

June 10, 2018
Walking on Water Part 2

If you heard the news last week you know that there were two highly successful individuals who took their own lives. I had watched the travel show of one of them, the other I did not know but by all accounts, she was a successful designer.

I read another article that stated suicides were on the rise. In the last 10 years they have increased by as much as 30%. I wonder why. Suicide is always a confusing thing but I believe, that at the core of it is an identity crisis. These individuals never fully knew their Creator, who they were and what they were created for.

Identity crisis is a big problem for a lot of people today. Their parents didn't have the ability to help them develop and we know society doesn't really help. In fact it confuses people more than it gives direction.

David and Amanda have a landed on a different book for their Sunday School class, the Purpose Driven Life. I think this is an excellent book that helps people find their true identity in Christ and the purpose God created them for. I have taught out of this book multiple times over the years and highly recommend it.

Identity crisis. It something that most people deal with, even Christians.

This was the big thing Paul was concerned about with the church in Ephesus that he founded. He was on a mission trip and came to the town of Ephesus and found a few believers there. He ended up spending two years in Ephesus, teaching them about Christ and the kingdom of God. He came to usher in.

Ten years later he wrote this letter from a jail in Rome. Paul knew his life was about to end, and it tradition tells us it did end not very long

after he wrote this letter to the Ephesian church and the church in Philippi.

Paul wrote to the church because he was concerned they would have an identity crisis. Forgetting what Christ had done for them and who they had become through accepting the work of Christ.

When Paul was leaving the church the first time, he told them the following.

Acts 20:28-31b, “²⁸ Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be on the alert...”

Paul knew that Satan could come through people who were not grounded in Christ and they would create an identity crisis that would leave them shaken, standing on shaky spiritual ground.

Satan is pretty good at doing this isn't he? Telling you, you are not good enough, not pretty enough, not successful enough, not well liked or loved and many other lies. He says this through the world and all of its systems.

We were birthed in it and live in a society that sets standards and makes us feel unworthy and inept if we don't live up to its standards. It creates an identity crisis.

One of the actions steps I gave us last week to help us walk on water, to walk in victory, to quiet the voices that tell us we are not good enough, was to give God praise for all He has done.

But the reality of this is, if you don't know all that God has done for you and keep in touch with this then it is hard to give Him praise. This is why Paul sent the saints in Ephesus this letter.

I heard a story a while back. It was about an Indian in Oklahoma. One of the tragedies of the Indians was they were all forced off of their land and onto worthless land throughout the country. Oklahoma was one of those dumping spots. But a lot of Indians have had their revenge in a way. The land in Oklahoma they were dumped on was rich with oil so the Indians became very rich.

The story goes that one old Indian came in to his bank and would tell the banker, the pond has gone dry, the grass is all burned up and the cattle have all died.

The banker knew what to do. Without saying a word he took the Indian into the vault, sat him down and brought him sacks of silver dollars and then left him alone. After sitting there for a while and counting his money, stacking it and gazing at it, the Indian came out of the vault saying, the ponds are all full, the grass is all green and the cattle are fat and well.

The banker realized the Indian just needed to see and handled his wealth. I think this is what Paul is doing in this letter to the church in Ephesus. He is reminding them just how good they have it. How good is their God. How good is the things He did for them through His Son Jesus Christ.

I personally think the church has an identity crisis today. I don't believe that Christians really know and believe, deeply believe in all that God has done for them through His Son Jesus Christ.

Yes, we know John 3:16. We know God loved us so He gave His son for the forgiveness of sins so we could go to heaven. But we are not so sure God likes us and blesses us in the here and now.

And because of this we have a hard time putting our faith and trust in God when opportunities to use faith arise or the storms of life come our way. Or even when someone pushes us a bit, does things we don't like or even doesn't do the things we think they should be doing.

Because we have an identity crisis we have a hard time releasing these things and people to God. We have a hard time stepping back and saying, okay God, Creator of the universe who works all things together for good for those who love You and are called according to Your purpose, let me see what You got. Let me see what You are going to do in this circumstance, with this person. Im not going to lift a finger because I have faith that you will move in that person or circumstance.

Identity crisis. Knowing and accepting deeply what God has done for us through His Son Jesus creates the possibility of being water walker. A water walker like Peter who stepped out of the boat in faith and actually walked on water. Water walkers, those individuals who have their sight and faith so strongly on Jesus that they see not only Him at work but they see miracles occurring through themselves.

This is who we want to be and who Jesus will empower us to be but we must have our identity strongly fixed in what God, through the writers of the Bible, tell us who we are.

Before we begin our study in Ephesians I do want to say and have you pray about spiritual revelation concerning the teaching that is going to come out over the summer.

It is one thing to read and accept truths intellectually, mentally, it is quite another to experience spiritual revelation.

Intellectually accepting truth move us a bit. It might move our emotions from time to time and move us to some action and changes in our lives but spiritual revelation, revelation that is poured out from heaven into our minds and hearts, that is powerful stuff. The most powerful stuff in all the universe.

This is life changing revelation from the hand of God and when we come to the word of God this is what we want.

This is like the revelation Paul experienced when he was on the road to Damascus when Jesus met him.

Look at what happened to the author of Ephesians before we look at the book he wrote.

Acts 26:12-14, “While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, ¹³ at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. ¹⁴ And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’”

I am not sure any of us has experienced spiritual revelation this way. I know I have not had a shining bright light and a voice from heaven challenging me and giving me direction.

I wish I could. I wish this is the way God works but it is usually not.

Spiritual revelation usually takes a little bit of harder work doesn't it? It takes time in the word and prayer.

I struggled hearing from God last week for some reason. I think I was little busier than I needed to be and I just didn't take the time to tune into God to hear what He had to say.

I think He finally did this so I would have something to say this morning and that is the prayer Paul had for the church in Ephesus which I will share in a minute.

If you are experiencing an identity crisis. If you are in question about who God created you to be and the things He wants you to do then this prayer is for you.

If you have a hard time hearing from God, seeing Him at work, then this prayer is for you. If you want to hear everything He has for you through the teaching found in this book of revelation, then this prayer is the right place to start.

In fact, before you read any of God's word, this is a great place to start. This was Paul's prayer for the Christians in Ephesus and it is a great prayer for us.

The prayer you find in your outlines is different than what is on the screen or in your bible. I have personalized for you and we will go through it in a moment. But first read with me the prayers of Paul.

Ephesians 1:15-19b, "For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe."

Ephesians 3:14-19, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner person, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”

For most of us, at some levels, most of us including me, we have an identity crisis. Someone else besides our Creator has told us who we are and should be. But praying this prayer in earnest will be the beginning of us finding who God created us to be and what He has created us to do.

Let’s have some lab time this morning. Let’s quit talking and listening and lift up this prayer in a very personal way as we prepare our hearts to hear and experience spiritual revelation from our God.

Ephesians 1:15-20, “I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to me a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of my heart may be enlightened, so that I will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance, ¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward me.

Ephesians 3:14-19, “I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant me, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner person, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in my hearts through faith; *and* that I, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that I may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”