

openly what in the outset he had avoided saying, as being too harsh — that he had felt concerned lest his labors should be vain, if, peradventure, Satan should prevail. And this he does that they may be carefully upon their watch, and may stir themselves up the more vigorously to resistance.” See here Paul’s clever way of teaching the Thessalonians the origin of the afflictions they face, and to encourage their resistance to Satan’s deceptive efforts to discourage both new and old Christians alike.

1 Thessalonians 3:6-8 - 6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, 7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; 8 for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord.
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A. 6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you. - Here we learn that Timothy did in fact make it to Thessalonica, and also successfully returned to both Paul and Silas as he states ***“But now that Timothy has come to us from you.”*** And here we see the wonderful news that caused the Apostles’ great rejoicing, the fact Timothy ***“has brought us good news of your faith.”*** God had kept these genuine Thessalonians converts firm in their faith and the Apostles get word that even persecutions have not deterred them from their trust in Christ. More than this, the Apostles were overjoyed at their ***“love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you.”*** Now this was even better news yet, that not only had they remained true to the faith with love, but they remembered the Apostles fondly and with warm affection ***“longing to see us just as we also long to see you.”*** Now this was a tremendous testimony of the faithfulness and power of God, having kept this young church both strong in faith toward God and sound in love toward men.

B. 7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; 8 for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord – Now this was an occasion of great encouragement for Paul and Silas and Timothy. Having zealously prayed for them in much love and anguish wondering how they had fared in the face of ***“much affliction,”*** the Apostle speaks of their emotions, ***“for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith.”*** Even though the Apostles themselves had been enduring much ***“distress and affliction”*** from their ongoing ministry in southern Greece, their hearts remained ever concerned about the Thessalonians and if they had stood the test of persecution. When they heard ***“the good news of your faith and love,”*** they rejoiced saying ***“we were comforted about you through your faith.”*** Paul and the Apostles were comforted knowing Thessalonians had passed the test and their great concern here had turned to comfort from God, having the wonderful news. So much were they rejoicing with thanksgiving to God Paul uses the figure of speech, ***“for now we really live, if you stand firm in the faith.”*** Here Paul means to say that the knowledge of the Thessalonians faith and love, causes them much joy as if it were the most encouraging thing they could hear. Not only were they longing to see Paul with warm affection, but they were standing firm ***“in the Lord.”*** This is to say that their faith had fared well and they were persevering in trusting Christ for their righteousness and following Him as their Lord. They were ***“in the Lord”*** and He was in them, and this was a testimony to the fact that God had chosen these converts out of the darkness of this world and caused them to ***“stand firm”*** in the faith, even in the midst of much affliction.

1 Thessalonians 3:9-11 - 9 For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, 10 as we night and day keep praying

most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith? 11 Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; NASU

A. 9 For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, - Paul is overjoyed to the point that he can find no words or way to express the greatness of his happiness over this news stating ***“For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account.”*** He has no words of gratitude to God that are equal to the joy that is in his heart, he is simply overjoyed. See here the Apostles heart toward these his spiritual children, his true sons in the faith. What encouragement for Paul to continue on in ministry this must have been to him? In this he must have pondered how all the distress and affliction must have been worth it. Surely he was gladly giving his life to see people come to Christ, and this was the greatest news of encouragement he could have received.

B. 10 as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith? – Here he expresses his strong desire again to go and to visit them and once again share the strong affection and love with which he longed to see them. So much was this the case that they ***“night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face,”*** hoping that God would soon give them opportunity to visit once again. And here see the purpose of their desire to visit, to ***“complete what is lacking in your faith.”*** Paul was so zealous to teach them and give them everything they needed for life and for godliness, he wanted them to have the complete assurance of full understanding.

Colossians 2:1-3 - 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and **attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.** NASB

And though they had stood firm until this day, he realized they had much to learn and much to be taught, as all Christians do. No matter how far we have come in the faith, we are still many miles from the goal of Christ-likeness. And because of this we need to always keep in mind what is lacking in our faith and persevere onto the end, when we shall be united to the Lord at His coming.

C. 11 Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; - Here see Paul's knowledge of who gives us such privileges as to where we go and when, and who is responsible for guiding and directing the steps of the wicked and the godly. The knowledge of God's providence in our lives should be the constant backdrop of our daily affairs, being always and ever mindful of His guiding power and gracious love, sustaining our very lives. Of this providence Paul wanted to make it clear to the Thessalonians who was governing his ability to come and visit and seeks their understanding that he wouldn't be coming until ***“our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you.”*** Paul seeks by this statement for the young church to understand who is in control even of such a simple things as to where and when we travel to conduct our daily affairs. In the words of James the Lord's brother, a failure to acknowledge this providence is boasting of and evil sort.

James 4:13-16 - 13 Come now, you who say, **“Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.”** 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15 **Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that.”** 16 **But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.** NASB

Learn here, you live and move and have your being at the mere pleasure of God who gives you your life and breath and all things that you have. Failure to acknowledge this great truth is to misunderstand one of the most basic elements of your life and existence on earth, that God is the one who determines the number of your days, the prosperity of your pursuits, and the very circumstances that grip your life from day to day. (1 Chron 29:11-13, Ex 4:11, Deut 32:29, 1 Sam 2:7-9,

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Job 12:9-10, 14:5, 37:1-13, Isa 40:22-25, 45:7, Matt 10:29-30, Acts 2:22-24, 4:27-28, Eph 1:11)

Acts 17:24-27 - 24 "The **God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth,** does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 neither is He served by human hands, **as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things;** 26 and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, **having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation,** NASB

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 - 12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; 13 so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. NASU

A. 12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; - As Paul was longing to return to Thessalonica and **"complete what was lacking in their faith v-10,"** here he prays for the same. But in so doing he touches on the essential nature of Christian sanctification, that is, the increase of God's love in the life of the believer. This desire of Paul for them to complete what lacks, would be surely fulfilled if in fact they would **"increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people."** The idea here is that the *agape* "love" which is in their hearts by the Holy Spirit would grow and enlarge and overflow. That they would **"increase"** in selfless sacrifice, and **"abound"** in the patience and kindness and all the other *fruits* and *habits* in which true Christian love consists. This is the great goal and pursuit of the Christian's life and the sum of the whole Bible, as our Lord commanded us to fulfill.

Matthew 22:36-40 - 36 "Teacher, which is **the great commandment in the Law?"** 37 And He said to him, **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'** 38 **"This is the great and foremost commandment.** 39 "The second is like it, **'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'** 40 **"On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."** NASB

Of this love William Burkitt comments, *"Still our apostle perseveres in prayer, on the behalf of his beloved Thessalonians; and the particular mercy he prays for, is, their abundant increase in the grace and duty of love, first amongst themselves and their fellow-brethren in Christ, all Christians far and near; next towards all men, heathens and infidels, their bitter and bloody persecutors not excepted. Where note, The true property of Christian love; it is, 1. A brotherly affection, which every true Christian chiefly bears to all his fellow-members in Christ, for grace sake; 2. A gracious propensity of heart, which a Christian bears for God's sake to all mankind, whereby he wills, and to his power procures, all good for them."* Here we see how much room we have to grow in love, not only for **"one another,"** but also **"for all people,"** a task which would be impossible for them and us without the aid of God's Spirit. Consider that they were under much affliction and severe persecution from their fellow countrymen, who Paul here commands them to increase and abound in love towards. This is not a new teaching, but an essential teaching for all Christians, first intimated by our Lord in His sermon on the mount.

Matthew 5:43-48 - 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' 44 "But I say to you, **love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you 45 in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven;** for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? 47 "And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 **"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.** NASB

The supreme example of this love was our Lord Himself as He hung on the cross at the hands of is deadly persecutors and prayed for their forgiveness, **"Father forgive them for they know not what they do,"**(Luke 23:34). Further, it is by this evidence that **"all men know that we are Christ's disciples"**(John 13:35) and also without this *agape* love abounding in our life, all our