

MORE AND MORE

1 THESSALONIANS 3:6–13



... may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all...”

A rallying cry often heard today in our economically challenged world is “Less and less.” Governments are called to balance their budgets. People are urged to use less energy and decrease consumption of limited resources. It is good advice that we should all heed. In the realm of faith, however, there are no shortages of love and grace and strength. Therefore, as followers of Christ, we are urged to demonstrate His love in our lives in ever-increasing measure.

In the apostle Paul’s first letter to the believers in Thessalonica, he urged them to “abound more and more” in a lifestyle that pleases God (1Thessalonians 4:1). He also commended them for their demonstration of love for each other, and called them to “increase more and more” in brotherly love (1Thessalonians 4:10).

That kind of ever-increasing love is possible only because it comes from God’s limitless resources, not from our own dwindling supply. Poet Annie Johnson Flint wrote:

*His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,
His power has no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.*

The apostle Paul expressed his desire for the believers: “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).

How much should we love God and others? More and more!

***Our limited ability to love does not change
God’s limitless power to love through us.¹***

¹ http://preceptaustin.org/1thessalonians_1-3_sermon_illustrations.htm

OPEN IT

1. What did your report card look like when you were in school? Which subjects were you strong in? Which ones could have used some improvement?

EXPLORE IT

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 3:6–13

2. What kind of news did Timothy bring to Paul about the Thessalonians?

3. How was Paul comforted by the Thessalonians?

4. What did Paul hope would increase and abound?

5. What should the condition of our hearts be at Christ's coming?

GET IT

More and more weeks have passed. Paul was now in Corinth, his heart longing to know what was going on. Timothy arrived and at the same time Silas arrived and the news from Timothy was, (I love this.) "Good news." Rather than using a simple word, he doesn't just say, "And Timothy gave a good report," or "Timothy came back and told us so-and-so." He said, "Timothy brought good news." You know what word he uses?

The word "gospel," (euaggelizō) — it's only used in the New Testament everywhere else to refer to the gospel. He brought us such good news I have to use a word that is usually referring to the news of salvation to even express how good it is. He takes the term reserved usually for the message of salvation by grace through faith, and says it was that kind of good news, thrilling news. And it really is amazing. He had such a heart for those people that he gets this report from Timothy and he calls it "gospel," good news, the best news.²

² <http://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/52-11/The-Pastors-Heart-Part-2> (C) 2016 Grace to You

6. In verse 6, what were some of the particulars of the good report that Timothy brought?

7. Looking back to 1 Thessalonians 2:17–3:5, how would Timothy’s report have helped combat some of the fears and anxieties that Paul had?

8. Think for a moment that Paul had sent Timothy to check in on our church; what type of report would Timothy bring back?

9. What do you think the Thessalonians thought when they received this letter and heard that they had been given high marks from Timothy and Paul?

10. When have you been comforted through someone else’s faithfulness and godly living?

Standing Fast: *“Steko” can mean to stand literally (Mark 11:25) but is used figuratively in this passage meaning to stand firm in faith and duty, to be constant, to persevere, to remain steadfast, to continue in a state. The **present tense** expresses Paul’s desire that his spiritual children continue remaining firmly committed in their Christian belief. Remember that belief always demonstrates itself to be genuine by one’s conduct or lifestyle. The word “steko” pictures an army that refuses to retreat even though it is being assaulted by the enemy. Standing firm as a believer is clearly an important exhortation as shown by Paul’s frequent use illustrated in the following passages.³*

11. What additional insight do the verses below give you concerning the phrase “standing fast”?

- **Philippians 1:27**

- **Philippians 4:1**

³ http://preceptaustin.org/1thessalonians_36-8.htm#3:8

- **1 Corinthians 16:13**

- **Galatians 5:1**

If: *This is not intended to question their stability and thus the NIV is accurate in rendering it "since you are standing firm." However, this sentence, in addition to expressing his assurance that they are standing firm, also contains a reminder that they **must continue to stand firm in the future.***⁴

12. What happens if we don't stand firm as Christians? How can our lack of standing firm affect other Christians around us?

13. What has helped you to stand firm in your faith?

Jude closes his letter with this beautiful benediction and reminds the church of God's faithfulness when it comes to our standing firm in the Lord.

*Now to Him who is able to **keep you from stumbling**, and to **make you stand** in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen (Jude 24–25, NAS).*

14. How does God keep his people from stumbling and make us stand?

*Paul carried his people on his heart to God's mercy seat. We will never know from how much sin we have been saved and how much temptation we have conquered all because someone prayed for us. It is told that once a servant-girl became a member of a Church. She was asked what Christian work she did. She said that she had not the opportunity to do much because her duties were so constant but, she said, "When I go to bed I take the morning newspaper to my bed with me; and I read the notices of the births and I pray for all the little babies; and I read the notices of marriage and I pray that those who have been married may be happy; and I read the announcements of death and I pray that the sorrowing may be comforted." No man can ever tell what tides of grace flowed from her attic bedroom. When we can serve people no other way, when, like Paul, we are unwillingly separated from them, there is one thing we can still do — we can pray for them.*⁵

⁴ http://preceptaustin.org/1thessalonians_36-8.htm#3:8

⁵ William Barclay Daily Study Bible@ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dsb/view.cgi?bk=51&ch=3>

15. What can we learn about Paul's attitude and activity surrounding prayer?

Paul prays to God that He will enable the Thessalonians to fulfil the law of love in their daily lives. We often wonder why the Christian life is so difficult, especially in the ordinary everyday relationships. The answer may very well be that we are trying to live it by ourselves. The man who goes out in the morning without prayer is, in effect, saying, "I can quite well tackle today on my own." The man who lays himself to rest without speaking to God, is, in effect, saying, "I can bear on my own whatever consequences today has brought." John Buchan once described an atheist as "a man who has no invisible means of support." It may well be that our failure to live the Christian life well is due to our trying to live it without the help of God — which is an impossible assignment.⁶

16. With such a great example of prayer in the early church recorded in the Scriptures, what keeps Christians from following their role model?

17. How do we go about allowing our love to increase and abound for all?

Paul prays to God for the ultimate safety. At this time his mind was full of thoughts of the Second Coming of Christ when men would stand before the judgment seat of God. It was his prayer that God would so preserve his people in righteousness that on that day they would not be ashamed. The only way to prepare to meet God is to live daily with Him. The shock of that day will be not for those who have so lived that they have become God's friends but for those who meet him as a terrible stranger.⁷

18. How does our pursuit of holiness in everyday living prepare us for eternity with Christ?

*John Stott says, "There is **no greater stimulus to holiness** than the vision of the Parousia (the return of Christ), when Jesus comes in glory with His holy ones."*

19. How does the truth of Christ's return motivate us to holiness today?

⁶ William Barclay Daily Study Bible@ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dsb/view.cgi?bk=51&ch=3>

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