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On this week's episode of Chosen and Cherished, we started a study in the book of Philippians. They call it the book of joy. The amazing thing is, when Paul wrote it, he was in prison. And yet he was filled with joy. I'm looking forward to learning why and how he could be. If you'd like to listen to the podcast, here's the link ~ <https://summitpoint.org/chosen-and-cherished/>

*Blessings,
Jonna*

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8 ~

Today, we begin the passage that will take us into the next week of Kingdom Output, having a humble purpose. As I'll see in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8, having a humble purpose doesn't mean weakness. I can be humble and bold at the same time. The most important part of a humble purpose is recognizing that my purpose is to please God and not man. When I seek to please God, other people may appreciate my heart for Him as it spills over into care for them. But if my goal is to please people BEFORE God, I will be motivated by the wrong things. At the core of pleasing man is self-protection or self-gratification. At the core of pleasing God is security and gratitude for Him and His love.

I don't want to forget that Paul called the church to imitate him and the Lord Jesus. So as Paul describes his humble purpose in this passage, I want it to become my humble purpose, too.

Vs. 1 ~ "For you yourselves know, brothers (and sisters), that our coming to you was not in vain."

Basically, Paul is saying... "You know that our ministry to you was not a waste of time." If I look back on chapter 1, I see why he says that. He saw the power of the Holy Spirit working in them...

- As they became imitators of the missionaries and of the Lord.*
- As they received the word with joy even though it was in the midst of a lot of struggle.*

- *As their faith became examples to other people miles and miles away.*
- *As they genuinely turned from idols to serve the living God and wait for Jesus to return.*

That sounds like VERY EFFECTIVE ministry!!! I pray those things could be said of me and of our Kingdom Outpost.

Vs. 2 ~ "But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict."

I love this about Paul... and I'm challenged by his unshakable devotion to the Lord. Before going to Thessalonica, he and the other missionaries had been in Philippi where they were beaten and thrown into jail for doing nothing wrong. But that did not stop them from boldly carrying the gospel to the next place. They did not fear the reproach of man. They were laser focused on the gospel, and they were excited to continue their ministry when they reached the Thessalonians.

I always joke (and kinda tell the truth, too) that God made me a biblical counselor because He knew that I needed constant reminding. I think Paul and the other missionaries had a huge advantage in their walk with the Lord because they were constantly sharing the gospel. It never gets old. It's the living and active word of God, the good news! It only gets better the more you understand it and all its implications. I can have that growing understanding, too. All I have to do is focus on the gospel every day.

Vs. 3-8 ~ Paul went on to explain more about his appeal of the gospel that he continued to declare to the people. I see as I read these next several verses that the gospel not only affects my hope and understanding of God, but it also affects my affections for His people.

"For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts."

Paul wasn't lying and his motives weren't impure. He wasn't trying to bamboozle anyone. He said he was entrusted with the gospel for his own life... and so he spoke that same truth to others, not to please them, but to please God. In 2 Corinthians 4:2 he said, "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God." It's never wrong that people are pleased with what we do. It IS wrong when my motives are to please people. When I'm seeking to please people instead of God, I will be tempted to compromise the truth in order to keep them happy with me. That's not good.

Also, this says we seek to "please God who tests our hearts." What does that mean??? A few passages that help me understand this are...

- *Psalm 26:2 ~ "Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind." God's testing of my heart, the center of my feelings, desires, and choices, as well as my mind, where I process the information that my hearts acts upon... proves my faith. Testing proves the loyalty of my heart and mind.*
- *Jeremiah 17:10 ~ "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds." The fruit that comes from the testing of my heart and mind is displayed in my actions. God tests my heart and my mind in order to reward me for what aligns with Him.*
- *James 1:2-3 ~ "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness." The testing of my faith proves how steadfast I am in my relationship with the Lord.*
- *1 Peter 1:6-7 ~ "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." God only gives me necessary trials that prove out how genuine my faith is, and the result of my faith is praise, glory, and honor from the Lord. That's pretty cool.*

O Lord, I pray that the testing of my heart, mind, and faith will show a growing resolve to please You alone. It's totally fine that others are pleased, even that I'm pleased. But when the test comes to see where my loyalty lies, I pray that You will be at the top of my devotion every single time.

"For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness."

I know that I'm trying to please man instead of God when use flattery, which is a form of manipulation. When I'm trying to please the Lord, there's no need for flattery. God is truth. His word is truth. He never hides the truth. Trying to please man is also often for greedy purposes. There's no need to be greedy when I'm trying to please the Lord. He who witnesses all that we do is a generous Father. Nothing escapes His notice. Our truth and loyalty are seen by Him and blessed by Him.

"Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ."

When I'm trying to please the Lord, there's no need to seek glory or honor from people. John 12:42-43 tells me that seeking glory from others makes me compromise what I know to be true. It says, "Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the

Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God." In John 5:44 Jesus said to the people, "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" Seeking the glory of man necessarily makes my faith fail.

Paul said he could have made demands as an apostle. He wasn't saying he was allowed to seek the glory of man or to use flattery or deceit. He was saying as an apostle who was given more authority from God than other believers, he could have made demands on the people to provide for his needs. But he chose not to do that because he didn't want anything to hinder their understanding of the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 9:14-15, Paul said he could have demanded that the church pay him for preaching the gospel, but he chose not to use those rights. In 1 Corinthians 9:18-19 he gave the reason why, "What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them." Anything to advance the gospel and not SELF. O Lord, please make that my heart as well!!!

"But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us."

Instead of using lies or deception or flattery or greed, and instead of demanding his rights as an apostle, he said, "We were gentle among you." In Philippians 1:8, he said, "God is my witness, how I YEARN for you all with the affection of Jesus." He genuinely cared for the believers in the same way that a nursing mom cherishes her baby. He says this right after talking about demands he could have put on them. Instead, he did more than share the gospel with them. He shared his own heart because they mattered to him. No one is just a number in the eyes of God. And no one is just a number in the eyes of God's ambassadors who represent Him.

How do I know that someone who's pouring into the lives of other believers is in it to please the Lord and not man? They will speak truth no matter what. They will never manipulate or flatter. When there's a conflict, they will stay steady in their devotion to the Lord, so they will stay steady in their care for others. They won't make demands.

I pray that my loyalty will always be to the Lord, and that it will be proved out and tested. I pray that my heart, mind, and faith will bear fruit that pleases God first and foremost, but also helps me to have authentic affection for people, genuinely wanting to see them grow in the Lord by faith. O Lord, please make it so in me. I know my motives will be somewhat mixed until You take me home. But I pray that what used to be 70% for me (or more) and 30% for You will veer closer and closer to 100% for You until the day You take me home.