

Title: New ID**[Slide 1]****Text: Galatians 2:15-21****Hero ID****USA!****[Slide 2]**

One picture says it all.

The U.S. Women's National Team provided the fireworks finale for the holiday weekend with a 5-2 victory over Japan in the Women's World Cup finals. They scored 4 goals in the first 16 minutes and 6 of the 7 goals scored in the match. (USA scored one goal against itself.)

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Carli Lloyd scored a hat trick within those first 16 minutes.

How big a deal is the USA win? Just ask the 335,000 girls who play soccer in the US. You can bet that a whole bunch of them were watching Carli's every move on the field. And how many went to bed that night dreaming of one day wearing a USA uniform in a World Cup game?

Sports have a way of not only bringing us together, but of causing us to *identify* with our team. Boston is happy when the Patriots or the Red Sox win. When Tom Brady steps onto the field, millions of New Englanders are right there with him.

David and Goliath:

Just as millions of Americans see their team's victory as their own, ancient people often saw the victory of a king or champion as their own victory. You might say that they saw their own fate, their own future, their own *identity* as worked out in the accomplishments of their champion.

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For example, when David went to battle with 5 stones and a sling against Goliath, both sides understood that the two men were fighting on behalf of their two peoples. Each side fully identified with its contestant. David's surprise victory over the giant was a victory for every Israelite in the land. What was true of David was true for them. They found their identity in David as Hero and King. In fact, it was said that they were "in David." (2 Samuel 10:1)

This notion of a people identifying with its heroes points the way to a far greater act of *identification: discovering our brand new identity in Christ.*

Christ ID:

Paul wrote the Letter to the Galatians because of some serious identity issues. The young Christians, many if not most who were Gentiles, were being forced to choose between two competing identities. In order to be part of God's family, would they have to first of all become Jewish, with all that entailed? Or was their new identity based upon their faith in what Jesus had done for them when He died and rose again?

Like the people Paul wrote to, you and I must choose between competing identities. Will we try to reform and remake ourselves? Will we try to squeeze ourselves into a religious identity? Or will we allow God to create a new identity for us as part of His family?

Which ID**Saul's Armor:**

To understand the choice each of us make when it comes to discovering our true God-given identity, think back to the David and Goliath story. Before David went out onto the battlefield with only his staff and sling, King Saul tried to outfit him in the king's armor. After all, if this teenager were to be "hero for a day" or, more likely for a few minutes, shouldn't he look the part? He might not be a king, but as the king's proxy he should try to wear the king's identity. Thankfully, David would have none of it.

Paul makes the same point about the identity choice that his opponents were forcing upon his new converts to Jesus in Galatia. They were being told that

they had to put on the old armor, as it were, of the Jewish tradition. Paul's reply:

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Galatians 2:15-16a NIV

"We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law..."

The "works of the law" were all of those "tribal markers" that designated a person as part of the Jewish people: food laws, observing Sabbath and holy days, and circumcision. These were the badges that you wore to identify yourself as part of God's family.

But Paul has come to see that they were never meant to win the battle against the twin giants of Sin and Death. Those "works of the law" could not restore and repair a person so that they would deserve to be "justified," or worthy of full status in God's family.

A New Hero:

Instead, Paul tells the Galatians that God has already won the victory through His Hero King, Jesus.

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Galatians 2:16 NIV

...but by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by the faithfulness of Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

Jesus, like young David, went out and fought the battle on our behalf. He was *faithful to the point of death*. He conquered Death when He rose on the third day.

Paul says that we become part of God's family by putting our trust in Jesus and what He did – His faithfulness. He is our conquering Hero.

IDs Old and New:

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Last Sunday the members of the U.S. Women's National Team went onto the field and won the World Cup. They won it for themselves and for their team. But more importantly, they won it for 319 million Americans. Their victory was our victory.

We didn't have to put on a soccer uniform and run out on the field. If anyone had, they would have simply gotten in the way and made it infinitely harder for the women to win the title. All we had to do was *identify* with them. All we had to do was believe they truly won – hard not to do that! – and that they won for all of us. Their victory is ours.

The team was *faithful* to its mission. It played superbly and won the title. The fans were *faithful* to the team, cheering it on.

Paul says that it's the same with the much greater victory that Jesus Messiah won over the twin giants of Sin and Death. If we want to be part of God's New Creation we must let His victory be our victory. We must put our *faith* in His *faithfulness*.

New ID**IDs Old and New:**

Last summer Suzanne and I had to get new passports for our anniversary trip to Europe. We already *had* passports, but they were long since expired. To get the new ones we had to send in the old ones. When they came back, they each had a hole punched in them. There were lots of memories represented by those passports and the places we had gone. But now it was time for a new passport and new travels.

If you want a new identity, you must be willing to surrender the old one. Only then can you take the new journey that God has for you.

Crucified with Christ:

So what do we do with our old identity? Paul says we "punch a hole in it," put it to death on the cross with Jesus:

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Galatians 2:19-20a NIV

For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live...

Remember that idea of identifying with your Hero so that what happens to Him happens to you? Paul says that when we identify with Jesus Messiah as our Hero King, we choose to see our old self, our old identity *die on the cross with Jesus*. We are "crucified with Christ." We aren't even alive any more in the way we once were!

Isn't that what happens whenever we acquire a new, life-changing identity? Remember those words, "I now pronounce you husband and wife!" With those words you are no longer the person who came to the altar. You leave your old identity of being single behind – punch a hole in it. It won't serve you anymore. You have a brand new identity.

New ID:

Paul tells us that when we put our faith in Jesus' faithfulness. We take on His identity, so much so, that Christ *lives in us*. Paul puts it this way:

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Galatians 2:20b-21 NIV

...but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!

His death is our death. His new life is our new life. His faithfulness to God's covenant plan calls us to faith in Him. It all flows from His infinite love for each of us, love so strong that He willingly gave up His life for us. And when we put our *faith* in His *faithfulness*, God declares that we are "righteous" – granted full status in His family. Nothing less than a brand new ID!