

*Note: The Rev. Caleb Kim will deliver the sermon below on Sunday, January 4, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at St. Andrew's, Fenelon Falls and via Zoom.*

Title: My Identity in Christ

Have you made any New Year's resolutions to fully accomplish the visions and dreams God has placed in your heart? Like many of you, I often feel the desire to make commitments at the start of the year, the season, the month, or even the week. Setting a clear determination helps me stay on track for a longer period of time. That's why, once again, I want to make some New Year's resolutions in the days ahead...

In a spiritual sense, making resolutions can be similar to the act of renewing our minds before God. As Reformed Christians, we are called to continually transform ourselves into God's perfect image with the help of the Holy Spirit. This transformation doesn't have an endpoint; it is an ongoing process throughout our journey of faith here on earth. Until the Lord returns in His Second Coming, we must continue the battle against our sinful desires and live a godly life every day. This, I believe, should be one of the items on our list of New Year's resolutions. This morning, I want to talk about how we can keep our resolutions and where we can find the strength to do so in our sacred walk with God in the days ahead. I also want to share the kinds of attitudes we should embrace along the way. From my perspective, there are two biblical methods for renewing our spiritual hearts.

The first method is taking God's warnings and His judgment seriously. Some of us might be uncomfortable with this idea, as we've often been taught that "God is love." And indeed, God's very nature is love. Out of His unchanging and eternal love for each of us, He allowed His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to sacrifice His life on the cross to forgive us for the sins we've committed. Because of God's steadfast love, when we believe in Him and repent, we receive forgiveness and the gift of eternal life.

However, we must also remember God's warnings in the Bible. When we obey the Lord, He promises to bless us abundantly (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). But if we continue to follow our sinful desires and act in ways that displease God, He will not be pleased with those actions. Not long after Jesus delivered the beautiful Sermon on the Mount, where He shared the Beatitudes, He warned His audience that it would be better to lose a part of their body—if it caused them to stumble—than for their whole body to be cast into hell (Matthew 5:30). That is strong advice from the Lord, reminding us of the serious consequences of pursuing ungodliness.

The Apostle Paul writes, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). God is love, yes, but He is also just and righteous. Someday, we will all "stand before God's judgment seat" (Romans 14:10). This truth—God's judgment—is a core message in every sermon preached to the people of God. It's not meant to bring fear, but to help us live in reverence and obedience, knowing that our actions, both good and bad, will be accounted for before God someday.

The second method that should continuously motivate us involves remembering our true identity in Christ. While reflecting on the subject of identity, I thought about two Bible

characters and how their identities were connected to their strengths and the decisions they made. Let us first consider the character of Moses, found in the Old Testament. When he came to realize his true identity as the leader of God's people, he made a series of life-changing decisions. These decisions are beautifully described in Hebrews 11:25-28... In this scripture, all the verbs—"refused, chose, regarded, persevered, and kept"—highlight Moses' strong determination to follow God's will, no matter the challenges he might face. Knowing his true identity in God empowered him to remain committed to God's calling and to His people.

In our text for today, we uncover a second powerful example of the relationship between identity and strength in the life of the Apostle Peter. Peter, as we know, often had "a big mouth," so to speak. He was proud of his own willpower and frequently made bold promises to Jesus. A few times, in front of the disciples, Peter declared that he would never leave Jesus, no matter the circumstances. But, unfortunately, when the Lord was arrested, Peter denied Him three times. When Peter relied solely on his own strength, he failed to keep his promises.

However, after Jesus' resurrection, He graciously visited Peter and, interestingly, asked him the same question three times: "Do you love me?" He also gave him the same mission three times: "Feed my sheep." Through this loving conversation by the beach, Jesus helped Peter realize his true identity in Christ. After this encounter, Peter was fully assured of Jesus' love for him and understood the mission the Lord had given him. On the day of Pentecost, Peter boldly preached the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection to a massive crowd. He courageously baptized many in the name of Jesus Christ. Peter was no longer a fearful disciple, but was transformed into a fearless apostle when he found his true identity in Christ.

In his epistle, Peter also reminded followers of Christ of their true identities in Him. During that time, many believers were being persecuted for their faith and scattered across various regions. Instead of expressing sorrow over their difficult circumstances, Peter encouraged them to praise God for what Jesus had done for them. He reminded them of their identity, saying, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession" (1 Peter 2:9).

Wow! Like the early believers, we too are called to live with this same identity. We are chosen by God to be His special people. The Almighty God wanted us to be who we are in Christ. When He chose each of us as His child, He rejoiced in that decision. Our Creator God wonderfully made each of us in our mother's womb, before we were even born (Psalm 139:13-14). We are not just chosen by God; we are also dearly loved by Him.

Someone once said, "The value of something is determined by how much someone is willing to pay for it." Would you like to know how much God values each of us? Just look at the cross. The Lord came to earth as a human being and sacrificed Himself on the cross because He cherished each of us as His sons and daughters in His Heavenly Kingdom. We are God's chosen people, and we are uniquely precious to Him.

God also calls us "a holy nation" and "a royal priesthood." These titles not only describe who we are in Christ but also highlight the privileges we have in Him. The word "holy"

means “set apart” for God’s purposes. While we live in this world, we are not of this world. As a holy nation, we are called to live differently—to resist worldly influences and to honor God in our daily lives. One question I often ask myself is, “What would I do if Jesus were in my place?” This is a question we, as a holy nation, should regularly ask ourselves. Our thoughts, words, and actions should reflect those of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The other title, “a royal priesthood,” speaks to our dual identity and role. The word “royal” refers to the authority of a king, while “priesthood” refers to the role of a mediator between God and people. In the Old Testament, priests offered sacrifices on behalf of the people, seeking forgiveness for their sins. This sacrificial system was temporary and limited—it occurred once a year and was performed only by the high priest. In the New Testament, however, when Jesus became the “once for all” sacrifice for our sins. His sacrificial act on the cross was complete and permanent. Because of his atoning work, those who trust in God’s forgiveness through Jesus Christ can now come to Him at any time, from anywhere, and seek forgiveness directly—without the need for additional sacrifices or a human mediator.

In today’s scripture, Jesus calls each of His disciples a priest. In God, every believer holds dual authority—both as a king and a priest. As followers of Christ, we are called to serve in His ministry as spiritual priests with the mindsets of kings. In my homeland, there is an interesting story that ties into this theme. Chul Jeong, a man who had worked as a farmer, suddenly became a king... Likewise, being a king is not easy. A king must possess a broad mind, wisdom, patience, self-control, and a deep understanding of the world. We, too, are called a royal priesthood. Yet, sometimes we still struggle with our weaknesses and failures. We may feel disappointed by our shortcomings and mistakes, and at times we might even imagine that angels are saying, “Please do not do that, O Caleb.” I also recall another story shared by a wealthy woman... I believe that this wealthy person, even though she had the means to buy anything, still had a mindset of saving, which was shaped by her humble beginnings. Her old way of thinking still influenced her, even though her circumstances had changed. This brings us to a question we all need to ask ourselves this morning: “Do I live, think, speak, and act as a king or queen?” Or “Do I go through life with the old mindset of my former self?”

Our answer may be mixed. At times, we live according to what the Word of God teaches us. At other times, we struggle to live out what we know to be true. One main reason for this struggle is the spiritual battle we are engaged in against our enemy, Satan. One of the most powerful weapons Satan uses against us is deception—especially deception about our true identity in Christ. He tempts us to focus more on what others say about us rather than on how God sees and values us. As I mentioned earlier, we are priceless in God’s eyes. Satan tries to pull our attention back to past mistakes and failures, encouraging us to dwell on them. Ultimately, his goal is to erase our identity in God and cause us to give up what God has called to do for His glory in our daily lives.

Have you ever experienced identity theft? I have. On a couple of occasions, I was scammed, and my personal information was stolen. After one incident involving online banking, I received helpful advice that I’d like to paraphrase. First, I was reminded that hackers exist, and that identity theft can happen at any time. Second, I was told to immediately lock any affected accounts and contact my bank or credit card company.

Third, I was instructed to take control of my identity by regularly reviewing statements, updating my passwords, and changing my security questions. Fourth, I was encouraged to set up mobile alerts and notifications. Finally, I was warned to stay vigilant because what happened once could happen again. I think these tips can also apply to our spiritual identity theft. Spiritual hackers are out there—our enemy, the devil, seeks to steal our true identity in God. When we are attacked or tempted to give up in our spiritual battle, we must directly cry out to God for help. We must examine our spiritual “accounts” daily through the Word of God and stand firm, allowing the Holy Spirit—our divine Counselor—to guide us, rather than being led by our emotions. We must stay alert, recognizing that spiritual battles continue, and continually seek God’s power and direction.

I recently heard the life testimony of Se-Jin Kim, a Korean Paralympic swimmer... This perspective helped Se-Jin experience the truth of Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” and assured him of his true identity in God, his Creator. As we grow in recognizing our true identity in Christ and live as holy warriors for the Lord, we are blessed with a deeper relationship with Him. We mature in our faith and receive His divine strength to accomplish the purposes He has prepared for us. Along the way, we may stumble—once, twice, three times, or even seven times. But the Bible reminds us that the righteous rise again (Proverbs 24:16). With the help of our Mighty and Merciful God, we can stand back up and continue pursuing the dreams and visions He has placed in our hearts, with renewed determination and committed perseverance, no matter what.

One suggestion I would like to make to you before the final blessing in this sermon is related to a physical posture as kings or queens. As we grow older, we may notice a bent spine or a slouched neck. When I saw my mother, who turned 80 last year, I noticed that she walked with her head down, and her chest was collapsed, likely due to physical deterioration. My wife and I encouraged her to open her chest and look straight ahead while walking, even though it was challenging due to her physical weakness.

As I age, I, too, am becoming more aware of the challenge of maintaining proper posture while walking, standing, or sitting. Despite the aging process, as a king and a royal priesthood in a spiritual sense, I want to walk, stand, or sit proudly, keeping my chest open and my head high instead of looking down. I want to continually remind myself of my true identity in Christ and live with the dignity and characteristics of a king in spirit, both today and in the days to come.

Friends, as we step into this new year, I pray that we—both as individual followers of Christ and as His church—will continually remind ourselves of who we are in Him. We are chosen by God. We are His precious possession. We are a holy nation and a royal priesthood. We are the apple of His eye. May we continually remember our true identity in Christ, so that with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we may keep our resolutions for the glory of God throughout the year. Let us think, speak, and live as reflections of Jesus—making a difference in this beautiful, God-given world. Amen!

*\*In this sermon, I have drawn inspiration and material from various ministers’ messages, based on Exodus 19:1-9 and 1 Peter 2:4-10.*