

spiritual gifts and service are nothing and meaningless (1 Cor 13:1-3).

John 13:34-35 - 34 "A new commandment I give to you, that **you love one another**, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "**By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**" NASB

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 - 13 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, **but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.** 2 And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, **but do not have love, I am nothing.** 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, **but do not have love, it profits me nothing.** NASB

In fact this love says Paul, is a debt we owe to all men and the fulfillment of the Law.

Romans 13:8-10 - 8 **Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.** 9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, **it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** 10 **Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.** NASB

James 2:8 - If, however, **you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.** NASB

Galatians 5:13-15 - 13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, **but through love serve one another.** 14 **For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, " You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. NASB

Indeed the love of God is our chief pursuit and will not yet become full and abounding in us until we have died to our own self-will and self-love, but rather it is a focus of benevolence toward others. Of this passage Calvin comments... "*He would have the Thessalonians abound in love and be filled with it, because in so far as we make progress in acquaintance with God, the love of the brethren must at the same time increase in us, until it take possession of our whole heart, the corrupt love of self being extirpated.*" Would that our life were seasoned with good fruits of the Spirit as this is the true substance of the Christian faith and the rule by which we judge ourselves and measure the reality of our own true faith.

Colossians 3:12-14 - 12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other**, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 And **beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.** NASB

Here then is the simple golden rule by which our Lord has told us to govern and judge our own hearts and motives.

Matthew 7:12 - 12 "Therefore, **however you want people to treat you, so treat them**, for this is the Law and the Prophets. NASB

But also notice that the chief agent in this abounding love is "**God.**" He is the One who fires love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit so Paul states "**may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love.**" Love is in fact the fruit of the Spirit and is the true evidence of a Christian's profession of Christ as Lord, and that one has been truly born again by God's Spirit of love which lives within. This then is why the Apostle prays, God would cause the abounding increase of love in these dear saints. Not only this but Paul also here sets forth himself as their example saying "**just as we also do for you,**" an abounding and sacrificial love that they were all witnesses to. This was manifested before them as Paul made great sacrifices for the people as having not previously known them, risked his life and sacrificed his own skin to bring them the Gospel in the midst of much affliction and deadly persecution.

B. 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. – When Paul says, "**so that,**" he looks to what he previously said about the Thessalonians abounding in love. If indeed the Lord causes them to "**abound in love for one another and for all people,**" this provides the basis for Him to "**establish your hearts without blame in holiness.**" Paul here is praying for their continued

growth the Christian faith and maturity, particularly here that their inner man would be purified, asking that **“He may establish your hearts.”** His focus here is on the heart, asking God that their hearts would be **“established...without blame in holiness.”** Consider what a heart is like that is **“without blame in holiness before our God and Father.”** Paul is here praying for their complete sanctification, abounding love (v-12) and pure hearts without blame in holiness (v-13), expressions of what completed sanctification looks like in the Christians life. Here then is expressed the goal and objective of our growth and maturity as Christians. We are pressing on to **“abounding love and pure and holy hearts.”** Know for sure that true religion is that which is pure in heart, where no one sees but God. If your heart and thoughts be pure, then you are pure in deed. Here also, see that people’s hearts are **“before our God and Father,”** who searches hearts and minds, in order to test the moral purity of our hearts, which moral purity pleases Him and the opposite wickedness does both repel and disgust Him. God is frequently seen in the Bible as the One who searches the heart and tests the mind seeking for purity of heart, in order to render judgment according to deeds, deeds being the overflow of what is in the heart. Even Christ Himself is said to do this in the New Testament.

1 Chronicles 28:9 - 9 "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; **for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts.** If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever. NASB

Jeremiah 17:10 - 10 **"I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind,** Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds. NASB

Revelation 2:23-24 - 23 'And I will kill her children with pestilence; and all the churches will know that **I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.** NASB

Know this, that everything you think in your heart and everything you do in your life is open and laid bare **“before our God and Father.”**

Hebrews 4:12-13 - 12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and **piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit,** of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And **there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him** with whom we have to do. NASB

But Paul’s thought of them having pure and holy hearts and abounding love is seen in view of the Lord’s second coming. He states, **“at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints,”** implying that our abounding love and holiness ought to be rightly established **“before our God and Father”** when He comes. Now the **“coming”** referred to here is the Greek, *parousia*, which Paul mentions at the end of every chapter in 1 Thessalonians (**1 Thess 1:10, 2:19, 3:13, 4:15-17, 5:23**). He has constantly kept them apprised that everything they do is focused on the hope of **“the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”** Here the Apostle’s prayer is that they are morally pure at the soon coming of Christ, who is in fact coming with **“all His saints.”** The term here for saints is the Greek *haggios*, meaning **“holy ones.”** Christ is coming with **“all His holy ones”** and the church is to be prepared by being holy for His arrival. It is disputed whether these **“holy ones”** are actually men or angels. Christ is said to come **“with His saints,”** but also for His saints, a tension which is relieved because saints simply means **“holy ones”** and can refer to either men or angels. Notwithstanding, the second coming of Christ is said to be attended by angels in many places (**Matt 13:41, 25:41, Mark 8:38, Luke 9:26, 2 Thes 1:7, Jude 14**).

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 - 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well **when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,** 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. NASB

See here then that we ought to be preparing our hearts before God, for He is coming soon to judge and to reward. Note well the goal here for the Christian church, abounding love and morally pure hearts. It is for this great end that the Apostle here interceded on their behalf.