

FAITH & LOVE



OUR UNEXPECTED PATH TO HOLINESS

1. Standing fast in the Lord in faith and love refreshes our brothers and sisters in Christ as they observe the activity of God in our lives here and now, 3:6-8.

- (1 Thessalonians 3:6–8 ESV) But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you— 7 for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. 8 For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.

Those who live in faith and love communicate the gospel reality of the kingdom of God in the here and now of everyday life.

- A. This witness is a powerful source of comfort for us in all our distress and affliction as we follow Jesus in a world hostile to those who love and follow Jesus.
- B. This witness breathes life into the fellowship—now we live.
- C. The good news report of their faith and love was a testimony to the transforming power of the gospel.

Good news... εὐαγγελίζω [euaggelizō] – to declare glad tidings; to bring good news; the joyful tidings of God's kindness, in particular, of the Messianic blessings; in the NT used especially of the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God.

- D. Faith: They believed God for life (the way things actually are, not merely the way we might think or want them to be) and lived accordingly.

Faith... πίστις [pistis] – is belief; believing in something or anything. Biblical faith is the act of believing in God in such a way that yields trust and obedience to God by believing God in his word, the body of truth to which we hold fast.

- E. Love: God is love and because God is love and was working in their lives ... they now reflected the very love nature of God himself.

Love... agape [ἀγάπη] – biblically the highest form of love; a selfless, unconditional, and sacrificial love that acts in the best interest of those cared for.

- i. Love is powerfully revealed by God's character ...
 - (1 John 4:7-8, 10, 19 ESV) Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. [8] Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ... 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us

and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ... 19 **We love because he first loved us.**

ii. Love is clearly described in God's word ...

- (1 Corinthians 13:4–7 NIV) **Love is patient**, love is **kind**. It **does not envy**, it **does not boast**, it is **not proud**. 5 It **does not dishonor others**, it is **not self-seeking**, it is **not easily angered**, it **keeps no record of wrongs**. 6 Love does **not delight in evil** but **rejoices with the truth**. 7 It always **protects**, always **trusts**, always **hopes**, always **perseveres**.

Love is patient ... to persevere patiently and bravely in enduring misfortunes and troubles; to be patient in bearing the offenses and injuries of others.

Love is kind ... to be kind; to show one's self mild.

It does not envy ... a sinful, resentful, and bitter reaction to the blessings, success, or possessions of others, acting as a direct opposite of love.

It does not boast ... to vaunt oneself; self display; praising one's self excessively.

It is not proud ... to be puffed up, having an excessive, arrogant, or conceited view of oneself.

It does not dishonor others ... it is not rude, showing disrespect and harshness in behavior.

It is not self-seeking ... selfish ambition, demanding from others; rivalry, or a focus on personal gain and desires at the expense of others and God's will.

It is not easily angered ... not easily provoked, stirred up (in one's emotions, feelings, or reactions) leading to scorn and spite.

It keeps no record of wrongs ... not resentful; does not keep a record of perceived wrongs for ill intent at a future time.

Love does not delight in evil ... takes no pleasure or satisfaction in unrighteousness of any kind.

But rejoices with the truth ... takes joy in what is true in any matter under consideration; what is real as opposed to pretense, simulation, falsehood and deceit.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres ... a protecting, trusting, hopeful, enduring attitude toward others in our new nature as the new creations we are in Jesus Christ in love.

- F. Living in faith and love — is standing fast in faith and love — is standing fast in the Lord and his word.

G. A summary statement as to what it means to stand fast in the Lord in faith and love.

We stand fast in the Lord in our passionate belief in God and his truth and live with a conscious determination in the presence God to do what is in the best interest of the ones we care for ... and this brings the reality and power of the kingdom of God into our lives and that of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

2. Standing fast in the Lord in faith and love reveals what is lacking and needs corrected, restored or completed in our faith, 3:9-10.

- (1 Thessalonians 3:9–10 ESV) For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, 10 as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?
- A. Simply put ... living the right way reveals our faults, failures and weaknesses.
- B. The good news of the Thessalonians' faith and love brought unspeakable thanksgiving and joy to Paul and his group of missionaries.
- C. But Paul knew that they needed to continue in faith and love to see what was lacking.
- D. God's purpose in our faith and love is never complete on this earth and so we need a plan to identify what needs fixed, replaced or is absent
- E. God has that plan—we continue in the humbling, transforming process of living in faith and love.
- F. Paul prayed that he would be able to be with them and supply what was lacking in their faith.

Supply ... καταρτίζω [katartidzo] – to correct, repair, as in restoring someone by replacing a part or putting together what is torn or broken; to mend what has been broken or torn; to complete.

Lacking ... ύστερημα [husterema] – a deficiency, that which is lacking; the state of needing something that is absent or unavailable.

Faith ... πίστις [pistis] – the content of what is and what should be believed in respect to our relationship to God and the things of God.

3. God establishes our hearts blameless in holiness as we increase and abound in our love for one another and for all, 3:11-13.

- (1 Thessalonians 3:11–13 ESV) Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord

Jesus, direct our way to you, 12 and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, 13 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.

Overview: This text clearly and powerfully teaches us that increasing and abounding in love for one another and for all is our clear path to holiness.

A. Paul prays that God the Father and the Lord Jesus direct his group of missionaries to the Thessalonians.

B. Paul prays this way because he knows that with all the human and demonic opposition that God has to make the way for them.

Direct ... κατευθύνω [kateuthuno] – to make straight, guide; of the removal of the hindrances; conceived of as making something straightforward and simple, as having no deviations.

C. God promises to make our paths straight when we acknowledge him in all our ways.

- (Proverbs 3:5–6 ESV) Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Way ... ὁδός [hodos] – a way; a traveled way, road; a journey; metaphorically, a course of conduct; a way (i.e. manner) of thinking, feeling, deciding.

D. Paul prays that the Lord will make them increase and abound in love for one another and for all.

We should note the significance of increasing—they had already prompted thankfulness and joy by their faith and love but now we learn that their next step is for God to make them increase and abound.

Make you increase ... πλεονάζω [pleonazo] – to increase as undergo change; to superabound; to exist in abundance; to become bigger or greater in amount.

Abound ... περισσεύω [perissyoɔ/] – to be abundant or plentiful; exist in large quantities; to exceed a fixed number of measure; to overflow.

Note: The love they are to increase and abound in is the love of God based on his character and his word.

E. The effect Paul prays for as they increase and abound in love is that God will make them ... at the very deepest core of their innermost being to be set ... firmly and free of guilt, fault and defect ... in the very presence of the majesty and holiness of God our Father at the time of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

- (Ephesians 1:4a ESV) ... even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.
- (Ephesians 5:27 ESV) ... so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Establish ... στηρίζω [stayridzo/] – to make stable, place firmly, set fast; to make more pronounced by firm determination.

Heart ... καρδία [kardia] – the organ in the body which is regarded as the seat of physical life; and figuratively understood as the center of our spiritual life; our soul as in our thoughts, passions and will.

Blameless ... ἀμεμπτος [amempts] – free of guilt; deserving no disapproval; free from fault, defect, blemish; impeccable; wholeness and moral soundness.

Holiness ... ἀγιωσύνη [hagiosune] – majesty, being set apart and devoted to God by the decree and work of God himself; the majestic purpose that God causes to happen in our lives which displays the essential nature of God as we are perfectly set apart and made unique and morally pure.

Holy ... ἅγιος [hagios] – pure, most holy thing, a saint; having the characteristics of moral or ritual purity; other as in God is other than this world.

So HERE IS THE GRACE OF GOD ...

- God calls us to lives of faith and love.
- He then causes us to increase and abound in our love so that he may establish us firmly in his holiness.
- He makes us other than the world like he is other.
- Having been made other like he is other God is now free to fully share his world with us.
- That means for those who are his own all the spiritual blessings in the heavenlies are ours in Christ forever.
- And that means for all eternity he will show us the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
- And now all God's people say amen ... and amen.

From John MacArthur – The Savior's Love for His Own

- All the grace, all the mercy, all the boundless blessings, all the lavish gifts that are poured out forever on those who belong to Him are the product of this infinite divine love. And with full knowledge of our ignorance, full understanding of our selfishness, weakness, failure, cowardice, doubt, denial – all of the things that He knows, not only what we've done, but what we will do. In the face of all of that, all these promises are poured out, and it's all motivated by love undeserved. It's about grace.