

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

A1106 – February 6, 2011 – 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13
The Presentation Before The Father

All right, we return to 1 Thessalonians. So if you'd open your Bible to 1 Thessalonians 3 we'll close out this chapter. 1 Thessalonians 3 covers the doctrine of sanctification and I've related each chapter to a certain doctrine that begins with the letter S. Anyone recall the doctrine of 1 Thessalonians 1? The doctrine of salvation. And there are number of truths related to the doctrine of salvation found in Chapter 1. So if you're looking for a chapter that covers some of the aspects of salvation then you might lodge in your mind 1 Thessalonians 1. When we come to 1 Thessalonians 2 we deal with another doctrine. Anyone recall the doctrine of 1 Thessalonians 2? The doctrine of service. And we observed the service of Paul and Silas and Timothy to the Thessalonians as a model for us to follow. Now we come to 1 Thessalonians 3 and we're covering another doctrine, and that is the doctrine of sanctification.

The doctrine of sanctification has several aspects. We can look at it from the angle of the phases, the aim, the dimensions, the means and the enemies. As for the phases of sanctification there are three: positional sanctification is the past tense, we have been sanctified or set apart in Christ; experiential sanctification is the present tense, we are being sanctified or set apart from the world system; and ultimate or final sanctification is the future tense, we will be sanctified or set apart from the flesh in the resurrection body. The second aspect of the doctrine of sanctification is the aim of sanctification and the aim is to learn loyalty to God through His word. That is the goal, that is what we're aiming for. The aim is not to stop sinning, though sinning is a bad idea, stopping sinning is not the aim of sanctification. The aim of sanctification is to learn loyalty to God through His word. It's the indirect approach. Because what occurs as I learn loyalty to God through His word is I sin less and less. So I don't try directly to stop sinning. I try to learn loyalty

to God and as a byproduct I sin less and less. The third aspect of the doctrine of sanctification is the dimensions and there are two: the existential present, that is, I am either in fellowship or out of fellowship, I am either abiding or not abiding, I'm either walking by the Spirit or walking by the flesh, these are all either/or conditions. I can't be in fellowship and out of fellowship at the same time. I'm either in fellowship or out of fellowship; I can't be abiding and not abiding simultaneously. I'm either abiding or not abiding. That is the existential dimension. The second dimension of sanctification is the long-term and this looks at things from the maturity standpoint. Here we're not looking at one moment of your life, whether you're in or out of fellowship, we're looking at the long-term. Over the long haul of my Christian life I've gone up and I've gone down but what is the general trend? Have I matured beyond where I was 10 years ago as a Christian? So those are the dimensions of sanctification. The fourth aspect of the doctrinal sanctification is the means, the instrument, how do I grow? So it's dealing only with phase 2, experiential sanctification. These things all related and if you just sit down and begin to think through each one and think now wait a minute, now that I understand these individually how does this one relate to that one? How do the enemies of sanctification relate to phase 1 of sanctification? And just work through these relationships and through that you learn a whole lot about the doctrine of sanctification and you'll think things that you never thought before. It will open up a whole lot of discussion either in the privacy of your own soul or with someone else you discuss these things with. What we're talking about is the means of sanctification and we're discussing that under the heading of phase 2, experiential sanctification. And the means are both Law and Grace. Law, meaning there is a standard of righteousness revealed in the commandments of Scripture. Anyone want disagree that God has given us Commandments in the New Testament? I think we all agree there are commandments given. God has a will for our lives. We have to know what God expects of us and that is His will for our life and that's what we are calling Law. Law in a general sense of a standard, not law in the Old Testament sense. But just law as a standard of righteousness. But law alone is not sufficient to sanctify, there also has to be grace. Grace - meaning the enablement to obey the law. In other words, here we're saying that we cannot obey the laws and be sanctified utilizing the flesh. We can only do it by utilization of the Holy Spirit. So grace is the enablement given by the Holy Spirit to obey the laws. Finally we have the enemies of sanctification and these are three: the world, which is the world system which is opposed to God

and the world system is ubiquitous. We live in the world but of course we're not to be of the world. So the world is our enemy. Second we have the flesh - our own flesh is our enemy and by the flesh we mean that which we inherit from our father who inherited from his father all the way back to Adam. And the flesh, whether you identify it as the sin nature or that which houses the sin nature, in any case it is the source of our personal sin. I know certain groups try to deny that we have a sinful nature, but then you have to attribute personal sin to the new regenerate nature and that has problems. Paul clearly teaches we have a sin nature in Romans 6, 7 and 8. And our sinful nature is an enemy of sanctification, it impedes progress. And so we have the world, the flesh and finally the third enemy of sanctification is the devil, and that should be obvious. As long as he is roaming about, seeking to devour us, he is able to do so by deception, through ideas that infiltrate our minds and of course by temptation, the temptations to sin.

The doctrine of sanctification is the focus of 1 Thessalonians 3 and it will continue into 1 Thessalonians 4 until we get to verse 12. And all these aspects are involved in these verses and we touch on them as we go along. But the main phase of sanctification that is being worked with is phase 2, experiential sanctification or what we sometimes call Christian growth or spiritual growth. It involves both the means of law and grace, it involves the enemies which impede our growth, it involves the importance of learning loyalty to God through His word, it involves a remembrance of phase 1; that we have been is initially sanctified. It involves the dimensions of sanctification, remaining in fellowship and in consideration of the long-term growth; all these aspects of sanctification are involved in our phase 2 experiential sanctification. So if we need some section of Scripture to lodge a way as an area we can turn to gather some of the truths that relate to experiential sanctification we want to remember 1 Thessalonians 3- 1 Thessalonians 4:12.

So let's finish chapter 3. So far we have seen that Paul and Silas were in a more immature state spiritually when they were separated from the Thessalonians and their patience ran out and their emotions got the best of them. Don't be shocked, yes the apostle Paul was at one point an immature Christian. Nobody, when they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, instantly becomes the super mature Christian. Every Christian, apostle or not has to grow to maturity. There are no shortcuts. And as long as we are immature,

(and we may just be immature in certain areas, we may be mature in other areas) in an area then more often than not our emotions are going to get the best of us and we're going to tank it. And that was Paul and Silas' problem at Corinth; their patience ran thin and they got uptight and they just had to know how the Thessalonians were doing. And so they sent Timothy and it's not bad that they sent Timothy. It was good that they sent Timothy. The Holy Spirit used this to inject Timothy into the ministry and the Holy Spirit used Timothy to strengthen and encourage the Thessalonians with respect to the faith and to find out about their faith, how they were doing and whether the tempter, Satan had tempted them and they had fallen for the temptation. See there's one of the enemies. So you see this all works together. But fortunately they had not fallen to the tempter and Timothy was able to bring a good report concerning their faith and love, their fond remembrance of them, and their desire to see Paul and Silas. They were comforted through the report that Timothy brought. And this brings about the enjoyment of eternal life as long as the Thessalonians stood firm in the Lord. And so Paul and Silas are filled with inexpressible joy and thanksgiving to God for his protection of these believers in their absence. But they continued to pray that this absence would be broken and they would be able to see them face-to-face and to complete the doctrinal training they had started.

And in the middle of this he begins in verse 11 to go directly into a prayer. Remember I told you Paul was the type of person who may, in the middle of a conversation or in the middle of a letter, just go into a prayer. It may seem out of place, it may sound strange to you that someone may write their prayer in a letter, but that's what Paul did because Paul knew that telling someone you're praying for them is comforting but actually praying for them is even more comforting and furthermore it is a teaching device because it teaches us how the apostle Paul prayed. Prayer is an area in which the apostle Paul was mature. So while he may have been immature in the area of patience and anxiety he was mature in the area of prayer. Paul and Silas were prayer warriors. And in verse 11 we have the prayer. We will look at the prayer and then we'll break it into its component parts and detail the significance of each part.

Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; ¹²and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you;

13so 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. And some manuscripts end with “Amen.” Most don’t but I note it in passing. In verse 11 we have the prayer addressed to **God the Father and Jesus our Lord**. The first request is that the Father and Jesus **direct our way to you**, the second request in verse 12 is that the Lord **cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people**, and the purpose is given in verse 13, **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**. So that's how the prayer breaks out into various components. Now let's deal with the first component part in verse 11.

Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you. And by addressing the prayer to both **God the Father and Jesus our Lord** what does Paul accomplish? He has two people addressed. Both are the subject of the sentence. They share the same case in the Greek language. So we have one article + two nouns describing the first person, the Father, and we have one article + one noun describing the second person, the Son. Then we have the verb and the verb is the word **direct** and this verb is in the singular. I'll just tell you that the implications of these observations are far-reaching. There is a lot loaded in verse 11. We won't be able to go through all of it but let me show you some of the things embedded in the grammar of the sentence.

First of all, by addressing in prayer God the Father and Jesus our Lord he puts God the Father and Jesus our Lord on the same plane, indicating a unity of essence. There is no inferiority of Jesus to the Father. The way they are addressed in a single sentence side-by-side with one another indicates a unity of essence or being. That is, they have the same attributes. Both the Father and Jesus have the attributes of God. The Father is sovereign and Jesus is sovereign, the Father is righteous and Jesus is righteous, the Father is just and Jesus is just, the Father is loving and Jesus is loving, the Father is omniscient and Jesus is omniscient, the Father is omnipotent and Jesus is omnipotent, the Father is omnipresent and Jesus is omnipresent, and so forth, immutable, eternal, veracity, immensity and whatever other attributes of God the Scriptures teach. So the first thing we learn from verse 11 is that

God the Father and Jesus our Lord are equal in essence and addressed as such in prayer.

Second, by using two definite articles, one before the Father and one before Jesus in the original Greek text, he distinguishes the Father from Jesus. While the Father and the son are equal in essence they are distinct in person. There is unity in the Godhead but there is also diversity. There is unity of essence but there is diversity of person. The Father is not Jesus and Jesus is not the Father but both the Father and Jesus are God. This is standard Trinitarian theology and it is very definitely taught in this text. Paul understood that God the Father and Jesus our Lord are equal in essence but distinct in person.

The third thing, and really this is just putting the other two things together and making some application, is that in Paul's mind God our Father and Jesus our Lord have a unity of purpose. Otherwise Paul would not pray to God our Father and Jesus our Lord and expect the same answer from each. In order to expect the same answer from each Paul must presuppose that God our Father and Jesus our Lord have a unity of purpose for history. And this is verified by the fact that the verb, **direct**, is in the singular. You would think that if two people are the subject of the sentence then the verb would be in the plural. But the verb is in the singular to emphasize the unity of purpose between God our Father and Jesus our Lord. So, we're saying that God the Father does not have one purpose and Jesus has a separate purpose. No, they have the same purpose, always, all the time, no matter what, they've never had a disagreement with one another.

The fourth thing, and this too is application and I'm bringing in other passages which relate to prayer, is that there is diversity of role when it comes to answering prayer. The Son is the one who intercedes on our behalf to the Father, Jesus is the intercessor, the mediator. 1 Tim 2:5, there is "one mediator ...between God and man, the man Christ Jesus," not Mary. Mary no more hears you pray than Mubarak, not saints, alive or dead, they don't hear your prayers, they don't help you get your prayers answered, there is only one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus. You don't need go to some Episcopal or Roman Catholic priests and confess your sins. All that's doing is spreading gossip, giving them ammunition to use against you in the gossip form. And you say, Oh, they would never use that. Don't be naïve, they have

used that and they do use that to control and oppress people. I wouldn't tell them a thing. There is only one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus. And that's God's word not man's opinion.

Now that we've seen both God our Father and Jesus our Lord are addressed in prayer, the unity and the diversity, let's look at the first prayer request. There are two requests, the first is in verse 11, and the second is in verse 12. And pay attention to the requests because they assume certain doctrines, certain theology. And they focus on important things and tell us, hey, these might be important things to pray for, not who wins the football game. The first is at the end of verse 11, **may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you.** We want to come see you. What's back of this prayer request? God's providence. Providence is God's personal rule over history and the direction history takes. It means that God is involved in all affairs. Whether it be the weather, the tide, the geographical boundaries of people, the languages that people speak, the football game, everything is providentially ruled over by the infinite – personal God. Yes, all the little details of history God is providentially ruling over them; down to every H₂O molecule. And Paul is praying **direct our way to you.** We want to come to you, this is our wish, this is an optative verb, which is very rare the Greek, it means a wish. He is saying we don't know if this is what God our Father and Jesus our Lord want for our lives but if it is we want to come to you. And we know that He is able to direct our way to you. That is not a problem for Him, He runs history, He rules the world, He manages every molecule on the planet so if He wants to direct our way to you then He can do that. Not a problem. And it's the whole idea that, from a human standpoint, there are certain obstacles in our way here. We can't get to you. We want to get to you. But there are obstacles in our way. And we know what the obstacles are from Chapter 2, verse 18, the satanic hindrance. Satan had duped the immature believer Jason into putting up bail to get out of jail in exchange for a guarantee that Paul and Silas would never return to Thessalonica. Now that's one big obstacle. But Paul says we know someone that's bigger than the obstacle. God our Father and Jesus our Lord. They run history and if they want to remove a satanic obstacle then they can do it. That's what we want, and if the Lord wants it then so be it. That's your attitude in prayer.

The second prayer request is in verse 12, and this shows you that though you may have grown spiritually in the past there's always more room left to grow. If you think you have arrived and you are so advanced in your maturity there's nothing new for you to learn, then you need to grow up. You have a big head. You're arrogant and you're dangerous as a believer. I don't care how much theology you've studied, I don't care how many verses you've exegeted, I don't care how many of the biblical languages you know, if you exist on planet earth right now as a Christian you still have room to grow. If you didn't, you wouldn't be here. The whole reason you are here is to learn loyalty to God through his word. And even when you get to heaven you're still not going to know everything there is to know. Because you're finite, you're limited and your knowledge will always be limited, which means that God will have something new to teach you every day for all eternity. But as long as you are here in this world he has you here for a purpose, and that purpose is to learn loyalty to Him through His word. And I do not hesitate to say that you have not learned total loyalty to Him through His word. I venture to say that you fail and that you disobey him just like I do. So, while the Thessalonians were doing very well, they were handling the trials and tribulations with great steadfastness of faith, yet nevertheless there was space to grow. And Paul prays for it in verse 12, **and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you;** in other words, love for the elect and love for the non-elect, love for believers and love for unbelievers. And he's asking **the Lord** for this and in verse 11 who is the Lord? Jesus is Lord. So He's asking Jesus specifically in verse 12. Jesus is the Lord and here we can add something about the nature of Jesus. Since the Greek word *kurios* was used by the Jews to translate the Hebrew name for God, YHWH, then it can easily be seen that Paul understood that Jesus was YHWH. So Jesus is Lord and the Lord is *kurios*, which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew YHWH, again signaling identity of essence. Jesus is not less than God, Jesus is not a god, Jesus is not just a good teacher or ethical advisor, Jesus is the Creator of the universe, God incarnate. And here he prays that Jesus **cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people.** Let's take the first. This is love inside the house of faith, inside the house of believers. And here the prayer is for the **Lord to cause** them to increase and abound in love. So it's the Lord that has to do this. We can't do this in our flesh, we cannot increase and abound in our love for one another; it has to be the Lord that brings the increase. And what this means is that He is the

author of our sanctification. You can't sanctify yourself. And you're wasting your time if you're trying to perfect your flesh. The flesh can do a lot of things that look good on the outside, what some people call relative good. Yeah, it's relatively good compared to what other human beings think. But the problem is that other human beings are not the standard. God is the standard for what is good. And God says that everything that comes from your flesh stinks, it's rotten, it's no good, the best thing you ever did in your flesh is pitiful. And God's not interested in it one bit except for eliminating it by throwing it into the trash can. And if that offends you then you're offended by God. Because that's not what I think, that's what God thinks. The only way that we can increase and abound in love is if the Lord answers these types of prayers and He causes us to abound in love for one another. Outside of that it's just our flesh working it up. Our dirty rotten flesh.

Now notice the two verbs that express the action desired by the prayer. The first is translated **cause you to increase** and the second is **cause you to abound**. Now, these two words are virtually synonyms. It's very hard to tell any difference between the two. The first one means to "super-abound" and the second one mean's "over and above" so it's sort of a way of intensifying by using the two verbs. It's saying a lot of love, a lot of love, a lot of love. There's always room to love more. And people here at this congregation love a lot. So it always gives me a chuckle when people come in here two times and then they've just got to put a comment card in and they will say you know the people around here they just don't love, they're not very welcoming. And I just want to say to these people: well maybe you should make an effort. But it wouldn't do any good because they're so arrogant to make judgments after two weeks. So it's better they don't even come back. I'm glad they don't come back because they'd just be a thorn in everybody's side. And it's better just to let them move on out down the street where they can get somebody to hold their hand and feel warm and fuzzy. People here, if you spend time here and you get to know some of them you'd find they do love, but you might have to make an effort. Just because you walked into this place three weeks ago doesn't mean that everybody else has a responsibility to come up to you and initiate a conversation. You can initiate just as well as other people. And some people quite frankly are more the shy side and they don't feel comfortable initiating. So don't take it offensively, they may just be shy. And if you're just so excited about getting to know people go talk to them. But don't blame the people here, Oh, poor me, nobody came to talk to me after two

weeks. Get over yourself and go talk to some of them. In any case Paul prays that even if you have a lot of love going around, there's always more that could go around. You haven't maxed out your capacity. We should love, and increase in love, and super-abound in love toward one another. This is our great testimony to the world. And if we don't love one another how can we tell the world that Christ loves them? If we have not love among ourselves than what would attract men to the love of Christ? Paul prays that their love may increase.

And then he prays that our love increase and abound **for all people**. And this is love outside the household of faith, outside the house of believers. This is for people you know in the workplace, people you know in the neighborhood, how are you going to lead these people to Christ if you don't love them? It doesn't make any sense. Why would I want to hear what you have to say about Jesus and the cross if you don't have any love for me? Why would I even want to be around you if there's not something distinct about the love you show toward other people? You know this love thing is a very serious thing. Why do we love? Because He first loved us. In other words, here's the motive to love others, whether it's inside the household of faith or outside the household of faith. And that is 1 John 4:19, "We love, because He first loved us." Did God love us when we were unlovely? Yes he did. Did God love us when we were at enmity with him? Yes he did. Now if He loved us when we were at enmity with Him shouldn't we love others? Paul prays that they do and I pray that you do.

And finally we come to the purpose of it all: verse 13 begins with *eis* + the articular infinitive of purpose which means it's a purpose clause, it's saying "to the end that..." and he's looking to the future, "to the end 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**. A very difficult verse. Let's see if we can unravel it and review some of what we've seen about Christ's coming. **so that He may establish your hearts without blame**, in other words Paul wants the Lord to answer the prayer request of verse 12 so that, verse 13, in the end their hearts will be established without blame in holiness before our God and Father. In other words there's going to be a presentation of believers before our God and Father. So this is within the household of faith. He is *our* God and Father and we will be presented before Him. When will this take place? When will

believers be marched into the Father's presence and presented before Him? Well, it occurs in conjunction with the **coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints**. According to Scripture, at some undisclosed time Christ will descend from heaven, and Christians, whether dead or alive, will be caught up in the air and we will ascend to heaven where we will be with Christ. Then we will attend the judgment seat of Christ, where our works will be judged and we will be rewarded accordingly. Then we will be presented without blame in holiness before our God and Father.

So let's review these events by looking at how Paul has presented them in 1 Thessalonians. These three events are all related in some way to the coming of Christ. When we talk about the coming of Christ we are talking about the *parousia* and it means "one's presence, especially as it relates to the arrival." So when we say the coming of Christ we mean when Christ arrives. And there are three truths in 1 Thessalonians so far that relate to the arrival of Christ. Turn to 1 Thessalonians 1:10, this is the first truth related to Christ's arrival. "And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come." What's the believer's responsibility? To wait for Him to return from heaven. Jesus ascended to heaven and this verse is teaching that we are to wait for Him to descend from heaven in order to rescue us from the wrath to come. So obviously we are not destined to enter the wrath that is coming. We are destined to be rescued away from the wrath that is coming. And so the first truth is that at some unannounced time Jesus is going to descend from heaven and rescue us away from the wrath to come. Our responsibility as believers is to wait expectantly for Him. It's a word for an expectant waiting, an anticipatory waiting. We really are to wake up each day expecting him to come that day, at that moment. That is the way to live each day, expectantly waiting for Him.

For the second truth turn to 1 Thessalonians 2:19, "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?" Every Christian's works will be evaluated at the judgment seat of Christ and rewarded accordingly with crowns. And Paul associates this judgment with the coming of Jesus Christ. So the first thing is that we are waiting for him to come. The second thing is that when He comes He will capture us up to Himself in the air, then we will return with Him to heaven and attend the judgment seat for rewards.

For the third truth turn to 1 Thessalonians 3:13, "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." So, after we go to the judgment seat of Christ then we will be presented before our God and Father. There's a presentation of us pure and spotless. As Dr. Walvoord says, "Christians are going to meet Christ in the air...After we meet him in the air he will take us home to glory to be in the presence of the Father and the holy angels. After that we are coming back to the earth with Christ.... What an event that arrival in heaven is going to be! All the holy angels will be in attendance on that day. When the dead in Christ and living Christians are caught up to be with the Lord and arrive in heaven as the trophies of grace, the marvels of God's resurrection power, they will be presented as a spotless bride, as a holy people, as those who are the workmanship of Christ. At the coming of Christ with all His Saints to heaven, we will be "unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father.... – unblamable because every sin is washed away, every unholy thing once and forever removed." So this speaks of our presentation before our Father after the judgment seat of Christ.

Finally, who are **all His saints**? When Christ returns for us verse 13 says He will **come with all His saints**. When it's translated **saints** it makes it sound like some spooky group of believers. It's not, all believers are saints. Saints are not a special class of believers. But that's a mistranslation anyway. It should be translated "all his holy ones." And that opens things up a bit, it's not referring to believers, it's referring to angels. As far as I can tell every reference to the "holy ones" refers to angels. And in fact if you turned to Zechariah 14:5 you would see that the end of verse 13 is a loose quotation of Zechariah 14:5 which says, "Then the LORD, my God, will come, *and* all the holy ones with Him!" And it refers to angels. It can't refer to men because all the redeemed men aren't present at this time. They're yet to be resurrected. So this refers to angels.

So let's conclude by putting this all together. First of all, Paul puts this to prayer. In other words prayer is the means by which our God and Father and Jesus our Lord accomplishes certain ends. God has a plan for history. And that plan is going to work out to the nth detail. But the means by which God works out his plan to the nth detail involves prayer. And Paul believed that God answers prayer. And the Bible teaches that God answers prayer and that

prayer is one of His means of bringing about the plan for history that He wrote before the foundation of the world. The plan included the prayer. And so Paul prays number one, that his way is directed to the Thessalonians, and number two that the Lord would cause their love to super-abound, over and above for one another and for all people. This is a means by which the results of verse 13 is accomplished, namely our hearts being established blameless, totally sinless before our God and Father in connection with the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His "holy ones" referring to the angels, and the sequence by which these things take place is now. We are here in this world and Paul is saying, if he were praying for us today in Feb 2010, he would pray that our love increase and abound and super-abound for one another, and for all people to the end that we are established before our God and Father as holy and blameless in His presence in association with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his angels to rescue us away from the wrath to come upon this world.

In other words an advanced truth of sanctification is that there are means to reaching this end. You say, all Christians will be resurrected and presented before our God and Father as holy and blameless and I say you're absolutely correct. But that does not mean that this end is accomplished independent of certain means. The means are the prayers of other believers for us to increase and abound in love. Those are means by which God brings about our ultimate sanctification when we are standing in the presence of our God and Father and our mentality is clean and totally pure. No evil thoughts.

Put another way, there is a purifying effect of "love for one another, and for all people." And it is this purifying effect that Paul desires for believers so that they when we are presented before our God and Father it will have been confirmed in our experience that we are Christians by position, i.e. when we are sanctified ultimately our experience in Christ will be evidence that could be called forth to confirm our position in Christ. Paul is saying that I want you to prove that out in your life as a Christian you really are a Christian. So many people say, well, I am already a Christian. I believed in Jesus when I was five years old. What more is there? Well there's a whole lot more. Paul says if you are a Christian prove out in your life that you are a Christian. Your life should be an ever continual confirmation that indeed you are a Christian. It's not saying that if you don't have good works you're not a Christian. It simply saying that a Christian ought to live like a Christian so

that when we stand before our God and Father it will be proven empirically from our love that, yes, we are Christians.

Now this is a difficult passage and I expect questions and if I don't have questions I'll conclude that I've done a great job of exegeting this text. But I can already tell you there are a number of things that I did not tell you about this passage because we simply don't have time and that's why I leave question cards there for you to ask the questions.

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2011