

# Identity

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you've got a Bible tonight, you can go ahead and turn to Romans chapter 2.

! We did a lesson series, we did a three-week series downstairs on identity over the last! three weeks we ended it this past Wednesday. I do think it's a good message, not just for students. Students are constantly in search of an identity and oftentimes gets them in trouble, that search does. But for all of us to explore what our identity is as human beings, now I think most of us are pretty sure where I'm going to go with this identity, but as human beings. And so I want to read the passage just starting out, just so we can kind of lay the groundwork, the foundation of the Word of God. I'm going to start reading in verse 1 of Romans chapter 2.

It says this, We know that God's judgment on those who do such things is based on truth. Do you really think any one of you who judges those who do such things yet do the same that you will escape God's judgment?

Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? But because of your hardness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourselves in the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment is revealed.

He will repay each one according to their works. I'm going to stop right there. We're going to read a little farther in just a moment. I want to kind of break it up into sections. We'll actually make it through verse 16 of this chapter this evening. I want to break it up into sections so that we don't get ahead because Paul's really laying some very important groundwork. It's some groundwork that will carry over through the rest of the entirety of the book of Romans. But it's very important groundwork. First of all, we need to know where he's coming from. He's coming out of Romans 1.

[ 2 : 22 ] Romans 1. If you were here a couple of weeks ago on Sunday night, got to hear Dr. Al Mohler preach a sermon on Romans 1. Amazing. Absolutely fantastic sermon. But for our purposes, let's remember what he said about it. In Romans 1, Paul basically preaches we're sinners. He uses an illustration to illustrate that fact that that is the natural state of who we are. Sinners. The natural state of man. And so right as we enter Romans chapter 2, he kind of takes kind of an aside.

This kind of aside of like we just came out of this really condemnation of sin. But just in case you might have thought that I was talking about somebody else, I wasn't. You need to know that I am speaking to you. Downstairs and on most of our youth events, we play this game called Mafia. It's a horrible game and I'm probably going to get some phone calls about it at some point in our ministry. But Mafia, it's a game. It's a card game. There's acting involved. There's debate involved. The students really love it. And so we'll sit in a circle and you deal out cards. And so most everybody gets just a numbered card and they are what we call the townspeople. And the townspeople, they're just cannon fodder for the game. They don't really accomplish much in the game. And then you have the sheriff. One person gets a special card. It may be the king. And that person, if he sees the king, he's the sheriff. And then you have Mafia members. Depending on the size of your group, you may have one, two, or three Mafia members. Now, the object of the game is for them to kill all the townspeople before they are discovered themselves as Mafia members. And so the game is played mostly in silence. And so there will be someone who's narrating the game and they will say, all right, everyone goes to sleep. So everyone will close their eyes and he'll say, okay, sheriff, wake up. And the sheriff will wake up. He's like, do you want to accuse anybody of being a Mafia member? And the sheriff will point at somebody. And that narrator will say yes or no. It's a Mafia member or not. And he has to go back to sleep still in silence. Then he'll say, Mafia, wake up. So the Mafia wakes up and he's like, who would you like to kill? I know this is, I'm getting some very judgmental glances. I believe in an old school youth ministry. None of that mamby-pamby stuff.

Anyway, and so anyway, and so the Mafia members will like to kill this guy, right? And they want to get the sheriff out because that's the most dangerous person.

So then everybody goes to sleep and they'll wake the whole town up. And then the narrator's job is to create this elaborate story of an unfortunate end that the townspeople came to. We like to use the Bradley Farm for our unfortunate ends quite often. That's a very dangerous place to live.

[ 5 : 29 ] Anyway, and so that's kind of how it goes. The art of the game comes when you are accused. And so the townspeople, when everybody wakes up, they're like, okay, this person has passed away in the night due to an unfortunate accident engineered by the Mafia. Who would you like to accuse?

This is the moment that the townspeople get to rise up. The sheriff is still secret. He's not allowed to identify himself. And so if he knows the Mafia member is he wants to steer the conversation to that person without giving away the fact that he's a sheriff. And the townspeople might have some ideas, right? Some assumptions. Whenever we play it, if Keelan dies first, we know it's Levi Bradley.

We just know it. It's immediate. Everyone is Levi Bradley. Yes, it's me and the game's over. That's just, that's the state of things, brothers. And so then the townspeople begin to make their accusations. When someone's accused, that accused person then gets to make a defense. I've gotten smart with Mafia over my years and years of ministry. I'm smarter than the kids we've been playing for a couple months. And so if I'm a Mafia member, I will begin to sow the seeds that get someone else accused. And not outright, but I make sure that the finger begins to point somewhere else. So that instead of them looking at me, they're now looking at them. And I don't care if that person's a Mafia member or not, as long as I'm not accused. So this is what Paul's getting at here. This is like, just in case you thought you could point the finger somewhere else, that you could project the blame, kind of pass it on, maybe compare and contrast your failings based on their failings and their failings or worse. Just in case you thought any of that, remember that it takes one to know one. And so if you accuse someone of sinning, just remember your sin as well. So he establishes that baseline. And that's, I think it's important for really all of Romans, especially for this passage, as we look into what Paul describes or doesn't describe as, but what I call our identity. And here's what I want you to keep in mind. I'm going to, I'm going to put this in your mind and we're going to come back to it. I was asked this question, or a youth pastor friend of mine has actually asked this question and we discussed it. He was asked this question, how he would rate his relationship with God on a scale of one to 10. So that's what I want you to do kind of in your own mind. You look at your relationship with God and come up with a number on a scale, let's say zero to 10. So keep that in your mind. I don't, you don't have to like shout it out, but keep that in your mind. How do you rate your relationship with God on a scale of zero to 10? We'll come back to that. [ 8 : 18 ] All right. So that's kind of verses one through six, picking up in verse seven. Well, let me start verse six because I don't want to miss this wording that he uses. Verse six, he will repay each one according to his works, eternal life to those who by patiently doing good, seek for glory and honor and immortality, but wrath and indignation to those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth, but are obeying unrighteousness, affliction and distress for every human being who does evil first to the Jew and also to the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good first to the Jew and also to the Greek. There is no favoritism with God. All those who sin without the law will also perish without the law. All those who stand under the law will be judged by the law for the hearers of the law are not righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be declared righteous. So when Gentiles who do not have the law instinctively do what the law demands, they're a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law, they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their consciences testify in support of this, and their competing thoughts either accuse or excuse them. On the day when God judges what people have kept secret, according to my gospel through Christ Jesus. And so in these verses 6 through 11, Paul, I'm going to say that he's performing a cost-benefit analysis. So any of you business minds there, you know what a cost-benefit analysis is.

If you're more like me and you don't know anything about business, you would go broke if you had your own business. This is what a cost-benefit analysis is. It's referred to as a CBA or sometimes it's referred to as a BCA. And Google says this, it's a systematic approach to estimating the strengths and weaknesses of alternatives that satisfy transactions, activities, or functional requirements for a business. And so Paul, he performs a cost-benefit analysis. And what we need

to understand, number one, is that your identity, what it is, has a price tag. Just like most things in life.

Now what are price tags for? I'll tell you they're worth something. What do we find price tags on? Pretty much everything. You know, your cell phones have a price tag. They're way too big. It should not be as expensive as they are, but they are. And so they have a price tag. Your car has a price tag.

You go to the dealership, look at the price tag, your eyes get really big. You're like me, you just go on home. You're like, I'm gonna keep that truck for a couple more years. And so there's a price tag on everything. All things are a price tag. And a price tag always implies a decision.

It's not just this thing that just kind of hangs there. It implies a decision on you as a consumer. And so you're going to weigh the cost versus the benefit of that item. So if I'm going to buy a car, I want to know, is it worth it? I drive this thing to work and back. And occasionally I take my wife to Louisiana to see her family or Texas. Is it worth that for the price that I have to expend on this vehicle? Sometimes it is. Well, the benefits are always worth it. Sorry. Sometimes the car is costly.

[ 11 : 53 ] I go to find a different car. I just got in trouble. Anyway, moving on. And so a consumer has to give something in order to gain something. I have to give money and I gain an item. And so Paul performs this cost benefit analysis on the life of human beings based on their identity. What is their identity going to cost them? Because every identity carries a cost with it.

And I think it's clear here. Now, before we really talk about the cost, there's two kind of caveats. It's my little soapbox in this message. Paul goes over in Romans 2, 4 through 5. The first thing is grace. So no matter what we think, no matter how incensed we might become at the sin that is so prevalent around us and the lives of people around us in our own lives, the fact is we live in an age of grace.

It is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance. So since our Savior shows such grace and restraint and patience, we are called to do that as well. So any interaction that we may have with other believers or non-believers should be absolutely saturated in grace. The other thing is grace is coming to an end.

Grace is coming to an end. Because that's what Paul says there. He says, don't make no mistake. The kindness of God leads to repentance. But that is coming to an end. It will end. And so what does that mean for us? Well, we live in the saturation of grace, but we're driven by the immediacy of its end in our interactions with God. And so Paul kind of puts that like right there. Make sure we're living in grace.

[ 13 : 41 ] And so the cost of our identity. I think there's two truths, absolute truths to our identities here in this passage. Truth number one is your identity is serious. I'm going to alliterate these. I'll make sure you tell the pastor.

Truth number one is your identity is serious. How serious is your identity? Well, it's right here in the passage. He says it. He says, verse six, he will, who God, will repay each one according to his works. Eternal life to those who by patiently doing good seek for the glory and honor and immortality, but wrath and indignation for those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth for obeying unrighteousness. Affliction and distress for every human being who does evil, first to the Jew and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, first to the Jew and also to the Greek. There is no favoritism with God. So first, identity is serious. You're going to get paid. God is a just, we're going to say he's a consumer.

Roll with that language, right? So when God comes up to humanity and all of humanity bears this price tag, he's going to pay what that price is, what the cost of that item is. He can do no other.

That's simply who he is. And so your identity is serious. You're going to get paid. You're going to be compensated for the price tag your identity carries. And there's two forms of compensation that we find here. Form number one, glory and honor. The other form of compensation is wrath and indignation.

Wrath and indignation. That's why it's so serious because there's only two. There's not like glory and wrath, honor and indignation. No, it's glory and honor here. Wrath and indignation. Otherwise.

[ 15 : 40 ] And so it's a very serious thing. It has two forms of compensation. The second thing I want to tell you is your identity is secret. So your identity is serious. You're going to be compensated. But it's also secret. What does that mean? What do you mean my identity is secret? It's secret to everyone but who really matters. Because God knows the hearts of men. So your identity is obviously not secret to him.

But is your identity secret to the person sitting beside you? The person won't say no, but the truth is, only God knows the hearts of men. So your identity is indeed secret to the person sitting beside you.

Your identity can even be secret, a secret to you. You may not even know your identity. The heart is desperately wicked. It deceives. It can lead you astray. So you can't trust it. And so your identity is secret except the one that matters. It's not secret to God. And that's what he says in verse 16. He says, on the day when God judges what people have kept secret.

According to my gospel through Christ Jesus. So your identity is serious. Your identity is secret. It demands a compensation. So the question for us is, can we afford the cost of our own identity? Can we afford it? Can we afford it? Can we afford to roll the dice on it, so to speak?

[17:07] I hope. I come out on top. Glory and honor sounds great. Can we afford it? I want to kind of do an aside here as well and talk about the holiness of God.

We all know that God is holy. Isaiah chapter 6 is always the passage that comes to mind when I think of the holiness of God. Partly because it says holy, holy, holy.

So it's obviously about the holiness of God. Isaiah, if you remember, Isaiah goes into the temple and has this vision of God. And what is his response to his encounter in this vision of God?

Woe is me. Everyone knows the King James response to that one. Even like people who've never read the King James Version know that. Woe is me. I'm doomed. I'm a man of unclean lips.

Now here's the cool thing about that interaction. God never confronts Isaiah with his sin. I'm not saying that God doesn't confront sin.

[18:14] I don't hear that. So why is Isaiah so convicted in that moment? Even though God hadn't even talked about it.

It's because of the holiness of God. His holiness. God's very nature stands in condemnation of our nature.

It's simply who he is. It's that burning holiness of God. And we can't even stand in it. 1 Samuel 6.20. This is when the ark of God comes back to the people of Israel.

The Philistines have had it for some time. And it comes back and it says the men of Beth Shemesh opened it to see. Make sure everything was in there apparently. And God struck many of them dead that day.

That's what it says. And here's their response. They said, who can stand in the presence of the Lord? This whole God. And so thinking about from the beginning of what we're talking about tonight.

[19:15] And our natural state. What we are as human. And our identity. Our identity can't even come in contact with God. And so.

If we break our identity down into two identities. Either you identify with Christ or you don't. And if you don't identify with Christ.

Can you even be in heaven? Can you even get to heaven? Even if Jesus was like, you know what? I'm going to be nice. I'm going to be loving.

And I'm going to let you come up here. You would perish. In an instant. Because your natural state would come into contact with God's natural state.

And you would be destroyed. Utterly destroyed. It just simply can't happen. But. The beauty of scripture. The two greatest words in all of the Bible.

[20:15] Ephesians 2.4. But. God. But God. So Paul like sets this stuff up in Romans. And he's like, you know, you've got two identities.

You are either in Christ. And glory and honor is your compensation. You either do the things that are righteous. Or you are not in Christ. You do evil and wrath and indignation.

Are your compensation. The problem is. How do we get. Not in Christ. In Christ. Ephesians 2.4 tells us. But God. Rich in mercy.

It says. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins. In which you once walked. Following the course of this world. Following the prince of the power of the air. The spirit who is now at work. And the sons of disobedience.

Among whom. We all once lived. In the passions of our flesh. Carrying out the desires of the body. And the mind. And were by nature children of wrath. Like the rest of mankind.

[21:14] Stop there. That sounds a lot like Romans 1. Have you ever read that? Now Paul like any other good preacher. Was prone to repeating himself. That's what he's doing here. In a little shorter

form.

And then verse 4. But God. Being rich in mercy. Because of the great love. Which he loved us. Even when we were dead in our trespasses. Made us alive together with Christ. By grace. We have been saved. Amen. But God. And so what about God? What is he talking about but God?

Well we get hints of it all throughout scripture. But just to kind of run it down. Walk us through the next few chapters of Romans. In Romans 5. You get these contrasting identities again. Paul's constantly contrasting identities.

You get to Romans 5. And you have the identity of Adam. Romans 5.12 says. When Adam sinned. Sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death. So death spread to everyone.

[ 22 : 11 ] For everyone sinned. And so Adam's sin and his identity. Now rests on us. Because he sinned and brought death in the world. And it went to everyone.

Generation after generation after generation. To this present day. We carry Adam's identity. It saturates us to the core. And we honestly cannot afford the price that he demands. It's wrath and indignation. We can't afford it. So Jesus then takes that and turns it all. Or God takes it. Turns it all on its head.

You get just a couple verses later. Romans 5.15-16. It says. But there is a great difference.

Between Adam's sin. And God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man.

Adam brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace. And his gift of forgiveness to many. Through this other man. Jesus Christ. And the result of God's gracious gift.

[ 23 : 07 ] Is very different. From the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation. But God's free gift. Leads to our being made right with God. Even though we are guilty of many sins.

And so. Jesus. According to Philippians chapter 2. Condescends. He condescends. Becomes human. He lays aside the privileges of divinity.

Become human. Hebrews 4.15 says. That he did that without sin. He does that without sin.

He is perfect in his humanity. And his perfect humanity. He mixes with his absolute divinity. And he is able to stand as the God man. In the presence of God.

And not be destroyed. And say. What does that mean for us? It means everything for your identity. Because then Jesus turns to us. Lays it upon us. Lays it upon us.

[ 24 : 03 ] And so now when God looks at us. What does he see? Does he see Chris. And the fact that he. Probably messed up. This afternoon. Before he even got up here. In front of you to preach.

Now. He sees his son Jesus Christ. It says in Philippians 3.9. Indeed. I count everything as loss. Because of the surpassing worth. And knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake.

I have suffered the loss of all things. And count them as rubbish. In order that I may gain Christ. And be found in him. Not having a righteousness of my own. That comes from the law. But that which comes through faith in Christ.

The righteousness from God. That depends on faith. Jesus puts that righteousness on us. It's no longer us. But his righteousness. It's called the imputation of righteousness.

A glorious and wonderful doctrinal term. And all of his perfection. And his righteousness. Then becomes my identity. And that wrath. That my natural identity.

[ 25 : 01 ] Requires. Then turns to glory. And honor. And so when you think about that scale. Remember that scale. Zero to ten.

When my youth pastor friend asked me that. I started kind of like crunching the numbers. Okay. I read my Bible. Three chapters. Prayer's been pretty good. Been journaling.

So I started crunching the numbers. And like. Started going up. And I was like. Then I was kind of prideful and arrogant. And so I started going back down. And I'm just being honest.

And so I didn't want to say. He's like. What would you rate it Chris? I don't want to say. What would you rate yours? And he said.

I just rate mine a ten. It's pretty arrogant of you. Rate it a ten. Really? And he's. A ten. Okay. And he says.

[ 25 : 56 ] The imputed righteousness of Christ. It is a ten. So it's kind of a trick question. Now this is a person that. The person that asked him.

Was serious. It was a trick question. The only two matter. Numbers that matter on that scale. The only two numbers that have any value. Or worth. Or any truth to them. Are zero. Ten.

And that's a glorious truth for us. Because you go from zero. To ten. Ten. Wrath. And indignation. To glory and honor.

And nothing you do. Makes you fall. Like. There's no place to fall on that scale. After you reach ten. Jesus isn't going to be less perfect. Jesus isn't going to be less divine.

Less holy. Less righteous. And that is your identity. So that's. That's our two identities. That I think are.

[ 26 : 54 ] Are very clear in scripture. I'll tell you. What kind of drove this. And of course. The recent Supreme Court ruling. On gay marriage. And stuff. And I don't get political.

It's just. It's just not anything. I read the news a lot. And I follow politics. And I'm like. Privately very political. My wife will. If I tell you. Her dad's like.

Rush Limbaugh. Is her godfather. And so he's super political. And so I can kind of hang with him. When he comes into town. And we'll talk about Fox News. And stuff like that. And then usually I like mention MSNBC.

Just make him mad. But. And it works. It works. It doesn't. And so I don't get political. But I heard. A very wise. Discussion.

On the idea. Not just. Homosexuality. And gay marriage. And all the baggage. That those terms. Have. Because those terms. Have become political terms.

[ 27 : 51 ] Have become political clubs. For both sides. Of our politics. And so. As I was listening to this guy. He's talking. He's out of a church.

In Seattle, Washington. Mercy church. Is it wrong. To be homosexual. Is it a sin. I understand. It's a different world.

In Seattle, Washington. Than it is here. It's an honest question. More and more. To the age group. That I. Deal with. It's an honest question. And the guy. He said.

It doesn't come down. To that. It comes down. To your identity. I can't identify. With two things. Is. You either identify. With Christ. And the word of God.

And it may. Hurt. And it may. Burn a little bit. And it may. The. The chastening. That the word. Produces in you. May hurt. So you either.

[ 28 : 46 ] Identify. With Christ. Or you do. You can't identify. As. Homosexual. You can't identify. As an adulterer.

A heterosexual. Adulterer. You can't identify. With these things. Your identity. Is Christ. Or it is. So I think. We can remove. All the politics. From the equation.

Said. You know. Identify. With the whole counsel. Of God's word. And that was kind of. What. What drove me. To teaching our students. Because it's. It is impossible. To dictate.

Morality. Is a dead end. You will dictate. Morality. For the rest of your life. Because there will. Always be something. Immoral. So even if. By the grace of God.

We somehow. Won. In the political realm. In the realm. Of public opinion. As far as. The acceptance. Of gay marriage. Even if that were to happen. The next day.

[ 29 : 42 ] There would be. A new moral battle. That's why. Ten years ago. The moral majority. Was as important. As it was. Among evangelicals.

Evangelicals. It was always. A moral battle. But if you interact. With people. Based on the grace of God. And the gospel. Of Jesus Christ. You change hearts.

And you leave. The morality. Up to God. And your identity. Becomes that. Of Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ. Can wage. A moral war. Much more effectively.

Than you and I can. So that's kind of. My heart behind. Talking about identity. Thank you.