



*NEW YEAR'S REVOLUTION: "Identity"

Biblical Text: [I Corinthians 15:9-11](#)

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* (play "Beatles Clip")

*Well - Happy New Year! I know – that's old news now. But I've been on vacation. I've been waiting two weeks to say that! It's good to be back. Ann and I enjoyed a couple of weeks off over the New Year's holiday.

I keep up with a lot of you on Facebook, so I've seen some of your *New Year's resolutions - so good luck with those. The thing about resolutions is sometimes they stick - but a lot of times they don't. And I've often wonder why.

I don't know about you, but I'm often my own worst enemy in that regard. So, I started thinking, *"What kind of power does it take to move us to change what we need to change?"* Most of the time it takes more than good intentions. It takes a **revolution** rather than a resolution to create lasting change.

*Back in my day, the Beatles sang, **"We all want to change the world..."* Now, Ann says Beatles' song references really date me! And she's right. But here's the thing. Everything old one day becomes new again. My granddaughter in Alaska is listening to Beatles' music while she's watching a Netflix cartoon called the *Beat Bugs. And so, all those old tunes are somehow new again!

And I think we still want *change for our lives and world, just like we did back in the seventies. **And, God knows, right here in 2018, we need it!**

Leading up to a weekend where we *honor America's Civil Rights champion, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., our nation's top leader used language we don't tolerate from our children or grandchildren, and racial slurs, to refer to people of Haitian or African descent. Well, something needs to change! God help us!

I don't care who you are, changing behaviors must start with changing our hearts and minds. **And only God can really accomplish that for any of us!**

*Without the right starting point; without the right catalyst, a revolution of the kind we need will never truly take place. That's why I'm using the Beatles' song as the theme for my new series that starts today. Besides ... *it's the Beatles!*

*Over the 5 weeks, we'll look at five components that are necessary for lasting change: **Identity** - **Capacity** – **Motivation** – **Endurance** – and **Security**.

And the starting point we need for us to experience the best in our lives - and the revolution God wants us to experience – can only happen when we lay claim to our ***true identity** – who we were created to be by God.

And our identity is shaped by the story we believe about ourselves.

The Bible is God's story about who we are. The 139th Psalm says: ***"I am fearfully and wonderfully made; (God's) works are wonderful, I know that very well."***¹

The problem is that most of us do not know that "very well." *Most of us don't look in the mirror every morning and say, ***"I am fearfully and wonderfully made! Yes, yes, yes!"*** That's not what we see, do we?

*No matter who we are, we see ourselves. But we also see our *shortcomings or flaws - or we see what *someone else thinks of us – or we see our age, our regrets, or our past. *We see every mistake, every limitation or liability.

*The story we believe about ourselves matters. And today I came to tell you this - if you will believe the story of grace, everything can change for you.

Our Bible lesson from the fifteenth chapter of *Paul's first letter to the Church at Corinth gives us some insight into how Paul understood his own identity. That's a hint to open your Bible now, if you don't have it open already. That's a new year's resolution that will help you – bring your Bible to Church.

Look at verse nine: ***"For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."***²

Paul's sense of his own identity was forever shaped by his past and that is true of all of us. If that's all we knew of Paul's story, we'd be tempted to say, ***"Paul - get over it!" "It's time to let it go, man!"*** But something happened that changed Paul's life forever. He was forgiven by God's grace!

In God's eyes, he was not defined by his worst failure. Verse 10 says it this way: ***"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain."***³ God's Grace changes how we understand who are.

¹ Psalm 139:14. Paraphrased by the author from the *New International Version*®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 Biblica.

² I Corinthians 15:9, *Revised Standard Version of the Bible*. Copyright © 1946, 1952, and 1971 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission.

³ Ibid. I Corinthians 15:10, *Revised Standard Version of the Bible*.

And God's grace is never in vain. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, ***"Anyone in Christ is a new creation. The old has passed away, and all things are new."**⁴

I know of no more powerful Biblical reminder of how that changes thing than I Peter 2:10: ***"Once you were no people. But now you are the people of God"**⁵

Or to put it in the first person, ***"Once I was nobody. But now I am somebody. I am a child of God."** Repeat that with me.

Paul knew that it is not because of our goodness, or appearance, or age or beauty or money or hard work or anything else but the love and grace of God. He said, also in verse 10: **"... it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me."**⁶

Finally, verse 11 reminds us just how important this understanding is. It's everything. Paul says, ***"...so we proclaim and so you have come to believe."**⁷

That's what I have come to believe. But I really don't know what you believe.

***You may have come to worship today believing, "I am nothing."**

You are not nothing.

You may have come to worship today believing, **"No one cares."**

You are wrong. He cares, and I care.

You may have come to worship today believing, **"I am unworthy."**

You never have to feel that way again! He has counted you worthy!

You may have come to worship today believing, **"I am nobody."**

You are somebody! You are somebody!

You are a child of God, fearfully and wonderfully made.

You are a child of God, imperfect, but redeemed by God's grace.

And because of that, you have a life worth living for the glory of God.

And once you know who you are, you will never be the same.

Once you know who you are, you will never be the same.

Will you pray with me?

⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:17, paraphrased by the author.

⁵ Op. Cit. I Peter 2:10^a. *New International Version*®.

⁶ Op. Cit. I Corinthians 15:10, *Revised Standard Version of the Bible*.

⁷ Ibid. I Corinthians 15: 11, *Revised Standard Version of the Bible*.