

IDENTITY

“Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet . . .” (John 13:3-5)

Jesus was able to perform the lowly task of washing feet because He knew Who He was, where He came from, and where He was going. Because Christ was confident in His identity He triumphed over every temptation. He could tell Peter to put away his sword because He knew that 12 legions of angels were standing by to do His bidding. He told Pilate that He was a king, and in fact that's why He came into this world. He could look with pity on the men who crucified Him because Jesus knew exactly what He was doing and they didn't have a clue. The devil attempted to destroy Jesus by attacking His identity. “If” you are the Son of God, he said, command that these stones be turned into bread. Jesus, of course, didn't budge because He knew Who He was.

Recognizing your own identity, of course, is also key to your behavior. Take Paul, for example. Even though they put him in prison he never considered himself a prisoner of Rome, only a prisoner of Christ (Eph. 3:1). Just as Jesus liberated other of His apostles from prison (See Acts 5:18 - 20; 12:6 - 11), Paul was confident that Christ could also liberate him any time He chose to do so. Consequently Paul was never terrified by his enemies. Paul knew who he was in Christ!

- As a prisoner in Rome, for example, Paul advised the Philippians not to be frightened in any way by those who opposed them. Such confidence in Christ would actually make their opponents afraid (Phil. 2:28, 29). The Philippians knew this was true because this is precisely what happened when Paul and Silas were unjustly imprisoned in Philippi. As you know, while Paul and Silas were not afraid, the jailer was (Acts 16:25 - 30). When the embarrassed authorities belatedly decided to quietly release Paul and Silas, Paul refused to go quietly. He knew who he was! That's why Paul demanded that the magistrates come down and personally escort them out of prison, and that's why they did! (Acts 16:35 - 40).
- The same scenario repeated itself when Paul stood as a prisoner before Governor Felix. Again, Paul was not afraid, but Felix was. The Bible is quite clear, when Paul reasoned with him about righteousness, self control, and judgment **“Felix was afraid” (Acts 24:25)**.
- Even though Paul was a prisoner when he wrote to the Ephesians he actually saw himself as being “raised up” and “seated” with Christ in the heavenly realms (Eph. 2:6).
- The Colossian Letter was also written from prison. With head held high, however, Paul reminded his readers that Christ had already disarmed powers and authorities, triumphing over them by the cross (Col. 2:15). Paul knew that Christ in him was the hope of glory!
- Paul was not discouraged by suffering because he knew from the very beginning that he would suffer many things for the name of Jesus (Acts 9:16). Confidence in his relationship with Christ, however, enabled him to transform every evil thing the devil did into something good. All things are not good, but all things do work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28)
- When Paul was driven out of Ephesus he left encouraging the brethren (Acts 20:1). He even praised God for hardships because they taught him how to comfort others facing hardship (2 Cor. 1:3 - 7). Satan sent Paul a thorn in the flesh and even this taught him that the power of God was being made perfect in his weakness (2 Cor. 12:7 - 10). Reflecting on years of hardship Paul wrote to the Philippians that it only advanced the gospel (Phil. 1:12).
- What about you? If your identity is “in Christ” it will change the way you do everything!