

Series: Thessalonians

Title: Paul's Prayer for God to Establish

Text: 1 Thess 3: 10-13; 4: 1-12

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**1 Thessalonians 3: 11: Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. 12: And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all *men*, even as we *do* toward you: 13: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.**

It is important for us to understand that God alone makes his child holy. In a sinner's experience of God's grace, when God has created a new heart in his child in the new birth then we are holy. Having been born of incorruptible seed by the word of God, the hidden man of the heart is not corruptible, the apostle Peter said.

1 Peter 1: 23: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

1 Peter 3: 4...the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

When Christ is formed in the new heart, of God is Christ made unto us both righteousness and holiness (1 Cor 1: 30). This is when we are circumcised in heart and begin to "worship God in spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in our flesh" (Php 3: 3). By this inward work of grace, the Lord establishes our hearts on Christ alone. We know the Lord Jesus is All. We are what Christ has made us by our Saviors work for us and in us. Our heart is set or fixed on the Lord Jesus alone. It is only when our heart is established on Christ, knowing that in and by the Lord Jesus we are righteous and holy, that our heart is established unblameable in holiness. It is in Christ, with Christ abiding in the new heart, that we are unblameable.

**Proposition:** It is the Lord who establishes our heart unblameable in holiness.

**Title:** Paul's Prayer for God to Establish

## **THE WORK OF GOD ALONE**

First, it is God alone who works all spiritual good in his people.

We see this in that Paul even depended upon God to direct his way to the Thessalonian brethren. He wrote in verse 11, "*Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.*" It was God our Father and our Lord Jesus who directed Paul away from Thessalonica. It would be five years before the Lord directed Paul to Thessalonica again. By that our Lord grew Paul in faith and love, establishing his heart more, growing him in grace more, making Paul know that the Lord's people stand by Christ our Master.

Again, we see it is God alone who works in our new man in that Paul depended upon God to give the increase in his brethren. He conveys it in his prayer for the brethren at Thessalonica in verse 12, "*And THE LORD MAKE YOU to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.*"

So Paul depended upon God to establish their hearts. This was the end for which Paul prayed in verse 13, "*To the end HE MAY STABLISH your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*" By growing us in love for Christ the Lord grows us in love to one another. He does it by establishing our hearts on Christ alone so that we know that in our Savior we are unblameable. By this the Lord makes us depend upon Christ to establish one another, even as Paul did.

As the Lord grows us in love to Christ then our hearts are established more and more to know that we are holy and unblameable by Christ and in Christ and so are our brethren. Those sanctified by Christ are complete in Christ and kept by Christ. This is essential to loving one another. We will come back to this, but each one our Lord Jesus has made holy, shall be grown in love by God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. And by increasing us in the knowledge of Christ and in his grace and his love for us, personally, the Lord increases us in love for one another.

## HEARTS ESTABLISHED UNBLAMEABLE

This is the end for which Paul prayed, that God would establish the hearts of the brethren in Thessalonica on Christ alone, verse 13, "*To the end he may stablish YOUR HEARTS UNBLAMEABLE IN HOLINESS before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*"

The new man, the new heart is holy in Christ our Holiness with Christ our Holiness dwelling in us. As our Father grows us in the new man in love, he establishes our hearts unblameable by making us enter into this more and more. He establishes our hearts by making us more and more persuaded that it is in Christ that we are unblameable and so are our brethren. Holiness is in and by Christ alone. This is a heart work. It is by the Spirit of our Lord establishing our heart upon Christ alone.

It is our heart being unblameable in holiness *before God our Father*. This is before God who looks on the heart. It is before God who sees all and knows all. We do not want to attempt to be found unblameable in holiness by what we have done but only in and by the Son of God. God's saints are made holy by Christ. We shall be unblameable before God in and by Christ who is our Righteousness and our Sanctification.

The Lord Jesus does not establish our hearts by legal fear. It is not by threats and so on. We cannot live unto God while in bondage. That is impossible. Perfect Love casts out that kind of fear. That is how false religionists frighten sinners into making a false profession and into performing other outward works. They use the scripture as a whip of law rather than declaring the entire work of salvation beginning to end is the work of our triune God in and by Christ Jesus. Only by Christ doing the work, and only by our hearts being established upon Christ, do we know that Christ is our Sanctifier and our Sanctification. Then will we cease to glory in our flesh and glory only in the Lord. The Bishop of our souls does not establish the heart of his saints with legal fear but by grace.

Romans 8: 15: For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Why must the Lord yet establish the hearts of these new believers on Christ alone? It is because when the Spirit creates a new holy heart within we still have the old man, our sin-nature, with us. We have a lifelong, constant warfare between flesh and spirit unto the end. But God did that on purpose.

We are like oysters. What creates the pearl in the oyster? It is agitation from the grit of sand.

Our hearts are established unblameable in holiness by our Savior keeping us while as yet we have this aggravating thing called sin which aggravates us day by day. As we experience Christ's unwavering faithfulness and love toward us, the perfect love of Christ casts out that legal fear. God our Father establishes our hearts upon Christ alone by making us know we are holy in and by the Lord Jesus. He separated us unto Christ alone. The Spirit of God persuades us in heart more and more that the safest thing in every circumstance is to commit all our care to Christ who shall present us unblameable to the Father. The heart is established with the grace of God.

Hebrews 13:9: Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For *it is* a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

By our Savior ministering grace to us in his love, as the Lord keeps us and grows us in the knowledge of Christ and the grace of Christ, he makes us know that is Christ alone who made us holy and righteous in himself as our representative Head by his one offering, not we ourselves. He establishes our hearts in holiness by increasing us in the knowledge of his grace and love toward us, making us know more, that in Christ we are holy and without blame before our Father even now. So he establishes our hearts to know

and believe that Christ alone is able to keep us and present us unblameable before God in the end.

Jude 1:24: Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy 25: To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

God's saints are holy by sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. But due to our sin-nature, we are apt to fall. We are apt to become fearful and turn to our works and to the law. Were it not for Christ being able to keep you from falling, we would fall away. Were it not for Christ keeping us we would fall away by the many tribulations he sends. We are capable of falling into sin, capable of falling from exercising grace, capable of falling into a legal spirit. But by the Lord keeping us we shall never fall away from Christ or from the doctrine of the Gospel of Christ.

But it is only by our Sanctifier, Christ Jesus, that we shall never fall away into apostasy! We certainly would if it were up to us to keep ourselves. Adam was in a perfect world in a state of innocence and he could not keep himself from falling. A host of angels were in heaven and could not keep themselves from falling. The angels that did not fall away were kept by the same one who is able to keep you from falling away.

God's saints are holy in the new man. But we are not perfect. We are imperfect because we yet have a sin-nature. Sin is mixed with all we do. Therefore, we cannot keep ourselves from falling. When the apostle John spoke of us keeping ourselves, it is really Christ who keeps us. We are kept by the power of God. We keep ourselves in the sense that, by the faith of the Son of God who abides in us, we are kept looking to Christ.

But we cannot make our heart unblameable in holiness in God's sight of our own selves. If we begin to imagine we have the ability to do that, it is our sin-nature deceiving us. That is the spot of vain religion. That is what the Spirit keeps our new heart sanctified from. He keeps us by Christ growing us in the grace and knowledge of him. God gets the glory! Satan could wipe us out easily were the Spirit to withdraw. Even our own sin-nature would wipe us out. It is not the saints that have kept his church and his gospel going forth for thousands of years, it is our Prophet, Priest and King!

The glory to establish our hearts and to keep us from falling and to present us unblameable in God's sight belongs to our Savior. He entered covenant with the Father to do so as Mediator, as Prophet, Priest and King of his people. The Spirit of our Lord establishes our hearts to make us commit all our care to him. He does it by making us know more and more that it is the Lord who cares for his people. More and more he persuades us that he alone is able to keep us from falling and present us unblameable in him.

2 Timothy 1:12: For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

He has left us in this body of death, in a world of sin and tribulation, to show us it is not of us! It is Christ alone who is able to keep us and present us unblameable before the all-seeing eye of God, as he has even now.

Colossians 1: 21: And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet NOW HATH HE RECONCILED 22: In the BODY OF HIS FLESH through death, to PRESENT YOU HOLY AND UNBLAMEABLE AND UNREPROVABLE IN HIS SIGHT: 23: If ye CONTINUE IN THE FAITH GROUNDED AND SETTLED, and *be* not moved away from THE HOPE of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;... 27: To whom GOD WOULD MAKE KNOWN what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE of glory; 28: WHOM we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man PERFECT IN CHRIST JESUS: 29: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to HIS WORKING, which WORKETH IN ME MIGHTILY.

Our Lord Jesus put off the body of our sins by his death on the cross. He arose and presented us in himself when he sat down at God's right hand. He presents us unblameable when Christ makes intercession for us

as our Advocate before the Father. But now, also, by Christ being formed in those born again of the Spirit, our new man is renewed in the image of Christ who created him. We have been made to

Colossians 3:10...put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge AFTER THE IMAGE OF HIM that created him.

The new man within us is holy after the image of Christ that created our new man. This is Christ's work. He is the mighty God. He is the Creator of our new man. He is the upholder of all things by the covenant word of his power, including our new spirit. It is his Father's will that his Son should keep each one the Father chose and gave to him in divine election. Christ promised to bring us to the Father without spot or wrinkle or any such thing but holy and unblameable and unprovable before the all-seeing eye of God. Christ purchased each one with his blood so that we are his possession. He will not lose one. It will be in Christ and by Christ--*in his righteousness and in his holiness*--that we shall be presented by Christ unblameable before the all-seeing eye of God.

Right now, through the gospel, our Lord is establishing our hearts in holiness by increasing us in love for Christ as our great Prophet, our Head, ministers this nourishing word to our inner man. The self-sanctifying man is,

Colossians 2:19...not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Christ is our Head. He is the Prophet, Priest and King who ministers nourishment to us through the preaching that gives God all the glory. The increase is the increase of God. He does it by showing us more and more that his love for his people is everlasting love. Our gracious Redeemer makes us clearly know that it is Christ alone that is keeping us for his great love toward us. Father, Son, and Spirit are one in this work for they are one.

He not only teaches us in the gospel but in providence as well. He rules the trials. He could keep us from falling any at all. But the Lord sometimes permits us to fall when we are tried to show us it is Christ keeping us and not we ourselves. He does not keep us from being buffeted entirely by satan. Look to Job, to David, to Paul. The Lord gave the devil permission to buffet them. But the Lord keeps us from falling away. We shall fall at times. But Christ will make us rise up again.

Proverbs 24:16: For a just *man* falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

Job 5:19: He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.

Psalms 34:19: Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all...24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth *him with* his hand.

Micah 7:8: Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD *shall be* a light unto me. 9: I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, *and* I shall behold his righteousness. 10: Then *she that is* mine enemy shall see *it*, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

Every truly sanctified child of God knows that Lord does not keep us entirely from committing sin. The sin is our own fault, not our Lord's. We do not want to sin. We endeavor not to sin. But when we do, the Lord keeps us from falling away. He is our Advocate before the Father. And the same Advocate keeps us personally from being separated from him by working in our new heart by the Spirit. No evil has touched us when we fall. He keeps us from falling away in apostacy going after damnable heresies. This is how Christ manifests them that he has approved.

We are under the grace of God and he keeps giving us more grace. The Lord keeps working repentance in our new man. And by saving us from these falls, the Lord increases our knowledge of Christ. He makes us know more and more that Christ alone did it! By delivering us again and again, the Lord increases our faith

in him and increases our love for him. By this ongoing work of our Lord, he makes us abhor our own selves and our sins more. He is making us trust our own selves less and less. This is one way God establishes our heart on Christ alone, making us know more our need for him to keep us.

By this continual work of grace, he establishes our hearts on the Rock. He makes us know him whom we have believed more. He persuades us he alone is able to keep that which we have committed unto him. And he makes us commit all our care to him knowing, "he careth for you."

The heart established in holiness is established on Christ alone. The heart established in holiness is not looking to any other in this world but committing all into Christ's hands knowing he is able to keep us and present us unblameable before God with exceeding joy. He shall present us unblameable in holiness, faultless before the all-knowing God our Father at his appearing. He washed us in his blood. He justified us by his righteousness. He entered into our new man in the new birth. He has done it now by his death and resurrection. Paul said our life is in Christ at God's right hand. When Christ who is our Life shall appear then shall we appear with him in glory.

Though we sinned in Adam and became guilty and corrupt in our sin-nature, Christ is the double cure. He perfected us in his holiness and righteousness by his one offering on the cross. Then our Savior created a new holy man by his incorruptible seed. The hidden man of the heart which is not corruptible. It is where his seed abides in us so that our new man cannot sin.

Brethren, though we are prone to backslide and are guilty of it many times after he converts us, though we carry the body of this sin all our days, yet Christ shall present us to God in his perfect holiness, in his complete righteousness, immortal and incorruptible, entirely by his doing!

## **INCREASED IN LOVE**

It is by this work of God's grace that our heart is established. It is beholding Christ's love for us. That is how the Lord increases our hearts in love for one another and for all men.

He teaches us to flee from sin. To strive against sin. He commands us that we do not sin. But you *have* sinned and you *shall*. But Christ shall make brethren, whose hearts Christ has established, to love you. They will speak to you of the redemption Christ accomplished for us. They will speak of this work he is working in us. They will exhort you to go to him. They will pray for you. They will wait on God to work in you. They will suffer long with you. They will bear your burden. They will forgive you and restore you. And they will give Christ all the glory for doing so because Christ established their hearts in holiness, making them know that God our Father, for Christ's sake, has done all the same toward them.

When you have fallen and the Lord does this, using your brethren in this way, he will humble you in heart and grant repentance by his goodness toward you. You behold the Lord's goodness most when the Lord makes you see you deserve it not. You behold his goodness when you behold his mercy and grace and love to you is for the sake of his Son. He makes you see it was God who kept you from falling away. By this, he will grow you in the knowledge of his grace and love toward you. By it, he will increase love in your heart for him and for your brethren. Then you, like the brother who was gracious to you, will give Christ all the glory.

These are the good works he makes men see in us that causes them to praise God in the day of visitation. That day of visitation is not only in the end. It now when Christ comes in Spirit and grants us repentance again. When the Lord makes us hear faithful brethren speak the gospel to us and melts our hearts and brings us to weep that we were giving ourselves glory for this work. When Christ visits us again is when we see the good works Christ worked in our brethren so that they did not use the scripture as a whip but spoke of Christ to us. Then we praise Christ for working that work in them. To deal with brethren in love, speaking of Christ alone, seeking to restore and forgive for the sake of Christ, is unlike the spots of this vainly religious world who lord over men and force and constrain men. It is a heart made holy by Christ. It is a heart established to know and praise and glorify Christ as the one who shall present us unblameable before God our Father at his coming. "The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil" (2 Thess 3: 3)

**Amen!**