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On this week's episode of Chosen and Cherished, we talked about how we're always listening to and learning from someone. The question is, who are we listening to and learning from??? If you'd like to listen to the podcast, here's the link... <https://summitpoint.org/chosen-and-cherished/>

*Blessings,
Jonna*

Ephesians 4:1-6

We're in a series called "Building a Godly Home." Interestingly, there aren't a ton of scriptures that speak to what a Godly marriage should look like. But in truth, ALL the scriptures that deal with relationships can and should be applied to marriage. The marriage relationship is the epitome of modeling relational oneness... and it is often the hardest relationship to apply those scriptures to.

Who can hurt me the most? The person I'm closest to. That's my husband. We intrinsically know that this relationship should thrive. And so it hurts us the most when it doesn't. I am so thankful that my husband wants to be unified with me and continues to work with the Lord to transform his heart, as I continue to work with the Lord to transform mine. But we're still both sinners in need of God's help. Unfortunately, without God's help, my natural tendency, just like it was for Adam and Eve, is to look outside of myself for blame rather than looking at my own heart when there's relational struggle. So Lord, as I approach this passage on oneness, please show me where MY heart needs to change, and help me not to focus on how anyone else's heart needs to change. That's YOUR job, not mine.

Vs. 1-3 ~ "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

First, I think it's incredible that Paul was literally in prison when he wrote this letter (and so

many other letters). Wouldn't the natural thing be to write about how I want someone to get me out of prison? After all, the only "crime" he had committed was loving Jesus and sharing His love with others. Paul was so convinced of who God is that no punishment could shut him up! Even when they eventually killed him... joke's on them... He wrote it all down in letters and 2000 years later, we're still learning from him!!! Paul knew a freedom in the Lord that no jail cell could hold him in. Moving on...

Paul started with the words, "I therefore..." What's the therefore there for? Right before he prayed for all believers, "that according to the riches of God's glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Only God can help us have that kind of strength. Relational oneness starts with comprehending the love of God. And that only comes through Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.

So... therefore... Paul said, "I URGE you to walk in a manner worthy of your calling." I exhort you... I encourage you... I implore you... to walk worthy of your calling. The Lord has called me by saving me from my sins. I am His because He has called me to Himself.

So what is a manner worthy of my calling? I am called to walk in ALL humility, ALL gentleness, with patience, bearing with another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Oh! Easy peasy! No.

Walking worthy starts with...

- ALL humility. ALL. The opposite of humility is pride. Pride can be displayed in both arrogance (I'm awesome) and shame (I should be awesome and I'm not). ALL pride is bad because both arrogance AND shame drive me away from the Lord who fills me with His love and strength. Humility recognizes that I have nothing in and of myself worth worshiping. It's all from Him. Therefore, I need to treat others with ALL humility, because I need a Savior just as much as they do.
- After humility comes ALL gentleness... or meekness. That means I need to treat others with gentle strength, not being harsh in tone, attitude, or action.

Interesting... what did Jesus say was true about His own heart when He called people to come to Him in Matthew 11:28? He said, "I am gentle and humble in heart." Walking in a manner worthy of my calling is walking in Jesus' footsteps... with ALL humility and gentleness.

It doesn't stop with ALL humility and gentleness. I also need to...

- *Be patient. That word also can be translated, "long suffering." Saying, "I'm just an impatient person... That's my personality" is not justification for being impatient. It's evidence that I'm not allowing the Holy Spirit to have full access to my heart.*
- *Bear with one another in love. Yikes! Much easier said than done. I'm called to endure with others. Sometimes enduring means walking with them through their suffering. Sometimes it means enduring with them when they're not enduring with me. That's hard!*
- *Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Eager... making every effort... being diligent... to maintain... keep... guard... watch over... unity... oneness. It's not just any oneness. People can unite to do evil. This is unity of the Spirit, according to the word that He moved men to write, with Him uniting us in love. He brings us the bond of peace. Well, that's just beautiful. Why do I have to be diligent to do this? Because I will naturally drift away from it if I'm not allowing the Holy Spirit to work in my heart.*

When does being humble, gentle, patient, enduring, and diligent to guard the unity of the Spirit get especially hard? It's ALWAYS hard, but it's especially hard when others don't treat ME this way! In fact, I would say, it is impossible to do IN MY OWN STRENGTH. That's why I need the power of the Holy Spirit working in me. In his book, "Absolute Surrender, Andrew Murray explains it like this... "Until you are brought to such a state that the more someone hates and speaks evil of you, the more unlikable and unlovable someone is, and you love him all the more... until you are brought to not (only) say, 'It is impossible with men,' ... but you have been led to say, 'This message has spoken to me about a love utterly beyond my power; it is absolutely impossible,' then you can come to God and say, 'It is possible with God.'" It is ONLY by the power of the Holy Spirit that I can walk as Jesus walked in humility and gentleness, pursuing oneness (inasmuch as it depends on me) with those who do not walk in humility and gentleness with me.

Lord, I KNOW that I still have pride that needs to be removed from my heart. Please do this supernatural work in me as I cooperate with You. My lack of humility shows itself when I am not gentle, when I judge rather than endure with others, and when I refuse to pursue unity inasmuch as it depends on me because it doesn't feel "safe." Lord, YOU'RE my safe place. Because I'm safe in You, I can love others regardless of how well they love me.

And now please remind me... what's my motivation for walking in a manner worthy of my calling? Ephesians 3:14-19 told me that the natural impossibility of doing this is made possible by Your love filling me and strengthening me with all the fullness of God. And now I see my motivation is the oneness of God... You in me, so that I can be one with others... especially with my husband.

Vs. 4-6 ~ "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

The word "one" is repeated 7 times in these few verses... It means... one. Only one. To what do all these "ones" refer?

- 1. One body... Jesus is the head of the body and the church is one body in Christ... through salvation. I am not separate from others and it is NOT my body, where everyone else needs to get in line with ME. WE all need to submit to Jesus as our Head.*
- 2. One Spirit... The Holy Spirit seals us all and brings us together in unity as we cooperate with Him.*
- 3. One hope... All believers have one hope... the hope of eternal life with Him. With God, nothing is ever hopeless.*
- 4. One Lord... Father, Son, Holy Spirit, perfectly united in mind, character, and purpose.*
- 5. One faith... not "every road leads to heaven." One road through one faith in One Savior.*
- 6. One baptism... ALL believers have gone down into death with Jesus and we have been raised to new life through Jesus.*
- 7. One God and Father of all... only one. The Father sent His Son. The Son made the Father known to us. He is OVER all, THROUGH all, and IN all.*

What I see here as my motivation is that nothing centers on ME. I am part of something bigger than me! I did not cause this oneness and I cannot maintain this oneness without the Holy Spirit doing this work in me.

I see in my marriage something bigger than us. This is not just about a horizontal satisfaction that comes in being one with my husband. Together, we are part of the body of Christ. God wants us to thrive in unity with Him and each other, and only He can make that happen as we cooperate with Him... intentionally choosing to walk in a manner worthy of His calling... recognizing that this is impossible with natural man, but absolutely possible with our supernatural God. O Lord, please help me to fix my eyes on You and pursue this oneness with ALL members of the body of Christ, and especially with my husband... all for Your glory.