

Nurturing Expectations

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[0 : 0 0] Let's begin. Our God, our Father, we thank you so much. You have given us Jesus Christ, our Lord, and it's through him that we have access to you.

It's only because of him, because of what he's done, because he's become a human being like us, because he stands before your throne and intercedes for us. It's because of that, God, that we can even speak to you right now.

And we thank you that you hear us. We thank you that your spirit is here among us, that you are glad that we are here together, that from the beginning of time, you chose us, you called us to do this, and to call us to do this in anticipation of the great hope we have to come.

God, I pray that you would nurture in us these great expectations of life, of a future with Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Amen. Well, we've all, most of us, I would say, have had an experience. Have you ever tried to explain something to a friend, to a co-worker, to a family member, and no matter how many words you use, it feels like things are just going right over their head.

[1 : 1 8] Now, if you're a parent with young children, how many times did it take you to explain to your children how to put on pants? Was it just like one time and then they were good?

They had it all figured out at that point? How about tying their shoes? Did they figure it out after just one time of explaining it? Did they ever seem to like forget at the most inopportune times?

When you're in a rush, it's almost like your children all of a sudden forget how to put on their pants, how to put on jackets, how to tie their shoes, how to do all of these things. You're like, I thought I told you how to do this. But it seems that everything you tell them just goes right over their head, right?

It takes a lot of reinforcing before they get it. And I've felt that way too. I've felt that way, whether it's in counseling situations, whether it's in preaching, sometimes you can just say the same thing over and over and over again to somebody and they just give you this blank stare.

You know, that blank empty stare like, I just don't have the mental categories to process what you're saying. Like, there are words coming out of your mouth and individually they make sense. But when you put them together, I don't understand them at all.

[2 : 2 6] It can be a pretty frustrating thing. And frankly, I've been on the receiving end of it too. I've got one particular book on my shelf that I just started reading it and about a third of the way I just gave up because I realized it's just like words are coming at me off the page and I have no idea what they mean.

I have no idea what is happening. So I just kind of gave up at that point. And that is incredibly frustrating whether you're on the giving end, whether you're on the receiving end of something like that. There is a big difference between the truth going into your ears and the truth going into your heart.

Big difference between the truth going into your ears and the truth actually making it all the way into your heart. And that difference is the difference between people who attend church, who grew up maybe attending church, who just kind of come on a Sunday, come on a regular basis on Sunday morning, between people who identify as Christians and people whose vibrant life is unforgettable and unmistakable.

The difference is between taking the truth into your ears and taking the truth into your heart. We want this vibrant life that is unforgettable, unmistakable.

And last week we asked the question, how does God transform us into vibrant people? And where we've been looking for answers to that question, to how does God transform us into vibrant people, is we've been looking to a letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to the first century church in a Macedonian city, the city of Thessalonica.

[4 : 06] Now this letter is preserved in our Bible as the book of 1 Thessalonians in the New Testament of the Bible. The answer that we found in 1 Thessalonians 1, verses 1-10, is that God transforms us into vibrant people through great expectations of life from Jesus, His Son.

The good news, we've received good news, and the good news we received is that God the Son became a man. He became Jesus of Nazareth. He was God's chosen king, His Messiah, His Christ.

And Jesus lived a perfectly good, a perfectly righteous life for our sake. He absolutely perfectly fulfilled God's right expectations of how a human being should live.

And yet He died on a criminal's cross, and He did it for our sake, on our behalf, rose again for our sake, and He returned to heaven to represent us before God the Father.

And so now everyone who believes in Jesus is accounted as righteous before God. Our sins, our rejection of God, and His good law, His good expectations, they have all been forgiven.

[5 : 18] Our sins have all been forgiven on the basis of what Jesus Christ has done on our behalf. That's the good news. And the good news doesn't stop there, because not only do you and I live a new life in God's family, but we have something to look forward to.

We have future grace to look forward to. We look forward to the day when Jesus Christ will return. On that day, we will be saved from God's anger against all that is evil and corrupt in this world.

We will be welcomed into the kingdom of God. So we have these great expectations of future grace. And these great expectations are what God uses to transform us into a vibrant people.

Now maybe you've got someone in mind. Maybe you're thinking of someone. And this person makes you sad, makes you feel sad inside because you know this person is not experiencing this vibrant life.

You know someone who is living without great expectations. of this magnitude, of this sort. Maybe you've got a son or daughter who grew up in the church but turned away from the Lord.

[6 : 37] Maybe you have a friend who claims to believe, but your friend really seems apathetic at best about Jesus Christ, about his kingdom, about his church.

Maybe you've got someone close to you who doesn't believe in Jesus at all. Now we learned last week that first of all, it is God's choosing, it is God's calling, it is the Holy Spirit's work that raises people up from spiritual death, that wakes people up from spiritual sleep, that opens the eyes of the spiritually blind.

It is God's initiative and God's work. It is not something that you and I can accomplish on our own. But, God usually, in this world, God usually does much of his work through human beings like you and me.

And so even though it takes God's initiative and the Holy Spirit's work to wake people up, God uses human beings like you and me. He's invited us to join him. to join him in his work of salvation.

This means that you and I have opportunities. We have opportunities and we have opportunities each day, including today, to implant great expectations in these people that we care about.

[8 : 03] and so we can be a part of helping them live the vibrant life of great expectations in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And so in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, picking up where we left off last week, 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 1 through 16, God the Holy Spirit is guiding his apostle Paul and he's guiding him to show us how we are to work at implanting these great expectations in the lives of others.

So follow along as I read in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 1 through 16. For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain.

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. 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.

For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed. God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.

[9 : 32] 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.

For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil. We worked night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you while we proclaim to you the gospel of God.

You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God and Christ Jesus that are in Judea. 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.

[11 : 04] So as always, to fill up the measure of their sins, but God's wrath has come upon them at last. This is the word of the Lord. So Paul is writing this letter after he has been driven out of this city, out of the city of Thessalonica, the city where he has planted a new church of new believers and Paul is corresponding with the church by letter and so we have this 2,000 year old letter that's part of that correspondence and the Jewish contingent that drove out Paul is continuing to reject this fledgling church and the people in the church are facing opposition and persecution from the Gentiles as well, from the Gentile people of Thessalonica.

And so Paul is writing to this church that is under pressure and he is writing to remind them of how he worked to implant great expectations of God's future grace in their hearts.

And that means that this is a perfect opportunity for you and me to ask of God this question. How does God implant our great expectations?

How does God implant our great expectations? how do they take root in our hearts? How do they take root in the hearts of the people we care about? Well if you want people to change some I know of some preachers who have a solution to that and their solution to changing people is to get up here and yell and scream at them a lot and to blow out the sound system.

That sort of preaching is a little bit more rare now than it was maybe 50, 60 years ago but if you look long and hard enough you turn over a few rocks you'll be able to find there are still a few preachers out there who will preach fire and brimstone not just when it does appear in God's word but they'll preach it as their bread and butter.

[13 : 04] And that might work at getting people to make a decision to escape future judgment. but what it doesn't do it doesn't implant great expectations of future grace.

And that means that that sort of preaching by itself as the bread and butter of a preacher's sermons that means that it is a very limited value in producing real vibrant change in my life in your life and the lives of the people that you care about.

According to what Paul is writing here in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 here's how God implants our great expectations. Through nurturing from the family of Christ. Through nurturing from the family of Christ.

That means that you and I we have a part to play in transforming your friends in transforming your biological family in transforming your spiritual family the local church Squamish Baptist Church into vibrant people of faith.

Every one of us has a part to play in this. You and you and you and you and you and you and you. According to what Paul is writing here we can work to implant great expectations in the lives of the people sitting around us and in the lives of others that we care about.

[14 : 36] In verses 1 through 12 Paul describes how the family of Christ the church nurtures these great expectations. So he starts with verses 1 through 4.

In verses 1 through 4 Paul writes for you yourselves know brothers that our coming to you was not in vain but though he 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 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.

So Paul and his companions had a God given boldness to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now there are many religious charlatans who might claim to have a message from God and man they come up with just some of the weirdest ideas some of those oddball ideas and what makes them especially oddball is they just seem to pop right out of their own mind and to come from nowhere else or there are religious charlatans who have corrupt and dirty motives or who use deceitful rhetoric clever word games in their speaking.

Paul and his companions were different. They were different because they had been tried they had been tested they had been approved by God to bring his good news to Thessalonica and they had no interest in being people pleasers.

They had no interest in surrounding themselves with people who made them feel really good about themselves and made them feel self-important. They were interested only in doing God's work.

[16 : 38] They were interested only in pleasing God even if that meant they were suffered even if that meant they were shamefully treated for it. They were heralds not hucksters.

Heralds not hucksters. At least that's commentator Gene Green words in. If your name is Gene Green I guess you love word plays a lot. So that's what he says. Love this quote.

The heralds were not hucksters who hustled these people. In this way Paul was following in the footsteps of his Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was no huckster either.

In the Gospel of Matthew chapter 8 we read a scribe came up and said to him teacher I will follow you wherever you go. And Jesus said to him foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

That is the worst health and wealth gospel you could ever imagine. Jesus explained the harsh reality to this would-be disciple. Jesus spoke what was on his mind rather than hiding impure motives.

[17 : 57] Jesus told the unvarnished truth that following him meant having no home and meant suffering and meant hardship. And Paul spoke the same way to the Thessalonians and you and I are meant to speak the same way today.

We are meant to be heralds not hucksters. We're not meant to be marketing geniuses who find ways to sucker people into the Christian faith.

We're meant to be straightforward and honest. This means that it's important to tell the truth to one another. That's how we speak in the family of Christ.

We don't come up with our own feel-good explanations for why things happen the way they do. If someone's going through a hard time we don't just come up with just some sort of clever little saying that makes us feel better.

We don't use words as tools, as instruments to get what we want out of other people. To get the love and respect we want out of other people. We don't use clever sound bites to try to win arguments with people we disagree with.

[19 : 14] I feel like that's half of Facebook these days when I get on there. Political arguments that use just clever sound bites that we've heard parroted from people. Christians don't do that. We simply tell people what God has revealed to us in the Bible the good news of Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are straightforward. We are honest about it. That's what life in the family of God is about. That's how we implant great expectations. Nurtured by the family of Christ.

And Paul goes on to write in verses five through eight. For we never came with words of flattery as you know nor with a pretext for greed. God is witness. Nor did we see glory from people whether from you or from others though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ 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 would become very dear to us.

So once again Paul is reiterating Paul and Silas and Timothy that they did not come to get something out of the Thessalonians. They didn't try to come and you know sort of butter them up with affirming words.

[20 : 34] Tell them oh what wonderful people you are oh oh what lovely wonderful people you are and I'm so blessed to know you and you can do no wrong and so forth.

They didn't do that to flatter them to praise them unconditionally to sucker them into anything. they didn't try to find ways to get them to sneakily secretly get them to fork over all their money.

That's famous P.T. Barnum quote there's a sucker born every minute. Paul said forget it. I'm not here to sucker people into anything. They didn't come to get glory and praise for being wise teachers and community leaders.

they didn't come to burnish their own reputation. In fact if that was their goal Paul was doing the absolute worst thing he could do. They didn't even throw their weight around.

They had the right to do that. Paul and Silas had the authority of apostles as witnesses to the risen Christ and they didn't even use that to kind of throw their weight around to boss people around. Paul and his companions were heralds not hucksters and they were givers not getters.

[21 : 50] Givers not getters. They were almost like infants in their gentleness. They listened they spoke they comforted the new believers with that kind of softness the kind of tenderness that a nursing mother has for her own child.

And they didn't hold the Thessalonians at arm's length at an emotional distance. They didn't try to protect themselves from the Thessalonians.

They loved them. They shared not only the good news with them but they shared their own hearts their very hearts with them.

They spoke with them intimately spoke with them honestly spoke with them gently. and Paul was following in the footsteps of his Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus in John chapter 15 told his disciples this as the Father has loved me so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

[23 : 02] If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love. Just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love these things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full.

This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do it I command you.

No longer do I call you servants for the servant does not know what his master is doing but I have called you friends for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

And Jesus spoke these words of love these gentle words these words of compassion he spoke them to his disciples and he gave them not only instructions he gave them his very heart he told them the very depths of his heart and then he gave his very life for them.

And Paul did the same thing for the Thessalonians and you and I are meant to do the same thing today. We are meant to be givers not getters. That means that if the people around you are going to be transformed by great expectations they're going to be given the vibrant life of Jesus Christ then they need you and me to stop trying to extract love and respect and admiration out of them.

[24 : 41] They need you and me to start giving them the truth the truth of the gospel message. They need you and me to start giving them our very heart.

They need word gentle words from us. I feel like I'm so bad at that. That's the thing that I keep screwing up over and over and over again is I have a tendency to be thoughtless in my words and not to be gentle and soft.

But Jesus knew when to be gentle and Paul knew when to be gentle and kind. And people had no doubts that they were loved by Jesus.

They had no doubts that they were loved by Paul. People need to know that you love them. People need to see who you are inside. in this way we win people over to the gospel.

That is how we implant great expectations nurtured by the family of Christ. And Paul continues in verses 9 through 12. For you remember brothers our labor and toil.

[25 : 51] We worked night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you while we proclaim to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses in God also how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.

For you know how like a father with his children we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

once Paul Silas and Timothy had gathered together a few people to form a church in the city of Thessalonica what they could have done at that point is they could have begun collecting financial support from them.

That might have even been an expectation. Thessalonica was a city in which many people competed for patronage money from wealthy Roman elites.

But Paul and his companions decided not to rely on a patron. Instead they chose to support themselves. They worked as artisans. Paul was a tent maker.

[27 : 01] This was not viewed as noble work. It was difficult work. And Paul says they worked night and day from before the sun went up in the morning until the sun went down at night.

They worked and sweated and labored to eke out just enough of the living to get by. To continue the work they had to do. As they worked in the marketplace they explained the gospel message to the Thessalonian believers.

And they did all this remaining blameless remaining above reproach to ensure that they were behaving properly toward these new Christians to ensure that they were not taking advantage of these new Christians.

And while they worked Paul and his companions took these new believers under their wings. They became like fathers to them. They were instructing them showing them how they're going to live now that they have been adopted into God's family.

They encouraged them they challenged them to live up to their new family name. to walk in a manner worthy of the God who called them. The God who adopted them.

[28 : 16] The God who welcomed them. So Paul, Silas, and Timothy they were heralds not hucksters. They were givers not getters. They were faithful and fatherly.

Paul was following in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because Jesus also ministered in a faithful and fatherly manner in the gospel of Mark chapter six. In the story we read, the apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught and he said to them come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest for a while.

For many were coming and going and they had no leisure even to eat and they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.

When he went ashore he saw a great crowd and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd and he began to teach them many things.

Jesus and his disciples were just drained at this point in Jesus ministry. They were drained by the demanding crowds who never let them rest. Jesus cared for his disciples.

[29 : 33] He behaved righteously towards his disciples because he looked for ways for them to rest. And even though he was exhausted he cared for the crowd too.

He cared for the crowd that continued to follow them because he looked at them. He saw that they were harassed and helpless. They were confused.

like sheep without a shepherd. So he treated them the way that a good father treats his children.

A good father what he does with his children he doesn't just kind of provide for the family or make money for the family and then just kind of leave the children to you know mom will bring them up and I'll just leave them alone and I won't have anything to do with them a good father takes the children under his wings and instructs them and shows them how we are to live as disciples of Jesus Christ fathers that is not something that you can farm out to your wives and to the church that is your responsibility that's what a good father does for his children he teaches them the gospel he instructs them in how to live a manner worthy of God that's what Jesus did for the crowds that's what Jesus did for his disciples that's what Paul did for the Thessalonians and you and I are meant to do the same thing today not only to our own children but we are meant to do that for the people that

God has placed in our lives whom we can teach whom we can instruct whom we can disciple that is the responsibility of every Christian we are meant to be faithful and fatherly this means that you and I are meant to think of ourselves as workers for the kingdom of God and I know that's different we're trained in the exact opposite way in Squamish because we're trained to think of ourselves as thrill seekers as adventurers as vacationers our primary mission being our own entertainment but you and I are meant for something so much greater we are meant to be hard workers characterized by holy righteous blameless life teaching instructing other believers making disciples of Jesus Christ that is what you and I were made for that is what it means to be a human being that is what you were born to be this is how we win people over to the gospel this is how we implant great expectations nurtured by the family of

[32 : 27] Christ in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 12 Paul reminds the Thessalonian church that God calls you into his own kingdom and glory these were the great expectations that Paul was reminding them of this future kingdom and it is so good its goodness cannot be contained in the future it keeps leaking back into the present we catch a glimpse of it we have some of the blessings of it even here and now you're all sitting here we're all here together that's what just a glimpse of the kingdom of God of what it's like when we celebrate communion a few minutes from now that's just a glimpse a taste of what the kingdom of God is like all the goodness that we have in this world is just the tiniest taste of the kingdom of that glory just the tiniest hint of that good life of that happy life of that eternal life with

Jesus Christ here on earth forever and ever and the result of these great expectations is something that Paul thanks God for in verses 13 through 16 where he writes we also thank God constantly for this that when you received the word of God which you heard from us you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is the word of God which is at work in you believers for you brothers became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea 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 displeased 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 so going back to verse 13 to the beginning of that those verses

Paul gives thanks for two things first God has given the Thessalonians acceptance of the message God has opened their eyes to sense God has opened their eyes to understand that the apostles message it isn't just simply this human message that a bunch of human beings just made up it's a God given message of hope and because they've accepted this message the word of God is now at work God's word has real power and does real things and it transforms them with great expectations it remakes them into a vibrant people so that acceptance is the first thing that Paul gives thanks for their acceptance of the gospel message and the second thing that Paul gives thanks for is that God has given the Thessalonians endurance through the message they are being persecuted by the Gentiles in Thessalonica they're being persecuted in the same way that the

Jewish churches in Judea suffered persecution by their fellow Jews in their towns and their cities at this point Paul expresses his anger his right anger toward the Jewish people who have not only rejected the Old Testament prophets and killed them who not only rejected John the Baptist and arranged for the death of Jesus Christ now they're hard at work trying to prevent the Gentiles from hearing this life saving hearing this life transforming hearing these great expectations of the gospel some of these Jewish people persecuting the church in Judea if they had had their way you and I would not be here they didn't want this to happen they didn't want God's kingdom to come they didn't want Jesus Christ as Lord and

Gene Green once again he explains it in this way the opposition of the Jews to the apostolic proclamation to this message of the gospel was not only a personal attack against the apostles or opposition to the purposes of God but also an attack against humanity blocking the way to the hope of salvation in this way they are hostile to all men now in condemning these hostile enemies of God Paul is following in the footsteps of his Lord Jesus Christ Jesus did the same in Matthew chapter 23 he condemned the Jewish religious leaders he said woe to you scribes and Pharisees hypocrites for you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces for you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets fill up then the measure of your fathers you serpents you brood of vipers how are you to escape being sentenced to hell

[37 : 54] Jesus was not always a nice guy he was gentle and kind and loving to those who needed to be cared for who were sheep without a shepherd and he was furiously angry with those who were trying to destroy those sheep and Paul says that this judgment the wrath of God just like the future kingdom this judgment has also leaked back into the present age shortly before Paul wrote this letter the Roman government had banished the Jewish people from Rome for a period of time and had massacred thousands of them in Jerusalem over the Passover these events were horrible they were awful and they were horrible and awful because they showed how horrible the rejection of God had been the reason there's so much suffering and anguish in this world is because sin and rejection and rebellion against

God is so bad is so awful but Paul is confident despite this Paul is confident he has hope that the Thessalonian believers will not only escape the wrath of God but they will be welcomed by God because God himself chose them and he loved them and he called them as we saw in verse 12 into his own kingdom and glory everything that Paul and his companions had said everything that Paul and his companions had done for them that was not just Paul working that was the grace of God at work in their lives all the ways that I talked about that Paul and his companions related to them was exactly the way that God related to them it's exactly the way that Jesus Christ related to them is exactly the way that God relates to you exactly the way that Jesus Christ cares for you exactly the way that you and I are meant to care for one another and to care for people who need to know the message of Jesus Christ we prepare them for a future life of glory this is what you and I are made to do this is how we implant great expectations nurtured by the family of Christ let's turn in prayer to our God our God our Father we thank you that you have not left us alone you gave us Jesus Christ our Lord we see him in his beauty we see how amazing he was how much he loved you how much he loved people how much he hated rebellion against you we thank you that you have not left us alone that you've given us your spirit who is working in us and among us awakening us and I pray God

I know there are people here who are asleep maybe some of them have sat in church and been asleep for decades wake them up spirit of God and I pray that you would surround them with people who are awake and who do know what life is like in the family of God who love you and who have great expectations and great hopes and I pray that they may just as you have loved them and cared for them they may in turn love them care for them nurture them be gentle with them instruct them correct them and so Lord God grow us up together as the family of God as your beloved children Amen