

Brother Joel, come with me. I need to share with you one of the most important things in your ministry here at New Life. After the service you may be tempted to stand here to greet the congregation members. Don't do it. I did that when I led worship here some time ago. And a young boy came rushing toward me and in no uncertain terms insisted, "The real pastor stands here." So if you want to be a real pastor at New Life you need to stand in the right place. Got it? Ok, let's go back. All kidding aside, to be a real pastor here at New Life, you need to stand in the right place. The apostle Paul's inspired words to the Christians in Thessalonica in II Thessalonians 2:15-17 insist you stand in the right place. (read them) Paul's inspired words urge you, BE A REAL PASTOR AT NEW LIFE. I. Stand in the right place-on the word of God. II. Enjoy encouragement from those near you to stand there.

Fake pastors or teachers had infiltrated the congregation in Thessalonica. They were misleading the people into thinking the last day was most definitely right around the corner or perhaps it had even already come. As a result too many were sitting around doing nothing, just waiting for Jesus to appear. Very little, if any, ministry of the word was being carried out. That is always the case when fake pastors are not standing on the truth of God's word. So Paul turned them back to the truth and urged them to use their time wisely and not sit around idly. There was ministry of the Gospel to be done.

Still, the apostle thanked God for these Christians whom God had called to be his redeemed children by the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth as he stated right before these words before us. He acknowledged them as his brothers and sisters in Christ. Now he urged them to return to and remain in the word of God through which the Holy Spirit had called them. He wrote, "So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter". The Lord Jesus had directly handed the truth of God's word, both law and Gospel, down to Pastor Paul. He, in turn, had handed it down to men like Silas and Timothy. All three had handed down the truth of God's word to these lost souls in Thessalonica. And the Holy Spirit caused them to believe they were lost sinners, the law, but they were forgiven and saved by the life, death, and resurrection of their Savior, Jesus Christ, the Gospel. Stand in the right place, Paul insisted for their own spiritual good. Stand on the word of God.

These words inspired by the Holy Spirit urge you, Brother Joel, as well as all of us to do the same. As sinners called by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, we all need to stand in the right place, on the word of God, especially the good news that Jesus lived the perfect life we cannot, died the death we deserve, and rose again to give us new life now and forever. In addition, however, brother Gawrisch, to be a real pastor here at New Life, you need to stand firm and hold on to that word also. Stand on and proclaim God's law and Gospel to those who gather here and to those in the community who still need to be caught for Christ. Speaking of which, your new pastor I am told isn't much of a fisher of fish, but no matter. The Holy Spirit has made him a fisher of men. So like John the Baptist, be a voice that points to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. I don't know whether Paul or John had an awesome voice, but your new pastor, people of New Life, has been gifted with a wonderful singing and speaking voice. While many use the gifts of singing and speaking to draw attention to themselves, or make money, your new pastor uses his to stand in the right place, on the word of God, which points to Christ. He would be the first in line to insist, however, that all this is by God's marvelous grace. So,

Brother Joel, enjoy that grace as you stand in the right place as a real pastor in your new calling at New Life. And enjoy also the encouragement of those near you to stand there.

Paul reassures his readers of the encouragement of the one ever near them, the one true God. He wrote, "May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word." By grace the heavenly Father was always there to encourage. By grace the Lord Jesus Christ was always there to strengthen and give hope. By grace the Holy Spirit would put his loving arm around them to stand by them and encourage as they stood on God's word. The word encouragement has the same root meaning as the word Jesus used for the Holy Spirit when he promised to send him. One called to one's side to encourage hearts that may be wavering and to strengthen in every good deed and word. Enjoying the encouragement of their loving God of grace and power as well as from the dear and real pastor Paul, they could stand firm in their faith as they stood on God's word

As you minister as a real pastor here at New life, Brother Joel, enjoy the wonderful truth that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit stand at your side to strengthen and encourage even in the times of feeling a failure or when things don't go according to plan. Enjoy that truth also in the times of blessing, always acknowledging the one who has his arm of salvation around you gave those blessings. Enjoy also the people the Lord places near you to encourage you as you labor as a real pastor at New Life. First and foremost, your dear wife, Siri, and your boys. Stand with her and your boys on the word of God and in prayer. Let them urge you on in every good deed and word. The same with your fellow real pastor. Stand together on God's word and be an encouragement to each other in every good deed and word. When that young boy told me to stand in the right place where the real pastor does, he did so rather insistently. Fellow believers here at New Life, do the same with your real pastors. Do it in love and gentleness. But do it. Do it for your own spiritual welfare and spiritual welfare of your pastors who need to be real forgiven followers of Jesus just as much as you do. Enjoy encouraging your new pastor and "old" pastor as they stand on law and Gospel with you. And, brothers, enjoy their encouragement.

After all, doesn't it all come down to wanting to stand and having many, many others stand with the living Redeemer as he stands on the earth in the end as Job proclaimed? So let's all by grace stand in the right place, on the word of God and enjoy the encouragement of our God and each other. But today, especially you, Pastor Gawrisch, a real pastor at New Life.