

Do You Have Your REAL ID? #2

Series: This World Is Not Our Home

I Peter 1:13-2:3

Intro: Flying is a lot of fun, but it can have its difficulties like flight delays and cancellations, going through security, seating issues, lost luggage, rude passengers, and on and on.

In 2016, 13 of us from this church took a mission trip to Slovakia. It included myself, my daughter, Natalie, Carolyn Dyson, her daughter Sherry, and granddaughter Amanda, Evan Hill, Lisa Keefer, Krislon & Krista Jones, Jan Lowe, Dawn McGlohon, Rachel Turner and Seth Turner.

We left RDU at 7:30 PM on August 9th, arrived in Boston late and had to run a long way to the international terminal, as they were holding the plane for our connecting flight to Paris. They cheered when we got on the plane. We arrived in Paris the next day at 11:35 AM and took the last leg of our flight and landed in Budapest, Hungary at 2:50 PM. Our hosts Chris Oakley and John Bean met us there...TELL REST OF THE STORY.

Another travel issue is that as of this past May, you are required to have a REAL ID for boarding commercial flights and accessing federal facilities. Real ID stands for "Real Identification." It refers to a set of security standards for state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards in the US, to prevent fraud and improve the reliability of identification.

Story: A heavily booked commercial flight out of Denver was canceled, and a single agent was rebooking a long line of inconvenienced travelers. Suddenly an angry passenger pushed his way to the front and slapped his ticket down on the counter. "I have to be on this flight, and it has to be first class!"

"I'm sorry, sir," the agent replied. "I'll be happy to help you, but I have to take care of these folks first." The passenger was unimpressed. "Do you have any idea who I am?" he demanded in a voice loud enough for everyone to hear.

Without hesitating, the gate agent smiled, picked up her public-address microphone, and said, "May I have your attention, please?" "We have a passenger who does not know who he is. If anyone can help him find his identity, please come to the gate." The people waiting burst into applause.

When you visit a foreign country, you **MUST** have a passport, because without that document you cannot move around inside their country.

That passport says who you are, what nation you belong to... and it has a picture of you inside.

ILLUS: I read the story of a woman who traveled a lot and eventually needed to get a new passport. She posed for a new picture, and as she handed in her 10-year-old passport she took one more longing look at the picture inside. Then she looked up at the clerk and sighed. "I like that original picture better."

The clerk smiled and said "Trust me. Ten years from now, you'll like this one."

Most of us agree that we don't like our passport or driver's license pictures, not our best look. But whether we like our photograph or not... we had better look like that picture. Because if we don't look like our picture... we're not going anywhere.

I began a summer sermon series two weeks ago called, **"This World is NOT our home."**

Peter tells us that we are "aliens and strangers in this land". So, as Christians, we are on foreign land, and we need to have a passport. Peter describes what our picture will look for on our passport - a picture he insists that we **MUST** look like. Because if we don't look like that picture... we're not going anywhere for Jesus.

That picture tells people who we are and whose Kingdom we belong to. In fact, if we don't look like that picture, people have a word to describe us- **hypocrite!**

A hypocrite is someone who tries to look like somebody that they're not.

This picture I'm showing you in I Peter IS your passport in this world. Here it is in 1 Peter 1:13 – 2:3

13Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. 14As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

17Since you call on a Father who judges each person’s work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. 18For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, 19but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20He was chosen before the creation of the world but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

22Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. 23For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. 24For, “All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, 25but the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.

Chapter 2, 1Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

Let’s PRAY

The title of my message today is: **Do YOU Have Your REAL ID?**

Identity theft is the fastest growing crime in America. Identity is the distinguishing character or personality of an individual.

Your identity is the most important part of who you are. Who you are will determine where you go and what you can do. Your identity is very important.

The devil knows your identity is the key to your destiny; therefore, if he can steal your identity, he can cause you to miss out on what God has for you.

Illustration: In an interview, singer-songwriter Michael Card talked about a counseling experience he had a few years ago. He said the biggest discovery he made was that his gift wasn't his identity. He said, "If it is, I'm an idolater; the greatest impediment to spiritual intimacy is your giftedness."

If anything is going to undermine your reliance upon God and become a source of pride in your life, it's going to be your gift. You reduce yourself to how you look, what you have, or what you do. But you are so much more than that!

Romans 12:3 says, "*The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and what He does for us*" (The Message)

As a follower of Christ, I find my identity in Christ. My identity is not based on who I am or what I can do. My identity is based on who Christ is and what Christ has done for me.

To put it in biblical language, basing your identity on who you are or what you can do is like building your house on the sand. Jesus said, "***The rain came down, the streams rose, the wind blew and beat against the house, and it fell with a great crash.***"

Here's what happens. You base your identity on school and then you graduate. You base your identity on a spouse, and they file for divorce. You base your identity on a job, and you retire, get downsized or move on. You base your identity on your kids, and they eventually leave home. Schools, marriages, jobs, kids are good things. But you can't base your identity on them.

I'm a child of God. I'm a temple of the Holy Spirit. My sins are nailed to the cross. My name is written in the Lamb's book of life. I didn't do any of that. God did it for me through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

According to Peter, this is what your REAL ID should look like.

I. First, we're told... "*Be holy, because (God is) holy.*"

Does that strike anybody as being a little unusual; the idea that we can be holy. I thought only God was holy. But apparently, we can be too. In fact, you and I are instructed to **"Be holy in all that (we) do."** I Peter 1:15

But how do we do that? How can we be HOLY? We need to understand that holiness means to be "set apart."

The Greek word for "holiness" comes from the same root word as Saint and Sanctify. When we become Christians, we are "set apart."

Now holiness is a two-step process:

- A. **God makes you holy.** When you became a Christian, God set you apart from rest of the world. You get to go to heaven... unbelievers don't. Not because you are more "righteous" than they are, but because you accepted God's gift of salvation, by receiving the righteousness of Christ.
- B. **God expects you to set yourself apart from the world.** He expects you to behave and think and live differently than those in the world. That's what Peter is saying when he says in verse 14: **"Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance."**

Paul says it like this when he wrote to the church in Ephesus, **"17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed."** [Ephesians 4:17-19, NIV]

Don't be like these folks!!! Don't think like these people. Be holy and set apart from this world. God tells you (and me) that we've got to decide to "Be holy for I am holy."

As believers we not only acquire new citizenship, but we also change our very ethnicity! We've been born again. We are new creations. We're no longer merely European, African, Asian, or American people. Now we are God's holy people. God's New Covenant is engraved upon our hearts.

Our call to be holy is based in the character of God. Our call to be holy is based on our relationship with God. There are three reasons people will obey someone else... - A slave will obey his master because he has to. - An employee will obey his boss because he needs to. - A son will obey his Father because he wants to. As God's children we are called to be like Him.

Holiness is the church's calling card, and unique brand. It's the only reliable way for Christians to stand out in this world. It is our evangelism essential. Holiness may seem counterintuitive! But like Jesus, holiness creates a gravitational pull to the gospel.

The desire for holy living spring from grace...from forgiveness we don't deserve...truth we would have never known, and a hope found only in Christ.

So, the first thing we do is to be holy.

II. Secondly, Live as someone who's Redeemed

Holiness is all about how you live. Being redeemed is why we live that way.

I Peter 1:18-19 says, ***"18For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, 19but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."*** [NIV]

We should be holy because Jesus has paid a high price for us. We belong to Him, and we do what we do because we love Him.

Don't be shocked by how people in this world behave. If someone isn't born again, you can't expect them to behave like a Christ follower. If people in this world don't belong to Jesus, they literally live by their own moral compasses.

And their bad behavior is simply a reflection of what's in their hearts. They have a disease called sin, and the result of sin will be an eternity in hell. And we should be more concerned by that than their bad behavior.

Until we come to grips with the fact that people don't need more morality in their lives...they need Jesus, people will continue to live without hope.

We are redeemed, and so God is telling us in I Peter that we need to make the choice that we BELONG to Jesus. And if we belong to Jesus then we are empowered to live holy lives because we know that ***"(we) are not (our) own; (we) were bought at a price. (And) therefore (we should) honor God with (our bodies)"***. [I Corinthians 6:19-20]

Peter is telling us we need to be holy, and we need to realize we're redeemed, but there's one more part of your passport photo you need to promote.

III. Remember that we are "Born again."

Verse 23 says ***"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."*** 1 Peter 1:23

Now I could go into detail about how you can be born again. I could spend a great deal of time talking about the fact that you need to believe that Jesus is the Son of the Living God. And that you must accept the fact that you've sinned and fallen short of God's glory and need to repent. And that you need to make Jesus the Lord and Master of your life. But that's not the focus of this message.

The question this morning is: What does being "BORN AGAIN" look like? How will the world recognize that I'm "Born Again"?

Peter answers that question in these words: ***"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth (in other words: "now that you've set yourself apart to be holy/righteous/pure) so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again"*** 1 Peter 1:22-23a

In other words: the MARK of our being "born again" is if we show love to one another. If we do not show that we love one another, then the world will not believe we're born again.

The Apostle John says it this way: ***"If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen."*** I John 4:20

I find it interesting that Peter talks about the need for us to be holy in an unholy world because we've been redeemed/bought by God. But then he implies that **it's impossible to be holy without being loving**. It's impossible to be moral and practice righteousness and have hatred in your heart.

In chapter 2, verse 1 God tells us what we need to do to remove the obstacles of true Christian love: ***"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind."***

In other words, a Christian who has a Resurrection ID is one who can look at someone who's offended them and say: *"I don't like what you done or said... but because you are made in the image of God I'll love anyway."*

Paul tells us how to deal with people who want to argue with us: ***"23 Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. 24 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful."*** II Timothy 2:23-24

Verse 25 goes on to say, ***"Opponents must be 'gently instructed'..."*** That means we don't abandon our principles, holiness or our commitment to God. But instead of trying to beat someone over the head with truth, we ***"gently instruct" them in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,"*** II Timothy 2:23-25

We don't worry about winning arguments, because we trust God to "grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth." We still present our faith in Jesus... but we do it IN THE HOPE that God will step in.

Jesus says in John 16:8 ***"And when (the Holy Spirit) comes, he will convict the world of (their) sin, and of (their need of) righteousness, and of (the fact that because of that sinfulness and their lack of righteousness, there will be a day of) judgment."***

I don't have to convict anyone of anything. That's the Spirit's job. I don't have to win the arguments. God will do that. Even if I "lose" in any debate, God is capable of working through me when I decide it's more important to show love than to win my argument.

ILLUSTRATION: I read the true story of a man named Joe White who got into a discussion with a Muslim named Imod. Instead of trying to argue with him about his religion, they talked and developed a friendship.

At one point in the conversation White asked him: "Imod, may I ask you a question? According to your Muslim faith, what will happen to you when you die?" Imod quickly responded, "When I die, there will be judgment. As I stand before Allah he will put all of my good deeds on my right side and all of my bad deeds on my left side. If my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds," his countenance brightened, "I will go to heaven."

As he concluded his statement of faith Joe, "And what if your bad deeds outweigh your good deeds?" "Well, I suppose I will go to hell."

Joe said, "that worries me deeply for you."

"Because, if I had to live my life worrying that if my bad deeds outweighed my good deeds I would go to hell, I would be scared to death."

Imod asked, "What does your faith teach you?"

"Well, my faith clearly teaches me that when I die there will be judgment; but God will not look at my good deeds and compare them to my bad deeds. God will look at me based upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who lives in my heart, and because of Him, I will go to heaven."

Imod replied "No one ever told me that before." (Joe White, One2Won Cross training, Session 8)

That Muslim saw a picture of a Christian who looked like his passport. He saw a person who was committed to holiness. A man who made it clear he was redeemed by Christ and belonged to Him. And who showed love for Imod in such a way that it was obvious, this man was "born again, " and his picture matched his REAL ID.

If the foundation of a building is improperly laid, the building is doomed. It doesn't matter how slowly you construct it or how carefully you build, or if you use the best material, or if you have the best builder. If the foundation is faulty, the building is in jeopardy.

What you believe about yourself is the foundation of your life; it is your identity, and a faulty foundation will create cracks in the soul. If you are going to construct a healthy life, it begins with what you believe about yourself.

In the first three chapters of the book of Ephesians, Paul mainly focuses on who we are in Christ. As a matter of fact, the phrase "in Christ" or "in Him" is the key expression used throughout; it is used 11 times in the first chapter and 30 times in the book.

That phrase is talking about our relationship with God, our union with Christ, and it is about how we are given this relationship with God through Jesus.

The Father chose you in Christ before the foundation of the earth. It wasn't dependent upon what you did or who you are or what you have.

The Father chose you in Christ to make you holy and blameless in his sight. You are adopted into the family of God.

Adoption implies belonging and freedom. "In Him" you have been redeemed by His blood, and your sins have been forgiven because God lavished His grace upon you. You are forgiven according to the riches of His grace, not according to the poverty of your life.

His grace is greater than your sin. You have received an inheritance from God. You have been included in Christ and marked with a seal as a family member when you received the promised Holy Spirit.

This is who you are in Christ, and this is only the beginning of your identity, the foundation of your well-being.

God doesn't love us because of who we are or what we do. God loves us because of who He is and what He has done, which makes God's love, and our foundation, unshakable.

To really understand your identity, you must properly divide soul and spirit.

Your spirit has been made new. You are a new creation in Christ. You have received a new spirit and a new heart (Ezekiel 36:26).

You have received every spiritual blessing you need in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 1:3).

You are heirs of God and coheirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).

Your spirit has been purified, purged, renewed, born again, and transformed. But your soul ... can still be a bit of a mess.

Our daily battle is to work out in the realm of the soul what has already taken place in the heavenly realms through the work of Christ in your spirit.

Your soul is where your mind, your will, and your emotions still hold sway over the reality of your daily existence.

For example, you may know cognitively that you are loved, but because you grew up in an abusive home, or because of your own sinful behaviors, you don't feel loved. Your soul still feels shame, you may even feel unlovable, and you feel distant from God. Until you deal with the issues of your soul, you will not experience the fullness of God, nor the intimacy with Him.

Establishing your REAL ID is learning to become who you already are.

This is what RENEWING OUR MIND is all about.

A key problem with our identity is that we often believe lies about ourselves rather than the truth. The power of a lie is in our agreement with it. Whatever we agree with, we give power to. If you agree with the truth, and hold on to the truth, the truth will set you free, but if you agree with a lie, it will ruin you.

And just so you know, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." So, the knowledge of the truth is found in Jesus.

If you believe that you are fearfully and wonderfully made by a loving Creator, in the image of God and redeemed by the Savior who counted you worthy of His very life, then your life will be rich with meaning, purpose, and passion.

You will be motivated to love others and treat them with dignity and respect because they have inherent worth.

Paul said in Romans 12:2, ***"Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind:"***

Renewing your mind with the truth is not a passive activity. We often misquote, or only partially quote, Jesus when He said: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free:"

The assumption is that if we only know the truth, we will experience freedom. But look at what Jesus actually said in John 8:31,32: ***"Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.""***

It isn't knowing the truth, it is in holding on to the truth that sets us free.

The truth of who you are in Christ, in your spirit, must be tightly grasped precisely when the lies of your soul are threatening to prevent you from becoming who you already are.

How do we know we have the right identity and are growing spiritually in the right direction?

There are four levels of transformation.

1. Level one is behavioral—it is acting different.

2. Level two is intellectual—it is thinking differently. The word repentance comes from the Greek word metanoia which literally means "change of mind." It is a paradigm shift. You think different thoughts. Intellectual change is good, but it's not good enough. God wants the change to go deeper than that.

3. Level three is volitional—it is deciding different. This is the level where you do what's right even when you feel like doing what's wrong. It is a restructuring of values and making decisions accordingly.

4. Level four is motivational—it is desiring different. It goes beyond emotion. It goes beyond passion. It is why we do what we do. The end goal is genuinely wanting what God wants. You hate what He hates. You love what He loves.

Galatians 5:24 say, ***“Those who belong to Christ Jesus nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to the cross and crucified them.”***

Crucifying sinful desires is half the battle. The other half of the battle is allowing God to download new desires.

Psalms 37:4 says, ***‘Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.’***

Ezekiel 36:25 says, ***“I will give you a new heart with new and right desires, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony heart of sin and give you a new obedient heart.”***

Closing: I know what some of you are thinking, pastor, can I just get a temporary visa, I’m not sure I can have a REAL ID that looks like that.

When you go to the first book in the NT, gospel of Matthew's, the first thing you see is a genealogy, and most people skip over that part. If you were going to write a book, and you wanted people to read it, why in the world would you start off with genealogy? Well genealogy was a way of introduction. It was a way you would signal who someone was, especially in terms of their identity and qualifications. For instance, in Jesus' time, if you wanted to be a priest you would have to show in your genealogy that you were descended from the line of Aaron, the first high priest of Israel.

Just like resumes, you don't want anything in your genealogy that is a blemish. You don't want anybody in your genealogy that is not going to make you look good. So, considering that, there are some things about the genealogy of Jesus that are just absolutely shocking.

First, there are women in this genealogy. Not only are there women in this genealogy, but there are Gentiles in this genealogy...Moabites, and Canaanites, and Hittites, people of despised races in this genealogy. You don't just have gender

outsiders, you have racial outsiders in the family tree of Jesus, and more shocking than that, you have moral outsiders.

Just when you think Matthew has gone off the deep end, he finally mentions David. There is this collective sigh of relief, "Ah, yes. David! David, the hero. David, the king. David, the psalmist. David, the man after God's own heart." I mean, wouldn't you want David in your genealogy?

But listen to how Matthew introduces David. ***"David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,"*** [Matthew 1:6, NIV]

He never mentions Bathsheba by name, only refers to her as Uriah's wife. Why? Because Matthew is evoking the story. So, what is the story?

Uriah was one of David's close friends and a mighty warrior. One day as he is out in battle, fighting for David, David is back in his palace and notices Uriah's wife. So, he sends a messenger out there to find out about her. The messenger comes back and says, "It's Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

So, David, a man after God's own heart, writer of the psalms, brings Uriah's wife up, sleeps with her, gets her pregnant, and then arranged to have Uriah, his friend, her husband killed. That is the story Matthew wants you to see in this genealogy of Jesus. Looks less like a respectable genealogy and more like the line up on a reality TV show about people's messed up lives.

What is Matthew getting at? The power of God's grace. Adultery, incest, prostitution, Moabites, Canaanites, illegitimate children, gender outsiders, racial outsiders, cultural outsiders, moral outsiders...they are all in Jesus' genealogy. You must remember the law of God precluded these people from entering the presence of God, and yet here they are.

Jesus Christ is bringing them in, which means it doesn't matter who you are. It does not matter what you've done.

It doesn't matter what family you came from. It doesn't matter how little or how much you've accomplished. The grace of Jesus Christ can cover you. In Jesus Christ, we all sit at the same table.

To the degree you understand this, you're going to be free from guilt.

To the degree you understand this, this will free you from insecurity.

To the degree you understand this...it will free you from this nagging sense of inadequacy that comes from the pursuit of self-righteousness, and self-justification.

If you root your identity in anything but Christ, when things go wrong, you will be devastated. You will be shattered, and you will despair, but if you root your identity in Christ when things go wrong, yes, you will be distressed, but you will still stand. **Your REAL ID is finding your identity in Christ.**