

## A New Identity

It is related of Tolo, a chief of the Shastika Indians, on the Pacific coast, that when he made a treaty with Col. McKee, an American soldier, in 1852, for the cession of certain tribal rights, he was anxious for some ceremony of brotherhood that should give binding sacredness to the mutual covenant. After some parleying, he proposed the formal exchange of names, and this was agreed to. Thenceforward he desired to be known as "McKee." The American colonel was now "Tolo." But after awhile the Indian found that, as in too many other instances, the terms of the treaty were not adhered to by the authorities making it. Then he discarded his new name, "McKee," and refused to resume his former name, "Tolo." He would not answer to either, and to the day of his death, he insisted that his name, his identity, was "lost" [Trumbull, H. Clay, The Blood Covenant (Impact Books, Jefferson Kirkwood, MO. 1975) pp. 334-335].

In Christ, you have a new identity. Those in the Federal Witness Protection program lose everything from their former life. Creditors and enemies are gone. People who held grudges can no longer find the object of their hatred. Previous traffic citations and other miscellaneous problems are removed from their record. Their slate is wiped clean. They have the opportunity to start over again fresh, with no taint from the past.

But what if they wanted to see just one old friend, collect one old debt? As soon as they go back, they are once again associated with their old identity. Every creditor, every enemy, is still waiting.

You cannot live a double identity. It is all or nothing. You are either brand new, or you return to who you were. You are either walking in the blessings of the covenant, or living under the curse.

Those who live in their new identity, those who live in Christ, as 1 John 3:9 says, cannot sin, "No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." But one of the key words in John's writings, and one of the key words in this verse, is the word translated "abides." The Greek word, "*meno*," is the root word for our word "remain." *Meno* means to abide in the sense of living somewhere and making it your home. The one who remains, who lives all the time, in Christ, and Christ in him, cannot sin. However, as soon as we step back into our old identity, for whatever reason or temptation, we bring back all the horrors of the past. Paul says in Galatians 2:18 that "if I rebuild what I

have destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor [or sinner].” If we remain in Christ, we cannot sin; but if we rebuild our old identities, we return to our past sinful nature and its results.

Many new Christians initially received immense spiritual blessings. They were filled with intense love, joy, and peace. They were on fire with fervor. But rarely is this kept. The reason: not remaining *in Christ*. All these blessings should grow stronger day by day as we remain, abide, and live in Christ. However, if we do not remain, the old nature returns. And it will remain!

Every decision is a test which will bring us deeper into the flow of the river of the Spirit of God or closer back to the shore (see Ezekiel 47). As new Christians, we began with our feet merely wet, though we were in Christ. Every decision became an opportunity to go deeper into the blessings. But every intentional decision not to flow with God is a decision to step out of the river. Once out of the river, it is not always easy to get back in. We would like to go back to where we made the wrong decision and simply retake the test, doing the right thing. The problem: previously, the power of God was there to help us accomplish what He required.

Once outside the river, the only way to return is the way you initially got in! Return to the cross, ask Christ for forgiveness, die once again to your old identity, and allow Christ to return you to the river.