

Union United Methodist Church

Sermon Outline: **Where Are You At? Part 3: Our Identity - In Christ**

July 24th, 2022. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Ephesians 1:3-22; John 1:1-13**

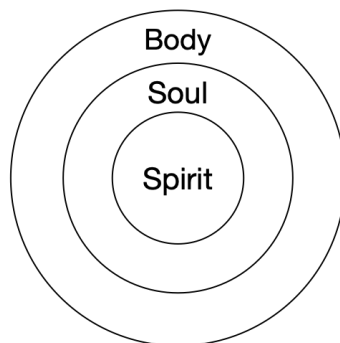
1. Assurance of Salvation - I am a Child of God

How do we know we are saved or born again?

To understand this, it is important to know the scriptural view of the nature of a human being. We are spirit, soul, and body. St. Paul makes this distinction in his epistles.

"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:23 NIV

Peter refers to what is translated as the "inner self" (NIV) or "hidden man of the heart" (KJV) in 1 Peter 3:4. The spirit of a human is also sometimes referred to as the heart.



Crude illustration:
Nature of a human

The fact that a person is spirit, soul, body is gleaned from such references in the New Testament. This is similar to the notion of the Trinity - God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is ONE God, but the scriptures make it clear that God is Father, Jesus the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. That is one of the mysteries of our faith. The Bible doesn't explicitly use the word Trinity, but we can see that in many scriptures (e.g., Matthew 28:19, John 14:16-17)

God is a Spirit Being and is called the "Father of spirits" (Hebrews 12:9 NRSV).
"God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

John 4:24 NIV

To quote John Wesley:

"How does he 'bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God?'

It is hard to find words in the language of men to explain the 'deep things of God.' Indeed, there are none that will adequately express what the children of God experience. But perhaps one might say, (desiring any who are taught of God, to soften or strengthen the expression,)

The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me, and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God."¹

God's Spirit tells us ... more accurately, God's Spirit tells our spirit ... there is a "handshake". He "bears witness" or "testifies" with our spirit to confirm this. We "know".

We "know" at least 3 things because of this witness of the Spirit.

- a. **"We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands"**
1 John 2:3 NIV
"This is how we know we are in him: whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did" 1 John 2:5-6 NIV
- b. **"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other.** Anyone who does not love remains in death" 1 John 3:14 NIV
- c. **"The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: we know it by the Spirit he gave us"**
1 John 3:24 NIV

¹ John Wesley, sermon titled "Witness of the Spirit," 1746

2. In Christ - Our True Identity & What We Have

a. Who am I?

What is your answer to the common question: "Who do you think you are?"

I am in Christ: A New Creation

"Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he* is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. "

2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV

○ **"In Christ"**

David Garland points out that, "in Christ," can mean several things that are not mutually exclusive:

- that one belongs to Christ,
- that one lives in the sphere of Christ's power,
- that one is united with Christ,
- or that one is part of the body of Christ, the believing community"²

○ **"A New Creation"**

Jesus called this being "born again," a spiritual transformation effected by the Spirit of God in a person - John 3

b. **Some "In Christ" Truths About Us**

It is faith-building to find and meditate on all the Scriptures in the New Testament where we see the phrases: "In Christ," "In Him," "Through him," "Through Christ," ...

Make it your own. Where you see "anyone" or "you," replace it with "I".

From 1 Corinthians 5:17

In Christ, I am a new creation; old things have passed away, all things have become new.

From Ephesians 1

**In Christ, I am blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places
In Christ, I am chosen to be holy and blameless in God's sight
Through Christ, I am adopted into God's family as His child**

² The New American Commentary

In Christ, God's grace has been freely given to me. This grace has been lavished on me.

In Christ, I have redemption through His blood. My sins are paid for.

In Christ, I have forgiveness of my sins

In Christ, God's will and purpose are revealed to me

In Christ, I was included in God's family when I heard and believed the gospel of salvation

In Christ, I am chosen for the praise of his glorious grace

In Christ, I am marked with a seal - The Holy Spirit in me is the seal and pledge of my salvation and inheritance

Acts 17:28

In Him, I live and move and have my being

Romans 8: 37-39

In Christ, I am more than a conqueror

Galatians 1:26 & John 1:12

In Christ, I am a child of God through faith

Ephesians 2:10

I am God's handiwork, created in Christ to do the good works God has planned for me

Philippians 4:13

Through Christ who gives me strength, I can do all things

c. **Experiencing God's Power "in Christ" Daily**

*** Through Meditation on the "In Christ" truths**

This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.

Joshua 1:8

*** Through Scripture based prayer – E.g., Ephesians 1:17-20**

(Prayer Based on Ephesians 1:17-20, 3:16-20, Colossians 1:9-14)

We pray that the God of our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One,
May give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation as we come to know Him

So that, with the eyes of our hearts enlightened,

We may come to know

what is the hope to which he has called us,

what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints,

what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe.

The same power God put to work to raise Jesus from the dead

We pray that, according to the riches of his glory,

He may grant us strength in our inner beings by his Spirit

And that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith.

That being rooted and ground in love,

We may have the power to understand, with all the saints,

what is the breadth, and length and height and depth,

And to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,

So that we may be filled with all the fullness of God

We pray that we may be filled with the knowledge of God's will

In all spiritual wisdom and understanding

So that we may live lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, as we bear fruit in every good work, and as we grow in the knowledge of God.

May we be made strong with all the strength

That comes from his glorious power,

And may we be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully

giving thanks to the God Who has enabled us to share

in the inheritance of all saints in the light.

Glory to God

Who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine

By his power at work within us.

In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen