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On this week's episode of Chosen and Cherished, we talked about the mindset the Lord wants us to have as we abide in Him. He wants us to think US, not ME. If you'd like to listen to the episode, here's the link... <https://summitpoint.org/chosen-and-cherished/>

*Blessings,
Jonna*

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5 ~

I'm so excited about this new series we're starting... Kingdom Outposts. This week's message is entitled, Gospel Fury. I just LOVE that title. I so want that to describe this church!!!

The Book of 1 Thessalonians was one of Paul's first letters. Only one or two of the gospels were written before this book. So this would have been among some of the first of the written New Testament scriptures for the new believers. It makes me think how blessed we are today to have the whole of scripture in the Bible. I pray that we will never take it for granted.

We learn about Thessalonica in Acts 17. Paul was on his second missionary journey when he preached the gospel to this city. Some Jews in the city tried to stop Paul, Silas, and Timothy from preaching the gospel, but the good news of Jesus cannot be stopped. Paul and the boys wrote this first letter to the church just a few months after they were with them. I wonder what it must have been like for the church to get this letter from Paul. I want to read it as they would have, and see what God wants me to apply to my own life.

Vs. 1 ~ "Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace."

In so many of his letters, Paul addressed himself as an apostle or a servant of Christ, but in this early letter, he didn't even really draw attention to himself at all. He just wanted to jump into encouraging these new believers in Christ.

Vs. 2-3 ~ "We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our

prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

One thing I see in Paul's letters is how much he valued prayer. In almost all his letters to the churches he told them that he was praying for them. And he often asked them to pray for him. Paul never viewed himself as superior to others. He knew that he needed the Lord, and he understood that the believers needed the Lord far more than they needed him. What must it have been like to hear that Paul was praying for them? I would think that would be really encouraging in itself.

Paul said he constantly remembered the Thessalonian believers in prayer. He was so thankful for their:

- Work of faith ~ To work for the Lord without faith in Him is to NOT work for the Lord. Anything not motivated from trust in Him is motivated from fear or selfish ambition or desire for some other kind of self-gratification. To work for the Lord is to work out of gratitude for what He's done. Paul saw that the Thessalonian church genuinely believed in the Lord and worked for His glory. There's something really beautiful about genuine faith expressed in works. It brings joy to the people who see it.*
- Labor of love ~ Sacrificial love is not easy. It requires giving without expectation or condition. That's labor... that can be painful... but it's a willing labor because of genuine love. That's reason to thank the Lord.*
- Steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ ~ Steadfastness... patient endurance. Hope... confident anticipation. Paul celebrated their ability to patiently endure trials because their confident anticipation of eternal life with God through Jesus was unwavering. That's reason to thank God. They understood that this broken world was not their hope and not their home.*

Would Paul be able to thank the Lord for these things in me or in our church? Are our works motivated from faith? Do we labor in love toward others because of the love we've been given? Do we patiently endure whatever trials come because our hope is not in our circumstances but in our Lord? O Lord, please make it so. Please help me to cooperate with You as You change me from one degree of glory to the next. These are the things that take me from glory to glory.

If I'm being honest, I struggle with patiently enduring. I am willing to wait, but what am I waiting for? Am I waiting for You to be glorified in me? Or am I waiting for this struggle to finally end? Am I waiting for You to use the circumstances to make me more like Jesus? Or am I waiting to be comfortable again. O Lord, please help me to let go of my desire for easy and comfortable, and help me to be willing to endure any trial because I get a greater depth of relationship with You. This is my prayer. You say if I ask in Your name, You will grant my wish. My wish is to be like Jesus, whatever it costs me here on earth. I can trust that You will faithfully answer this prayer.

Vs. 4-5 ~ "For we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake."

Paul, Silas, and Timothy knew something... They could see it with their eyes. They knew and saw that the believers were truly their brothers and sisters in Christ, were truly chosen by God, and truly loved by God and by themselves. That's huge right there!!! Knowing Jesus makes us family. Knowing Jesus is a constant reminder of God's love. O Lord, please help people to be able to see with their eyes that we are unified, members of the family of God, chosen and cherished by God Himself. To have this knowledge changes our confidence, our security, our peace, our joy.

How could they know and see that these brothers and sisters in Christ were chosen and cherished by God? Because they saw that when these people heard the gospel from Paul and the others, they didn't just take in the words. They did more than that. The words came ~

- In power... They received power to hear the words and receive the words.*
- In the Holy Spirit ~ When true salvation occurs, the believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit as guarantee of his inheritance with the Lord.*
- With full conviction... The believer is so sure of the hope of the gospel that he is willing to put all his eggs in one basket... the basket of Jesus Christ.*

There's no power in just hearing the word. James 1:22 says, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." Without the Holy Spirit, there's no sealing or transformation. Without full conviction, we will never confess Jesus as Lord. Paul celebrated that these people were genuine believers who heard the word and embraced the word. It was written all over their joy filled faces.

What were the things Paul did in this passage? He thanked God, he faithfully prayed, he remembered the church with love. He, Silas, and Timothy also proved to be genuine in their love for the Lord, as they said in vs. 5. I pray that I will notice more reasons to thank God for what I see in others, that I will faithfully pray for others, and that I'll remember the God honoring things I see in them rather than dwelling on any negative. I also pray that the evidence of my life will prove that I'm a genuine follower of Jesus.

What did the Thessalonians do? They put their faith in action; they worked hard for the Lord even if it cost them because they loved Him and they loved His people. They patiently endured trials because of their hope in Jesus... They knew that this world is not their home. O Lord, please let this be true in me!

What do I see about the Lord from this passage? He is the highest authority, so I need to bring my prayers to Him. He chose me. He loves me. He went out of His way to make sure I

heard the gospel and would receive it for myself. His Spirit gives me power to believe with full assurance, holding nothing back.

O Lord, I pray that if Paul were writing a letter today, he could write these first 5 verses about our church. I pray that we will not just be hearers of Your word, but that we'll receive Your word in power and in the strength of the Spirit, so much so that we put our faith in action, pour out love even if it costs us, and endure whatever struggles we go through because our hope is not in this world but in You. Please make it so in us. Give us gospel fury!