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Wednesday, December 21, 2016 Daily Devotional - Our True Identity

DECEMBER 21ST 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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[Ephesians 1:3-8](#)

When I hear a believer say, “I’m just a sinner,” I feel like responding, “That’s what you used to be.” A lot of folks cling to a view of themselves as a patched-up, slightly-better-than-before version of their old self. The Word of God contradicts that opinion: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor. 5:17). In fact, according to Scripture, we’re dramatically different once we are complete in the Lord.

The question is, Will Christians trust in what they feel, or will they believe what God says about them? His Word calls us saints ([Rom. 1:7](#)), disciples ([John 13:34-35](#)), and fellow heirs with Christ ([Rom. 8:17](#)). If your opinion is that you are “just a sinner,” then you cannot fully experience and enjoy your identity as a follower of God.

Believing what the Lord says about our new self is a choice. Satan certainly schemes to convince believers that Scripture doesn’t apply to them. He knows that people held captive by spiritual poverty back away from opportunities to share the gospel and serve God’s kingdom. It’s much easier to spiritually bankrupt someone who already thinks of himself as “just a sinner” than it is to conquer a disciple who knows he is a child of the loving heavenly Father.

Our true identity is defined not by our past actions but by the Savior's. Jesus purchased our lives with His blood and brought us into relationship with the Father, who adopted us as His beloved children. We have every reason to hold our heads high, stand firm, and courageously proclaim the gospel.

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Tuesday, December 20, 2016 Daily Devotional - Who We Are in Christ

DECEMBER 20TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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[1 Peter 1:1-7](#)

Peter wrote the first of his two epistles to encourage people who were undergoing persecution. And the disciple decided to begin the letter by reminding believers of who they are in the Lord.

Believers are chosen in Christ. It's not that the Lord selects some people to enter heaven and others to go to hell. Rather, the good news of Jesus Christ is offered to all humanity ([John 3:16](#); [Rom. 1:20](#))—salvation is for everyone who receives the Savior through an act of free will. The bottom line is that God wants you (2 Pet. 3:9).

Believers are recipients of mercy. No one can claim that his or her righteous works earned a place in heaven. We are saved through the mercy of Christ alone ([Titus 3:5](#)). God loved us so much that He made a way for us to be in relationship with Him now and forever.

Believers are protected. [Psalm 34:7](#) says, “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him.” We are so well guarded that the only way our life can be touched by hardship is if God allows it. That doesn't mean we won't experience loss or upheaval. Sometimes the Father permits His children to walk through dark valleys, but always the protective shepherd, He remains by their side ([Psalm 23:4](#)).

The message of Peter's letter is simple: Do not be afraid when you go through trying times. Focus on who you are in Jesus Christ. You have reason to be bold, assured, and triumphant, because you are a chosen, beloved, and well-protected child of God.

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Monday, December 19, 2016 Daily Devotional - Learning from Adversity

DECEMBER 19TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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2 Corinthians 12:7-10

What are we to do with our pain when, despite our pleading, God won't remove it? He knows we're hurting but does nothing. How can He be a God of love yet not come to our aid?

Today's passage gives us intimate insight into a very painful event in Paul's life. We don't know exactly what the "thorn in the flesh" was, but his account of what he learned through that experience is an amazing example of what God wants to teach us through adversity.

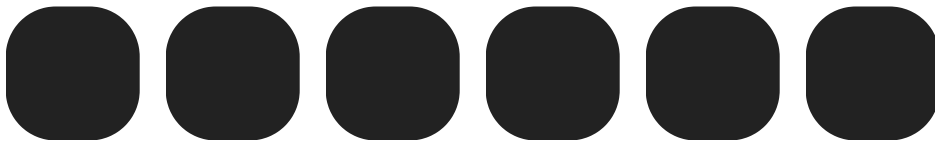
- *First of all, God is sovereign over the situation.* Ultimately, He is the one who allowed the thorn and the one with the power to remove it.
- *Second, God prioritizes the spiritual.* Paul wanted physical relief, but the Lord was working for his spiritual good. The thorn was a protection against pride, which would have seriously hindered Paul's ministry and corrupted his character. Whatever God allows to afflict believers is designed to protect them from sin, produce holiness, and equip them for faithful service to Christ.
- *Third, God's grace is sufficient.* The Lord didn't remove the pain but gave Paul both the grace to endure it and strength in his weakness. If God doesn't provide a way out, He will provide a way through.

Once we understand the Lord's sovereignty, priorities, and sufficiency, we can respond to our afflictions as Paul did—with gladness. When Christ's strength is perfected in us, we can be content in whatever difficulties God allows in our life. The Lord's unwillingness to give us relief is not neglect. Rather, it is evidence of His surpassing love, which seeks our eternal good.

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Thursday, December 15, 2016 Daily Devotional - Jesus Christ is Lord

DECEMBER 15TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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[Romans 14:7-12](#)

Followers of Jesus would agree that whether we live or die, we do so for Christ. But His sovereignty is not limited to those who claim Him as King. The entire world—the whole universe, in fact—is subject to His authority. At the final judgment, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess and praise God.

In the here and now, relatively few people recognize the Lord's rule and seek to remain in His will. Most refuse to see that all of our human constructs—such as government, culture, and society—thrive or falter in the palm of God's hand. Moreover, nonbelievers resist Christ's sovereignty in their own lives. People who won't surrender their will to the Lord's great purpose assume control of their own destiny. However, the Lord's supreme reign cannot be thwarted.

It's common for men and women today to believe that there are no consequences for rejecting the lordship of Jesus Christ. You may have heard people say things like, "That Christian stuff works for you, but it's not for me. I'll live on my own terms." Yet Jesus' parable of houses built on either solid rock or sand offers a different perspective ([Matt. 7:24-27](#)). Only those who make their abode in the Lord can withstand the upheavals of this world.

Kneeling before Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life is the wisest decision you can make. The sovereign Ruler of the universe loves you and desires to bless all of your days. Make your eternal home in the safety of His kingdom, and forever delight in Him.

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Wednesday, December 14, 2016 Daily Devotional - An Introduction to Christ

DECEMBER 14TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Revelation 1:4-8

John gives us a compact description of the Lord. Verse 5 in today's passage condenses the wondrous nature of Jesus Christ to the bare but beautiful essentials of who He is.

Jesus Christ is the faithful witness. Jesus came to earth to more fully reveal the character and ways of the Father ([John 14:9](#)). The miracles He performed validated His claim to be the Son of God.

Jesus Christ is the firstborn from the dead. The Savior bore our sins and died on the cross, was buried, and rose again on the third day. His resurrection proved that eternal life is possible for us, too, which is what Jesus taught when He said, "He who believes in Me will live even if he dies" ([John 11:25](#)).

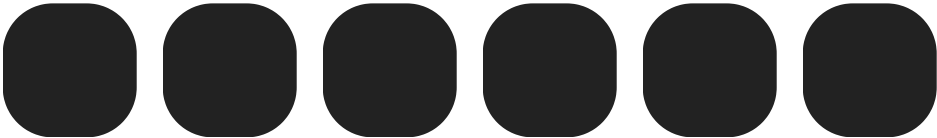
Jesus Christ is ruler over the kings of the earth. The Lord raises men to power, just as it is He who removes them ([John 19:11](#); see also [Rom. 13:1](#)). And believers have access to a higher authority than human leaders. In God's throne room, we can beseech Him on behalf of our land and lay claim to His promises.

Jesus Christ loves us and, by His blood, released us from our sins. Note the change of tense in [Revelation 1:5](#). The Lord's love is ever-present, but He *has freed* believers from their past (NIV). Both the penalty and power of sin have been broken by His sacrifice.

When people ask you about Jesus, introduce Him by guiding them through this mini biography. In just a few sentences, John describes Christ's character, divinity, and authority. The disciple was not timid about proclaiming the Lord to whomever he encountered. We shouldn't be shy, either, when we serve so great a Savior.

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