

# Birthright

## Our Spiritual Identity in Christ

*"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new person; his old being is gone, a new life has begun!"*  
2 Corinthians 5:17

The word *birthright* signifies the rights and responsibilities inherited due to one's birth. This especially applies if one is born into royalty. In the same way, since we have been spiritually born of God into His royal family, we have been endowed with certain rights and responsibilities. However, before we discuss these, we let us first examine the complete transformation of our spiritual identity that occurred with our new birth in Christ. The Bible says that when we were physically born, we were born with a sinful nature. Our sinful nature was like a "sin factory" within us, continually producing sinful attitudes and actions. The Bible says, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7)." In other words, a man speaks and acts based on who he is - in his inner being. This is why Jesus said that a man's sinful thoughts and deeds originated from out of his sinful heart (Matthew 15:18-19). This was our spiritual identity before we were saved. We were sinners by nature and no matter how hard we tried, we could not escape our identity problem.

God's divine solution to our identity crisis was to get rid of the "sinner" - the "sin factory" within us. Since we were born into sin, the only way we could be freed from sin was through death. God's remedy was to spiritually include us in His Son's death in order to remove our sinful nature, so that the Spirit of His resurrected Son could live in us. This was not merely conceptual or symbolic. When we were saved, God actually removed our sinful nature, which was at the very core of our inner being and the root of our self-identity and rebellion toward God (Romans 6:6; Colossians 2:11). As a result of our new birthright in Christ, we have been set free from sin's dominion and destruction. The Bible says, "He who has died has been freed from sin... count yourselves dead to sin

but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:7, 11)." This is the miracle of our new birth, made possible by the divine operation of the cross of Christ.

The universal search for self-identity is the central issue that motivates all unbelievers and accounts for their self-centered behavior (even when it is sometimes cloaked in outer morality). Yet, tragically, even many Christians continue to have an identity crisis after they are saved. They mistakenly believe that they are still a "wretched" sinner with a sinful nature. As a result, they live lives of secret guilt and desperation, always afraid that their "dark side," which continually ensnares them in sin, will be publically exposed. If you are a born again Christian, this is not your divine birthright! This life of defeat and shame is not the life of victory over sin that Jesus Christ died on the cross to give you! Here is the Biblical truth: when you were born again, God made you a new person in Christ. However, before God could give you a new spiritual identity with Christ's divine nature, He had to first deal with your old sinful identity (that you inherited from Adam). Therefore, God not only dealt with its fruit (your sinful actions) by forgiving your sins; He also got rid of its root (by removing your sinful nature). Your old sinful nature is now dead and gone, and Christ now lives in you by His Spirit (Colossians 1:27). This is the truth that sets you free from slavery to sin (John 8:32-36). You are no longer a sinful person; you are now a new person in Christ who loves God and can obey God, if you believe and act on this truth.

Jesus said that, in order to find your new spiritual identity in Him, you must lose your old soulish identity for His sake (Matthew 16:24-25). How do you do this? You took your first step when you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and surrendered control of your life over to Him. After you are saved, you can now "put to death" each day your old soulish way of thinking and acting and put on Christ's way of thinking and acting (Romans 8:12-14; Ephesians 4:22-24). If you believe and act on the Biblical truth that you no longer have a sinful nature and you are now a new

spiritual person in Christ, you will see new Christ-like attitudes and actions spring out from your new identity - who you are in Christ! Your personal testimony of faith will then become like the apostle Paul's: "I (my old self) have been crucified with Christ, and I (my sinful nature) no longer live, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God (Galatians 2:20)." When your identity is in Christ, this is real freedom, this is real security!

Now that we have been born of God, we have been endowed by God with certain unalienable (unchangeable) rights that no one (not even the devil) can take away from us (unless we let them). We have the right to be the children of God, and to know God as our heavenly Father (John 1:12; 2 Corinthians 6:18). We have the right to serve God without being afraid of sin's ensnarement (Luke 1:74; Romans 8:15). If we walk in God's truth, we have the right to live free from the guilt and condemnation of sin (Romans 8:1). And we have the right to live free from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15). We also have certain God-given responsibilities. We have the responsibility to love one another as God loves us (John 13:35). We have the responsibility to stop practicing sin and be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:10; 1 John 3:6). We also have the responsibility to share the gospel with the world around us (Matthew 28:19-20).

If we believe the truth, we will realize we are not hopeless sinners! We are saints - holy ones - who are dead to sin and alive to God because we no longer have a sinful nature, and Christ's Spirit now lives in us. If we believe and act on this truth of the cross every day, we will progressively lose our old sinful way of thinking and acting, and we will increasingly be transformed into Christ's likeness and His way of thinking and acting. This is our divine birthright in Jesus Christ! This is the easy yoke that Jesus promised us (Matthew 11:28-30).

*"You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."* 1 Peter 2:9