



VOX CHURCH :: Finding Colossus

Chew On This

Justin Kendrick :: Sunday, March 1st, 2020

We're in a teaching series right now called Finding Colossus. This is week four and we've been looking at this idea of identity. What is my identity? Who am I really? And today I want to look at a passage of scripture that is one of the more well-known passages in the New Testament, but also one that, personally, I've never exclusively preached on in the entire ministry life that I've lived. I've been waiting to preach this particular message for about two years, about two years, and so it's all bottled up inside of me.

2 Corinthians says this, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come." Look at it one more time. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come." If you want to jot some notes down, the title of the sermon is "Chew on This."

It's been three weeks now that we've been unravelling the complex identity that is you. And we are all, whether we realize it or not, constantly trying to construct a stronger sense of self. We often use the natural elements around us, things like your ethnicity, things like your family of origin, things like your talents or your job, the titles that you have in life. And you collect all those things and try to get a sense of self. Now, those things aren't bad, those are gifts from God. But what we've been looking at over the last few weeks is that those things alone are not enough for you to have a sure sense of self. You need a deeper answer to the deeper question of who you are. And that answer is only found in Jesus Christ.

In week one we looked at this idea of the great mythic story of God, that God has been writing a story through history, and that story includes you, but you only find yourself when you're willing to forget yourself. You see, seeking to find yourself, you'll never find yourself. But seeking to find Jesus, you will discover yourself in finding him. That was week one. And then in week two we talked about "the divide inside", and each of us knows this challenge that on the inside of me, sometimes I do what I don't want to do. Sometimes I find myself pursuing things that are destructive to my future. There's a tension, a battle between the flesh and the spirit. And we talked about how victory becomes consistent in our lives when we begin with the acceptance that is found in the Gospel, the acceptance that is found through Jesus.

Last week, Pastor Mike Schnepf brought a fiery word about the layers of identity. You're a servant, you're a steward, you've been saved, and you have a divine seed within you.

But for many of us, this truth feels like a contradiction to our reality. You might be here today and you say, "Well, Justin, I believe that Jesus loves me and I believe that Jesus died for my sins, but if you had to ask me, 'Do I feel more like a saint or more like a sinner,' I really feel more like a sinner." Maybe you're here today and you say, "I keep tripping up, I keep struggling with the same old things. I keep falling back into the same habits, and I think I'm just broken. I think I'm just stuck this way. And when I look at myself honestly, when I look at my identity, I feel more like a sinful person than I do like a holy, perfect, blameless saint. And so, my identity is kind of tied to this broken performance. So, yes, I believe I'm saved, but do I believe I'm changed?"

And this is the struggle for a number of Christians, that you believe Jesus saved you, but has he really changed you? Has he really transformed you? Have you experienced the reality of that transformation in your day-to-day life? And I think for many of us, we kind of walk around feeling like a junior varsity Christian, like a second-class Christian. We say, "Well, I'm a Christian, but I'm kind of like a mess, so don't do what I do. I'm trying my best, but I'm just not the best example of a Christian. I feel like I'm kind of there, but I kind of got in on a secret ballot or something, like someone snuck me in the back door. I'm not a real legit Christian". A lot of Christians live with that sort of identity.

I remember when I was in eighth grade, I tried out for the middle school basketball team. I made the team, which I was pretty excited about, but I hadn't made the team sixth grade. I tried out, didn't make it. Seventh grade, I didn't make the team. Again, I tried out, didn't make it. By eighth grade I did make the team, and when I made the team the coach brought me into his office and he sat me down. He starts the conversation like this, he says, "Kendrick", he looks at me, he says, "I'm going to keep you this year".

And right away I was kind of like, "Well, that's not the way I was hoping this would start", you know? It was a pity conversation, "You've tried every single year and failed, I just feel so bad. I'm just going to keep you on, alright?" So, I was like, "Thanks Coach, I'm just happy to be here, that's great." And then he said, "But the truth is we only have 12 uniforms, Kendrick, and you're the 13th player on the team. And so, the other kids, they're going to get uniforms, but I don't have a new uniform for you. There's a box in the boy's locker room full of old uniforms, just pick whatever you want out of that box."

I was like, "Coach, I don't care, I'm just happy to be here, I'm excited. I want to be on the team." I go out to the box as I'm watching the other players put on their new cool looking uniforms. I go to this box, and I don't think the box had been opened since 1958. I open the box, and it was like "Pooh!", and dust comes out. I started taking the uniforms out, and the shorts are quite short. I'm like, "Coach, I'm not feeling eighth-grade good in these shorts", you know?

I put the on the uniform and I chose number four. I went out and as we start practicing in our uniforms, I discovered that someone else already has number four, because the new uniforms have different numbers than the old uniforms. So, now I'm not number four. We took some tape and now I'm number 14. I went from 4 to 14. So just imagine me, (in my John Havilcek 1952 uniform, with a taped "1" next to my "4", so that I'm number 14) as I step out on the basketball court. I guess the good news for me is that I hardly ever stepped out on the basketball court, I pretty much just lived on the bench. If we were up by 30 or down by 30 with one minute left, I maybe got some playing time, otherwise I just lived on the bench. I got really good at keeping my particular spot warm.

Now, some of us, you feel like your Christian life is a description of my eighth-grade basketball career. You feel like, "Jesus picked me for the team, but I feel like he just picked me out of pity. I feel like he just said, 'Alright, alright, you've been trying so hard, you're on the team. Fine, fine, just get to the team'. But I'm still wearing my own self, I'm still wearing my old uniform. I was never given a new uniform, and so I'm looking like a fool out there in my old uniform. And I don't even feel like I'm actually in the game. I hear other Christians seeing miracles of watching God move and receiving healing and peace, and I don't feel any of that stuff. I feel like I'm not even in the game, I'm just on the bench as a reserve because he felt bad for me." For some of us, this is our Christian experience, and that's why 2 Corinthians 5:17 is so critical for your life.

Paul says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come." He's telling us that something beyond pity has brought you on this team, that there has been a divine work of God. Something glorious has happened to you. Something glorious has happened in you. What does it mean to be a new creation? What does that really mean? Is it just semantics or is something supernatural underneath those words, "a new creation"?

He first tells us that it's for anyone. Anyone. This means if you're old, you fit here. If you're young, you fit here. If you're tall, if you're short, if you're white, if you're black, he says "It's for anyone." If you're rich, if you're poor, he says "It's for anyone." If you're very talented, if you feel like you don't have any talents, if you feel like you're always in the in-crowd, if you feel like you're always in the out-crowd, he says, "It's for anyone!"

Then he says "If anyone is... **in Christ.**" In Christ. In Christ. Now he's speaking about a *spiritual position*. Here's an illustration: Imagine the NFL or NBA draft when these young kids get drafted out of college and they join the pros. At the draft ceremony they are brought on stage, they shake the commissioner's hand, and they are presented to the team that chose them. Do you know what is then handed to them as they take the podium? A hat. They hand them a hat from the team they were just chosen by. So now, the athlete puts on the hat, and it's like "Boom! Atlanta Hawks. I am in the Atlanta Hawks now." Or, "Boom, Dallas Cowboys. I am now a part of the Dallas Cowboys." As soon as they put on the hat, they're now on the team. They've become a part of the team.

So, what the scripture tells us is that you were on "Team Adam" through your birth, that you were born onto a particular team, and it is the team of the first man who is the representative for all people. This is Adam. His spiritual status was passed on to you.

You were born on Adam's team. Now, Team Adam is born with a heart of sin. Team Adam is born separated from God, and this is the condition of every single person born on this Earth. See, Adam always seeks to justify himself. That is the culture of Team Adam. And so that means that Adam is either proving himself by doing good things or changing the rules and making up his own way of doing things. That's Adam's philosophy, "I either change the rules so I look better, or I try, try, try, try, try to prove myself." And this is the culture of Team Adam. That's what you were in before Christ: either trying to be a good person to prove to yourself (or your dad or your neighbors) that you're important, or saying, "I don't care what anybody thinks, I'm going to make up my own rules and decide what I want to do."

So that's Team Adam's philosophy. Those that are in Adam follow that philosophy, but Jesus came and he's called "The last Adam." Why is He called the last Adam? Because he is severing the connection between Adam and those that are believing in Him. Christ comes and lives a perfect life that you and I could not live, then he dies on the cross as a substitute for our sins. As our representative, he rises from the dead and fulfills the contract that Team Adam had with your soul. He then transfers you onto a new team with a new spiritual position.

So now, in Christ you're on a different team. God sees you and judges you not on the merits of your old team Adam, but on the merits of your new team in Christ. You are now judged on the merits of the righteousness of Jesus the Son. God illustrates this again and again and again in the Scriptures. For example, you look at the story of Noah and the Ark and you might think that that's a story about a man who gets on a boat and survives a flood and gets off. And that's true in the natural, but it's actually a story about Christ who is the Ark of your soul. You must run into the ark (Christ), and in running into Christ you discover that the floods of this world and the judgment of God do not touch you because you have abided in the Ark who is Jesus.

That's what the story is actually about. And if you don't know that then you don't really know the story. See, every story is that way. In the Old Testament we're told that there are cities of refuge. Cities of refuge where, if you had committed a crime and someone was after you, you could run to this city of refuge. As soon as you got into the borders of the city, the avenger could not attack you. So, in the same way, Christ is the City of Refuge. And when you run into him, you are now in Christ, and the avenger, the judgment, the guilt, the shame, no longer has the right to be upon you. See how this works?

Jesus talks about the vine and the branch, which is another illustration. Paul talks about the head and the body. Jesus' most famous picture of "If anyone is in Christ," is what he calls "The New Birth." The new birth. Now,

for many of us (if you've been around church or followed Christian theology in the past) being "born again" has a whole package of cultural baggage that comes with it. Don't think about it culturally, think about it biblically. Jesus describes this change that happens in the believer as a "new birth," that you were born into the family of Adam but now, through Christ, you've been born into the family of God. And this is the real secret, by the way, of our faith.

See, some people misunderstand Christianity. And I'm talking to you today because you may fall into one of these categories. Some people think that Christianity is a list of rules, that you have to be a good person and obey and do better for God. So, you're always trying to prove that you're good, always trying to do better, always trying to be a nicer person. You think that's the essence of Christianity. Friend, that's not the essence of Christianity at all. Following the rules or doing good or being a good person is never going to get you right with God, never going to get you blameless and perfect before God, and never going to give you the peace that your heart longs for.

Or, some of us think that Christianity is just the love of and acceptance of God. "He loves you just as you are, you don't have to change, you don't have to be different. You don't have to adjust your life, God will just love you as you are, always, forever." If you follow that train of thought, you have misunderstood who you really are. See, you're not that broken, sinful, distracted person that you think you are. There is a deeper revelation of your true identity. See, the real secret of Christianity is the truth of yourself, who you actually are, in him. That a miracle has occurred in the inner chamber of your heart. That you have been fundamentally, supernaturally, invisibly, changed by God.

I love how CS Lewis describes it when he talks about Christ. He pictures Jesus as a great diver, diving into the sea. Look what he describes it as, he says, "The story of the incarnation", that's the coming of Jesus, the coming of God in flesh, "Is the story of a descent and a resurrection. One has the picture of a diver, stripping off garment after garment, making himself naked, then flashing for a moment in the air and then down through the green and warm and sunlit water into the pitch black, cold freezing water, down into the mud and slime, then up again, his lungs almost bursting, back again to the green and warm and sunlit water, and then at last out into the sunshine, holding in his hand the dripping thing he went down to get. And this thing is human nature". See, Jesus came to rescue human nature.

And if that is a profoundly confusing thought for you, then stay with me, because the rest of this verse explains what that means. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation". Everybody say, "creation."

That's a weird word for Paul to use. We would expect him to say, "If anyone is in Christ, he's a new person", right? Or, "If anyone is in Christ, he's been changed or made new." Both are true. But he uses the word "creation" and he does it on purpose. He does it because he wants to point us back to the creation narrative of Genesis chapter 1. There is a story in the beginning of the Bible about God creating the world. And the truth is, you and I can't create anything, we can't. All we can do is rearrange the things God already created. But this experience that we have in Christ is not just the rearranging of things already created, it is a new creation and only God can do that. And so, what we have to understand is that your new creation in Christ is actually a mirror image of God's first creation of the Earth. If you want to understand what God has done in you by the Spirit, you can look at what God did in the natural through creation, and you'll discover who you are. In Genesis 1, we're told that the Earth is formless and void, right? And darkness rules over the face of the deep. This is a picture of your heart and your soul before Christ. You are formless in your identity. You are void, unaware of who you really are. You might have talents, abilities, skills, or ethnicity that you're trying to collect into this sense of self, but it's not the true essence of who you are.

Your true identity is formless and void. Darkness veils who you truly are. This is the condition of man outside of Christ. And then it says that the Spirit hovers over the surface of the deep. That's the beginning of the story. The Spirit hovers, so also the Spirit began to draw you to God. You didn't draw yourself to God, it wasn't your

calculations that brought you to Jesus. Something pulled you, something divine called you to church, called you to faith, called you to trust Christ. The Spirit hovered over the surface of the deep. And then it says, "And God said, 'Let there be light' and there was light." We find that it was the spoken Word of God that caused illumination on the Earth. So also, God's Word of the Gospel spoken to you caused divine illumination where, by his Spirit, he made you come alive. He made the light come on, that's what the new birth is all about. A divine spark was lit on the inside of the human heart of he who believes when God said, "Let there be light." And then it says that, after you've been born from above, God then begins to separate the light from the darkness. So it is with you. Once you trusted in Jesus and believed in the gospel, the light came on. You received Christ by faith, and then God went through the business of separating light from darkness.

He began to teach your heart, "This thing is darkness. Don't do that anymore." And then he said, "That's light, do that." He says, "He named the darkness night, and he named the light day." So it is with you. God starts to name things. He says, "That is righteousness. That is unrighteousness. You've got to change the way you think about relationships, you've got to change the way you think about money, you've got to change the way you think about your time. I'm teaching you the difference between darkness and light". And then from this revelation, we're told that new things begin to grow. There's trees and plants and life and animals. All these things begin to grow. So it is in your own heart. Once you've had the light come on, he separates the light from the darkness and now new things start to grow in you. You start to have new desires: a new desire to honor God, new ambitions to follow God, a new longing to be holy. These are the evidences of a life that's been born from above. Eventually, if you know the story of creation, it goes through these stages and culminates with the image of God brought forth on the Earth, through man and woman. The image of God is revealed, and they're given dominion. So it is with you. When you are born from above, these new desires begin to grow and the end result is the image of God displayed in a place of dominion.

If anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. God has done a profound divine work on the inside. He tells us that the old has passed away. Now, you have probably experienced someone in your life passing away. Maybe an aunt, maybe an uncle, maybe your mom, maybe your dad, maybe your brother, maybe your sister, maybe your friend has passed away. It means that they've died. It means that no longer do they walk the earth in this natural body, right? And so if a person is married and their spouse passes away, scripturally they're free to marry another. That's why he says, "The old has passed away." What he's telling us, is that when Jesus died, he died as your representative, which means that he represented you. And so, in his death, the marriage to sin that your heart had through Adam, passed away. That covenant was completed because of his death. When you believe in the Gospel, a new marriage is initiated in the Spirit where you are made one with Christ. So, the Old Testament gives us a physical picture of the old being cut away and the new coming in through the process of circumcision.

Circumcision is when you cut the foreskin of a man's penis off. It's a super uncomfortable illustration. Back in the day, I guess they talked about it more freely. But now it's like, "Did you just say penis? The foreskin of a what? Don't talk about that, that's weird."

But you know, God uses this as a physical symbol to illustrate the Gospel. It's through our own weakness that God does what we cannot do ourselves and he cuts off the authority of the old self. This is a biblical picture that's important for us to understand. See, the physical act of circumcision is not what I'm talking about, praise the Lord. It's the spiritual act of circumcision that is so important for us to understand. Look at Colossians chapter two, it says, "When you came to Christ, you were circumcised, but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision, the cutting away of your sinful nature." Now, notice in the text it doesn't say, "This can happen if you're a really good Christian." It doesn't say, "This will happen after five years of faithful service." It says that the moment you trusted Jesus this occurred. Whether you realize it or not is a different story, but it has happened, it has occurred. Someone could transfer a ton of money into your bank account and pay all your debts and you could live unaware of it. But that doesn't mean it's less true, right?

And so, he says "This circumcision, this cutting off of your old self, the covenant with sin that's been severed, has occurred, whether you realize it or not". He clarifies in Romans 2. He says, "You're not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you've gone through a ceremony of circumcision. No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law rather true circumcision is a change of heart produced by the Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people." See, there's been a change of heart, produced by the spirit. Now, if you were here last week, you know that Mike talked about the heart as the core of who you are. You live in a physical body but that's not who you are, that's just your tent. That's just your outward form.

You have a soul. A soul is your mind, your will, and your emotions. Some people think that's all there is to a human: a soul and a body. But that's not what the scripture teaches. The scripture says there is a deeper part of you called the heart. It's also called the spirit. So, you have three selves. The outer self, which is the body, the internal self, which is the soul, the mind, will and the emotions, and then the true self, which is your spirit, or your heart. Now, if you've been around church any length of time, you've probably learned Jeremiah 17, because it's a scripture that pastors quote all the time. "The heart is deceitfully wicked, who can know it? The heart is deceptive above all things, desperately sick. Who can understand it?" We are taught, culturally, to not trust your heart. Christian culture often teaches, "Your heart's evil, your heart's wicked, your heart's broken, stay humble, Don't trust your heart, don't trust your heart because it's evil and it's broken." Now, it's true that you can't trust your emotions sometimes, but your emotions are the element of the soul, right?

It's sometimes true that you can't trust your mind, but again, your mind is your soul. You definitely can't trust your flesh, but your flesh is a part of your body. Now, when Jeremiah says, "The heart is deceitfully wicked", he's not talking about the realm of the soul, he's not talking about the realm of the flesh, he's talking about your true core self. It's described in another passage of scripture as a heart of stone. Your heart, because of sin, outside of Christ, is like stone, unable to experience God. It cannot feel. But on the cross, something miraculous has occurred. Look how the prophet Ezekiel describes it in Ezekiel 36. He says this, "I will sprinkle clean water on you", this is describing what Christ would accomplish on the cross, "and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you". This is the blood of Christ that washes us of our sins. Stay with this. He says, "And I will give you a... " what? "I'll give you a new heart, a new spirit I'll put within you." Then, what's he going to do? "I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, I'll give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."

When Moses wrote the 10 Commandments, he received them from God. The very finger of God inscribed them on tablets of stone. Now, why did he write them on tablets of stone? He did this because those tablets of stone were a picture of your heart. Your heart, because of sin, is like stone. The law was never meant to bring you to a place of righteousness, the law was meant to reveal your need for a savior.

God wrote the commandments on tablets of stone so that you would see the stoniness of your heart. But when Jesus came to take your place, die for your sins, and forgive you of your brokenness and wickedness by performing this miracle of a divine heart transplant, he is judged for your sins. But where does God lead him in the moment of judgment to represent for us the transfer that's going to occur in your heart? Look at it in John 19. It says, "So, when Pilot... ", this is Pontius Pilot who judged Jesus, "heard these words, he brought Jesus and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called the Stone Pavement, and in the Aramaic "Gabbatha." See, Jesus was brought to a very particular place that God had already pre-ordained and planned, so that the pictures, that the allegories, and the illustrations of the Gospel would always be woven through everything he did.

He was brought to the place of the Stone Pavement so that you could understand that in that moment he was being judged guilty for your heart of stone, so that he could pay the debt in full. And by an act of sheer grace that you did not earn or deserve, he could remove your heart of stone and give you a new heart.

Moses is told in the Old Testament to construct a dwelling place for God called The Tabernacle, later called The

Temple. This is where the very presence of God is to dwell. Now remember, every Old Testament story is a New Testament picture. Everything is pointing back to Jesus. We see this tabernacle being built as the very house of God, the presence of God. And we're told that the tabernacle has three chambers. There is the outer-court, that is what you can see. And then within the outer court there is the holy place, and this holy place was a sacred place. And then within the holy place there's what's called "the Holy of Holies."

The outer court, the holy place, the Holy of Holies. Now, the Holy of Holies was the most sacred place of all places. It was the place where nothing unclean could dwell. It was the place for the ark of the covenant, which represented the very presence of God. And it was the place where the presence of God made its home. Where is the temple of God today? Where is his home? Where does he dwell now in the New Covenant?

Well, 1 Corinthians 6, tells us, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?" So in other words, there's a new temple. No longer do we need to worship in some building constructed by man, because God has framed out your very self as the temple. And, in fact, you are three chambers just like the tabernacle was. You have an outer court, it's called your body. And then you have a holy place, that's called your soul. But then there is the Holy of Holies, where is the Holy of Holies in the New Covenant, where nothing unclean dwells?

Where is the most sacred place, the dwelling place of God? See, the picture of the Tabernacle is to show you that it's in the top, in the middle. That your heart has become the Holy of Holies. Which means that your heart is good, that the core of who you are is not wicked and sinful and broken. The core of who you are has been replaced by Christ, and your heart is good.

Now, for a long time, Christians have believed something very different about themselves. I know, as a follower of Christ, in my first many, many years as a Christian I believed this about myself. And maybe you're here today and you're believing this about yourself. You say, "Oh, Justin, I can't trust myself". Well that's true. You can't trust your flesh.

Now, it's true that your body is still in Adam, that you still have lustful tendencies, proud tendencies, selfish tendencies. But what you have to understand, what God is trying to teach you through the Gospel, is that when you misunderstand the core of who you are, you'll never live the fullness of what He's called you to live. Because, at your core, the essence of who you are is not lies, not lust, not pride, not sin. The essence of who you are, your true nature, your true self now is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. That's who you really are.

The seed of Christ has been planted inside of you and the old self has been changed, even though your flesh may rage, seeking to live by an old standard. If you are in Christ, you're a new creation! The old has been cut off and the new has come. Christ's spirit in you has made you blameless, you must receive your true self. See, when you think wrongly about yourself, you act wrongly about yourself. When you think that you are evil at your core, you'll never break the cycle of sin. But when you understand that, at your core, you've been made righteous, then you begin to live out of the true identity that is yours in Jesus.

You remember the last scene in Beauty and the Beast? I know you do. Guys are like, "I never watched that movie." Yes, you did. We've all seen it. In the last scene of Beauty and the Beast (it's my favorite scene in the whole movie) true love is revealed. Belle kisses the Beast, true love is revealed, the spell is broken, and the beast becomes a prince. The Beast becomes a prince, and the candlestick guy becomes a human being, the little teacup kid becomes a boy, and the clock guy becomes the butler. Everybody's happy and rejoicing! No matter how many times I've seen that movie I look forward to that scene. I even know it's coming. As soon as it happens there's something inside me that's like, "We did it, yeah! Yeah! Candlestick man, you're free!" I already knew it was going to happen, but it's just so exciting. Why? Because Beauty and the Beast is talking to you about your story. You've been living like a teacup, you've been living like a broken clock, you've been living

like a beast. You've been living that way because that's who you think you are. But Christ has been speaking to you that the core of who you are is not that beast anymore. The core of who you are is no longer a fragile teacup. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away. Behold, the new has come!"

And that, I believe, is the most important word in this entire text, the one you skip over most quickly. The one we forget that's even there. If anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, behold, behold, the new is come. It's interesting that Paul sneaks that little word in there. It means, "Notice this." It means, "Examine this." It means, "You need to chew on this." Chew on it.

Why would he put that word in there? Why would he put that little word in there, "Behold"? He could have just said, "If anyone is in Christ he's a new creation, the old has passed away, the new has come." But he doesn't. He says, "If anyone's in Christ, he's a new creation, the old has pass away, **behold.**"

Everybody over 30, do you remember Big League Chew? What happened to Big League Chew? It's hard to get now. I asked a friend to get me some for today and they were like, "No one sells Big League Chew anymore." I had to go on Amazon to get it. You can get anything on Amazon.

Remember when you were kid, (if you didn't eat this, Jesus still loves you but you missed out) the whole idea was to put the whole thing in your mouth and just chew.

What does it mean to chew? It means to meditate. It means to work it. You got to work it. Got to keep chewing. You have been transferred to the Big Leagues, and it's required that you learn to chew. See, we live in a culture that doesn't know how to reflect, we've forgotten the secret power of reflection. We live our lives at 110 miles per hour and we don't take time to chew. I have a friend, his name is pastor Mike Schnepf, I'm just going to blow him up. The man eats so fast. You say, "Lord, thank you for this food. Bless it in Jesus' name," you look up, his plate is empty. And I always ask him, "Did you even chew? Did you even taste the food? Did you savor it at all?" I like to try to chew things. Try to work them in. Did you know that a cow chews eight hours a day? Multiple chambers in his stomach that, after he chews his grass, he gets it down and then he barfs it back up and chews it some more? Do you know that?

It's gross. But his constant chewing allows him to take the difficult substance of grass, (which if you tried to eat, would do you no good) and he's able to extract the nutrients out of the grass. Here's what I've learned: that the concept of the new self is difficult to grasp. It requires frequent chewing. You've got to get all the nutrients out of this truth because your mind is going to tell you, "You are not a new creation." The devil is going to tell you, "You're a phony. You're a fake." So you need to chew. What you'll discover is that if you chew, the fears that used to define you start to dissolve. That insecurity that used to be overwhelming, and now all of a sudden you feel valued. Maybe you're not even aware of exactly when it happened, but you start to feel loved. Rather than working from a place of constantly needing acceptance, you work from the place of affirmation and deep acceptance, because you've been chewing.

And then hope starts to grow. Joy starts to grow. Love starts to grow. Why did Paul add that little word, "Behold"? Why am I here eating an entire packet of Big League Chew? For you to remember this truth one week from now, when you forget everything else I said. Because you can't become who you really are until you deeply believe it yourself.

And this is the barrier that has held back so many of us. Because, at your core, you still don't believe that he's given you a good heart. At your core you still think that you're evil and wicked, because your flesh keeps pulling you into sin. But the truth is deeper than your flesh. The true self, in Christ, has been made new. And you have to receive that identity and then meditate on it. It's in the meditation, in the chewing, eight hours a day, regurgitating it up, chewing it again, and again, and again that God, in his invisible power, begins to reshape your identity, reframe your confidence, and lead you to a place of holy assurance. A place where you know

you're deeply valued because you've deeply experienced his love. You can't fully become who you are until you deeply believe it yourself. "Behold, behold, behold, the new has come."

Church, I remember when this truth of the new heart became real to me as I studied the Bible. And I have to be honest, at first, I fought against it. I had assumed for so long that Jeremiah 17 was a picture of the New Covenant heart. I had accepted this idea that I was wicked at my core. I didn't want to be proud. The new heart should not lead to pride, because it's still true that nothing good dwells in your flesh, and that apart from him you can do nothing. They have to stay connected as the vine and the branch are connected. You have to stay connected as the head and the body are connected in order for you to receive this new life. But, at the same time, you must also believe that, at your core, you've been made good by God if you are ever to break out of the cycle of brokenness in your own life.

It's that deep internalization of your true identity that then propels you to a place of breakthrough and victory. Maybe you're here today and you've been trying to change, you've been trying to grow, and it is frustrating. Because deep down inside, you still assumed that the deepest part of you is sinful. Today, I believe that God wants to turn the light on. He wants to show you, in the cross, in the resurrection, in his blood, through his love that if anyone, is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. It has come. Would you receive that right now?