

SE Identity in Christ

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Preacher: Tedd Tripp

[0 : 00] We'll be looking there in a moment, but if you get there, you'll be where you need to be in a moment. Let me just pray with you and ask for God's blessing on his word tonight.

Father, we come to you this evening asking that you would be with us, that you would open your word to us, that we pray, Lord, for the opening of your word, not just conceptually and intellectually, although we certainly need that, but we pray for that even deeper work of the word of God, that sanctifying work of the word of God, that work of God's word by the spirit within our hearts that transforms our ways of thinking, our ways of responding, our ways of viewing ourselves, our ways of viewing others, our ways of interpreting our lives.

And so we're asking, Lord, for your deep work of grace within us tonight to illuminate our understanding of rich truths from your word.

We pray that you would do that for us. And in doing that, prepare our hearts to receive your table with thanksgiving for the richness and grace of the gospel.

We ask this for his name's sake. Amen. Last Sunday evening, I had the opportunity to speak to you about the ways that the gospel transforms our sense of identity as people.

[1 : 31] And it's because the gospel is a foundational relationship in our lives. And the person and work of Christ has secured for us all that we need.

So our sense of identity is rooted in Christ and his work rather than anything else, rather than the socioeconomic group that I might be part of or my ethnicity or my education or my accomplishments or anything else we believe might give us a sense of self-worth.

Our worth is rooted in our sense of identity is rooted in who we are in Christ. And we saw that illustrated in Philip's interaction with the Ethiopian eunuch, this man with whom no self-respecting Jew would have had any relationship.

But the gospel dissolves those barriers and enables us to see people through a different lens. And we saw four implications of that. One is that our identity is rooted in the grace of the cross.

Second implication was that I'm in solidarity with every person who's ever repented and believed. And thirdly, my identity in Christ enables me both to give and receive from other people.

[2 : 42] And then finally, I've been given this identity in Christ so that I can make the identity of Christ known to others. It's really what Paul talks about in 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

We have been reconciled to God through Christ. And we have this ministry of reconciliation as ambassadors imploring people to be reconciled to God.

Now, tonight, I want to look with you at this issue of gospel identity in relationship to two other issues, in relationship to the issue of idolatry and in relationship to the unity that we have as believers.

I'm not sure the best term to use for my first point. I just introduced it as idolatry. But really, what I'm talking about is the fact that the gospel frees us from other masters, from the mastery of other things.

The gospel transforms our idolatries and sets us free from other masters. And that's really why I wanted you to turn to Romans chapter 6 because I'm not going to read the passage, but I'll be referencing the passage.

[3 : 48] If you have it open in front of you, you'll be able to find your way through it and see the themes that are there. But we need to think about the cross and how the cross not only converts us, but also how it changes our sense of identity.

And the cross continues to change us throughout our Christian walk. As we grow in grace, we understand more and more the implications of the cross and the implications of what it means to be reconciled to God through Christ.

And one of the things from which the cross frees us is the mastery of anything else. It frees us from any form of idolatry. And you'll notice in Romans chapter 6, this passage recognizes the problem of mastery.

The language of the passage is totalitarian language. Everyone is serving something. If you look at verses 13 and 14, don't present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have brought from death to life and your members as instruments for righteousness, for sin will not have dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace.

But Paul's assumption is you will either be serving one of those masters. You'll either be giving yourselves to sin and to unrighteousness, or you'll give yourselves to God and to righteousness. And the idea of dominion is really the subtext there.

[5 : 11] And in verse 16, similar language. Don't you know that if you present yourself to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey.

That's the language of mastery. Either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness. So Paul's assertion here is that we're either slaves of righteousness or we're slaves of sin.

But all of us are under mastery. And what the gospel does is it frees us from the mastery of enslavement to sin and enables us to be slaves of righteousness.

So Romans 6 is recognizing that everyone is serving something. There's no one who's not serving some master. And in many ways, that really follows the pattern of the Ten Commandments, where God says, you shall have no other gods before me.

That's the fundamental commandment. All the other commandments are expressions of serving other gods, serving other masters. And God is saying either, I am your God and you're serving me, or you're serving some other god.

[6 : 19] And there's no one who doesn't have a master. Everybody is serving something. But the fact that we're serving something is not always obvious to all of us.

I mean, there are some people you will talk to people and know people who are not religious people at all. They're not part of any religious community. They don't subscribe to any set of beliefs.

But in terms of this passage, they are still slaves to sin that leads to death. And that slavery is not always obvious, as I mentioned. As I mentioned, it may be that they're serving a career, and the master is the master of a career, or the master of success, or the master of family, or the master of relationships, or the master of a partner, or a lover, or a political cause.

But everybody is serving some master. And that's one of the points that Paul makes in this passage. Everyone has something that makes them tick, something they delight in, something that they long for, something that they look at and think, if I had this, I would truly live.

My life would really matter. And often a person's chronic concerns really show the master that they're serving. If only I was married. Or if only I had that special someone who cares for me, just for me, then I would really live.

[7 : 42] I would enjoy life. Life would be full. It would be good. I would be the joyful Christian I'm supposed to be, if only I had that. And you might even talk to people sometimes who feel a little bit mad at God because God has not given them the thing that they desire.

It's a master. And they may have a hard time admitting it. But they're mastered by those things, that idea of male or female affection, the idea of they're a slave to the idea of belonging to someone, being the person that matters in the life of some other person.

David Paulson talks about this in a lot of his counseling material. He points out the word *epithymia*. It's a word that's used in this passage. It's used in many, many passages in the New Testament.

And it's not an easy word to translate because the King James translates it as lust, which probably worked well in 1611 when the King James was published.

But lust in our day carries a sexual connotation that is not necessarily tracking with the word *epithymia*. Sometimes it's translated, the NIV often translates it evil desires.

[8 : 54] The ESV translates in this passage, passions, which is a good translation. It shows up here in verse 12 as passions. Don't let sin reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions.

But it's a matter of wanting something, wanting something so deeply and so passionately, something which may even be good in itself. But it becomes an ultimate thing that masters us, that we have to have.

And we often have problems identifying these false masters because they're so plausible. I remember doing counseling at the counseling center in Allentown. And I was counseling a woman.

And as I first met with her and understood her, she was an older woman. Her children were grown. She was a Christian. She was married to a Christian man.

But she was a bitter, angry, hurting woman. And as her story unfolded and I got to know her better and understand her background and the things that had brought her to that juncture more thoroughly, it was the story that emerged as she had been one of these helicopter moms, always hovering around her children.

[10 : 08] And she was overbearing. And she was overwhelming to them. She was a control freak. And she was always trying to control and manage everything going on in their lives. And her poor husband, he could not be a good enough father.

And naturally, over time, her children rebelled against this overbearing mother. And if you talked, as I talked with her, she talked about how when they were teens, she would go to her husband.

And she would complain to her husband. And she would complain about him to other people about the fact that he wasn't a good spiritual leader.

He was too self-centered. He wasn't spiritually minded. And in many ways, she was right. But she became embittered against him. She withdrew from him.

And over years, became more and more angry and bitter as a woman over her family and the ways her children turned out because they all rebelled against her in various ways and became needy adults.

[11 : 18] And she became this bitter, angry, defeated lady. Now, here's the problem. She had desires that were appropriate desires.

Her desires were for her children to be okay. She wanted her children to do well. But it was an *epi* desire. It was a desire that was an inordinate desire.

It was a desire that was a passion with her. And she thought, if my children turn out well, if they're happy, successful adults, then I will really have lived.

She made gods for her children. She was mastered. She was a servant, not of God, but of the idea of children that were happy, successful children.

And she thought if she could have that, she would have life. And if she could not have that, then nothing in her life mattered. Her life had been nothing. Not even God was a comfort for her.

[12 : 20] That's why she couldn't forgive her husband. That's why she was so embittered. God was not enough for her. She had made this transaction within herself in which she had said, if my children turn out to be good and they have a good life and they look back at me as their mother and they say, Mom, it was all because of you.

Then my life will have been worthwhile and I'll have joy. But if they fail and if they get in trouble and they end up hating me, then my life is over and I don't even want to live.

That's mastery. And that's the kind of mastery that the gospel frees us from. It frees us to be able to live to God and not to live for these other masters.

And if you want something, even a good thing, you can want a good thing. And if something keeps you from achieving that good goal that you had, you're going to be disappointed and upset and it'll be troubling to you.

But if you want something in an inordinate way, it becomes one of those epithemia desires, those epi desires. And you can't have what you want, then you'll be devastated.

[13 : 34] That's why Martin Luther said the problem is always the problem of the first commandment. It's always the problem of breaking the first commandment. Something or someone has become more important to me than anything else.

It's become a master. Or if you think about lying, why is it that we lie? I mean, why am I lying in any particular situation?

Because the reason we lie or the reason we do any sin, I'll just choose lying as an example, is because at that moment, there's something that we feel that we must have. And so we lie.

And a lie is a way of getting that. And one of the typical reasons we lie, not the only reason, but one of the typical reasons people lie is because we're fearful of losing faith. We don't want to lose someone's approval.

We don't want to look like we've dropped the ball, like we haven't been doing our job. And so the sin, under the sin of lying, is the idolatry at that moment of desiring human approval.

[14 : 34] And if we break the commandment against being a false witness, it's because first we're breaking the first commandment, the commandment of idolatry. Something is more important than God.

We're looking to something, looking for human approval rather than to Jesus as our sense of worth and meaning and happiness. And so the sin, under the sin of lying, is a failure to rejoice in God and believe in our acceptance before God and truly live as though if I have Christ, I have all that I need.

The sin, under the sin, reflects a failure to believe the gospel and live out of the gospel, whatever we might tell ourselves. And that's a failure that is not only true of unbelievers, it's a failure we have when we are struggling, when we are disconsolate, when we are upset and angry because things are not going the way we want them to go and we're provoked at the people and circumstances in our lives.

We are serving some master other than Christ because what we've received from God's hand, we can know God in the midst of whatever the struggle or trial is. And see, anything you add to Jesus as a requirement for a happy life is a functional Savior, it's a pseudo-Lord, it's controlling you, whether it's power or approval or comfort or control.

And the only way to change that habit is to repent of the failure to believe the gospel, the failure to remember that I'm saved and I'm made acceptable because of God and His great grace, not by pursuing this goal or this other master, but through the grace of Jesus Christ.

[16 : 20] And see, what the cross does for us, what the gospel does for us is it frees us from other masters. That's what Paul's talking about in Romans 6. That's why in verse 11 he says, you must consider yourself to be what you are, to be dead to sin, alive to God in Christ.

Let not sin, therefore reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions. Don't present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourself to God as those who have been brought from death to life and your members to God as instruments for righteousness, for sin shall have no dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace.

Grace frees us. Grace frees us from any other master. It sets us free completely. You might remember that Augustine, the early church father of the 4th century, he, if you've ever read Augustine's Confessions, if you haven't, there's a modern translation of it that is really wonderful.

There's some old translations that you will never wade through but there's a modern translation that's quite nice. But anyway, Augustine in his Confessions, he talks about his life because as a young man, he led a profligate life and he was a wicked man.

He consorted with women and various things and his mother, his dear mother, prayed for him continually and eventually God arrested him and saved him.

[17 : 47] And he tells how that after he had been saved, he was, he saw a woman that he had once been with and their paths crossed and she sought effusively to greet him and he was just looking through her like she wasn't even there.

And, and, and she said to him, oh, Augustine, it is I, it is I. And she identified herself and he said, oh, I know, I know it's you but it is not I.

In other words, I'm not that man anymore. I'm a different man. Different appetites, different desires. I've been set free from the mastery of needing to have a woman.

And I, I'm, I'm a different man. I have a new master. And that's what the power of the gospel does for it. The gospel frees us from old masters and liberates us to true, to serve the true master of our souls.

And that Paul's reminding us in this passage, you died with Christ. So consider yourself, remember, remind yourself, maintain the conclusion, hang on to this truth, you are dead to sin, alive to God in Christ.

[19 : 00] So sin shall not be your master. We've been made rich in every way in Jesus Christ. When your father looks at his dear son, his heart bursts with joy over the beauty and magnanimity and goodness and magnificence and nobility and sacrifice of the son, the son in whom he is well pleased and he sees Christ's virtues in us.

that's the meaning of 2 Corinthians 5.21 that God has made him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

Lloyd-Jones uses the illustration of a slave who has been emancipated and he says that slave who was emancipated, the emancipation proclamation has been declared he's no longer a slave but he sees the old master coming in his temptations to say yes sir master, yes sir master and we need to be reminded we're no longer under the mastery of sin.

We have a new master who have been set free from that previous dominion and see that's why you come here that's why you come here week after week that's why you come to worship because you long to be moved by the power and grace of the gospel.

You long to worship God, you long to sing God's praises, you long to hear God's word, you long to be reminded of deep truths that are precious truths to you because you want to be moved with the power of the gospel, you want to be moved with the marvelous work of God's redemption, you want to experience the joy of the cross and the wonder of Christ's work all over again so that you're freshly filled and delighted in him and when you go home in the Lord's day when your heart has been met by God you have a sense of joy and exuberance as you face a new week because you've been freshly reminded the beauties of Christ and the goodness of his gospel and you're thrilled with his grace and you want to go out and live for Christ and that's something we need to be continually doing for ourselves in our own devotional times reminding ourselves of Christ bringing Christ's selfless act of sacrifice leaving the glory and the splendor of his glory with the father coming into this earth being robed in flesh like ours facing all the temptations we face being tried by wicked men condemned put on a cross dying the father turning away from him being raised again to the power and glory of God all those truths we need to be bringing before ourselves all the time so our hearts are freshly melted by those truths and we allow the grace to melt our hearts we delight in him and delight in being mastered by him and him alone the Christian life is not lived just by white knuckling it through

[21 : 55] I gotta do it right I gotta get it right I gotta get it right the Christian life is lived by the joy of the Lord it's the joy of the Lord Nehemiah says it is the strength of God's people well the second theme I want to look at with you very quickly is unity and I want to take you to Ephesians chapter 2 for that and ask you to turn to Ephesians chapter 2 the second half of the chapter 12 to 22 I'm gonna read a large section of this in a moment so I won't read it just now but again if you have it in front of you you'll be able to follow as I make references to it and you'll remember this passage is primarily it's a passage about the unity we have in Christ and obviously the primary application of the passage our pastor has preached through it to us but the primary application is about the division between Jews and Gentiles and the resolution of that division in Christ but I want to look at one of the sub applications of that for a few moments because there's a transformation that is produced by grace that's so profound that it brings unity that crosses all barriers that would otherwise keep us from others if we had time we could work this out more fully but this passage really demonstrates the necessity of the church because through the blood of Christ you see that in verse 12 through his work on the cross verse 16 people have experienced grace and are brought together in unity

Margie and I had the joy some years ago of being in Israel for a conference a conference that was being held in Haifa and it was a conference that was being held in a conference center and there were both Jewish and Palestinian Christians gathered together embracing one another worshipping God together enjoying fellowship together now these people wouldn't even be able to go to one another's homes because of the ethnic hostilities for a Jew to go to a Palestinian district or a Palestinian to go to a Jewish district but there they were together in this conference center unified in Christ but I want forced I just want to draw to your attention quickly three metaphors that are used here to describe the unity between you and all believers and there's an intensification of this I think is very interesting the first metaphor is the one we find in verse 19 we are fellow citizens consequently Paul says

I mean consequent to the death of Christ who has saved us by his grace who has been raised from the dead who has freed us from our sins who has made us his children consequent to all that he has done for us on the cross to reconcile us to himself and in the hostility that exists between us and various other people groups we've experienced grace in which we have been transformed we've been made fellow citizens with God's people and really for us that means that the most fundamental point of identity for us is the fact that we are a Christian I'm a Christian first and second whatever else I happen to be because the most basic expression of what I am as a redeemed person is a Christian I'm a follower of Christ I'm not an American first I'm a Christian first I'm a Christian first who happens to be an American I'm a Christian first who happens to be male

I'm a Christian first see my maleness is not the most important thing about me being a Christian is I'm a Christian first an educated man second I'm a Christian first a Caucasian second my citizenship as a child of God is profoundly shaping for me so that I'm a fellow citizen with every other person on the planet who knows Jesus Christ so my ethnicity my nationality all those things are not the primary things the primary thing is I am in Christ and in Christ I have unity with every other person who has repented and believed in Jesus Christ Margie and I have the experience as you know of traveling all over the world and we meet people that we've never met before in railway platforms or in airports and we get into the car with them moments later we trust them we can immediately fall into deep and meaningful conversation we trust them not to harm us or to try to take advantage of us and and and and we because we are fellow citizens with them we belong to each other and

I know Pastor Chad's experienced this in Africa you can have a more profound sense of closeness to a brother in the heart of Africa than you do even someone from your own country or your own even perhaps natural family because we are fellow citizens with Christ Martin Lloyd Jones you may know he was a great preacher the last half of the 20th century but Lloyd Jones was a medical doctor first and then he became a preacher and gave up the practice of medicine but he tells about going to a little village on the coast of England for a holiday and he was there sunning himself by the side of the sea and he met a fisherwoman from this little fishing village on the coast of England and as they talked together he realized that in spite of the vast differences between their backgrounds their life experience their families of origin and all those kinds of things in which they had very little in common they had a great deal in common because they were both believers in

[28 : 02] Jesus Christ they were fellow citizens they belonged to each other well the next metaphor I want to look at is this metaphor of being members of God's household we belong to the same family family now you know family you know if you think about a king a king lives with his subjects he lives in the same country as his subjects■ house, there are certain unwritten rules that govern the way that you behave with people that you invite into your house. It's not the same as having a family member. In fact, when we feel really close to someone we've invited into our house, we say, oh, you can take off your shoes and put your feet on the coffee table. We're family. But we use terms like that because we're acknowledging that there's a special intimacy to being members of the same household because members of the same household prepare meals together. They eat with each other. They clear the table. They sweep the floor after supper. They take their turns at dishes and taking out the trash after the work is done for the day. They play board games or cards together and they talk together.

And there are thousands of repeated and sometimes even tedious tasks that are done in the safety and security of a home that produce a very deep sense of intimacy within a family. In fact, if you drop a stranger into this family, the stranger is not sure of what to do. Have you ever had the experience?

Maybe I've had this experience where I've been invited into someone's house and I said, well, what can I do to help? Well, you can peel the potatoes. Well, how exactly do you want the potatoes peeled and cut up? And if I'm doing it for Margie, I know just how she wants to have it done. But I don't know how another woman might want to have that done because there are different protocols for how you peel and dice up potatoes in different families. You know, that's part of the intimacy of family. You know what those unspoken standards are and you have a sense of it. You know, members of the same household have a common history. Remember the time we have common memories. We have running jokes.

Even dad's old, you know, the bad dad jokes and all that. We sacrifice our ambitions and our hopes for one another. We grow together because we rub shoulders together and we spend time together and we are accustomed to accommodating ourselves to one another. So we know each other's secrets. We know each other's weaknesses. We know the foibles of the members of the family. We clean up after each other. We care for one another when we're sick and we learn how to overlook those weaknesses and accept one another in the interest of family unity. And so you hear people saying things like, you know, he might drive me crazy sometimes. We might even get in some accidents or some arguments, but at the end of everything, he's my brother. He'll always be my brother.

That's one of the reasons why it's so hard for parents when their kids leave home because they know things will never be the same. Not because you will love your kids less after they leave home, but the context of intimacy is somewhat lost because the intimacy you have with family members who have launched is the intimacy of common past history. But they're enjoying a different history in their life experience.

[32 : 05] You're not in the orbit of their life experience anymore. And it's a sense of loss. I've taken the time with this because I want us to see the richness of this metaphor for our unity.

God says that I'm members of the same household with all who know Christ. We are family.

We belong to each other. The third metaphor that's used here is a holy temple, a temple in which God dwells by his spirit. This passage is an interesting passage because it says we're like living stones.

We're like rocks that have been hewn out by God and he's fitting these rocks together and mortaring them together. And from these rocks, we're part of those rocks. From these rocks, he's building a temple. And it's a temple that is cemented together by the Holy Spirit.

And he's, and he's, and he dwells there. I mean, there's something even more than being members of the same household here. You know, a king dwells amongst his subjects in the same land. They share, but a family, they dwell together and share common experience and common space. But the Holy Spirit inhabits the temple like, like blood, inhabits your body. It flows everywhere through us. We're all this part of this temple in which God lives by his spirit. And the gospel produces that kind of grace in us.

[33 : 54] And it happens because of the work of the gospel. Paul talks about the fact that the, well, let me read a section here.

How is it the gospel produces this transformation? Let me begin with 12, verse 12 in Ephesians chapter 2. Remember that one time you were separated from Christ, alienated from the common wealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who are once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself a new man in the place of the two, and so make peace and might reconcile us both to God and to one another through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

One of the problems of what divides us in this passage is the law and its commandments. It was the thing that divided Jews and Gentiles. Martin Lloyd-Jones in his commentary in Ephesians 2 makes this observation that the big problem that divides us is our gifts.

The law was a gift of God to the Israelites. But the Jews took such pride in this gift that they separated themselves from everyone and looked down at everyone who wasn't a recipient of the law.

[35 : 31] And it still happens today. I mean, we have, you know, ethnic groups that divide themselves according to the things they take pride in. So you have some people that are, you know, we're a part of an ethnic nationality that's known for precision and careful workmanship, or we're part of a nationality that is cold and distanced, or we're part of a nationality that's friendly and warm, or maybe you're part of an ethnic nationality that has a lot of PhDs, and you see yourself as superior to those who have more people doing domestic work.

But those divisions happen with us. Margie and I were on a wedding one time in India. It was a cross-cultural wedding. It was between an American man and an Indian woman.

And there were people from the United States there and Westerners there as well as Indians. And, of course, all the Westerners arrived about 10 or 15 minutes early so they could be in place at the appointed hour for the wedding.

But when it was time for the wedding to begin, most of the Indians hadn't even showed up, and the ones that were showing up were putting out chairs and doing arranging of the facility to make it ready for a wedding, like as though the wedding was going to take place hours later, which it actually did.

But, you know, during this whole time, the Westerners were looking at their watches, and they're saying things like, this is how these people are, these Indians. They're never on time. They never come to anything on time.

[37 : 00] I don't think Indians even own watches. This is ridiculous. It's so rude. It's so inconsiderate. I can't believe if they're going to have the wedding at 9 o'clock. They should have said it was 9 o'clock, not 7 o'clock. What's the matter with these people?

Why are they so rude? And when the Indians finally arrived, they're saying, what's all the fuss? It's a wedding. These people are getting married. It's not about the clock.

You can't deal with people with a watch. That's the problem with you Westerners. You Westerners are so stuffy and high-bound. And you think the clock is the most important thing in your life.

It's a wedding. It's about love. It's not about the time piece. Get a grip. So, you know, these two different ethnicities looking at the same circumstance very, very differently.

And what the cross tells us is we're all the same. We're all sinners. And the cross slays our pride and the pride that divides us from others and shows that we all come together on the same ground as sinners who are in need of mercy, sinners who have grace in common.

[38 : 02] The cross slays our pride. And I was talking to someone about this yesterday. But, you know, there are two ways to be your own Savior and Lord. One way is to just say, I don't care.

I'm going to be bad. I'm going to break all the rules. I don't care. I'm going to be my own person. You're just going to have to live with it. Well, that's a way of being your own Savior and Lord. Or the other way to be your own Savior and Lord is the opposite.

It's to keep all the rules. And to come to God saying, God, I keep all the rules. I'm a good person. You have to accept me and take me to heaven because I've kept all the rules.

I've done the right thing. I've been the person I'm supposed to be. And the cross says to us, you're all lost. The rule breaker, the rule keeper, we're all lost.

We all need grace. We need him. We need his righteousness. So on the cross, he put to death the hostility. Your pride, your hostility, your selfishness was slain on the cross.

[39 : 06] And God took him who knew no sin and made him to be sin for us. Of course, that doesn't mean that Jesus became sinful. But what it means is that our sin was laid on him. So your pride was laid on him and slain on the cross.

Your selfishness was laid on him and slain on the cross. Your hostility to one another was laid on him and slain on the cross. Your selfishness that's ruining your life and bringing misery to people around you was laid on him and slain on the cross.

He suffered and bled and died so that he could make us his children and bind us together in his kingdom and his family.

And when you see that, when you get a hold of that, when you get that truth deeply within you, not just as a theoretical idea, God is the one that's made me acceptable.

But when your sense of identity is tied to the fact that I'm accepted in Christ and nothing else makes me acceptable. That's what makes me.

[40 : 24] When that becomes your sense of identity, it slays your pride. And it humbles you. And it frees you to live in the grace of the gospel.

Because when you see it, it slays your pride. You understand that the pride and hostility of your heart was judged on the cross. As you embrace that, it becomes more than just this idea of objective truth that God has provided righteousness to his son.

I mean, that's a wonderful objective truth. It's foundational for us. But what I'm appealing here is to have that truth be truth that is taken inside and out of which we live, out of which we look at all the circumstances of life.

And it maps on to our life. Each of these things we've looked at last week, we looked at the issue of identity tonight, it's mastery, power over slavery, the essential unity we have, are all pictures of the transforming power of the gospel.

And that's what we celebrate tonight at the Lord's table. The table is a symbol of the broken body of Christ and the shed blood of Christ.

[41 : 50] And it's preaching to us that we can't make ourselves acceptable. But we want to pray deeply within our hearts, even as we partake of this means of grace, that God would enable us to feed on Christ in our hearts by faith.

So we'd be people who are transformed by the grace of God and see that our essential identity is the gospel. Our...

That which masters us, which becomes that which we must serve, is the gospel. We're slaves no longer to unrighteousness, but to righteousness as people who have given themselves to God and given their members to righteousness.

That which provides unity with everyone and every person on the planet who names the name of Jesus Christ is the grace of the gospel. May God enable us to live as people whose identity is transformed, who are freed from other masters, who live as those united to all who have repented and believed.

Let's pray together. Father, we ask for your grace that you would pour these things deeply within us internally, that it would not just be the theoretical ideas out of which we live, but it would be the heartbeat of our whole being.

[43 : 14] We ask this for Christ's glory. Amen. Amen.