

A MESSAGE ON YOUR GOD-GIVEN WORTH
SPIRITUAL IDENTITY THEFT
Don't be a victim, be a victor!
By George Foster



*Name, address, phone, password, social security—
we know them all, but do we know our true identity in Christ?*

YOU APPLY FOR A LOAN and, to your surprise, you are turned down—even though you have paid your bills on time. What has happened? You are a victim of identity theft. Someone has obtained your personal information and is using it to run up debts that you know nothing about. That's a disgusting part of the economic world in which we live today. It may also be part of our spiritual world.

Satan seeks to rob us of our identity in the Lord Jesus Christ. He doesn't want us to know how closely linked we are to Jesus. He loves to have us feel distant from Jesus when in reality we are close to Him, guilty when we are in fact forgiven, estranged when nothing can separate us from Christ's love. Satan wants us to forget who we are, whose we are, where we are in our walk with God, and what amazing resources are available to us through our relationship with Christ.

Hidden with Christ in God

For several years I carried between the pages of my Bible an obsolete note of Brazilian currency. Because of runaway inflation at the time, the fifty *cruzado* note had been discontinued and had no monetary value whatsoever. This particular bill, however, was of value to me because it reminded me that—just as the bill was in the Bible—I am in Christ. I often looked at it and said, 'My life is hid with Christ in God' (Colossians 3:3). Where the Bible goes, the bill goes. Where Christ is, I am. Where I am Christ is. I am in Christ and Christ is in me."

To my disappointment, the bill disappeared one day. I looked for it and it was gone. Did I mislay it? Was it stolen? Or did it just fall out? No matter, I know that nothing like that will ever happen to me. I am and will always remain in Christ.

Nothing separates me from Him—not death, life, angels, demons, past, present, future, height, depth—nothing! He is always with me to help me and guide me. He will never leave me and I will never leave Him. He will always guide me and I will always follow Him. He will always sustain me and I will always trust Him. I will be the person God made me to be and I will do what God gives me to do!

Our new identity

In Christ we have a new identity and it is *that* identity that must predominate. It is upon *that* identity that we must stand. Oh, I'm still the eldest of five sons born to Benjamin Bartley Foster, Junior and Mary Jane Foster. I appeared January 1, 1942, in

Chicago, Illinois. My parents have both passed away, but they live on in my memory as my father and mother.

Jesus also died, but He is not just a memory; He is alive forevermore—in deed and truth. He ascended bodily into heaven and He's coming back again. In Christ, by new birth and by adoption, I am now a child of God. I have Him in heaven and in my heart. That's the identity that gives me hope, joy, peace and love. That's the identity that I most closely and profoundly treasure. I am His and He is mine!

Power in our identity

Our identification with Christ is a powerful, liberating fact; but maybe you ask what gives us the right or privilege to think we can be so closely identified with Him? Let me say joyfully and with certainty that you and I can claim that identity with Him because He so willingly and thoroughly identifies himself with us. We didn't initiate it; He did! Think about it: Christ took upon himself human flesh and became one with us.

Born of a woman, He identified with us in our humanity.
Born in a stable, He identified with us in our poverty.
Born of an unwed mother, He identified with us in our humiliation.
Baptized without sin but with repentant sinners, He identified with us in our sin.
Tempted in the desert, He identified with us in our struggle.
Rejected by those He came to save, He identified with us in our alienation.
Crucified on a cross, He identified with us and took the punishment for our sin.
Buried in a borrowed grave, He identified with us in our mortality.
Rising from the dead, He identified with us in our hope of eternal life.
Ascended into heaven, He has prepared a place for us to live as family with Him.

So what does that mean to us today? Because He so thoroughly became one with us, we can consider ourselves one with Him and we can dare to call ourselves His followers, His servants, His friends, His brothers and sisters—sons and daughters of God. We can take the name of Christ and call ourselves Christians—Christ's ones. In that name we have hope, we have salvation and we have victory.

In Christ

As we read the New Testament, the little two-word combination—in Christ—keeps appearing. We see it in a variety of places and ways—especially in Paul's letters:

In Christ we have redemption through his blood.
In Christ the mystery of God's will is revealed to us.
In Christ we were chosen to be holy and blameless in his sight.
In Christ God has freely given us his glorious grace.
In Christ we were included when we heard the word of truth.
In Christ God exerted his mighty strength, raising him from the dead.
In Christ God has shown us the incomparable riches of his grace.
In Christ we are created to do good works that he has prepared for us.
In Christ we, who were far away, have been brought near.
In Christ we are built together as a collective dwelling place for God's Spirit.

In Christ God's eternal purpose is fulfilled.
In Christ we are sealed by the Holy Spirit.
In Christ we have been raised from death and seated in heavenly places.
In Christ we are reconciled to God through the cross.
In Christ are the riches in glory by which God will supply all our needs.
In Christ all things hold together.
In Christ all the fullness of God resides.
In Christ we are a new creation.
In Christ we can abide and bear much fruit.
In Christ all things are possible.

In some passages the words "in Christ" are used to describe Christ's qualities—such as "all the fullness of God resides in Him." In other texts the combination refers to blessings we have because of Him—such as "in Christ we have redemption through his blood."

Life and security in Christ

These expressions are straightforward and easy to understand, but there is also a use of the expression that has more mystery to it. When the words say that you and I are "in Christ"—such as "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation"—what does it mean for us? Let me suggest four words all beginning with the letter "a".

It means *acceptance*. We have accepted him. He has accepted us. We belong to Christ. He belongs to us. This mutual acceptance has come through the redemption that He brought to us through His atonement. We were estranged from God but through Christ we have been embraced by Him and reconciled to Him.

It means *adoption*. To be in Christ is to be part of His family. God has made us sons and daughters. "He came to His own but His own did not receive Him. But to those who did receive Him, He gave the power to become sons of God" (John 1:12). We can now address God as "our Father" and know that we have a personal relationship with Him. He has assumed parental responsibility for us.

It means *access*. Because Christ has so fully identified with us and has united Himself to us, we have access to God through His name, which we are now privileged to use. There was only one moment when Jesus did not have access to the Father; it was when He took our sins upon himself and experienced a sinner's alienation to the point that He cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He allowed that break in His access to God in order to provide the same access for you and me."

Finally, being in Christ means *attachment*. Jesus gives us a wonderful picture of this when he speaks of the grapevine and its branches. "I am the vine; you are the branches." We have been so effectively grafted into the vine that together we make up the same plant. We are one. We are inseparably joined. We are in Christ. His life flows into us and enables us to be fruitful.

These four words – acceptance, adoption, access, and attachment – are aspects of a word that encompasses them all: our *union* with Christ. We are joined. We are included. We are accepted. We are embraced. We are grafted in. We are one! "Nothing shall separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus!"

He became sin for us. We became righteous in Him

British author and speaker, Ray Mayhew, led a victorious life conference at Bethany International headquarters in Bloomington, Minnesota. To illustrate that we are in Christ, he asked four volunteers to come to the platform. Three of them were told to hold hands and form a circle facing inward. They represented the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – three persons, yet united as one.

Then he asked them to drop their hands and face outward. This represented the moment that “Christ became sin for us” and was abandoned by the other members of the Trinity. At that moment he cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Then Ray had them face each other again, their hands still at their sides. The fourth volunteer was then asked to step into the circle and the four of them held hands.

What was Ray doing? He was encouraging his audience to see that they had been grafted into the eternal Godhead, possessors of eternal life and eternally united to God through Christ’s death and resurrection

Who I Am In Christ

As we affirm and reaffirm who we are in Christ, we will discover that our thinking is changing, our feelings are changing, and our behavior is changing as we seek to personify and exemplify what it means to be in Christ. It’s a matter of establishing the healthy habit of speaking up and declaring the truth as we find it in God’s Word.

We don’t have to wear a uniform or adopt a certain hair style or dress code or drink a certain brand of tea to be identified with Christ. He loves us and knows us by name. We are members of a winning team. Greater is He that is in us than He that is in the world. We are more than conquerors through Christ!