

January 24, 2010 AM  
#1391

Identity Theft  
*This Is Just The Way I Am*

Clarence King was a hero of nineteenth-century western history. He was a brilliant scientist and witty conversationalist, best selling author and architect of the surveys that mapped the West after the Civil War. King served as the first director of the United States Geological Survey.

John Hay, American statesman, diplomat, author, journalist, and private secretary and assistant to Abraham Lincoln was a close friend of Clarence King and one of the only people who knew King's secret.

In 1888 Clarence King met Ada Copeland an African-American former slave who had moved from Georgia to New York. King hid his identity from her. Despite his blue eyes, King convinced Copeland that he was an African-American Pullman porter named James Todd.

The two fell in love and entered into a common law marriage. Throughout their thirteen years together, King never revealed his true identity to Ada, pretending to be Todd, a black railroad worker, when at home, and continuing to work as King, a white geologist, when in the field.

Clarence and Ada had five children and lived in a beautiful house. Ada always thought that her husband earned a comfortable living and that's how they got along. She only found out the truth in a letter he wrote to her while he was on his deathbed in Arizona.

He told her he had set up a trust fund to support her and the children. After his death Ada went to court to try to get control of all the money. As it turns out, there was no trust fund. John Hay had been the one sending a check each year and when that was exposed Hay stopped giving and Ada was left with nothing. She lived to be 103!

Not only is that one of the most bizarre stories in American history but it illustrates the principle were building this series on. A lie believed as truth will affect you as if it were true.

For thirteen years Ada Copeland believed that her husband was a black Pullman porter. That's how they lived their entire married life. It was a lie but she believed it

was true and and it affected her as if it were true.

We are in week two of a series we're calling Identity Theft. Speaking of Satan, Jesus said, *He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.* (John 8:44)

In another passage He said this about the Devil, *The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.* (John 10:10)

The father of lies is a thief who only wants to rob and destroy. It always amazes me how blind we can be to that biblical truth.

Satan comes along like he did to Eve in the garden and says, "There's no consequences to sin. In fact, sin expands your horizons. Sin gives you insight that God doesn't want you to have."

To Eve he said, *You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.* (Genesis 3:5) Sin won't hurt you. God's just holding out on you. He doesn't want you to really enjoy life.

It's like he hands us a pretty package all wrapped up in shiny paper with a nice neat bow and says, "Here. Open this and you'll have a great life. Don't worry about God and all His annoying rules. Live a little."

So we open the package. All is great fun till we really get inside. Inside is death and decay. Satan isn't about building us up. He's about tearing us down.

This morning we want to look at another lie that our spiritual enemy wants us to believe. He wants to rob us of our realization of our identity in Christ and convince us that we just can't change.

He wants us to believe that when our sins and shortcomings are exposed that there's nothing we can do about them. He wants us to just shrug our shoulders and say, "Oh well, that's just the way I am."

That's a lie, but remember, *a lie believed as truth will affect you as if it were true.*

What is the truth?

*I. A Believer Has Been Given A New Life From God*

**Turn to II Corinthians 5 page 1028**

When anyone puts their faith in Christ as Savior they are said to be “in Christ.” When that happens, when we’re made part of the Body of Christ by faith, there is a new act of creation on God’s part. One set of conditions, or relationships, has passed out of existence and another one has come to stay.

In John chapter 3 Jesus said, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’*

To be forgiven of our sins and made part of God’s eternal family we need a spiritual birth. Jesus is saying flesh is flesh and spirit is spirit. Our flesh, in other words, our natural body, can’t produce a spiritual birth. That can only come from God the Holy Spirit.

In John 5:24 He said, *Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.*

The relationship change for a believer is so radical the Bible says we pass from death to life. Notice, that’s in the past tense. It already happened.

The Bible goes on to say, *He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*(Colossians 1:13,14)

By faith we have a new birth, a new life, and now we live in a new kingdom. We live in the kingdom of God’s Son.

**Read verse 17**

If anyone is in Christ, that means if anyone has put their faith in Him as their sin bearer, there is a new creation. Your Bible may say “he is a new creation” but you’ll notice that the words “he is” are in italics. Remember, the reason the translators put words in italics is to show that they weren’t in the original. The translators thought that it flowed better with the words ‘he is” but they wanted us to have the opportunity to think it through for ourselves.

Unfortunately the NIV translators didn’t choose to let us know that here so they didn’t

use italics.

What the Greek text literally says is, “If anyone in Christ new creation.” I believe the words “there is” flows with the context much better than ‘he is.’”

If anyone puts their faith in Christ there is a new creation that takes place. And how it takes place is that old things have been passed by and all things are now new.

You might have noticed that I said “passed by” instead of “passed away.” Both translations are possible. The verb that’s used here is *parerchomai* which is made up of the preposition *para* which means “beside” and *erchomai* which means “to go.” Literally it means “to go beside.” In Luke 18:37 and Mark 6:48 it’s used of Jesus passing by someone.

What I believe verse 17 is getting across is this: When we place our faith in Christ as savior there is a new creation. Something exists that didn’t exist before. A spiritual birth comes from the hand of God.

Nothing of the old is in the new. That which is flesh is flesh, that which is spirit is spirit. Nothing of the old enters into the new creation. All things concerning who you really are have become new.

You don’t live in the kingdom of darkness anymore. You’ve passed from death to life. You are a child of the King living in His kingdom.

There is, therefore you are, a new creation. Implication, now live like it!

Unfortunately this verse is often misused. People quote it and imply that if you’re really a Christian, all the past habits and sins that you’ve been dealing with will just disappear.

I don’t know about you, but when I received Christ some things changed in my life and some things didn’t. Maturing in the faith is learning how to apply biblical principles to dealing with sin.

If you’re a believer, you have a new life from God. It’s called “the Spirit,” “the new birth,” “the new man.” That means you possess the power to change.

The last thing the Evil One wants you to understand is that you have the very person of God living in your life. He wants you to dwell on the old, not the new.

*I. A Believer Has Been Given A New Life From God*

*II. We Have To Learn What The Bible Promises Believers*

**Turn to II Timothy 3 page 1057**

II Timothy contains some of the last words of a man who knew he was about to die. He was an apostle named Paul who was writing to a young guy he had trained, named Timothy.

**Read verse 12** If you're going to live out your faith you're going to make some people mad. They just won't understand. Some kind of persecution will come. For Paul it would be having his head removed from his body on Ostian Road just outside of Rome.

**Read verses 13-15**

The holy scriptures are the source of saving truth. The Bible is the book which points the way to God. It opens up the mind of God to us. It enables us to think God's thoughts after Him.

**Read verse 16a** *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...*

The word translated "scripture" is the word *graphe*. It's used 51 times in the Greek New Testament and each time it's a technical term for God's words that are written. *Graphe* comes from the verb *grapho* which means "to write." It's the basis for our English words "graph," "graphic," and "graphite." Graphite is the led in a pencil.

The word translated "inspiration" is the word *theopneustos*. *Theos* is the word for God and *pneo* is the verb "to blow out."

That means that the writings of the biblical authors were breathed out by God. God used human authors but He breathed His words through them. In fact, just like God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life and he became a living being, God breathed out His words and they're living and powerful.

Now catch what comes next. This is the key to really seeing change in our lives. **Read verse 16b**

Because the words of the Bible are God breathed, they're profitable for four things:

1. Doctrine. That's teaching. What's right? What's wrong? What's God's plan? It's all

there in the Bible.

2. Reproof. That's showing us what we're doing wrong in our thoughts, words, and actions.

3. Correction. The Bible doesn't just tell us what we're doing wrong and then just leave us hanging. It tells us what's right to do.

4. Instruction in righteousness. This is how to make the right actions stick. This is living out the correction and not going back to the wrong.

Then in verse 17 we get the result. **Read verse 17**

The word translated "complete" means 'capable,' "adequate." The words "thoroughly equipped" mean 'completely enabled.'

Here's the promise. Every person who has placed their faith in Christ can change. They're new people, they have the Holy Spirit, and they have the truth of the Bible to direct them.

When we say, "I know I get angry and yell at everybody in the family, but that's just me." Or, "I live my life in fear of everything, but that's the way I was brought up and I can't change." Or, "I'm addicted to drugs and so was my dad so it must run in the family, I'm doomed." Or, "I'll never be good with money. I just live in debt all the time. That's just the way I am." We're not telling the truth.

It may be the way we feel. We may have failed a whole bunch of times and are discouraged. It may be that this is what people have told us over and over again since we were little. A lie believed as truth will affect you as if it were true.

The truth is that God's commands are God's enablements. He doesn't tell us to deal with things in our life and then not give us the wisdom and power to actually change.

*I. We Have To Recognize That We've Been Given A New Life From God*

*II. We Have To Learn What The Bible Promises Us*

*III. We Have To Let God Expose Our Motives*

**Turn to Hebrews chapter 4 page 1064**

The Bible not only rebukes us for what we do wrong, shows us the right way to live, and shows us how to keep doing right, it exposes motives.

## **Read verse 12, 13**

Why is it when we're not living the way we know we should we avoid the Bible? Why is it that while the Bible's still the best selling book in America, it's not the most read? Because it gets inside us. Because it exposes us for who we are. It exposes the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The key word is "heart." In the Bible the heart the source of all motivation. The Bible says it's the wellspring of life. The word "heart" appears over 1000 times in the Bible. It's our true self, the source of our motivations.

Ed Welch writes, "The heart by nature is selfish. It wants what it wants when it wants it. It doesn't want God setting limits or providing direction. When changed by God Himself, the heart's selfish and anti-God motives are not erased, but they are gradually replaced by a desire to love God and live for Him alone."

See, were not just selfish at heart but as John Calvin the reformer wrote, "The human heart is a factory of idols...Everyone of us is, from his mother's womb, expert in inventing idols."

Our idols aren't made out of wood or stone. When you go to India you seen idols everywhere. Those are representations of gods and goddesses and people offer worship and devotion to them.

Our idols aren't tangible, but they're just as real and our worship and devotion is just as sincere.

Rather than Krishna and Vishnu, our idols are peace, comfort, power, control, respect, pleasure, freedom, happiness. This is what drives us.

The idols of our heart stand in the way of us changing and until we identify what it is that we just have to have, that we crave, that is so important to us, were going to go on with the same sins and faults dictating our behavior.

Here's some "idol of the heart" type questions that the Bible confronts us with:

- Who do you love, the world or Jesus Christ?
- Who do you trust, people or God?
- Who or what do you worship, idols or God?
- Who do you obey, Satan or God?

- Whose glory do you live for, your own, or God's?
- Where is your treasure, in this world or in Christ?

Our heart is always asking those questions. We're either for God or against Him.

Think about the guy who's seething with anger. He's angry at the people he works with. He's angry with other drivers on the road. He's angry with his family. Why? Chances are he worships at the altar of respect and he's not been given the respect he thinks he deserves. So he's waging war against the people around him.

But there's even more. As bad as that is he's waging war against God. He's resisting a sovereign God who uses people to refine us. Instead of submitting to God's sovereign purposes and learning to forgive and love he's saying, "I will be God." His desires rule.

See, we were all created to worship. God made us for Himself. Revelation 4:11 *You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.*

The biblical command is, *Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.* (Psalm 29:2)

God's ultimate purpose is that *All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And shall glorify Your name.* (Psalm 86:9)

We were created to worship God and if we don't worship Him, we will still worship. We'll worship ourselves. We'll worship the idols of our own heart.

The path of change always goes through our heart. So here's where we have to begin. We have to take an honest, biblical look at the fruit of our lives- the big and little sins, the anxieties and fears, the disappointments and despair- and ask what they tell us about our relationship with God.

Then we have to ask ourselves the tough questions: What do I want? What is it that's more important to me than the worship of almighty God?

Ed Welch again, "If we see sexual sin, our hearts are full of wants. We believe that God is not good and doesn't really see our private lives. We trust in our own devices to find satisfaction."

"If we see jealousy, our hearts believe that life can be found in what other people have.

Furthermore, not only do we want it, we wish they didn't have it. We see God as our errand boy who hasn't given us what we wanted or deserved."

"If we disrespect authority our hearts are saying that we want nothing and no one above ourselves: not parents, not a boss, not God."

When we take that hard look, what we see can be real discouraging. It can be pretty ugly. But the answer isn't just to make a few external changes. God wants more than that. He doesn't want sacrifices and offerings that just make us look good in front of other people. The Bible says, *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart.* (Psalm 51:17)

Here's where real change comes from. First we look at our hearts, then we look at Jesus.

One last passage. **Turn to Psalm 22 page 490**

This is one of those amazing testimonies to the truth of the Bible. Psalm 22 is a Messianic psalm. It centers on Messiah. It was written about 1000 years before Jesus hung on the cross to pay the awful price for our sins.

**Read verses 1-8, 12-19**

What an astounding picture of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffering on the cross.

Now I want you to just imagine Him , bruised, bleeding, beaten almost beyond recognition, and writing in agony , nailed to the rough timbers of the cross. I want you to imaging the holy one of Israel taking the weight of your sin on His shoulders.

Now tell me, who do you worship? Who do you trust? Who gave everything just for you? Who has demonstrated love for you beyond measure? Who has proven that He wouldn't leave no matter how tough things get? Who has shown you unquestionably that you're in the bulls eye of His love and amazing grace?

Do you complain and grumble? Look to Jesus. He is generous above measure and hasn't given you what you deserve. He's given you what you don't deserve.

Do you play with sins that are hidden? They obviously aren't hidden to God. He laid them on Christ at that cross. And He did that to liberate you.

Do you struggle with fear? Now you know that He will never leave you or forsake you.

Do you strain to be in control at all times? Look at the One who gave up all for you. Do you think He would lead you into anything that wasn't for good?

Are you shackled by addictions? Focus on Jesus who broke the power of sin through His death and resurrection.

Can you change? Can I change? Yea, we can. In fact, if we're going to grow in our walk with God, we must change.

Don't let Satan blind you to who you are. Don't let the evil one deceive you about all that you have in Christ. You can change. The direction for change is in the Bible. The biblical power for change is in the indwelling Holy Spirit. The biblical motive for change is the message of grace that draws you to be like Jesus.

Ada Copeland's life was shaped by something that she believed to be true when it wasn't. In the end, she lost all that she thought she had.

Don't live a lie. Claim what's yours. You can change. What is the one thing God wants to change in you next?