance in life, determines God's posture toward you.

The Gospel reshapes our understanding of motivation. Instead of being driven by guilt, we are drawn by gratitude. Instead of performing for approval, we live from approval already received. This is not merely a theological distinction but a life-transforming reality.

Consider how this changes your relationships. When you know you are unconditionally loved by God, you can love others without expecting them to fill the void in your heart. When you possess God's approval, you can serve without manipulation or people-pleasing. When you understand your security in Christ, you can take risks and face rejection without your identity crumbling.

The pattern of Scripture places Gospel declarations before ethical demands. God does not say, "Love others and then I will love you." He says, "I have loved you; therefore, love others." This sequence matters profoundly. Behavior change that flows from Gospel identity is sustainable and joyful. Behavior change motivated by guilt or fear is temporary and burdensome.

Reflection Questions:

- Where in your life are you still living for approval rather than from approval?
- How might your relationships change if you truly believed you already have God's complete acceptance?
- What would you attempt for God if you knew failure could not affect your standing with Him?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to truly believe there is no condemnation for me in Christ Jesus. Free me from the exhausting pursuit of approval from others. Teach me to live from the approval I already possess in Your Son. May my obedience flow from gratitude rather than guilt. Amen.

Day 5: Becoming Who You Already Are

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."*

The most revolutionary aspect of Gospel identity is this: Christian growth is not about becoming something you are not but about becoming who you already are in Christ. You are already a new creation. You are already reconciled to God. You are already righteous in His sight. The question is not whether these things are true but whether you will live from their reality.

Sin, at its core, is an identity crisis. When we sin, we are acting out of a false identity rather than our true identity in Christ. We behave like orphans when we are adopted children. We act like slaves when we are free. We live like enemies when we are friends of God.

Sanctification, therefore, is not about changing into something new but about aligning your daily life with who you already are in Christ. When you struggle with fear, you remind yourself: "I am not someone who lives in fear because I am in Christ, and perfect love casts out fear." When temptation comes, you declare: "I am not a slave to sin because I have been set free in Christ."

This truth transforms how we approach spiritual disciplines, relationships, and service. We do not read Scripture to earn God's favor but to remember who we are. We do not pray to convince God to love us but to commune with the One who already delights in us. We do not serve to prove our worth but to express the worth we already possess.

The beauty of this Gospel identity is that it removes the burden of self-creation. You do not have to figure out who you are or build an impressive identity. God has given you the highest possible identity: you are in Christ, and Christ is in you. Now simply become who you already are.

Reflection Questions:

- In what areas of your life are you trying to become something rather than living from who you already are in Christ?
- How does understanding sanctification as "becoming who you are" change your approach to spiritual growth?
- What specific lies about your identity do you need to replace with Gospel truth?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You that I am already complete in You. Help me to stop trying to create an identity and instead live from the identity You have given me. When I am tempted to act like someone I am not, remind me of who I truly am in You. Make me authentic to my true Gospel identity. Amen.

Closing Reflection: Never Forget Who You Are

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." - Ephesians 1:3

This is not your potential. This is your position. This is not your aspiration. This is your reality. This is not what you could become. This is who you are.

Tomorrow morning, when you wake up, you will face the temptation to forget the Gospel once again. The world will tell you that your worth depends on your performance. Your emotions may whisper that God is disappointed with you. Your circumstances might suggest that you are unloved and alone.

In those moments, remember: you are chosen before the foundation of the world. You are adopted as God's beloved child. You are sealed with the Holy Spirit. You are blessed with every spiritual blessing. You are in Christ, and Christ is in you.

Do not live beneath who you are. Do not settle for the scraps of worldly identity when you possess the riches of Christ. Do not wake up tomorrow and forget the Gospel. You are home in Christ, and nothing can change that truth.

The question is not whether God loves you. He does. The question is not whether you are forgiven. You are. The question is not whether you have a secure future. You do. The question is: Will you believe it? Will you live it? Will you become who you already are in Christ?