

Our Collective Identity

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Preacher: Sam Bunnell

[0 : 0 0] All right, y'all love the book of Ephesians? Amen, I do too. It is full of just spiritual meat, and I am loving diving into it in my study and then sharing what God gives me for you all.

So let's go there. Let's go to Ephesians chapter two. Once again, this book is about who we are and how we live, and right now we are in the who we are part.

So that's exciting. We're discovering our identity in Christ, not according to what man says about us, but according to what we read in God's word, what he says about us.

So that's what we're talking about today. Book of Ephesians chapter two, we did the first 11 verses, I'm sorry, 10 verses last Sunday, and today we are doing verses 11 through the end of the chapter.

For some reason, this isn't working, Floyd. There we go, there we go. Just needed a minute. Kind of like me when I first wake up, so that's good. It just needs a minute sometimes.

[1 : 0 4] Much of our series is taken from the Christ-centered exposition, Exalting Jesus in Ephesians by Tony Merida, and that's a great series to avail yourself of if you ever have an opportunity.

The background of the book of Ephesians, written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Ephesus where he had pastored for three years, and he was written under house arrest in Roman imprisonment off in Rome far away from this church in Ephesus, and it was delivered by courier to this church and then passed around to many other early churches back in those days.

The breakdown is the first three chapters, who we are in Christ, the next three chapters, how we live for Christ. So today, we're continuing our series on who we are in Christ.

If you see in your bulletin, there's some blanks to fill out, and so try to follow along, and you can fill in those blanks and take that home and look that over later if you'd like to. Ephesians chapter 2, beginning in verse 11.

If you're able to physically, would you mind joining me in standing, and we'll read beginning in verse 11. I'm reading from the Christian Standard Bible. So then, remember that at one time, you were Gentiles in the flesh.

[2 : 1 3] It is safe for us to place ourselves into this you umbrella, all right? This was written to the church in Ephesus, but it was written for all the early church Christians, and God included it in our New Testament for all of us to benefit from so we can place ourselves into that you that this is written to.

So then, remember that at one time, you were Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcised, by those called the circumcised, which is done in the flesh by human hands.

At that time, you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world.

But now, in Christ Jesus, you see a parallel there? Back earlier in the first part of chapter 2, when it talked about you previously followed the ways of the world, according to the ruler, the power of the air, the spirit, work, and the disobedient, you were children of wrath, but then in verse 4 it said, but God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive.

There is a direct parallel between that, and again, how he emphasizes this point, drives it home for us, here in verse 13. But now, in Christ Jesus, you, who were far away, have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

[3 : 44] For he is our peace, who made both groups one, and tore down the dividing wall of hostility.

In his flesh, he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace.

He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body, through the cross, by which he put the hostility to death. He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near.

For through him, we both have access in one spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but now fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

In him, the whole building being put together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him, you are also being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit.

[5 : 08] Let's pray together. God, I pray that you would speak to us from Ephesians 2, the latter part of that chapter. I pray that you would drive this home, that you are a God of peace.

You are a God of uniting. You are a God of tearing down the walls, reaching across the lines. And we have benefited so greatly from that. And it's in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. You may be seated. Who we are in Christ, our collective identity. So, let's look at it.

Our collective identity. Sorry, y'all. I don't know why it's like that. I think there was some weird way I made the slide, and you know, that's on me.

But you're just gonna have to, you know, look a little closer. Like, what is that again? Our collective identity. All right? This is who we are together. Now, this is not our collective identity.

[6 : 09] This is not who we are together. These are adversaries, right? What do we have here on the left? Come on, y'all. Let's get a little more audience participation. This is the talkback time, okay?

On the left, what do we have? Democrats. There you go. On the right, we have Republicans. That's right. Some of the kids who maybe haven't studied and learned these party animals, so to speak, they're looking at it like, what are they talking about?

That's a donkey and an elephant. Very patriotic looking and angry at each other. Well, there you go. That's our country, right? We divide.

We pit ourselves against one another, and throughout the time, Democrats and Republicans have even stood for different things throughout the years, and so, you know, a hundred years ago, you might have, if you call yourself Republican today, who knows, you might have been a Democrat back then.

Man can change his mind about things, but what he doesn't seem to change his mind about is arguing with others. That's what we continue to do. Regardless of what we think, we find somebody who doesn't think like us, and we argue against them, and if we don't find, if we don't have somebody near and close who disagrees with us, we'll go out and find somebody who disagrees with us, and that's what the Internet's for.

[7 : 22] If you were wondering why the Internet was invented, it's a platform for disagreement and fighting, so, and it fulfills its purpose very well. Obviously, there's a little sarcasm in there, but there's some less, you know, I don't know, less intense.

That's pretty intense right there. Rivalries out there. Astros and Rangers, we got any Astros fans in the house? Woo! That are willing to identify as Astro fans right now?

How about the Rangers fans? Let's go! Yeah! The, sorry, I shouldn't just say Rangers. I should always say world champion Rangers. There you go. Anybody actually go to that parade?

No. Yeah. I was in Dallas on the day of the parade, and I consciously chose not to go. It's like, look, I love my Rangers, but no.

That was a madhouse. About 700,000 people, I think, gathered down there. Look, Astros have had a great run. They've won a couple of World Series, so we're going to have this rivalry for years to come.

[8 : 28] But, you know, we're pitted against one another in the same division. We'll play each other. How about this one? Red River rivalry? Got any Sooner fans in here? Thank God.

Got any Longhorn fans? Let's go. Come on. Yes. Y'all got us this year, but overall, we've had a far better season, so let's see what happens.

That's the thing. You never know what's going to happen in these rivalries. People get up for them. They feel emotional about them. You know? Oklahoma turned around and lost to Kansas and somebody else that they shouldn't have lost to right after that.

So, clearly, Texas was the better team, but why did they lose? Why did they lose that game? Because it's the Red River rivalry because you never know what's going to happen. One team could be ranked in the top five and the other one have a losing record and the losing record comes in and wins that game because everybody gets emotional.

They get worked up. They get hyped up and they go out and play better than they usually would otherwise. And that's what happens sometimes with these rivalries because we get emotional about it. We get passionate about it.

[9 : 33] We pit ourselves against one another. How about this one? We're not going to talk about what happened this year, but we'll get them next year, all right?

So, don't worry about it. But y'all understand we've got these rivalries. We draw lines. We draw dividing lines. It's what we do. We'll always do it.

I skipped one and I want to get to it. From the history of our country, we did it. We drew dividing lines. We fought a war over it. It's who we are as people.

And so, man draws dividing lines. God erases them. God erases them. You know what divides us ultimately?

Sin. Sin is what divides us ultimately. Now, we can have fun and we can choose different sports teams and root against the other one and cheer for ours. But there are very real fractures, very real dividing lines in our country, across our world, and sin is the cause.

[10 : 44] 100% of the time. God created no dividing lines in the Garden of Eden. But sin divided us.

Sin divided Cain and Abel. Sin divided all these countries that have gone to war. Sin divided the Gentiles and the Jews. Sin divided those who would follow God and those who would oppose God.

Sin divided all these lines. And God steps in and says, I am the answer to the division. I am the solution. So, number one, excluded.

Excluded. What we are without Jesus. We read about this in verse 11. So then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcised, quote on quote.

There's two different groups here. The uncircumcised, the circumcised. Without diving into the, you know, medical procedures of all that, back then the Jews were the only ones who practiced circumcision.

[11 : 48] Which nowadays happens right after a baby is born and is common practice across the United States and around the world because they see the health benefits in that. But this procedure divided people.

You were part of the circumcised Jews or the uncircumcised Philistines or Gentiles. And so, that was done in the flesh by human hands. But, at that time, there was a real exclusion happening.

There was a real dividing line. There were those who followed Jesus and there were those who were without Christ. Excluded, verse 12 says.

Excluded from the citizenship of Israel. Foreigners to the covenants of promise. God made all these promises in the Old Testament. He made all these covenants. He said, I will be with you.

I will be your God. You will be my people. And those of us Gentiles were excluded from that. Foreigners to that. Without hope and without God.

[12 : 48] Now, we had all kinds of things that we would call God. Throughout time, Gentiles have had all sorts of things that they would call God. They'll make up their own. They'll build idols. They'll make their own passions and goals and desires and the objects of their love and affection.

They'll raise them to the status of God. So we'll do all kinds of things but in reality, we are without God. So, we were excluded.

Ephesians 4.18, a couple chapters later, it says, they're darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that's in them, the hardness of their hearts.

That is a reminder of who we are without God. We are ignorant and have hard hearts. That's us. God is the only one that can impart true wisdom and understanding to us.

God is the only one that can soften our hearts. God's the only one that can make us nice. God's the only one that can make us lovable. God's the only one that can make us good and righteous.

[14 : 00] And so, apart from him, we are excluded from God's life. Why were we excluded? Excluded. We were without Christ, without Jesus. He's the answer.

He's the Savior. He's the only way. So if you don't have him, you're excluded. We are without citizenship. We had citizenship of the world, but we were without citizenship in God's kingdom.

All throughout the parable, you see Jesus constantly making reference to the kingdom of God. Right? Jesus says, the kingdom of God is like this, and he tells a parable.

The kingdom of God is like this. He came to build his kingdom on earth, but we were excluded from that kingdom until he made a way to have citizenship. We've got some people who recently gained citizenship to the United States right down front here.

Yeah. That's exciting, isn't it? I didn't mean to call him out this morning at all. I'm trying to embarrass him, but I'm on the spot. But that is such an exciting thing when you gain citizenship that you're seeking.

[15 : 08] But my goodness, it doesn't, it pales in comparison to gaining citizenship into God's heavenly kingdom. And we're excluded from that, apart from Christ.

We're without hope. We have no hope. Then verse 12, that's what it said, without hope and without God. And those two are linked together. Man, if you have, if you don't have God, you have no hope.

That's why there's so much suicide out there. There's why there's so much depression out there. That's why there's so much hopelessness out there. That's why there's so much anger. People lashing out because they don't have a life.

You ever heard somebody tell you to get a life? I've had people tell me to get a life before. We have a life. We have something to live for.

We have a reason to keep going if we have God. If we have no God, then what's this ultimately about? Who ultimately gets to say what's right or wrong?

[16 : 05] Who ultimately gets to say what our lives should be about? Unless God is real, God is true, God exists, and He's here for us. So we're excluded without Christ, without citizenship, without hope, and without God.

But that's not where He leaves us. Number two, reconciled. This is what Jesus does for us. Verse 13, now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Okay? So that's what Jesus does for us. All the way down through verse 18, He talks about how He can reconcile us. How does He do it? Verse 14, the second part here, it says He tears down walls.

He tore down the dividing wall of hostility. This is what man does. Man builds up walls. We build up walls around our own hearts, right? And we don't let people in.

We build up walls between countries, and we don't let people in. We build up walls around ourselves and our houses, and we don't let people in. We build up privacy fences.

[17 : 08] We put up walls everywhere we go. Why? Because we don't trust people. Sometimes, a lot of times, with good reason. Right? But God is there to tear down walls.

He's not saying you need to go home and tear down your fence and open the door to your house and say, everybody come on in. That's a good way to lose all your stuff and maybe worse. But, hey, Floyd, I'm going to switch to this handheld.

Sorry, man. This thing's not staying put. Check, check.

Y'all hear me? There we go. All right, this will work. This will work a lot better. So, God tears down those walls that we build.

He did it with sin. He tore down the wall through his death on the cross. Now, he didn't just go and say, sin's okay. The things you have done are okay now. I'm changing the rules and you're no longer in trouble.

[18 : 13] That's not what he did. Sin is wicked. Sin is terrible. And something had to be done about it. A punishment had to be made. A sacrifice had to be made. Jesus made that sacrifice.

He took the punishment. So, then he said, I can tear down the wall now. So, now you can get to God because of me. Jesus abolishes legalism.

Verse 15, he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations. You understand what he's talking about there? All those Old Testament commands, many of which God gave to humanity himself.

He gave them to his people and established them and then Jesus abolished the legalism. That's what was needed for that time to show us how freedom in Christ would look.

How exciting and wonderful it would be when grace replaced the law. You and I cannot exist by the law.

[19 : 22] You and I can't keep the law. We can't follow it. So, I don't know about you but I'm a pretty good person. You're not good enough. If you fail the point, if you fail the law in one point, you've failed it all.

If you've broken the law in one area, you've broken it all. You're guilty and you deserve punishment for your sin. So, Jesus said, that's not the way to God and we don't need to operate that way as people of God.

Sometimes, Christians have done a poor job of that. Sometimes, we've carried on legalistic practices as though the law was still the way to God. Sometimes, we'll preach grace.

We'll preach salvation by grace through faith in Jesus and yet, we don't actually live that way where that grace speaks louder than the laws we inflict upon people.

So, we must be very careful as a church, as the people of God, to be people of grace, people of love, people of compassion, people of mercy because that's how God treats us.

[20 : 35] I grew up around a lot of churches in kind of a movement that went really far into legalism. You know, there was only one version of the Bible you could use.

There was only one type of music that was acceptable. There was only one type of dress that was acceptable. You know, you take it as far as you want to go, but we kept moving the needle on what was acceptable in God's eyes regardless of whether God actually said anything about it in the Bible.

And that's not the Jesus that came to seek and save the lost. That's not the Jesus that abolished legalism. Instead, that Jesus preached peace.

Preached peace. That first part of verse 14. He is our peace. And then jump down to verse 17. He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

That's what Jesus does. He came to preach peace. We're coming into the Christmas season. We're going to sing songs all about the Prince of Peace, about how Jesus came to bring peace on earth.

[21 : 39] Jesus didn't come just to bring peace on earth. The truth is there's never ultimately going to be peace on earth.

Jesus came to bring peace to the earth through him. He is the only way to have peace on this earth. But we're not going to stay here.

Eventually, we're going to get to go up and be with him forever in heaven. So yes, he said, I came to bring peace on earth and have good will toward men, but that's only found in him.

And someday, this earth will be destroyed. We read about it in the book of Revelation. Lanny's teaching about it on Wednesday nights in the book of Revelation, but someday, this earth's going to go away.

God's going to start over with a new heaven and a new earth, and there will be peace. But until then, he is the Prince of Peace for us. He preaches the gospel of peace, and he's given us that gospel of peace to go preach to others.

[22 : 42] Isn't it good that we have a message of peace? You know, we're not the terrorists who are going around trying to recruit people to a message of war and hate. We have a message of peace.

We have a message of love. We have a message of grace. That's what we get to go tell people about. The good news. That's why we call it the gospel. That's why we call it the good news. It's not bad news you're going to be a way out of it.

You're just giving them a way out of it. You're giving them a way of escape. You're giving them a way of deliverance and freedom. And Jesus gives access to God. Verse 18, for through him we both, Israelites, Gentiles, the people that God chose and all the rest of us, we both have access in one spirit, the Holy Spirit, to the Father.

So, he gives access to God. Now, there we go. I want to read this to you guys. James Denny was a Scottish theologian.

He says, the cross, the cross of Jesus is the meeting place not only of God and man, but of all races, all conditions of men with each other. There's neither Greek nor Jew, male nor female, bond, meaning slaves, nor free.

[24 : 07] The cross is the basis of a universal religion and has in it the hope of a universal peace. You understand that? Of all the Christian truths which are confessed in words, this is the one.

The one that the cross is the basis of a universal religion has this idea of the universal peace. this is the Christian truth which is most outrageously denied indeed.

There's not a Christian church in the world which believes heartily in the atonement. You understand we're saying the atonement, Jesus' death on the cross which took the place for us in that atonement as the extinction of privilege and the leveling up of all men to the same possibility of life in Christ to the same calling to be saints.

The spirit of privilege if you're not tracking with me yet, watch this last sentence. The spirit of privilege in spite of the cross is obstinately rooted everywhere even among Christians.

It's calling us out a little bit. Okay? You understand what he's saying? We have this idea of privilege privilege just like the Jews had when they were the circumcised and they're looking down on everybody who's not circumcised.

[25 : 34] Paul deals with it all throughout the New Testament letters to those early churches. You and I have the same spirit of privilege that puts us up above everybody else and looks down our noses at everybody else.

Why? Because we draw dividing lines. It's what we do. We love our rivalries. We love our this is our tribe, this is our crowd and you can't sit with us.

That's what we do. And God is God continually having to remind us that that's not who he is. He tears down those walls. He blurs those dividing lines.

And so it's absolutely essential for the people of God to be reconciled to God and to one another. And that's what we come to on the last point here, unified.

What Jesus saved us to become. We are to become unified in him. Because he tears down the walls, because he has reconciled us to himself, we now have this common bond, which is more important than any other division that we find between ourselves.

[26 : 46] Our common bond and reconciled with God is what can unify us despite our differences. promises. So, what are we talking about? We're citizens of the same kingdom.

Citizens of the same kingdom. Look at verse 19. So then, you are no longer citizens with the saints, but members of God's household. So, we live together, okay?

We live together in the household of God. Now, sure, we all have our own houses that we go to. we don't all wake up in the morning and see each other at the breakfast table.

But we are all members of the same household, and so these truths should bind us together because we realize we are citizens of the same kingdom, not an earthly kingdom, a heavenly kingdom.

And that is far more important than the earthly kingdom. today, we have people that went and literally paid the ultimate sacrifice to keep us free here in America.

[27 : 54] But you know what the ultimate example of that is? Jesus paid the ultimate sacrifice to give us freedom that we could never achieve and no one else could ever find for us.

No one else could ever pay that penalty. No one else could ever make that level of sacrifice for us, but Jesus made it. That is what gives us freedom at the spiritual level in the heavenly kingdom, not this earthly kingdom.

So we're citizens of the same kingdom. Philippians chapter 3 and verse 20 talks about that. Our citizenship, lest we forget, is in heaven. And we eagerly wait for a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, I fly my flag on 4th of July. I'm proud to be an American, and I got to see Lee Greenwood seen that live at a Dallas Cowboys game, and that was so much fun. Y'all ever heard Lee Greenwood sing proud to be an American?

All right, I'm just making sure you're looking at me like I don't know what you're talking about. So I love it. I'm patriotic. Thank God every day that I got to be born in America. There are people who might walk into our church that didn't get to be born in America, and they don't have that bond with us.

[29 : 05] But you know what bond we do have? God's love. Our citizenship is in the same kingdom. Our citizenship is in heaven. So we thank God for our earthly citizenship, and we try to be as good a citizens as we can in our earthly countries, remembering that our real citizenship is in heaven.

And someday, when earthly nations will have passed, God will still remain. Heaven will still remain. And our citizenship will be there.

And so we thank him for that. 2 Timothy 1 and verse 9, he has saved us. He's called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

He's called us to a higher calling, a higher plane. He's got his own purpose for us, and we're members of the same family. Verse 19, we saw that.

We're no longer foreigners and strangers. We're members of God's household. Now, what is something that is always true about family? Y'all start throwing some things at me.

[30 : 20] What's that? Always get along, he says tongue-in-cheek, sarcastically, and immediately his kids say no. That's funny.

No, families don't always get along, do they. That's right. They're there for each other. Families can feud within themselves, but they sure will unite against anybody else trying to attack them, right?

That's my brother to fight with. You can't fight with him. We are members of the same family. I'm trying to teach Austin a bow right now, and they're home sick, so I'm not going to, I can pick on them, and you know, it's fine.

But I'm trying to teach them right now, you guys are brothers, you're two years apart, you've got to have each other's backs. You've got to have each other's backs. My brother was six years older than I am, well, still is.

He always had my back, and I always had his back. And that was just, you know, we had that relationship. And I want my kids to have the same thing. And the truth is, you and I should have the same thing with each other.

[31 : 27] We should have each other's backs. We should pray for each other. We should not be out there to undermine each other. Yes, thank you. God bless you. I know. It's, I had a cold for like a week, and now this cough just won't go away.

Pardon me for a second. Don't look at me. I feel self-conscious. All right.

Here we go. Thank you. I'm going to wet the whistle. But we are members of the same family. We've got to remember that. And so we must love each other like family.

Understand there's going to be disagreements. We're going to feud sometimes. But don't let it get to the point of breaking up the family. You understand? At some point, somebody's got to humble themselves and go and say, you know what?

I was wrong. I got to make this right. I have to do that. I've had to do that a couple times in the last few weeks. It happens. I got to do that with my own family.

[32 : 32] I got to do that with this family. We've got to do that with one another. God's household is the church. 1 Timothy 3 reminds us of this. God's household is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

You understand that last part there? The pillar and foundation of the truth? It means the church is really important. The church is essential to the community. If we don't have a strong church in the community, then the community will suffer because the pillar and foundation of the truth is crumbling.

So we've got to be a strong pillar that can't be broken. We've got to have a strong foundation that can't be shaken of the truth.

Who's the truth? Who's the truth? Jesus. He said, I am the way, the truth, and the life, right? So we are the expression of Jesus on earth.

Again, that's a terrifying thought, right? If you and I are the ones who are supposed to express Jesus on the earth, we do that so poorly sometimes. It's no wonder the world around us is going to hell in a handbasket, so to speak.

[33 : 44] But when we are a strong pillar and foundation as the church, then the truth is able to go out and be received and make a difference and change lives.

So we must remember that we are part of the same family, part of God's household. That's our church. Romans 12, verse 5.

We who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. It doesn't just say that we're members of God's body. It says we're members of one another.

Man, God just takes it a step further. He says you've got to get along because you are members of one another. If there is strife within the body where the members are fighting with each other, then the whole body suffers.

And then the whole community suffers. And then the whole county suffers. And the whole state suffers. And the whole nation suffers. And the whole world suffers. And you start to see why there's so much turmoil and strife because often the church drops the ball.

[34 : 49] Ultimately, we are the light in the dark world. So when the light shines brightly, people are drawn to it. When it's dim or when it's kind of flickering, it's not as effective.

And when it turns out, the community is lost. So we pray that God would not extinguish our light, that we would get along, that we would be members of one another, united as God's household.

We are stones in the same temple. Verse 20 through verse 22. Verse 20, we're built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

In Christ Jesus, the whole building being put together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him, you also are being built together for God's dwelling in the spirit.

He's not just working on me. He's working on all of us together. Okay? They couldn't have said together more times than they did. It's like every sentence had the word together in it.

[35 : 56] We are being built together. We're stones in the same temple. So we're supposed to fit. God's building us into what he wants us to be and he's building us together.

So we are stones in the same temple. Look at 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 4 and 5. As you come to him, Jesus, a living stone. He is the living stone we're talking about here.

There's this typology that we're reading here. Jesus is the living stone rejected by people but chosen and honored by God. Then, verse 5, view yourselves as living stones.

We're also living stones like Jesus. A spiritual house are being built to be a holy priesthood. God is building us together into this beautiful spiritual house.

But we've got to fit together. Okay? If we get all bent out of shape, then the stones don't fit. And the house doesn't get built. So, what's our takeaway?

[37 : 00] We should daily trade our earthly identities for our heavenly identities. That's our takeaway. Daily trade my earthly identity for my heavenly identity.

That is a daily action. It's a daily realization. Adopting my heavenly identity. Why? Why do we have to remind ourselves daily? Because we're trapped in this body.

We're trapped in this flesh. We're not going to come by it naturally. You're not going to wake up and be filled with the Spirit. You'll have the Spirit of God if you put your faith in Jesus and are His child.

He's there. But you've got to consciously turn to Him and say, I'm taking on my heavenly identity today because the people around me don't need earthly me.

Right? They need heavenly me. I can always tell when my family is getting earthly Sam as opposed to heavenly Sam. And they usually suffer a little bit for that.

[38 : 03] I can always tell when I'm dealing with people in my earthly self as opposed to my heavenly self. And then I've got to go make that right. And you've got to do the same thing.

So we must daily trade our earthly identities for our heavenly identities. Real quick and we're done. What does this look like?

Identity switch. Okay? Identity switch. Here we go. I give up earthly privileges. I give up earthly privileges. That's what that guy was talking about, James Denny, that Scottish theologian.

You know, we carry around this idea of privilege with us. And I'm not even referencing the, you know, this, the woke ideology out there of white privilege and, you know, that kind of stuff.

That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about this Christian privilege that comes into our minds. This Christian privilege of I'm above that. I'm a good person because I go to church.

[39 : 06] I've been going to church my whole life. I'm a deacon. I give my tithe. You know, we get this idea of earthly privilege in our heads. We've got to get that out and remind ourselves that we are who God says we are.

We are wicked, evil sinners on our way to hell. But God came in and rescued us and changed us. And now the only good in us is because of him.

So now we are simply stones being built into the building that he wants us to be. We are lights shining in the darkness. We give up our privileges and we take on his responsibility, his mission for us, his purpose for us.

I give up earthly preferences. Number two, I give up earthly preferences. Okay? You might feel one way about it. What did we say back in our series on the church?

Don't let secondary things become primary. Anybody remember that? Good. Don't let secondary things become primary. We've got to at some point give up our earthly preferences out of preference for others.

[40 : 17] Say, you know, this is what I would prefer, but that's not what really matters. What really matters is we fit together.

We are unified and we can go forward. It doesn't matter if I win. I don't have to win as long as Jesus wins. I give up earthly preferences and then I give up earthly priorities.

Your priority about the music might be something. Your priority about how the church looks might be something. Your priority about how you spend your time might be one way.

Your priority about what you spend your money on might be one way. God, I can tell you, I can promise you, is here to rearrange your priorities. God will do that. The closer you walk with God, he will give you new priorities.

And if you give up your earthly identity and you take on your heavenly identity, your priorities will change. Alright? But they'll change for the better. God will make something so much more beautiful out of your life through that reordering of your priorities than you ever could.

[41 : 19] I can promise that. I can testify that. He's done it in mine. And then I give up earthly passions. I give up earthly passions. You might be passionate about something that God doesn't want you to be passionate about.

You might be dominated or controlled by the lusts of your flesh. You might have worldly sinful appetites that are driving you away from God.

And that's a constant battle going on between the flesh and the spirit in your life. When you take on your heavenly identity, you give up those earthly passions. Say, God, I love how it makes me feel.

I love doing this. It's my go-to. It's my escape. But instead, you're going to have to provide a new escape for me. He will. You're going to have to provide release for me, deliverance for me, freedom for me.

He will. He'll give you new passions. You can become passionate about your family. You can become passionate about his will for your life. You can become passionate about the people in your life that don't know Jesus and helping them meet him for the first time.

[42 : 24] He'll give you new passions. Galatians 3.28. It's printed in your bulletin there. There is no Jew or Greek. There's no slave or free. There's no male and female since you are all one in Christ Jesus.

All right? You got that? Did we get it across this morning? That's who we are. We are one in Jesus. That's who God says we are. We sang it earlier.

I am who you say I am. Who he says we are is one in Christ Jesus. There's this song that was written by this guy who said his name was John Oxenham.

That wasn't his real name but that was the name he wrote music under. And so he says in Christ there is no east or west. It's in our Baptist hymnal. In Christ there is no east or west.

If you don't believe me you can pull it out and search in the back it'll be there. In him no south or north. The whole song I encourage you to look at it when you get home tonight it's 12 o'clock we're not going to take time to go through it all right now.

[43 : 34] But the principle is there in Christ there is no east or west in him no south or north. Man draws these divisions. Man back in the time in the day when this song was written the north and south that was a major division.

Right? Man has always throughout time drawn lines drawn dividing lines. God is here to blur those lines. God is here to tear down those walls.

We must daily trade our earthly identity and all that goes along with it all that baggage that makes up our earthly identity lay it down and take on our heavenly identity and say God as best I can with the help of your spirit I'm going to be who you say I am today.

Would you pray with me? Let's bow our heads. Lord Jesus I thank you for teaching us from your word. I thank you for convicting me for convicting I'm sure many hearts in here by your spirit that we don't always act like who we actually are.

We often act out of our earthly identity instead of our heavenly identity. And our priorities and our passions and our preferences always come up to the forefront.

[44 : 46] I pray that we would confess that to you. Thank you for your forgiveness and walk forward by the power of your spirit.

Church with every head bowed and every eye closed right now let me ask you this question. How many of you would say there's some things that God needs to change in my heart? to become that heavenly version of me that he wants me to be instead of that earthly version?

There's some things he needs to change in me. Would you slip your hand up and I'll pray for you? All across the room thank you. You can put your hands down. How many of you would say I don't even know Jesus yet.

I need to be saved. I need to confess my sins and turn from my sin and turn to Jesus to forgive me become his child. Would you slip your hand up? I'll pray for you as well.

Thank you. God you've seen the hands you know what's going on in each heart. I ask that you would embolden us give us the courage and give us the strength to take the steps necessary to lay down ourselves and take on our identity in you.

[46 : 02] Make us fit together as a beautiful holy building of a church that can go out in this community and truly show off Jesus and not ourselves.

We'll trust you to do it it's in Jesus name we pray. Amen. Thank you.