

February 9, 2025

God's Good News Story – The Church Aive & Growing

I Thessalonians – Part 2

God's Good News Story - "The Church Alive & Growing" is our ongoing multi-year where we are working our way chronologically, historically, and missionally through the New Testament. Our goals are to have a clear understanding of what the Bibel says about the 1st Century church and its' growth and the principles and lessons we can learn from them to keep the Church Alive & Growing in the 21st Century.

We are in week 2 of our mini-series in the book of 1st Thessalonians, which is the 52nd book of the Bible and the 13th book of the New Testament. It appears to have been one of the earliest books of the New Testament written by the Apostle Paul while on his 2nd Missionary Journey between 49-54AD. It was written to address concerns by the church in Thessalonica by encouraging them to live right, trust in God and place their hope in the sure and certain 2nd coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

J. Vernon McGee saw a threefold purpose, which he put this way:

"(1) To confirm young converts in the elementary truth of the gospel.

(2) To condition them to go on unto holy living; and

(3) To comfort them regarding the return of Christ."

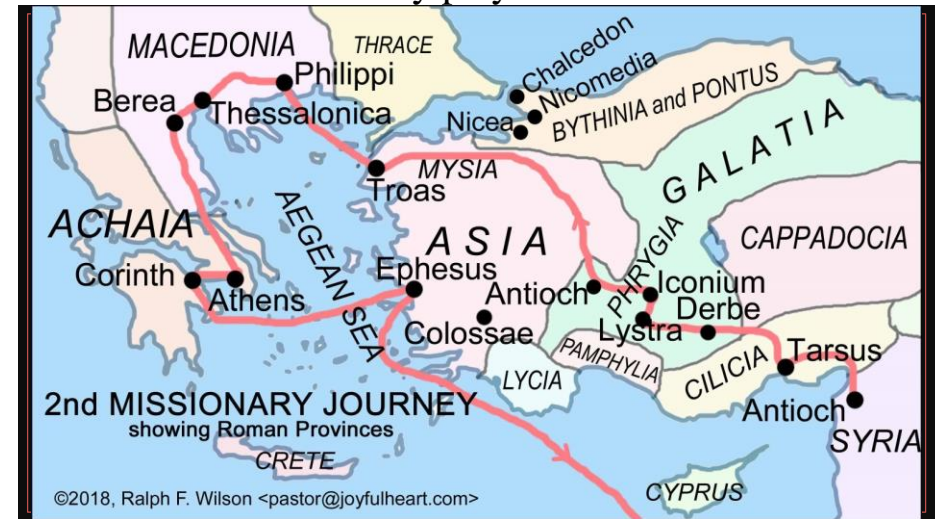
(McGee, 5:368)

Key Theme: Encourage & Comfort one another in the midst of uncertain times.

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As we look briefly at this map, I want to remind you that we are looking at approximately 49-54AD time frame for this Missionary Church Planting Journey which covered

about 3 years in time frame and 2700 miles in distance. Paul & Silas were the key players in this adventure



Last week our message revealed...

Their Work of Faith

Their Labor of Love

Their Steadfastness of Hope (in Jesus Christ)

In Chapter 1 we saw the description of an ideal church. Here in Chapter 2 the focus moves to the Ideal Christian Leader/Pastor we see in Paul, and how the church is blessed by such leaders. Warren Wiersbe states "Just as God uses people to bring the Gospel to the lost, so He uses people to nurture the new believers in Christ and help them to mature. The Church at Thessalonica was born through faithful preaching and the Church was nurtured through faithful pastoring". (Wiersbe, P. 163)

Paul uses a familiar technique to help the church understand Pastor Paul and his role. He uses word pictures to help them visualize the function of the Pastor/Leader. (Adapted from Warren Wiersbe)

1. The Faithful Steward (1-6)

1 Thessalonians 2: 1-6... *¹For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, ²but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. ³For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; ⁴but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. ⁵For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness— ⁶nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.*

In these first 6 verses we hear the heart of a faithful servant Pastor/Evangelist/Church Planter who holds the Gospel of Jesus Christ in highest regard. In verse 4 we read where Paul uses the analogy of a Trust. He speaks of the Gospel as being entrusted to him and other leaders where the role and responsibility is to be a faithful steward of that Gospel Trust. This analogy reveals that he sees himself and other Christians as Stewards of the Gospel Good News 'Trust'. The steward of a trust does not own or possess it, they are tasked with the job of managing all the resources of the Trust Owner...God. Every steward is also responsible for the best use of the resources and will face an accounting one day for their actions. Faithfulness and integrity are vital qualities for a Steward. Paul reminds them of his faithfulness and his commitment to purity and approval of God. We see in the

manner, the message, the motive, and the method of his work that Paul is a godly and bold example of a faithful steward.

Paul continues his description of a godly leader by using another analogy...

2. The Gentle Mother (7,8)

1 Thessalonians 2: 7,8... *⁷But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. ⁸Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.*

Whereas the example of the Steward was on faithfulness, this example expands the godly leader's description to include gentleness and love. Paul was obviously a man of bold, faithful authority but he also balanced that out with a loving gentleness; a trait that is often not used in our day when describing a leader. But in God's leadership plan, gentleness is an important and necessary trait. It takes time and energy to care for people and Paul shows that he has taken the time and patience to gently lead them into spiritual maturity. Paul teaches us that God's Leadership Model not only includes a Faithful Servant Steward mindset, but it also includes a caring, loving and gentle element. People will more likely (*joyfully*) follow a leader who loves them than follow one who induces fear.

Paul then continues with the family imagery with the next leader's trait.

3. The Concerned Father (9-12)

1 Thessalonians 2:9-12... ⁹ *For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.* ¹⁰ *You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers;* ¹¹ *just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children,* ¹² *so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.*

Not only did Paul lovingly and gently care for the Church he also had a guiding, directing role in which like a ‘concerned father’, he sought to exhort, encourage and motivate his ‘spiritual children’ to walk in a manner worthy of God, in righteousness and truth.

Paul shows in his work, his walk, and his words what a spiritual leader/father should do. He went on to encourage them, comfort them and challenge them to become mature followers and live a life worthy of God.

These last verses round out Paul’s teaching of a Servant Leader role and segue us naturally to a focus on the people (church members) and reminds them of their roles, resources and responsibilities now that Paul had preached and pastored them. He was acting like a good leader/coach/father and urging them on to live up to the training they had received.

4. God’s Word Within Us (13)

1 Thessalonians 2:13... *For this reason, we also constantly thank God that when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the Word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.*

The Church Planter and Pastor Paul transitions smoothly from what His purpose and plan for them was to showing them that the same Word that he preached to them to lead them to faith is the same Powerful Word that is now within them. He motivates and encourages them with the powerful truth that they have the Word of God in them and thus they can be faithful and say it with me
“Powerful witnesses of God’s Good News Story, motivated by love and empowered by the Holy Spirit”

Paul seems to be saying “I shared with you the Word, now it’s yours...live powerfully through it”!

Next Pastor Paul adds to the resource of the Word to the resource of God’s People, the Church, around them.

5. **God's People Around Us (vs. 14-16)**

1 Thessalonians 2:14-16...¹⁴ For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews,¹⁵ who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men,¹⁶ hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.

Paul then shows the next logical step to having the Word of God within us... The powerful transformation in their lives and their fellow believers to be bold, hope filled and joyful overcomers. Sadly, even when believers follow God and walk worthy there is still going to be difficult and challenging times. We live in a fallen, sin-broken world and we will face hardships. But Paul seems to be saying, just as I and other leaders have stayed faithful even in persecution, so must you. He then states that as they stay faithful and imitate the ways of Christ, they will become witnesses and examples to other Christians. Their faithful example and endurance will be a motivation for others to stand fast, stay true and never give up, no matter how difficult it may become.

The last 4 verses we will close with, but I will also pick up with them as they tie into newt Sunday's message.

6. **God's Glory Before Us (17-20)**

1 Thessalonians 2:17-20...¹⁷ But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face.¹⁸ For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan hindered us.¹⁹ For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

Here Paul, the Faithful Steward, The Gentle Mother and the Concerned Father, brags on his 'spiritual children'. He states that he wishes he could have stayed with them longer, but that Satan hindered him. In a sense Paul is saying, "*I trained you right, make me proud*", but then he moves it to the highest level and states that they are making the Lord Jesus proud as His glory and joy. What a gift that Paul gave his 'spiritual children; He gave them the proper encouragement, love and direction and challenged them to continue in their faithful service to God.

Paul in saying to the 1st Century Church, and to us as the 21st Century Church as well...

Don't Give Up! Lay hold of the spiritual resources you have in Jesus Christ. You have the Word of God Within you, The People of God Around You, and the Glory of God Before You. Shine Brightly for God!