



March 2003

*The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant (Psalm 25:14).*

#### A LITTLE BOY SEARCHING FOR AN IDENTITY

When I was in about the fourth grade, me and my best friend Chip each cut a knick in a finger, and then put our fingers together to become "blood brothers." I think we got the idea from the Lone Ranger and Tonto. I identified with Chip, and he with me. We were buddies. Everything I had was Chip's, and vice versa. Chip was free to use my 28-ounce Mickey Mantle baseball bat and I was free to use his 29-ounce Al Kaline baseball bat. Even as a little boy, validation of my IDENTITY by someone close to me was so important. Little did we know we were practicing a basic covenant custom pursued by man throughout history, and originated in the heart of God.

I believe the key issue in all of life is IDENTITY. Romans 5:12-21 reveal that person is either IN ADAM (sinful identity) or IN CHRIST (righteous identity). So, identity is determined by BIRTH, not by BEHAVIOR. Every person is born into Adam's family, or else they are re-born into God's family. Through salvation God forgave me of my sins AND transferred me out of Adam's family and into "the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Colossians 1:13) through the cross.

2 Corinthians 5:17 describes the miracle of salvation: "Therefore, if any man is IN CHRIST, he is a new creation (reborn); old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." This brand new identity comes through the New Covenant (Testament). To understand the New Covenant, we must see the heart of God in the Old Covenant (Testament).

In the Old Covenant, God had a part and man had a part. This is a conditional covenant. Deuteronomy 28:1-2 says God blesses if man obeys God's perfect commandments. Deuteronomy 28:15 says God curses if man disobeys. The Old Covenant was the model for covenants between two men in those times. The shedding of blood was central to these covenants. Here are three aspects I see.

1. **Cutting of the covenant.** An animal (goat, turtle dove, lamb, etc.) was slain and cut in half down the spine, and then laid on the ground.
2. **Unity of the covenant.** The two men then stood opposite each other and exchanged something, such as each other's robe or sword (or baseball bat!), symbolizing "I am putting on you...and you me. We are one." Both men walked through the pieces of animal flesh, symbolizing "I am dying to my independent living...I'm surrendering my rights for you."
3. **Sealing of the covenant.** The men would seal the covenant in blood, such as cutting their wrists and then mingling the blood together in a firm handshake, symbolizing again "We are one."

Through the Old Covenant, God reveals that man apart from Christ can never obey God's perfect commandments. Therefore, the Old Covenant foreshadowed and prepared for the New Covenant. In the New Covenant, God has a part, but man does not have a part! This is an unconditional covenant (grace)! God lovingly calls people to enter His covenant of grace by faith in Christ alone, without any condition on man to perform any part. God the Father guarantees the divine side of this covenant, God the Son (Jesus) guarantees the human side as our Representative, and God the Holy Spirit seals the covenant. It's amazing to see how the three above aspects are perfectly fulfilled in the New Covenant and to see how the Trinity of God is in all of this.

1. **Cutting of the covenant [God the Father].** On the cross, Jesus was the sacrificial lamb of the New Covenant. God the Father offered His Son Jesus for you and for me, and the Father draws us to see this (John 6:44). Jesus said in Luke 22:20, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you." Hebrews 10:20 parallels the flesh of Jesus with the temple veil that was cut in half by God...the veil that once separated man from the Holy of Holies, the dwelling place of God.
2. **Unity of the covenant [God the Son].** As I was drawn to Christ and His love for me, by faith I stood at the foot of the cross and humbly exchanged all I was for all He was. I can barely begin to fathom 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For God made Christ who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might BECOME (i.e., identity) the righteousness of God in Him." I was drawn to walk through the cut veil into the presence of God...dying to myself and my independent living...dying to my old identity...and I became one with Christ.
3. **Sealing of the covenant [God the Holy Spirit].** Ephesians 4:30 says that "by the Holy Spirit you were sealed for the day of redemption." This sealing is also in blood, but not earthly blood, but the spirit blood of Christ's life in me through the Holy Spirit. Leviticus 17:11 says "life is in the blood." Jesus now lives through me. My identity is rooted in the life of Jesus. Jesus' nail-scarred hands reached down and secured me in Himself. I am forever one with Him!

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## MY IDENTITY AS A HUSBAND

My marriage with Joy is a covenant relationship, not a contract for convenience. It is so amazing to now see my marriage with Joy in view of the three aspects of the New Covenant.

1. **Cutting the covenant.** To start our wedding, I stood at the altar. I believe now that this is a picture of Christ on the altar of the cross. Ephesians 5:25 says that I am to love Joy *“just as Christ loved His bride the church and gave Himself for her.”* In a marriage, the husband represents GRACE, the initiating of sacrificial love. The wife represents FAITH, the receiving of this love.
2. **Unity of the covenant.** Joy was led to the altar by her daddy, a beautiful picture to me of her heavenly Father drawing her to Christ. Joy and I exchanged vows and rings. We died to independent living in order to live for each other. We became one.
3. **Sealing of the covenant.** Our covenant before God and man was sealed with a kiss. Perhaps this is intended to be a picture of sharing the same breath of life – the Spirit of the resurrected Jesus in us. Apart from the life of Christ in me, I cannot love Joy.

Joy got her IV out this past month, and she is very slowly gaining some strength back. She still experiences some pain and discomfort, but we believe it is primarily because she has been down for so long. She will be starting physical therapy soon. I covet your prayers.

## LIVING OUT OF MY IDENTITY

I was eating at a Waffle House and writing in my journal as I normally do when I am alone. All of a sudden, a man in the adjacent booth asked me, “Are you a school teacher?” I said “No,” and put my head back down to eat my eggs, thinking that I did not want to talk to him. But he further asked, “Then what are you?” That question penetrated deep in my heart, and all of a sudden I responded, “Well, I work as an engineer, but I really am a minister of hope that is only from Jesus. Do you know this hope?” I immediately was in awe at what I said. I felt awkward and natural at the same time. I felt awkward because the old habits from my former old identity still linger, habits of trying to protect myself and not be vulnerable. But I also felt natural (genuine, not forced), because I was growing in experiencing my new identity and the overflow of Christ’s life from me. I joined the man in his booth, and shared coffee and truths with him. He had heard of Jesus DYING FOR HIM, but he had never heard of Jesus LIVING FOR HIM.

As I got up to leave, I shook Mike’s (a truck driver) hand, humbly confident that I had ministered true hope to him. As I drove home, I had condemning thoughts like, “You didn’t share those Scriptures right. You didn’t say enough.” Like never before, I recognized those thoughts were not from my new heart that Christ gave me, but were temptations from the accuser (see Revelation 12:10) to “lead me astray from the simplicity that is in Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:3). By the grace of God, I recognized those temptations, and then realized that somehow the nail-scarred hand of Christ shook Mike’s hand in the Waffle House that night.

Since that time, I have shared Christ with others, more and more naturally through how God has uniquely created me. And each time I know it’s a New Covenant miracle.

*Are you wanting to learn more about your true identity?  
The next GraceLife Conference in Simpsonville will be  
Friday evening April 25 and all day Saturday April 26.  
Please feel free to contact me for more information.*

*You can read one of my recent articles entitled “One Calling” at the following website:  
[www.etsrinitynow.org/5/gibg-onecalling.shtml](http://www.etsrinitynow.org/5/gibg-onecalling.shtml)*