

Ears that Really Hear the Truth of Your Identity

We've been discussing the Face of Grace, or to put it in another fashion, "What does grace look like?" God is called "the God of all grace" (I Pet. 5:10), and Jesus was a one "full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). You are "a child of God," and given your spiritual birth, you reflect the "God of all grace" in your very life. Have you heard something and said, "I don't believe what I'm hearing!" Are you "hearing" who you are?

"I have learned to be self-sufficient (content) in who I am" (Philippians 4:11)

"Any text, taken out of context, is nothing but a pretext." What is the context of Philippians 4? The whole book deals with the subject of joy (1:26; 2:18; 3:1). Paul continues talking about joy in chapter 4 (vs. 1). He begs two women Euodias (Odios) and Syntyche (Soon Touchy) to get along (v.2). He then continues to write about thanksgiving (v.6), peace (v.7), and joy (v.10). Paul writes of the "joy" he has because the church sent him money (v.10). But Paul wants to make clear that his joy is not DEPENDENT on the money they gave. "I am not speaking (of joy) because of a need met (wants)." Rather, **"I have learned to be self-sufficient (content) in who I am."** In verse 12 he describes various "states" of life or circumstances, so many translators go back and "add" the word "state" to verse 11. But it's not there. Paul is content regardless. You say "No way! That's impossible. Nobody can be content regardless of circumstances!" Paul writes: *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:13).

I. Your "state" or "circumstances" should not affect your abiding joy as a child of God.

The great Puritan writer Jeremiah Burroughs drew my attention to the true meaning of Phil. 4:11 in his classic book *"The Art of Christian Contentment."* Burroughs writes that Paul is saying, **"I have learned in what I am to be happy."** In our day the proper English would be "I am content with who I am. Who are you? If I were to ask you to answer the question, "Who are you?" what would you say?

I am a mom or a wife... really happy because of who it is I am related to in this life.

I am a businessman . . . are happy because they DO it better than other businessmen.

I am a preacher . . . are happy because they preach it better than other preachers.

I am a follower of Jesus... happy because of what I'm doing for God and for others.

II. Your true identity is only found in God's grace and purpose in your life.

- A. The circumstances of all our lives are constantly changing, for either the better or for the worse.
"By the grace of God, I am who am: by His grace which is given to me" (I Corinthians 15:10).
- B. You may think you need something else, but His grace is all you need to be content.
"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, so that you, always having sufficiency in everything, may have an abundance of everything you need for every good work" (II Cor. 9:8).
- C. Those who have it all in terms of worldly success, lack the one thing that brings real happiness.
"We aren't sufficient of ourselves to think highly of self; our sufficiency is of God" (II Cor. 3:5).

III. Learning who you are by God's grace is a process.

This word "learned" literally means "to unlock the mystery of." To learn who you are in Christ involves learning some facts, just as Sherlock Holmes and all the great detectives would want "just the facts mam!" There is God as He is and there is God as we conceive Him to be. It is far more difficult to make the mind unlearn its errors than to make it receive truth. Unlock the truth by really hearing what the Bible says is true of you because of God's grace. Let the discovery saturate your

mind, and eventually your feelings will follow. “I have unlocked the secret of being content in Him.”