



1 Thessalonians

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And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we *do* to you, 1 Thessalonians 3:12

There is an emphasis in the Greek of this verse which is lacking in this translation. The word "You" begins the sentence. It reads, "You moreover, the Lord may make to increase and to abound..." In the previous verse, Paul spoke of himself and his companions – "Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you." This verse then contrasts that thought with the emphasis on "You." What can be inferred is the thought, "Whether we come or not, this is for you to do." From there he explains what that thing is. They are to "increase and abound in love toward one another."

This petition is made to "the Lord" by Paul. In the previous verse, it was seen that he addressed God and the Lord Jesus Christ together, using a singular verb. For this reason, it is probable that "the Lord" in this verse is speaking of both again. Thus, the term Lord indicates "God" and not just one member of the Godhead. Although that may not have been what was on Paul's mind, it does fit properly.

After petitioning love between the brethren, he then adds in, "and to all." This could mean everyone in a general sense, or it could be referring to all believers, not just those in the church at Thessalonica. The latter is probably the case. Paul has harsh words for many outside of the scope of believers, as did the Lord Himself. However, the bond of love should not be ignored among believers, even if they are of a different church, culture, or creed.

To show what he means, he concludes with the words, "just as we *do* to you." The love of Paul and his associates towards the church in Thessalonica was perfectly evident in how they ministered (and continued to minister) to them. Despite being apart from them physically, the love between them grew steadily. Paul's desire was that this same type of increasing love

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would characterize them as well. The fellowship of believers should be built up, not torn down.

Life application: It is true that in a general sense, we should have a sense of love for all people. If they are unsaved, we should want their salvation. However, Paul places a stress on the love between believers that should exist. It is something that we should strive for, even when they are really irritating know-it-all's or contrarians in ways that cause our skin to grate. A little lost skin is not worth dividing the fellowship.

...so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. 1 Thessalonians 3:13

The previous two verses, tied together with this one, will give the full sense of Paul's thought –

“Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. ¹² And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we *do* to you, ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.”

Paul has petitioned for direction for those in Thessalonica which will make them increase and abound in love. Requesting the fulfillment of this was “so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father.” It is through the abounding in love that this will come about. The New Testament repeatedly says that love is the fulfillment of the law (Matthew 22:40, Romans 13:8 & 13:10, Galatians 5:14, and James 2:8).

In loving, meaning towards God and towards fellow believers, we will be found “blameless in holiness.” There can be no charge against someone who is fulfilling the divine law, because they are dealing with hearts that are pure. And this is deeper than an outward display, but it is with sincerity. One sets themselves apart (holiness), just as they have been set apart by God, in acting in love. On that day which is set for Christ's return, the intent is that this is how we should be found. As He says, we should be this way “before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The day isn't known, and the church has waited 2000 years so far, but the day will come. Christ will return to bring the church to Himself. At that time, we will stand before Him to make an account of our lives. This is known as the bema seat judgment. It is a judgment for rewards and losses, but not one for salvation or condemnation.

Paul then adds in that Christ is coming “with all His saints.” Two main views are possible with this. The Greek says, “the holy ones.” Therefore, some believe this is angels that are being

referred to. Those who hold to this would choose a verse such as Matthew 25:31 to support their view. This is not what Paul is thinking of. Matthew 25 was spoken to Israel, still under the law. Paul is more likely preparing the way for his words of Chapter 4. In verse 14, he notes that “God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.”

In other words, they are already dead and awaiting the resurrection at the rapture. Jesus will bring them, and together we shall meet him. The “blameless and holiness before our God” is referring to those who are still alive. Once someone has died, they simply await the resurrection. But while living, this is how saints should conduct their lives, and this is the intent of Paul’s words concerning Christ returning with His saints.

Life application: There is a lot of infighting and backbiting in the church. A lot. We have enough of this in the secular world. Let us strive, as much as is possible, to live at peace with our brothers and sisters in Christ. It isn’t always possible, but this is what we are asked to do.

Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God;

1 Thessalonians 4:1

Chapter 4 begins the instructional part of the letter to those at Thessalonica. Until this point, no true note of instruction has been given. Rather his words have been greetings and calling to remembrance things which have occurred. His words, “Finally then,” Give the sense of “For the rest, then...” In other words, there are other matters which require his instruction, and they are now to be submitted for this purpose. This is to be a new subject and a new direction.

Of course the word “brethren” is given to indicate that his words are intended for believers. And this will certainly become evident as he continues on through the chapter. It is a chapter which provides immense hope, and which is probably cited as much as any other passage from Paul’s pen over the church age, especially when dealing with the issue of believers who have died. In this, it is obvious that the words are intended as pertaining only to those who have died in Christ. Thus, they are “brethren” that he will speak about there as well.

After this, he says, “...we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus.” To urge is to request, but it is a request which bears a note of strong desire or impulse to ensure that what is presented is followed through with. In this case, the Greek word indicates, “to ask on special footing,” and thus there is a sense of intimacy coming from one in a preferred position. To exhort is to prompt to action. This Greek word indicates making a call from a close and personal relationship. Both of these words are used in connection with “in the Lord Jesus.”

In other words, “This urging and exhortation is given because of and by our close and personal union in the Lord. We are brothers, we are family, and the Lord is our Head. Therefore, take heed to what I now state.” He then defines his exhortation by saying, “that you should abound more and more.” What this implies is that those in Thessalonica have been given guidance to abound in their Christian walk. They have, thus far, been living by that guidance as is evidenced by Paul’s words of rejoicing of Chapter 3 when he heard this was so. Now he petitions them to continue in this life but growing in it from day to day and even moment to moment.

All of this is evident from his closing words of this verse which say, “just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God.” Paul and his companions had visited Thessalonica, they had established the church and given instruction, the Thessalonians had accepted the teaching and had continued on in it. All of this was a walk pleasing to God. Paul’s great hope for them is that this walk would continue.

Life application: We are either moving forward in our Christian walk, or we are moving backward in it. Paul’s exhortation to all is that we always move forward, abounding more and more. Let us endeavor to do so.