

**You Are Not Your Past**  
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Lorain Avenue Church of Christ (12-01-2024)

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Good Morning.

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You are NOT your past.

This is the title of our lesson this morning. ... "You Are Not Your Past."

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If you are a Christian, you are not your past.

God has made you "anew." He has re-made you. He re-made you through baptism.

He didn't remake you on the outside, however. He re-made you on the inside.

You are now a child of God.

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Let's show this to be the truth.

Please turn to 1 John, chapter 3 and verse 1.

The Apostle John writes ... "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are."

Hold onto this ... and turn to the Gospel of John ... John, chapter 1 and verses 12 to 13.

Speaking of Christ ... John writes ...

"As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Hold onto this as well ... and go with me to John, chapter 3 and verses 3 to 5.

Jesus ... speaking to Nicodemus said ...

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

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Now, put all three passages together. And what do we see?

God loved us so much ... that He has made all who have believed in Christ and have been born of water in baptism ... His children.

God re-made you on the inside.

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You are NOT your past.

God has made you anew.

You are not what you did.

You are not who others say you are.

You are not even who YOU say you are.

You are who God says you are.

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In life ... we tend to live up to who we're told that we are. Or to what others expect us to be. Or what we're learned one way or the other, good or bad.

Sometimes we underestimate ourselves. Many times, we overestimate ourselves.

Let's look to God. There is none wiser.

He knows us.

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Who does God say I AM? ... you might ask.

You might, and you should.

It's not good ... when you allow "who YOU say you are" ... "who you THINK you are" ... to shape your life.

It's always best ... when you allow "GOD to say who you are" ... when you allow HIS assessment ... to be in control of your destiny.

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Do you remember one of the opening remarks in our lesson book ... in our study of Ecclesiastes? Solomon realized ... that ... after "trying on" many lifestyles that turned out to be dead ends ... that there was only one way to live ... only one ... and that was a life clothed in God. "Fear God and keep His commandments, for that is the whole duty of man."

Recall, that we read in Galatians 3:27, that all of us who have been baptized into Christ ... have clothed ourselves in Christ?

Clothed in Christ ... what does that look like ... when we are clothed in Christ?

Who ... does God say we Christians ... we Children of God ... really are?

In Ecclesiastes 3:11 we saw that God has placed eternity in man's heart. It's in our spiritual DNA.

We'll never be satisfied ... we'll never be successful ... until we live the life God designed us to live. We'll be like square pegs in a round hole ... until we begin to be ... who "God says we are."

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God says you are "Forgiven."

Turn to Hebrews, chapter 8 and verse 12.

Again, that's Hebrews 8:12.

God says ... "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

A hard part of forgiveness for us humans ... is that we can't easily forget what we've done when we've sinned.

I think I should say ... a tender-hearted Christian can't easily forget.

And I imagine a hard-hearted person can let go of their past wrong doings a lot easier. Maybe I'm wrong, I don't know.

The Apostle Paul speaks about the Christian's past ... as recalling things of which we are now ashamed.

But do you know the really blessed thing about it? God has let your past go. Totally. Completely.

And He stands ready to help you move forward. He's cleaned you up ... put you on your feet ... and is urging you to do good works.

With God, the past is a place to learn from ... not a place to live in

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God says you are "A New Creation."

Let's turn to 2 Corinthians, chapter 5 and verse 17.

That's 2 Corinthians 5:17.

The Apostle Paul writes ... "Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Remember ... this is talking about you. It's describing you. The NEW has replaced the OLD.

There's a scene in the movie ... "The Poseidon Adventure" ... I'll always remember it.

The movie's been around for quite a while.

In a storm at sea ... a rogue wave rolled an ocean liner ... a passenger ship ... upside down. Keel up.

Throughout the movie a band of survivors fought to get to the bottom of the ship ... which was now in the up direction.

After a huge ordeal ... rescuers torched through the hull and pulled these survivors out. As they climbed out ... the sun warmed them ... the sea was glassy ... they all got a new lease on life.

The song was playing in the background ... "There's got to be a morning after."

I think it impressed me because I could feel their release ... their freedom.

In Romans 6:4 we're told that we rise up from baptism ... to walk a new life. We are all new and shiny on the inside.

We get a fresh start. A clean slate.

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God says you are "Redeemed."

Let's read Psalm, chapter 107 and verses 1 thru 3.

Psalm 107:1-3.

"Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Let the redeemed of the LORD say so ... Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary, And gathered together from the lands ... From the East, West, North, and South."

Think of the hymn we sing ... I'm redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Glory, glory, Christ is mine. All to Him ... I now resign .... I have been redeemed.

To be "redeemed" ... means to be saved or delivered from something bad. From danger. From slavery. From almost certain death. In the Bible ... redemption from the danger of sin and from eternal punishment is a major theme.

It means to be "brought back."

It's a release from bondage. It brings a feeling of intense relief. It can cause a person experience the fresh feeling of forgiveness.

People who've been redeemed from the brink of danger ... feel driven re-purpose their lives. This is seen, especially so ... when the Christian dedicates the rest of their life to Christ.

There is a release from the guilt ... and shame ... of past mistakes that can weigh you down, There is hope and a positive attitude. A feeling of relief and calm. Feelings of gratitude and love.

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God says you are "Free."

Galatians, chapter 5 and verse one.

That's Galatians 5:1.

The Apostle Paul writes to the brethren ...

"It was for freedom that Christ set us free ... Therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."

First of all ... Christ set us free from Satan's hold. He freed us from the hold sin had over us.

Next ... look at the first part of the verse in the NASB version. "It was for freedom that Christ set us free." It's not confusing if we understand where Christ wants us end uo ... to land ... once we've been set free.

He does not want us to escape from one set of problems only to be trapped by another set. He wants us to be totally free. That's why He set us free. Don't let sin grab you from another angle.

It was to be totally ... absolutely ... free ... that Christ set us free.

A German poet once said, "You say that you're free? Show me your ruling idea, and not simply say that you've escaped from a yoke." It's like saying don't jump from the frying pan into the fire...

Don't escape alcohol by using drugs. Don't escape anger by turning to profanity. Don't finally learn the truth about baptism only to adopt false ideas about the Holy Spirit.

Christ freed us from all that will harm us. All. Stay that way. Stay on guard.

Having been freed ... you are able to choose the path of Christ. Such freedom brings the feeling of joy. You can breathe free. You have the power to choose Christ's path without having to answer to anyone but God.

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God says you are "A Masterpiece."

Let's go to a beautiful verse. Ephesians, chapter 2 and verse 10.

Ephesians 2:10. It reads ...

"We are His workmanship (God's workmanship) ... created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

God is the Master Craftsman. He didn't create man in His image and then come up with something for man to do.

God planned the work of Christian men and women before the creation. And then He fashioned Masterpieces to do His bidding.

A Masterpiece ... is a "piece" designed and fashioned by the Master.

In Jeremiah 1:5 ... we read where God told the prophet Jeremiah ...

"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you ... Before you were born, I sanctified you ... and I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

Not only does this verse call attention to the sovereignty and control of God ... it shows that there is life at conception.

Does this shed any light on why the Lord asked Saul why he kept kicking back against the cattle prods?

Do you wonder what God has planned for you?

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God says you are "Christ's Ambassador."

Let's read 2 Corinthians, chapter 5 and verse 20.

In the previous verses ... the Apostle Paul reminds us that God reconciled us to Himself in Christ.

So now, He's given us the job of spreading that message to the world. Preaching it by our words and actions ... actually.

2 Corinthians 5:20 reads ...

"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; 'we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.'"

God is making His appeal through us. And we're saying ... "We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

Choosing and appointing foreign ambassadors is a critical task. An ambassador must represent their country faithfully. And they must show it in the best light.

A good ambassador presents their country as a good place to live. "The best place."

God is trusting you ... as a Christian... as one He's reconciled to Himself ... to speak for Him and His Son ... .. inviting others into the fold.

What an honor. What a responsibility

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God says you are "Loved."

Romans, chapter 5 and verse 8 is a powerful ... moving ... verse.

Turn there with me. Romans 5:8.

"God demonstrates His own love toward us ... in that while we were yet sinners ... Christ died for us."

How many times have you said something like this to another person ... "If you do such and such ... I'll do this for you." If you do ... then I'll do. It goes unsaid... but it's understood what will happen if the other person doesn't do their part first. I should say ... it's understood what will not happen.

God's love for us. God's love for YOU ... is so great ... that He sacrificed to give you the greatest gift ever ... before ... before you were able to do something for Him.

Paul says ... that while we were still sinners ... He gave up His only Son for us.

Andy Goodison ... was so overcome emotionally ... that he could barely get these words out of his mouth when he waited on the Lord's Table.

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Conclusion

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From the moment we're born ... they say we start playing a part in our own life story.

To begin with ... we're only doing small bit parts. Someone else is calling the shots.

As we grow older ... we take more of a lead role.

The experiences we have ... our surroundings ... the people that we come into contact with ... .. just about everything in our lives ... goes into making us the people we become.

Everyone has stories they tell themselves. These stories are incredibly important ... because they can shape our lives when we allow them to.

Some are stories that are good ... and they serve us in a positive way. Other stories hold us back ... or point us in the wrong direction. We've all encountered both the good and the bad ... of varying degrees.

An overbearing husband can make a wife believe she's worthless or trapped. Overly strict parents can kill their children's spirit. On the flip side ... overly loose parents can launch their children into the world in many wrong directions at once.

Satan is part of the equation. He puts ideas in our heads that will kill us in the end.

We all have stories we tell ourselves ... stories of who we are ... what we ought to do ... our worth. And if we're not careful ... we'll allow them to determine our path in life ... and our eternal destiny.

Let God ... set your story straight.

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You became a child of God with the hope of eternal life.

You are NOT your past. God has made you anew.

You are not what you did. You are not who others say you are.

You are not even who YOU say you are.

You are who God says you are. And God says.

God says you're "Forgiven."

... A New Creation."

He says you are "Redeemed" and have been set "Free."

God says you are "A Masterpiece."

... and an Ambassador of Christ ... representing His Kingdom ...

... and are loved beyond your wildest dreams ... unconditionally ... forever.

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As the words of a hymn go ...

"Then we shall live ... as ones who've been forgiven."

And as another hymn ...

"I've been redeemed."

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The next time you are faced with regret from the past ... or can't seem to find your way ... remind yourself of your Godly destiny ... the awesome Future you have in Christ.

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Thank you for your kind and patient attention.

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