

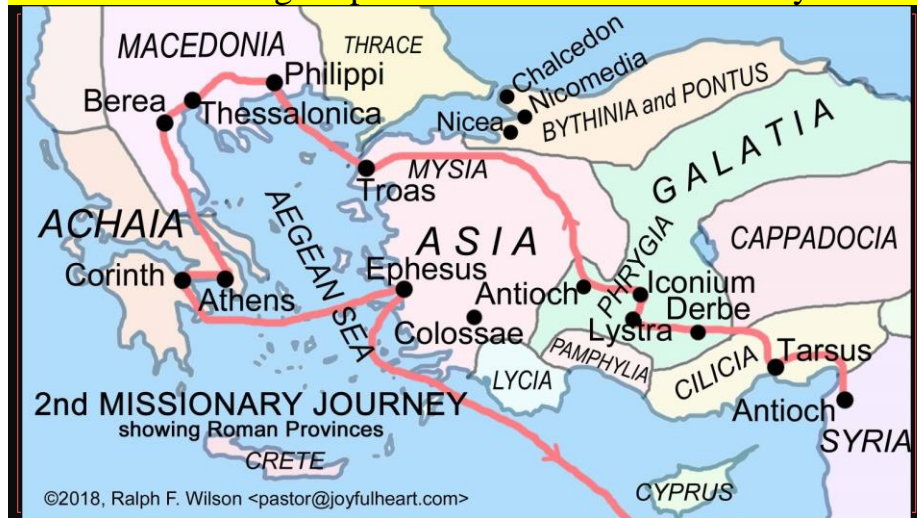
February 2, 2025

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

I Thessalonians – Part 1

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 Bible 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.

Last week we caught up to Paul on his 2nd Missionary Journey



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.

Let's take a look into the background and 1st Chapter with this creative art concept from the Bible Project.com

<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-1-thessalonians/>

"This is one of the earliest letters we have from Paul, (Galatians being the possible earlier). Last week we were introduced in Acts Chapter 17 the background of the church at Thessalonica. Paul and his coworker Silas went to the ancient Greek city of Thessalonica. After nearly a month of telling people the good news, a large number of both Jewish and Greek people gave their allegiance to Jesus and formed the first church community there. But trouble was brewing as Paul's announcement of the risen Jesus as the true Lord led to local opposition. The Christians in Thessalonica were accused of defying Caesar, the Roman emperor, by "saying that there's another king, Jesus" ([Acts 17:7](#)). This led to persecution that became so intense that Paul and Silas were forced to flee from Thessaloniki. This was a doubly painful tragedy as they loved the people there. This letter is Paul's attempt to reconnect with them after receiving a report from Timothy that the Thessalonian Christians were doing more than okay—they were flourishing despite intense persecution.

This letter was written with two main movements. The first section celebrates their faithfulness ([1 Thess. 1-3](#)), while the other section is a challenge to keep growing as followers of Jesus ([1 Thess. 4-6](#)). These two larger sections are surrounded by three prayers. The letter opens with a thanksgiving prayer in 1:1-5, with the two movements linked together by a transitional prayer in 3:11-13, and then the letter concludes with a final prayer in 5:23-28.

Paul opens the letter by giving thanks and celebrating the Thessalonians' faith, their love for others, and their hope in Jesus despite persecution.

He goes on to retell the story of their conversion, looking back at how they were once idolatrous polytheists living in a culture in which all of life was permeated with institutions and practices honoring the Greek and Roman gods. Paul says that they “turned away from idols to serve the living and true God and are waiting for the coming of God’s Son from heaven” ([1 Thess. 1:9-10](#)). In a city like Thessalonica, transferring your allegiance to the God of Israel and King Jesus came at a cost—isolation from your neighbors and hostility from family. But for these Christian Thessalonians, the overwhelming love of Jesus and the hope of his return made it all worth it”. (From <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-1-thessalonians/>)

1 Thessalonians is the 52nd book of the Bible and the 13th book of the New Testament. It may 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.

I think we can easily see how this same theme can be helpful to us today. Life is full of uncertainty, now just as it was in Paul’s day. The solution to uncertainty is found through prayer & God’s Word.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10... ¹ *Paul and Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.* ² *We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;* ³ *constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,* ⁴ *knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;* ⁵ *for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.* ⁶ *You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the Word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,* ⁷ *so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.* ⁸ *For the Word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.* ⁹ *For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God,* ¹⁰ *and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.*

This letter is attributed to Paul, but from the first lines it appears that it was a joint letter from Paul, Silvanus/Silas and Timothy. These three spiritual leaders were in harmony with their love and concern for these new Christian ‘brothers & sisters’ in the Thessalonian church. In fact, Paul uses this address over 15 times in the 1st letter and 7 times in the 2nd. Obviously, Paul and his coworkers had great love for these people.

Paul begins in his usual way with a greeting “***Grace and Peace to you***” then he jumps into warm, encouraging and uplifting comments filled with thanksgiving and prayer. Paul reveals his love for them by profusely praying for them and thanking them and for their faith, love and hope.

An important point to open with here is that Paul sets the example for Christians to pray and be thankful for other believers.

A 2nd point is to see that the Thessalonian Christians set the example of how we should live the Christian life:

Dr. Thomas Constable states this:

“Three characteristics of these Christians stood out to Paul: **First**, they had turned to Christ in faith. **Second**, they had served Him out of love. And **third**, they had borne up under tribulation patiently because of the hope that lay before them’. (Constable)

Another way to put it is

Their Work of Faith

Their Labor of Love

Their Steadfastness of Hope (in Jesus Christ)

<https://virtualbiblestudy.com/lessons/1-thessalonians>

These three specific words are echoed again by Paul in his letter to the church at Corinth in the famous ‘Love’ Chapter 13... vs. 13... ***But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.***

It is clear that we today in the 21st Century Church should strive to let these three traits show in our everyday life. Let’s take the brief time left to focus on these 3 characteristics of the 1st Century Thessalonian Church and measure how we as the 21st Century Broussard Church compare!

1. Their Work of Faith

Our faith can be described in many different ways, weak, strong, inactive or active etc. These Thessalonians had a strong, working, active faith. It could be humorously said of them ‘*Excuse, Your Faith is Showing!*’ At least three different times Paul makes mention of this working faith. It was a testimony to their genuine faith in God through Jesus Christ.

Point to Note: Put your faith to work... be active and positive in your faith walk.

2. Their Labor of Love

Next, we see Paul thanking them and acknowledging their Labor of Love. We all can recall how Jesus specifically said that the world would know we are His disciples by our love (See John 13:35, and others). This type of love is not just some sentimental, sappy, self-serving love. It is a genuine product of the 1st point – A Work of Faith. When we truly have a working, active faith, it will reveal itself in labors of love. More than just talk, Love will serve, work, care and minister in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Point to Note: Put your faith to work in genuine caring Labors of Love. This will bring glory to God, honor to Jesus and blessing to your fellow humans.

3. Their Steadfastness of Hope (in Jesus Christ)

Lastly, Paul includes in his thanks and prayers a remark on their Steadfastness of Hope in Jesus. As I mentioned earlier, these Thessalonian Christians were not having an easy time of it. They were under distress and some level of persecution. It would be easy to lose hope and wonder whether all this is worth it. But they did not lose hope, they leaned into hope with a vigorous steadfast assurance. They doubled down on their faith and love, and it produced a steadfast, enduring hope. They turned from the false hope of the pagan gods to the Sure and Steadfast Hope in Jesus. They believed what Paul wrote in vs. 10 *...to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.*

Point to Note: Let your faith in Jesus, and your love for God produce a vibrant, steadfast, enduring HOPE!

CLOSING WORDS

Let's Review The Description Of These
1st Century Christian Disciples

- **Their Work of Faith** – *They Were Grounded in their Faith Relationship With Jesus.*
- **Their Labor of Love** – *They Were Passionate About Their Calling To Love God And Love Others.*
- **Their Steadfastness of Hope (in Jesus Christ)** – *They Were Hopeful about their Future in Jesus.*

My question to us today as 21st Century Disciples.

What About:

Our Work of Faith

Our Labor of Love

Our Steadfastness of Hope?