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“LIVING CONNECTED”

Philippians 3:17-4:1

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INTRODUCTION:

You are going to be so glad that you came today and found this out – take a look at this on the screen. (Picture of lady weighing herself by lying on her back, legs up in the air and the scales balanced on her feet. Words: “I’ve been doing this wrong all of my life. So glad I learned the right way.”)

See there, now you know you’ve been doing it all wrong all these years. You’ve been weighing yourself all wrong. Just wait ‘till Weight Watchers and Jenny Craig find this out. Why, it will revolutionize the whole weight loss industry. *But seriously, for far too long we have been weighing our personal and collective spiritual selves the wrong way – using wrong measurements.*

Paul’s email – oops, I mean Paul’s letter to folks in the Philippians church, gives us some real insights about measuring our worth, about discovering who we really are, and about how we become who we are meant to be.

Our True Weight Value

This is the season of Lent, the weeks between now and Easter Sunday. Lent is a time to remember who we are and what is our identity. From this text, Paul has written yet another letter to the church addressing a couple of key issues.

- 1) Not allowing others to define you**
- 2) The process of how to find your worth in Christ**

Paul is writing about how we can **live CONNECTED with God through Christ.**

() Lent is a great time for us to renew and strengthen our connection. Lent is about opportunity. If you and I will use these weeks to focus our energies, time, and thoughts toward Christ and follow his examples, we’ll come to Easter prepared for a fresh new beginning.

() You see, now is the time for strengthening the connection between God and ourselves. Paul reminds us that we are not just citizens of earth, but also of Heaven. We can connect the two, bringing into our earthly existence, the purpose and will of God; individually and collectively.

How?

Renew our heavenly citizenship. The Philippians Church had a great visual image of how this works. Let me give you a little history on the region. Philippi was a Roman Province. It was greatly populated by Roman citizens along with a Jewish populous. The Roman influence came when Augustus had come there with others and a great army to capture and kill Brutus and the others who had assassinated Julius Caesar. Once they had killed the assassins, the leaders in Rome were afraid to bring the armies back to Rome because of the political instability. So they gave the soldiers property at Philippi to keep them there.

Now get the picture - the soldiers were citizens both of Philippi and of Rome. Therefore they had rights and opportunities in both states. You and I, in Christ, are citizens of Atlanta and of Heaven. We, therefore, have opportunities to connect the two. We have the ability to bring some of the heavenly culture to our corner of the world.

WOW!! That's huge.

And another thing – We can discover who and what it is that unites us, rather than divides us.

Paul was seeking to resolve issues that divided followers of Christ. Now, get beneath what was going on then, because you also live in the presence of the same dividers.

Here's what is going on.

Some one(s) in your life suggest that you must first,

() **Leave behind who you are . . . to become who you are not (their definition of you) . . . in order to become who you are meant to be.** What this is all about is how you become an *authentic self* – how you reconnect with God and God's purpose for life. In this particular letter, Paul has confronted an ongoing struggle. One you face today at many levels.

Who are you and how do you connect with God? Where do you place the source of your personal value?

In Paul's day, there was a group of Jewish followers who said one must first be a good Jew (keep the law) before they can follow Christ and be connected with God. So it is about one group telling another that they must first become like them before they can connect with God.

() Paul says – No – it's about discovering and being who you are in Christ:

Forgiven through Christ and Re-Connected with God. Then, it is about becoming who you are God-gifted to be.

() **Discovering and Being who you are in Christ.**

Forgiven – Re-connected with God

() **Following Christ's Example:**

- Spending time alone with God
- Using your time and energy to bring healing to those in need; to correct injustice; to share with others the grace you have received; and to better others by serving.

() **Becoming who you are God-gifted to be:**

not what another or others would shape you to be.

I heard a truth put into a great expression this week. It addresses the matter of *weighing your true value*.

When you under-value who you are, others under-value what you do and the gifts you bring, i.e. what you have to share.

The context of the statement was a piece on how women in American tend not to get most of the money they earn because they give so much of it away to their children, partner, spouse, or even the company for which they work. Because they give so freely, those receiving from them tend to de-value what women bring. They come to expect it.

As I thought about that, I realized how you and I often under-value who we are – the worth of our gift of self and who we are in Christ; with an attitude of less value, others who would reshape and define us, under-value what we do, offer, and have to share.

We need to **STOP** that.

We need to value our personal identity – *who and what God has given us*. And we need to **highly value who we are in Christ**. As we hold tight those values, we'll live in full connection with our Source. Someone says, the Scripture tells us that "pride goes before destruction" and that "one should not think more highly of oneself than they ought." Note that neither of those references tell us to de-value ourselves.

So what can we do to keep this message of value before us? What words can we speak that will help us to affirm our belief that we are worthy and have the ability to create our life of purpose? I suggest some affirmations and ask you to read them with me aloud:

- ▶ I am worthy of love, joy, and success. Christ makes me worthy.
- ▶ I am smart and make wise choices as I'm led by God.

- ▶ I am loved, lovable, and capable.
- ▶ I co-create with the Creator things worthwhile.
- ▶ I handle anything life hands me because of my connection to God.
- ▶ I have all the energy I need to do everything I want to do.
- ▶ I am attracting all the right people into my life as I follow the path of God's purpose.

STOP being afraid of who you are – *Value greatly who your are in Christ and live connected with God so that your true value keeps shining through.*

Believe these affirmations and say them during your day.

Live by them and remain fully connected with God.

Pastor Ike

SLIDES

Philippians 3:17-4:1

“Stick with me, friends. Keep track of those you see running this same course, headed for this same goal. There are many out there taking other paths, choosing other goals, and trying to get you to go along with them. I’ve warned you of them many times; sadly, I’m having to do it again.

All they want is easy street. Those who live there make their bellies their gods; belches are their praise; all they can think of is their appetites.

But there's far more to life for us. We're citizens of high heaven! We're waiting the arrival of the Savior, the Master, Jesus Christ, who will transform our earthy bodies into glorious bodies like his own. He'll make us beautiful and whole with the same powerful skill by which he is putting everything as it should be, under and around him.

My dear, dear friends! I love you so much. I do want the very best for you. You make me feel such joy, fill me with such pride. Don't waver. Stay on track, steady in God."

Others Would Question Your Value and Suggest That You:

Leave behind who you are. . .

Become who you are not (their definition of
you). . .

To become who you are meant to be.

Paul Says NO!

- * It's about discovering and being who you are in Christ.
- Following Christ's example
- Becoming who you are God-created to be

Discovering and Being Who You Are In Christ

Forgiven and
Re-connected
with God



Following Christ's Example

Time alone in Prayer
and

Using time and energy
to help bring healing
and hope. . .

correct injustices. . .

share with others the
grace you've received,
and better others
through serving them.



Becoming Who You Are God-Gifted To Be

Not How Others
Would Shape You
To Be



Get This Helpful Truth

WHEN YOU UNDER-VALUE WHO YOU ARE

OTHERS UNDER-VALUE WHAT YOU DO

A faint, semi-transparent image of two hands shaking is visible in the background, centered behind the text. The hands are rendered in a light teal color, matching the background. The image is positioned behind the text, with the hands appearing to be in the process of a firm handshake.

AFFIRMATIONS



I am worthy of love, joy and success.
Christ makes me worthy.

I am smart and make wise choices as
I'm led by God.

I am loved, lovable, and capable.

I co-create with the Creator things
that are worthwhile.

I am able and empowered to solve
problems that come my way.

I can handle anything life hands me
because of the connection I have
with God my Source.

I have all the energy I need to do
everything I want to do.

I am attracting all the right people
into my life as I follow the path
of God's purpose.

I rightly value greatly who I am in
Christ and in God's gifts.

My True Value Comes Shining
through.

