



Sermon Notes

Term – Spring 2018

Series – Identity

Gathering & Date – the 10 & the 5, 15 April

Title – Time to make your choice ...

Preacher – Paul Langham

Reading – Romans 1:1, 7; 1 Corinthians 1:1-3; 2 Corinthians 1:1-2; Galatians 1:1-3; Ephesians 1:1-2; Philippians 1:1-2; Colossians 1:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-2 [and 1 Peter 1:1-2; Jude 1-2]
These readings are printed in full at the end of these notes

Main message of this talk in one sentence – We all have a choice to make: to live under what God says about us or under whatever voices contrary to that truth say about us.

Main points –

13 of the 22 Epistles in the New Testament were written by Paul.

9 of these were written to local churches, and are named according to which church they address. Today's [composite] reading is the opening greeting from each of those 9 letters.

Can you spot the odd ones out?

They are Galatians, and 1 & 2 Thessalonians and differ from the remaining 6 in that they contain nothing about identity. Scholars believe that these 3 are the earliest of Paul's writings to survive – this suggests the Holy Spirit, combining with Paul's own experience, effected a change in the way he began his letters as his ministry matured.

Throughout his later ministry, he always begins his letters with statements about identity – both his and his readers'.

Paul moves on in each letter to teach his readers doctrine and encourage them in mission. But first he affirms identity. In other words, our identity (our being secure in who we are in Christ) is the necessary soil in which doctrine can take root and mission spring forth in fruit and harvest.

Again, we see the deep scriptural truth that we do not work or minister in God's Kingdom **for** affirmation but **from** affirmation – just as Jesus did: at his baptism, before he had healed anyone, raised anyone from the dead, calmed any storms or multiplied loaves and fish, his Father spoke these words over him:

'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.' Luke 3:22

At the Transfiguration, the Father says again

'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.' (Matthew 17:5)

This is my Son, whom I love.' (Mark 9:7)

'This is my Son, whom I have chosen;' (Luke 9:35)

Interestingly, Paul and the other NT writers use some of the same language when talking about us! The key words are

- hagos = holy people
- agapetos = beloved (spoken over Jesus above)
- eklektos = chosen (spoken over Jesus above)
- kletos = called

The NT never ever refers to believers as 'sinners' but always always as 'saints' or 'holy people'. Yes, we continue to sin, but sin no longer defines us. We have literally changed category

- from darkness to light
- from alienation to friendship
- from lost to found
- from slave to sin to servant of Christ
- from death to life

In other words, as believers, we are 'categorically' different from when we were unbelievers

The challenge is to embrace, believe and accept what God says about us and speaks over us.

These verses are ones to use over and over again

⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

We must recognise enemy strongholds for what they are – areas in our lives, often created by false words, from which the Enemy bases his operations against us. We must develop the intentional habit of taking such false words & the thoughts they produce captive and make them obedient to Christ.

Imagine your mind & heart as an airport. No airport allows anything and everything to land at will – in fact nothing can land without the approval of air traffic control. You are air traffic control for the landing strips in your hearts and minds. You are responsible under God, with the help of the Holy Spirit, for what lands and what doesn't get permission to land.

It is not what we *do* that determines who we *are*.

It's who we *are* that determines what we *do*.

For further thought and prayer –

Be honest about your own 'false-word-based strongholds' – do you know what they are?

How easy do you find it to accept that you are

- holy
- beloved
- chosen
- called

If you find it hard, you are not seeing yourself as the Lord does. How can you allow his voice to rise in volume over the other, false, voices?

What can you do to begin taking false thoughts captive and making them obedient to Christ?

Use these words from Ephesians as a meditation:

¹ From Paul, chosen and sent by Jesus, the King promised and appointed by God, to my dear friends in Ephesus who've been made holy in him: ² may you all have the deep peace of knowing God's unconditional and undeserved love.

³ We all know how wonderful it is to be chosen and how special it makes us feel. How much more wonderful to be chosen by God himself! That glorious truth lies at the heart of all the extraordinary things he has done for us in and through Jesus and explains why he showers us with every spiritual gift we could possibly need.

⁴ In fact, long before he designed the cosmos and fashioned planets and stars, long before he let his imagination run wild with the colours, shapes, seasons and creatures of earth, long before all this, God chose you! He designed you to be perfect, to stand before him without feeling ashamed – and now, because of Jesus, you can begin to live the life he always intended.

⁵ God's love knows no limits and even though the cost was out of this world, he was determined to adopt us into his family. ⁶ We've only his extravagant and undeserved love to thank for all this. ⁷ He sent his only Son, Jesus, to buy us back with his own blood, which washed away our sins like stains from a cloth. ⁸ What an amazing God, to lavish unconditional love on those who have done nothing to deserve it.

⁹⁻¹⁰ And as if that wasn't enough, our individual salvation is just one part of his great plan to renew the entire cosmos and make it perfect, with Jesus himself as its King.

¹¹ We can never thank God enough for his extraordinary generosity in choosing us and sending Jesus to rescue us. ¹² All we can do is praise him for his goodness. © Paul Langham / Bible Society

APPENDIX – FULL SCRIPTURE READINGS

13 of the 22 Epistles in the New Testament were written by Paul.

9 of these were written to local churches, and are named according to which church they address.

Romans 1:1, 7

¹ Paul, a **servant** of Christ Jesus, **called** to be an **apostle** and **set apart** for the gospel of God ... ⁷ To all in Rome who are **loved by God** and **called** to be his **holy people**: **Grace** and **peace** to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's identity

- Servant = doulos = slave
- Called = kletos = divinely summoned
- Apostle = apostolos = messenger
- Set apart = aphorizo = separated from

Our identity

- Loved = agapetos = divinely loved ones
- Holy people = hagios = holy, sacred, different

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Paul, **called** to be an **apostle** of Christ Jesus by the **will** of God, and our **brother** Sosthenes, ²To the church of God in Corinth, to those **sanctified** in Christ Jesus and **called** to be **his holy people**, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ – their Lord and ours: ³**Grace** and **peace** to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's identity

- Called = kletos = divinely summoned
- Apostle = apostolos = messenger
- By the will of God = thelematos = wish / preferred option / best choice
- Brother = adelphos = lit. from the same womb

Our identity

- Sanctified = hagios = holy, sacred, different
- Called = kletos = divinely summoned
- Holy people = hagios = holy, sacred, different

2 Corinthians 1:1-2

Paul, an **apostle** of Christ Jesus by the **will** of God, and Timothy our **brother**, To the church of God in Corinth, together with all **his holy people** throughout Achaia: ² **Grace** and **peace** to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's identity

- Apostle = apostolos = messenger
- By the will of God = thelematos = wish / preferred option / best choice
- Brother = adelphos = lit. from the same womb

Our identity

- Holy people = hagios = holy, sacred, different

Galatians 1:1-3

Paul, an **apostle** – sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead – ² and all the brothers and sisters with me, To the churches in Galatia: ³ **Grace** and **peace** to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

Paul's identity

- Apostle = apostolos = messenger
- brothers and sisters = adelphos = lit. from the same womb

Our identity

- Nothing said

Ephesians 1:1-2

Paul, an **apostle** of Christ Jesus by the **will** of God, To **God's holy people** in Ephesus, **the faithful** in Christ Jesus: ² **Grace** and **peace** to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's identity

- Apostle = apostolos = messenger
- By the will of God = thelematos = wish / preferred option / best choice

Our identity

- Holy people = hagios = holy, sacred, different
- Faithful = pistos = faithful, reliable

Philippians 1:1-2

Paul and Timothy, **servants** of Christ Jesus, To all **God's holy people** in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: ² **Grace** and **peace** to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's identity

- Servant = doulos = slave

Our identity

- Holy people = hagios = holy, sacred, different

Colossians 1:1-2

Paul, an **apostle** of Christ Jesus by the **will** of God, and Timothy our brother, ²To **God's holy people** in Colossae, **the faithful** brothers and sisters in Christ: **Grace** and **peace** to you from God our Father.

Paul's identity

- Apostle = apostolos = messenger
- By the will of God = thelematos = wish / preferred option / best choice

Our identity

- Faithful = pistos = faithful, reliable
- Holy people = hagios = holy, sacred, different

1 Thessalonians 1:1

Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: **Grace** and **peace** to you.

Nothing said

2 Thessalonians 1:1-2

Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: ²**Grace** and **peace** to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nothing said

1 Peter 1:1-2

Peter, an **apostle** of Jesus Christ, To **God's elect**, exiles, scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ²who have been **chosen** according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the **sanctifying** work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: **Grace** and **peace** be yours in abundance.

Peter's identity

- Apostle = apostolos = messenger

Our identity

- Elect / chosen = eklektos = select, choose as a deeply personal choice
- Sanctified = hagios = holy, sacred, different

Jude 1-2

¹Jude, a **servant** of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been **called**, who are **loved** in God the Father and **kept** for Jesus Christ: ²**Mercy**, **peace** and **love** be yours in abundance.

Jude's identity

- Servant = doulos = slave

Our identity

- Called = kletos = divinely summoned
- Loved = agapetos = divinely loved ones
- Kept = tereo = watch over, guard

⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5