

God's Identity and Ours

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[0 : 0 0] Take your Bibles and turn to the Old Testament book of 2 Samuel, chapter 7. We're going to begin reading at verse 18 and read through the end of the end of the Lord. And he was getting ready to do that. And the Lord appeared to him and said, David, you're not going to build me a house. I'm going to build you a house, a kingdom that will never end.

And you will have a son that will sit on that throne. And verse 16 says, your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me. Your throne will be established forever. Those were Nathan's words to David. And so, King David, you see verse 18. He went in and sat before the Lord.

And this is what he said. Who am I, O sovereign Lord? And what is my family that you have brought me this far? And as if this were not enough in your sight, O sovereign Lord, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant. Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O sovereign Lord?

What more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O sovereign Lord, for the sake of your word and according to your will, you've done this great thing and made it known to your servant.

How great you are, O sovereign Lord. There is no one like you and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself and to make a name for himself and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before your people whom you redeemed from Egypt. You have established your people Israel as your very own forever. And you, O Lord, have become their God. And now, Lord God, keep forever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house. Do as you do as you promised so that your name will be great forever. Then men will say, the Lord Almighty is God over Israel and the house of your servant David will be established before you. O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, you have revealed this to your servant saying, I will build a house for you. So your servant has found courage to offer you this prayer. O sovereign Lord, you are God. Your words are trustworthy and you have promised these good things to your servant.

[3 : 0 7] Now be pleased to bless the house of your servant that it may continue forever in your sight. For you, O sovereign Lord, have spoken and with your blessing, the house of your servant will be blessed forever.

Who am I? God has kindly answered that question in the scriptures, who and what we are. But as people have no stomach for God's word and turn away from it, their minds are increasingly darkened and totally confused about their identity. Who am I? Am I just an animal a little higher up on the supposed evolutionary scale than the ape? Who am I? Am I an accident of time and chance that just brought me into being?

When I die, do I just cease to exist or do I have a soul and an eternal existence after death?

Am I male or female or one of many, many choices in between the two that I must figure out for myself? Am I accountable to a higher standard of morality than my own?

And on and on we could go and as more and more individuals no longer know who they are, the larger culture inevitably disintegrates and self-destructs.

[4 : 44] Because according to the Bible, people live out of their self-conscious identity. And if children are taught at school that they are nothing more than an animal, then we should not be surprised if they behave like animals.

For people act in line with what and who they think they are. Self-conscious identity shapes our behavior. And that's true of Christians as well as non-Christians.

Indeed, the Bible tells us as believers to be what we are. This is what you are, now act like it. That's the *modus operandi* of Scripture.

That's the way it works. You are children of light. Now act like it. Don't do the deeds of darkness. So knowing who we are shapes the way we live.

And the more aware we are of our identity, the more it will shape the way that we live. Years ago, a man wrote a book on the church named *Cinderella with Amnesia*.

[5 : 53] And his thesis was simply that the church had forgotten who she is, the bride of Christ. And forgetful of who she is, her behavior then falls well below of her calling and her identity.

Think of a Cinderella loved by the prince, destined to be his bride. And yet, if forgetful of this, she would just continue to live her paltry life among the cinders.

There is such a thing then as spiritual amnesia. It is very possible for Christians to forget who we are. And it happens all too easily.

The world is always telling us its version of who we are. That's coming at us, bombarding us all week long. The devil's whispering into our ears his lies about who we are and our flesh is so quick to agree with the lies rather than the truth.

And under such propaganda, it's all too easy for us just to grow forgetful of our true identity and simply to not live as we ought.

[7 : 09] So we may be living like spiritual paupers when in fact we are children of the king of kings. So for the past 15 months or so on Sunday mornings, we have come to God's written word and we've been having him tell us who we are in order that we might live more in the light of our true identity.

And we've seen the richness of our identity. It's not just one thing that we are. It's like the coat of many colors that Joseph had. So we've seen that I'm a human being made in God's image.

I'm chosen by God. I'm a new creation. I'm in Christ. I'm a disciple. I'm a believer. I'm a Christian.

I'm a temple where God lives. I'm a slave of Jesus Christ set free from sin. I'm a friend of God. I'm a branch in a vine. I'm a farmer sowing seed waiting for harvest.

I'm a witness of Jesus. I'm a saint. I'm a sheep. I'm a soldier. I'm a stranger and pilgrim.

[8 : 25] I'm a son of God. God. And the beauty of it is that if you are simply reading your Bible consistently, you'll be constantly reminded by God of who you are.

Isn't that good? You'll be reminded how to think of yourself and then how to live in light of who you are. And personally, this study has been my salvation over the last year.

For 41 years, no small part of my identity was that I was Joseph's husband. And that identity shaped my life. And it had its tentacles all over my life.

Hardly anything in life was unchanged by my identity as Joseph's husband. According to Jesus, when a man and woman are joined together in marriage, they are no longer two, but one.

One. And marriage changed my identity from one to just half of one. And so, that's to affect the way I lived for 41 years.

[9 : 43] I was no longer to ever think about life just as my own desires and thoughts and I needed to consider her. My other half, my better half, a very part of me.

For the two do not remain two but become one, Jesus said. And so, we worshiped together and we did ministry together, we prayed together and we played together and we parented together and we planned and dreamed together and we laughed and we cried together and in short, we did life together, all of it as one.

So, when my better half was taken from me, my identity changed. That aspect of my identity changed.

Drastic adjustment needed. I'm no longer the husband of Joss. So, who am I now? What am I to do?

How am I to live? These are the questions that bombarded me. But this study has anchored my feet to something that doesn't move and that doesn't change.

[11 : 00] Yes, my world was rocked. But as I return to what God says about me, week by week, my focus was on this is what you are, John.

And therefore, this is how you are to live in the light of what you are. And week after week, all year long, I've had my focus set straight.

That yes, your identity as husband has changed, but you're still a sheep in Jesus' fold. You're still a son of the Heavenly Father. You're still a soldier in the battle that's raging.

And on and on, it was my salvation. Here was something solid, unmovable. And that's been crucial to my stability.

Just to remember who I am in Jesus Christ. And I'm finding I need daily reminders and that's the beauty of the Bible because that's what I get.

[12 : 02] Daily reminders of who I am. Now, maybe aspects of your identity are changing. Maybe you've lost a spouse, a loved one, and that's changed your identity for sure.

Maybe it's retirement and your identity as that worker at that place that's been such a huge part of your life all these years. That's different now.

And you might be wondering, well, who am I? And disoriented as to what you're to be doing with your life. Maybe it's not retirement, but a change in your health.

You're always self-sufficient. You did for yourself. But all of a sudden now, that identity of healthy man or healthy woman is changed and now you're dependent on others.

that changes a lot, doesn't it? Maybe it's your financial security that's changed. Maybe your family's moved away. A host of things that tend to rock our world.

[13 : 09] I want to call you to keep your ears tuned to the word of God telling you what you are. Yes, that's changed, but this hasn't. And so, to live out your identity in Christ.

I've just got one final lesson as we bring this study to a close today. And that's just this point that our identity is inseparably linked to God's identity.

We've been studying our identity. And what we'll see this morning is that our identity in all of its richness is inseparably linked to who God is.

John Calvin said that next to the most important question of who is God is the question who am I? And he showed how those two questions are not unrelated but that in fact you cannot really answer the second question who am I unless you answer the first question who is God?

And that's true of you whoever you are but especially if you are a Christian who you are is directly linked to who God is and the glory and grandeur of being a Christian and knowing who you are is who it is that is your God that is your father and so on.

[14 : 37] Sinclair Ferguson said the Christian self image always begins with the knowledge of God and who he is. So my identity as a Christian is deeply rooted in God's identity.

I won't appreciate who I am unless I know who he is. So let's look more closely this morning at this connection between who I am and how it's connected to who God is.

I want to give you an example first and then we'll turn to some scripture passages. The example. So who am I? Remember we saw that the Bible says I am a sheep in Jesus' fold.

Now the blessedness of this identity is not in the fact that I am a sheep. It's not to be found in my sheepness. No, there's nothing really great about that.

Sheep are dumb. Sheep go astray. Sheep are defenseless and totally dependent upon a shepherd. Sheep without a shepherd, oh, that's someone to be pitied.

[15 : 36] They're harassed and helpless. So the blessedness of being a sheep in Jesus' fold is not who I am in and of myself as a sheep, but it's who my shepherd is.

It's in his identity that my identity as his sheep takes on richness and fullness and amazement. If my shepherd is a mere hireling who cares nothing for the sheep, then I'm just the next meal for the wolf.

He will run. Oh, but if my shepherd is the Lord himself, then I will have no lack of anything needful because he is the one who leads me to lie down in green pastures and leads me beside the still waters.

He's the one who restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his own namesake. I don't need to fear anything.

Not even the very valley of the shadow of death because he is with me and he's with me with his rod and his staff to comfort me. And he's the one preparing a table before me in the presence of my very enemies and he's anointing my head with oil and he is filling my cup to overflowing.

[17 : 08] It's in his fold that goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life and it's under his care that I will come to dwell in his house forever and ever.

You see, all the comfort and encouragement and blessedness of my identity as a sheep is due to who the shepherd is.

So we can't appreciate our identity unless we appreciate the identity of the shepherd. You see, that's the example of the principle I'm wanting to unpack this morning. I'm not just any sheep, I'm his sheep and that makes all the difference in who I am.

It's because of the kind of shepherd he is that I'm blessed. He's a good shepherd. He is the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. He's the one who says of his sheep, I give them eternal life.

and they will never perish. No one can snatch them out of my hand. You see then how my identity is wrapped up and inseparably connected to the identity of my shepherd.

[18 : 20] Now, that's the example. Now, some texts of scripture. In the gracious work of salvation, God makes sinners his own people.

people. He doesn't find us as his, but he makes us his own people. Peter said to those who by faith had built their lives upon Christ, the living stone, he says, you are a people belonging to God.

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. That's your grand identity. God's people. But not only are you God's people, he is your God.

That's his identity. You, his people, he, your God. You see how the two are just woven together in grace. That's the great covenant promise found throughout the Bible, Old Testament and new alike.

I will be their God and they will be my people. And what all that means will be fully seen when Jesus comes back in Revelation 21.3.

[19 : 36] We read, now the dwelling of God is with men and he will live with them and they will be his people and he will dwell with them and he will be their God.

So who are you? You're God's people. And who is he? He's your God. Do you see how the two are married in salvation?

I am his and he is mine forever and forever. So what makes us so special is not who we are in ourselves but whose we are. We're his.

Now turn to Deuteronomy chapter 33. this is one passage that speaks of this identity of God amazing identity of God and the amazing identity of his people and we find them together here in this passage.

Deuteronomy 33 almost at the end of the fifth book of the Bible Moses is blessing the tribes of Israel just before he dies and he starts with individual blessings for each tribe but in verse 26 he shifts to speak then of Israel as a whole and the blessing of God's people as a whole.

[21 : 04] What I want you to notice as I read is the way that Israel's identity is wrapped up in the identity of their God. I'm going to begin at verse 26 and read to the end.

And by the way when we see there is no one like the God of Jeshurun is just another name for Israel. It means the righteous one and that's a reference to Israel a poetic name for Israel that's used once in a while in scripture.

So I'm going to replace it with Israel this morning so you'll not be confused. Verse 26 there is no one like the God of Jeshurun or of Israel who rides on the heavens to help you and on the clouds in his majesty.

The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemies before you saying destroy him so Israel will live in safety alone.

Jacob's spring is secure in a land of grain and new wine where the heavens drop dew. Blessed are you O Israel who is like you a people saved by the Lord.

[22 : 14] He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you and you will trample down their high places.! two incomparables first of all there's no one like the God of Israel no one like him oh to be sure other nations had their gods gods of plenty but they were just imaginary gods whose only existence was in the minds of their people they were gods that had eyes but could not see gods that had ears but could not hear they had mouths but could not speak hands but could not help feet but could not stand up they had to be propped up and chained up so as to not totter and fall over and they were gods with demons behind them to give an appearance of reality and power but the

God of Israel alone is the eternal God the one who really does exist who was and is and is to come the living God he really does exist he is the living and true God and only he is and there's never been a time when he was not before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world from everlasting to everlasting you are God there's no one like him that's verse 27 he goes on further and underneath are the everlasting arms he's telling us the identity of this incomparable God he's the eternally existent one now we hear he's the incomparably strong one with everlasting arms how strong are your arms how long could you hold up a heavy weight God can hold up everlastingly everlasting arms he he's able to hold all of his people and carry all of our burdens!

forever and ever he is a God of everlasting strength furthermore there's none like him in his majestic greatness verse 26 so he rides on the clouds in the heavens as if they were his chariot and he's having a drive a ride throughout his universe so great is his majesty verse 27 he alone is sovereign ruling over all peoples and enemies he will drive out your enemy before you saying destroy him well someone might say who does he think he is driving out peoples and nations and destroying them well he's he's the sovereign lord of the universe that's who he is and that's what daniel tells us that he does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and with the peoples of the earth those he destroys and those he drives out and no one can hold back his hand or say to him what have you done no one can hold him accountable no one can demand and he alone is the provider of every blessing of a fruitful land a secure spring of water what we need to live and a land of grain and new wine where the heavens drop dew that is what

God does he provides he he is the only provider it is no God of fertility that that's bringing forth the fruitfulness of the earth all your fruitfulness comes from me he would say and then verse 29 he alone is savior who is Israel they are people saved by the Lord he is the savior he is as the verse goes on he is a shield he a helper incomparable great God and something of his identity showing there's none like him but there's another incomparable in the passage did you see it there's someone else whose identity has no equal and it's found in verse 29 blessed are you oh Israel who is like you a people saved by the Lord and the answer is no one there's no one like

Israel so there's no one like the God of Israel and there's no one like Israel but though both are incomparable they're incomparable for two very different reasons God's incomparable greatness is inherent it's due to who he is in and of himself he is eternal he is everlasting strength he has majestic greatness he's the sovereign the provider the savior the shield the helper the sword Israel also is incomparably great there's none like her but her greatness is not inherent but derived from being the people who are saved by the Lord you see how their identity their great identity is derived from the great identity of their God there's no one like Israel because there's no people that have a God like the God of Israel and that's his name that's that's the name by which he goes the

[28 : 24] God of Jeshurun the God of Israel so Israel you are blessed verse 29 you are incomparably! great there's no one like you because you are a people saved by this great Lord and because he is your shield and helper and your glorious sword and because he rides on the heavens to help you verse 26 and because he the eternal God is your refuge and because his everlasting arms are underneath you verse 27 and because in sovereign power he drives out your enemy before you verse 27 it's all because of him you see that you are great because you have this great God who is your God in other words all that he is and all of his incomparable greatness he is for you and that's what makes you great he stooped down to make us great Psalm 18 says it's his work that gives our identity meaning and awe and amazement so

God is incomparably great because of who he is Israel is incomparably great because of whose is take God away and Israel is no different from all the other nations of the earth her identity is inseparably bound up with the identity of her God now people of God believers in Jesus this is your identity you are the people of God that's what Peter is saying in first Peter chapter two you are that holy nation you by faith have been grafted in to the Israel of God indeed that's what he calls us in Galatians 6 in verse 16 the Israel of God whether Jew or Gentile circumcised or uncircumcision that doesn't mean anything what means everything is a new creation and if you're a new creation you you have become a new creature and the old is gone and the new has come you are now in

Christ well you are the Israel of God that's what he's saying in Galatians 6:16 what makes the Israel of God so great is the God of Israel so so we don't think of ourselves correctly without thinking of the God to whom we belong that means believer never think of yourself as detached from the living God father son and holy spirit when we do we're into the lies of the devil when when you're thinking of yourself here and and God over here we're starting to listen to the world to our flesh to the devil no if we're listening to God we never think of ourselves as detached from this God to whom we have been united in Jesus Christ so always think of yourself in relation to

God now that's why I had pastor Jason read second Samuel chapter seven that's the other passage that is so clear on these two identities second Samuel seven and verses twenty two to twenty four verse twenty two notice again the two great incomparables many hundred years later after Moses spoke of those two great incomparables now here's David and he's saying the same thing verse twenty two of second Samuel seven how great you are oh sovereign Lord there is no one like you and there is no God but you as we have heard with our own ears you see he too had heard what Moses had said about this God it sets him apart from all else he alone is God none like him and then verse twenty three and who is like your people Israel there's the other incomparable there's no one like your people

Israel and what makes them incomparable is that they're the one nation on earth that God this incomparable God went out to redeem as a people for himself and to make a name for himself to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before your people whom you redeemed from Egypt you have established your people Israel as your very own forever and you O Lord have become their God so Israel's greatness the one thing that distinguished them from all the other peoples of the world is that God was their God and he acted on their behalf so if you would appreciate your identity and all of this multifaceted color that we we've been studying you must see each one of those identities in your relationship to God Father Son and Holy Spirit we are what we are because he is what he is and so I'm a sheep in

[33 : 38] Jesus told the amazing thing about that is not who I am but it's who my shepherd is all right let's go to another we spent some five weeks on the fact that I am a child of God a wonder to behold John says that you and I should be called the children of God and that is what we are so I'm a child of God but the wonder is not in my childishness the wonder is in who my father is no longer the devil you're of your father the devil Jesus would say to the unbelievers and the fact that I'm no longer a child of the devil I am a father to his son

I have his discipline his child training to grow me up I have his inheritance which the highest of which is he himself is my inheritance the Lord is my portion and that forever and ever you see my identity as a child of God is wrapped up with who my father is so think about your father get to know your father if you would appreciate being his son we saw that I'm a slave I'm a slave not to sin and self and Satan that's the way I was born and that's the way I lived many of my years and you lived many of your years but I'm a slave to God now and what makes that glorious is the kind of master he is for he delights in the well being of his servants he doesn't crush them by laying burdens on them his yoke is easy and his burden is light in fact he carries the burden of his slaves not just piling more on and he actually serves his slaves and he rewards them for everything they do for his namesake this is a master that I serve

I'm a branch not in some sickly vine but a branch in the most fruitful vine of all Jesus Christ and his life flows from him to me because I'm united to him as branch in vine and what a glorious possibility that opens up that I can learn to love like Jesus I can learn to live like Jesus because supernatural sap of grace flows from Christ the vine to me the branch it's all because of the vine that I've grafted into by faith I'm a friend I'm a friend of Jesus the glory of that is not just that I have friends but it's who my friend is the kind of friend that he is that's what makes all the difference and the fact that he counts me as his friend that's what Jesus says you are my friends if you do what

I command he counts you as his friend that's even better than me having him as my friend I'm a soldier ah yes but not of some loser captain we're not marching into sure defeat not at all I'm a soldier in the army of God and we're on the winning side Jesus is my captain he enables me to be strong in his might and in his armor what a privilege to be fighting on the winning side strong in Jesus our captain and to know that when the dust settles light will have conquered darkness life will have conquered death I'm a saint I'm set apart I'm a devotee I've been set apart but to who well to God what what what what what

God to be set apart to to be devoted to to be consecrated to I'm set apart from the world and I'm I'm now set apart to this God I'm a temple but not of some pretend deity I'm I'm a temple the living God dwells in me by his spirit I'm a believer but not of lies that lead to destruction but of the unseen God and of his truth that leads to life I'm a disciple but not of some two bit guru on a mountain somewhere deceiving people leading them to hell I'm I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ the Son of God the Lord of the universe who is himself the way the truth and the life no one comes to the father but by him aren't you glad you're a disciple of Jesus that he's the one you're discipling you're following you're learning from that's the identity that makes your identity as disciple so wonderful

[39 : 17] I'm a witness I'm not spreading some message that's worthless that's impotent that I would be ashamed to go knock on a door and talk about I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ because it is the power of God unto salvation it really saves because it has a righteousness from God to give to sinners who can't be righteous in themselves and that righteousness really saves them it puts them right with God what a blessing to be a witness for Jesus it's Jesus and his gospel that makes my identity as a witness so glorious I'm a farmer I'm planting seeds that I will reap in eternity but by the grace of God they are not seeds that lead to destruction but seeds that lead to life eternal life and I'm a stranger and pilgrim here I don't belong here I'm going home this isn't my home and so I'm a stranger here people don't know me I'm not one with the locals and what a blessing to be to have

God as my guide to know that he's always journey through this world and he holds me by my right hand and he counsels me with his own word and afterwards he will receive me into glory leading me all the way as a pilgrim through this wilderness you see in each case our identity is inseparably linked to God's identity and that's what makes our identity so glorious we're far richer than we realize and what helps us realize our riches is who God is his identity so we don't study our identity in isolation from God's that would be to make an idol of ourselves we study our identity in relation to the God who in Jesus Christ has saved me so what's your greatest comfort in life and in death the Heidelberg question number one the answer says my greatest comfort in life and in death is that body and soul in life and in death that

I don't belong to myself but to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ I belong to him I'm his if you would know who I am and what I'm about you you've got to know him remember what John said that we are the children of God the reason the world does not know us is why it did not know him in other words you can't know the children of God unless you know him and one day he will be revealed and when he is revealed and people come to see who Jesus is for the first time then they will understand who the children of God are because we'll be with!

Oh you're one of joined to by living faith so that's my greatest comfort that I don't belong to myself but to him I am his and he is mine I belong to my faithful savior Jesus Christ who at the cost of his own blood is fully paid for all my sins and completely delivered me from the power of the devil and he protects me so well that apart from the will of my father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head indeed that he makes all things fit together for my salvation and therefore by his holy spirit he also assures me of salvation and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him I'm his he's mine is he yours is he your shepherd or are you a sheep without a shepherd is he yours is he is

God your father or is it still the devil who's your father are you his slave or are you still the slave of sin and Satan and don't say well I'm nobody's slave I just do what I want that's exactly right you are a slave to Satan because that's what he wants you to do serve yourself you're doing his will and he's got you so deceived that you think you're free when you're really in chains but it's all so pitiful that you could be a sheep in Jesus fold you could be a son of the heavenly father you could be set free from sin and self and Satan and serve this glorious master all of this identity could be yours if you come to Jesus Christ all these identities are ours when we are joined to Christ it's in Christ that these things become ours so I commend him to you receive

[44 : 30] Jesus as he's offered to you in the gospel put no trust in yourself all your trust for salvation in Jesus alone not your works his works not your identity who you are and what you've done but his identity he's the savior and he's the one who's come to save sinners glorious savior God really has made us for himself and we really are restless until we find our rest in him well let's pray almighty God father in heaven how blessed we are to know you and to know that you are ours and that you say of us you are mine and so as we've come to the end of this study thank you that these are things that you have told us in your word and though this study comes to an end we really never get done studying our identity in

Christ but every time we pull down our Bibles and read we're reminded we are no longer cut off from him but we are now in him so remind us Lord what a father's smile is ours what a savior died to save us what a spirit dwells within us and help us then to live according to our new identity in Christ we ask in Jesus name amen amen