



10/9/26

1 Thessalonians 2:15-3:5

Whelp! My voice came back from vacation, so I was able to record this week's episode of Chosen and Cherished. Brace yourself... it's about joy and it's about serving... Serving the Lord is our Greatest Joy. If you'd like to hear the episode, here's the link... <https://summitpoint.org/chosen-and-cherished/>

*Blessings,
Jonna*

This week we'll start our next focus in our series, Kingdom Outpost... The War is On. Yikes! What war? In John 17, Jesus said that believers in Him are "not of this world, even as He is not of this world." In 1 John 3:13, John said, "Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you." Yikes. Genuine followers of Christ are enemies in the world's eyes because we're enemies of the world's prince, the devil himself. Today's passage shows me the heart of the enemy, and how I should respond to his and his followers' attacks.

I need to start in vs. 14 because vs. 15 starts in the middle of a sentence...

1 Thessalonians 2:14b-16 ~ "For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last!"

Those who are not with Jesus are AGAINST Him. There is no neutral ground. Some oppose through apathy or ignoring the truth, but others are on the warpath. They killed Jesus. They killed His prophets. They will do whatever they can to stop His people from spreading the gospel. 1 Timothy 4:2 calls them "liars whose consciences are seared." 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 speaks of those who don't know Jesus, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of

God." Satan is on the warpath, and he has insincere liars on the warpath with him who seek to drive out believers, have no interest in pleasing God, and really... oppose all mankind. How do they oppose all mankind? They actively work to hinder the message of the gospel from reaching the ears of Gentiles (unbelievers) to keep them from being saved. Their goal is take people down with them, to experience the wrath of God with them that IS upon them because if God has declared it, it SHALL be so.

Let no one be deceived. Satan is NEVER for us... not for believers and not for unbelievers. He HATES us because we are all made in the image of God, and He hates God. Whether we know it, acknowledge it, or ignore it, Satan is on the warpath, and we are in a war. Yikes!

You know what I think is so cool about what comes next? Paul didn't talk about how to fight fire with fire. He didn't talk about strategies to fight the devil. He knew what John said in 1 John 4:4 was true, "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." Instead of strategizing, Paul turned his attention to the believers. He spoke with love and not hate...

Vs. 17-20 ~ "But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy."

His whole desire was to come and encourage the Thessalonians because he hated being torn from them, although he said they were only torn away in person but not in heart. He said Satan hindered them from coming. Why would he hinder them from coming? Why does he care? Divide and conquer. If he could keep Paul and the other missionaries from coming, maybe he could steal, kill, devour, and destroy the church so that the gospel would be stopped.

That's always been his plan. It started in the Garden of Eden. It continued through the Old Testament even as he tried to wipe out the Jews because he knew the Messiah would come from their bloodline. He tried to kill Jesus. Even as a baby when he personally knew that Jesus' parents had been warned that Herod was coming to kill him and they fled to Egypt, he still incited Herod to kill all the baby boys who were 2 years and under. He is evil! And he celebrated when Jesus was crucified... not so much 3 days later. And now, he's on the warpath to stop people from receiving the truth that sets us free!!! Nothing he offers is good... ever!!! Let us not be deceived!!!

But back to Paul. He wanted to come and encourage these brothers and sisters in Christ. They were excited to boast about them before the Lord because of their genuine faith in Jesus. It was his hope and joy and crown of boasting before the Lord because the believers were his joy and glory. It brought Paul joy to see their love for Jesus, and he knew it was also his honor to share the love of Christ with them. When we serve Jesus faithfully by serving His people faithfully, it becomes our joy and honor. This is how we fight the war.

How much did Paul actually care? 1 Thessalonians 3 shows me how he put his love into action.

Vs. 1-3a ~ "Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, that no one be moved by these afflictions."

They didn't have texting or email back then. Paul couldn't just call them up and ask how things were going. He cared so much that he had to do something. So... at the height of all the opposition he was personally facing, he ended up in Athens (Acts 17). It was a very lonely time for him. But it was more important to him that these believers would be encouraged in their faith. So he had Timothy leave him and he sent him to them with 2 goals... to "establish" them, to strengthen them so that they could hold firm in the faith... and to "exhort" them, encourage and comfort them in the faith, so that no amount of affliction, distress, suffering, or tribulation could move them from their loyalty to Jesus.

He didn't want them to sink into that downward spiral that starts with, "Why God? Why are You allowing this? You have all power and authority. You could stop this. Why aren't You stopping it?" And it spirals down to the declaration that "God is not good." But God IS good. He strengthens us and encourages us and comforts us. He doesn't leave us alone in it. War is never easy. This is a war. The one we need to recognize as not being good is the enemy who is opposed to ALL mankind, whether they are for God or against Him. And God always prepares us if we will just pay attention. God never lies to us. Paul explains this next.

Vs. 3b-5 ~ "For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain."

Suffering on this battlefield called earth is the destiny of all who call on the name of Jesus Christ as Lord. But we have so many promises from the Lord that He won't leave us here alone. Psalm 73:24 says, "You guide me with Your counsel, and afterward You will receive me to glory." 1 Peter 5:10 says, "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." Revelation 21:3-4 speaks of when it's all said and done and we are with Him in glory, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." Amen!!!

So don't be surprised that we're in a war. Satan will use every strategy he can to hinder us. But let me not forget this... if God allows Satan to hinder me, it's because God is using it for my good. I may be destined to experience affliction on this earth, but Romans 8:28-29 also tells

me that it is my destiny to become like Jesus. And even what Satan uses to hinder, God will use for my good. Everything Satan does to tear me down makes him become God's servant to help build me up in Christ and make my faith stronger. O Lord, open my eyes to that whatever Satan means for evil, You use for my good (Genesis 50:20).

Paul said, "Remember how, when we were with you, we kept telling that we would suffer affliction? And even you have suffered (1 Thessalonians 2:14-15). But even so, we were so concerned that you'd forget and get overwhelmed by the weight of it all that I had to send Timothy. I needed to know about your faith. I needed to hear that the tempter who uses any means necessary to take you down hadn't succeeded... It would break my heart to find out that our labor in sharing the gospel with you had come up empty." This is so huge!!! Paul did not focus on the devil or his works. He focused on encouraging and comforting the believers, so that they might not focus on the devil, but stand firm in their faith.

How do we fight this war? Stand firm in faith! Jesus fights FOR us!!! Jesus IS for us!!! Don't be deceived. Don't think the devil is for us, no matter who we are. He's not even for the insincere liars. Don't be deceived. Don't think this earth is our heaven. "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to himself." Yes, we are in a war... and yes, we have the victory. "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." Amen! Yes! May it be so!!!