

From Death to Life

A Study of 1 Thessalonians

Standing Fast & Praying Hard – 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Focus:

Having been torn so quickly away from these new believers, Paul is doing everything he can to take care of them from afar. It's not enough for them to have simply made an initial profession of faith, but they now need to grow in that faith. It is to that end that Paul labors, loves, and prays on their behalf.

Opening Question:

Who taught you how to pray? What did you learn from that person?

Read:

1 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Some Questions for Reflection:

The "but" of verse 6 shows us a contrast. What is contrasted here?

What are the specifics of Timothy's report? Why is the inclusion of continued faith and love so important? (Sunday's sermon focused on faith... trace the ways Paul has already mentioned faith in this letter in 1:3; 1:8; 3:2; 3:5; 3:6; 3:7; 3:10.)

What is Paul's reaction to Timothy's report? (Reflect on the following point made in Sunday's sermon that this is the only time in the New Testament that the word for "good news" is used not in reference to the gospel... how does that help us to understand Paul's reaction here?)

How does the passage reveal the importance of not just evangelism, but ongoing discipleship?

Why is growth essential to the Christian life?

Reflecting on Sunday's sermon, what does it mean for Paul to supply what's lacking in their faith?

What does Paul pray for these believers?

Why do you think Paul might be encouraging them toward an increase in love when he clearly has already praised them for being so loving previously (e.g., 1:3)?

What does Paul's prayer reveal about the ultimate purpose of our love for one another?

God is always working to conform us to the image of Christ so that he might have a pure bride at Jesus' coming. How concerned are you for that kind of holiness? Would you say you strive with all your being to live in a way that is "blameless in holiness"?

Closing Reflection and Applications:

What can we learn from the way Paul prays here?

In what ways are you growing in your faith?

How would you like to grow? In other words, what is lacking in your faith?

What steps can you take to pursue growth?

From what we see in Paul's own example, what do we learn about the importance of a Christian community for Christ-like growth? How can we help each other in these ways?

Review this question from last week... Paul's affection for the Thessalonian believers is clearly massive. Examine your own heart. How deep is your love for other Christians – particularly those with whom you've entered into a covenant relationship with at Christ Church? How can you prioritize growth in this area?