



10/16/26

On this week's episode of Chosen and Cherished, we continued our study in Philippians and looked at what it means to work OUT your salvation while God works IN you. If you'd like to listen to the podcast, here's the link... <https://summitpoint.org/chosen-and-cherished/>

*Blessings,
Jonna*

1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

We've just finished a week focused on "The War is On" and now we go to the new theme for next week, "Community of Love." Both are true. We ARE in a war this side of heaven AND we are a community of believers who are called to come alongside each other in the love of Christ... to take our stand in this war together, with our Savior and Lord fighting for us. We are not alone in any sense of the word. I pray that we would know that and experience it and trust it.

As I look over this passage in 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13, I see very clearly that Paul's involvement with the Thessalonian believers was personal. He deeply cared for them. He had shared that he nurtured them like a nursing mother and he exhorted and encouraged them like a father. He knew the enemy was trying to crush their faith, and he was deeply concerned that they would get caught in his trap, not because he had seen any evidence of a wavering faith, but because he knew the devil's tactics and how crafty he could be. He couldn't go to them. So he did the next best thing. He sent Timothy. And then he waited for news of their faith from Timothy when he returned.

I remember when my daughter spent a semester in Israel. My heart was split between here and there. There wasn't a moment that went by where she wasn't somewhere in my thoughts. Was she okay? Did she need anything? I knew I couldn't get to her if she needed me and it was always a weight I felt bearing down on my heart. I think that's similar to what Paul was feeling. He never had biological kids of his own. But these were all like his kids. All of them mattered to him.

So when Timothy arrived and said that their faith and their love was still intact, and that they always remembered Paul and the other missionaries and were longing to see them again, Paul was overjoyed! He said, "For this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord." In other words, we had been distressed and deeply concerned for you, but now we were deeply encouraged by your faith! We could finally breathe easy because we knew that you were standing fast IN THE LORD. Nothing was derailing your faith and loyalty to Him.

What a wonderful blessing to know that someone you love is standing firm in their faith in the Lord regardless of the opposition... even when you're not there to help encourage their faith. I always prayed for my daughters and their future husbands (who are now their husbands) ... and now I pray for this for my grandchildren... that they would have such a deep faith in the Lord that no trial or struggle OR success could make them turn away from the Lord. I always prayed for their salvation, but more than that, that their commitment to Him and love for Him would never be mundane or just going through the motions. I also recognize that I need to be praying that for myself and for my husband... that we would never think we've arrived, and we don't need to completely and humbly rely on the Lord. The enemy is always looking for an opportunity to crush our faith.

This is why it's so important to pray and to be in community. We need to encourage each other and spur each other on. God never calls us to stand on our two feet. We need Him and He provides us with brothers and sisters in Christ to lock arms and "encourage each other every day, as long as it is called today, that none of us will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13).

Over the rest of this passage Paul spoke of his prayer to God for these believers he loved so much. Paul understood the incredible importance of prayer. Prayer is simply conversation with the Lord.

I looked up some quotes on prayer... here are a few I found...

"Our ordinary views of prayer are not found in the New Testament. We look upon prayer as a means for getting something for ourselves; the Bible idea of prayer is that we may get to know God Himself." ~ Oswald Chambers

"Some people pray just to pray and some people pray to know God." ~ Andrew Murray

"Some people think God does not like to be troubled with our constant coming and asking. The way to trouble God is not to come at all." D.L. Moody

I think of the fact that Jesus prayed. He spent hours with His Father in prayer. He thanked. He shared needs. He listened. He grieved. He modeled for me what a relationship with the Father I can't see looks like. I can't see Him, but our relationship is very real, and I can talk

with Him. He WANTS to be in relationship with me. Psalm 105:4 says, "Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His presence continually!" I think that means... all the time. And He's always there. He's never too busy and there's nothing too big or too small for me to bring to Him.

So what did Paul's prayer look like?

First... it was gratitude and joy. He said, "For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God..." Right away I see that Paul didn't thank the Thessalonians for their faith. He thanked the Lord. He knew that it is "in the Lord that we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are strengthened to stand firm in faith. We cooperate with God by submitting to Him and He gives us the strength to accomplish what He has for us to do. So Paul thanked God. Prayer includes gratitude, and gratitude grows our joy as we actively pay attention to what God is doing.

Paul also prayed for the opportunity to be able to see these believers face to face. He said, "we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith." Paul loved being used by God to encourage them in their faith... and he also understood that God was in charge of the plan.

His prayer was to be able to "supply what was lacking in their faith." Their faith was strong. But our faith needs to keep growing. Paul knew that they could grow weary from opposition and affliction, and he wanted to help equip them so that their faith could grow as they endured whatever trials they would face. I love seeing how Paul never stopped wanting to care for them, and he never assumed that he knew better than the Lord what was needed.

He prayed, "Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you..." His prayer was humble and surrendered. "Not my will, but Yours be done, Lord." He prayed with open hands... Whatever You say, Lord, may it be so. He also recognized that he didn't have to pray to an angel or anyone other than God Himself. God Himself listens to our prayers. That's huge! I pray that I will never take that for granted. God Himself cares for me!!!

Finally, Paul prayed with an understanding of God's purpose. His prayer showed that he was on God's plan. He said, "and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints." He prayed that THE LORD would increase their love. That's His purpose... to increase our love. My love doesn't grow because I make it grow. My love grows because the Lord makes it grow to the point that it abounds... as His love abounds.

Paul used the words "so that." That's a purpose statement. There's a purpose for my love growing. What is it? It is through my growing love for the Lord and others that God strengthens and establishes my heart so that I'm found to be blameless and holy. Now wait a second! I know me! How can I be called blameless and holy? It's all Jesus. By His blood, I am

made blameless and holy according to the law of freedom, the law of the Spirit of life who sets me free from the law of sin and death. By His strength the Holy Spirit transforms me to become blameless and holy as I continue to surrender my heart to Him. Hebrews 10:14 says, "For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." By His offering I am declared blameless and holy for all time because Jesus is blameless and holy... and now He's working in me to make me blameless and holy like Jesus.

When Jesus returns with all the saints, all the believers, I will be counted blameless and holy before the only opinion that matters... that of my God and Father in heaven, because of the sacrifice of His Son.

I will be with Jesus, face to face with the Father, with ALL the saints. Jesus' love poured into my heart... my heart responding in love for Him and for all the saints. O Lord, as much as possible, let this be the culture of our Kingdom Outpost... all the saints standing firm in our faith, loving Jesus in obedience, loving others, and growing more and more in His love. "Whoever keeps His word, in him truly the LOVE of God is perfected... Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling" (1 John 2:5, 10). O Lord, make us strong in Your love.