

Increasing And Abounding In Love

(1Thessalonians 3:12)

- I. Paul here prays for both *increasing* and *abounding* in love. See “increased” in **GEN 7:17-18**.
 - A. Compare the prayer of **1TH 3:12** with **1TH 4:9-10**.
 - B. We should abound in love, but divine enablement must be sought to do this. **EPH 3:16-17**.
 - C. God teaches us to love one another; this is a prayer for God to strengthen what He has wrought in us. **PSA 68:28**.
 - D. Paul commended these Thessalonians for loving *indeed*, which is loving *in actual fact, in reality, in truth*. **1TH 1:3; 3:6; 1JO 3:16-18**.
 - E. Paul prays for the increase of this love; there is always room for growth. **2PE 3:18**.
 - F. The great goal of the church's maturing process is to increase *by* and *in* love. **EPH 4:15-16**.
 - G. Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians was answered. **2TH 1:3**.

- II. To abound in: To be plentiful, wealthy, or copious in; to possess to a marked extent, so as to be characterized by; to have wealth of. (Used of persons and things, in reference to inherent qualities, characteristic attributes, or things whereby the subject is made wealthy, eminent, or distinguished.)
 - A. To abound in love is to possess it to the extent of being characterized by it. **JOH 13:34-35**.
 - B. Abounding in love embraces knowledge and judgment. **PHIL 1:9**.
 - C. A lack of love indicates we have forgotten what Jesus did for us on the cross. **2PE 1:7-9**.
 - D. A lack of love hampers faith and understanding. **GAL 5:6; 1JO 2:11**.

- III. Abounding love means abounding obedience which defines loving in deed. **1JO 5:2-3**.

- IV. Abounding love means abounding in the characteristics of love. **1CO 13:1-7**.
 - A. Spiritual gifts, knowledge, alms, and martyrdom are profitless without love.
 - B. Knowledge without love will puff up rather than edify. **1CO 8:1-2**.
 - C. Paul prays for believers to abound in love “...one toward another and toward all men.” Love is not to be limited to those only who agree with us or do us good. **MAT 5:43-48**.

- V. Paul and his fellow-laborers are the pattern for this abounding love by virtue of the phrase, “...even as we do toward you” (**1TH 3:12**).
 - A. **1TH 2-3** shows *how* Paul loved the Thessalonians *before* and *after* their conversion.
 - B. Therefore, this is a pattern of love to believers and all men.
 - C. Paul loved the Thessalonians in leading them by his words and conduct into the obedience of the faith. **1TH 2:1-12**.
 - D. Paul sacrificed his rights to benefit the Thessalonians. **1TH 2:6-9**.
 - E. Paul had a genuine interest in the Thessalonians; he did not merely use them for himself. **1TH 2:8**.
 1. Christians are also to be “...kindly affectioned [disposed, inclined] one toward another with brotherly love.” **ROM 12:10**.
 2. We should look on the things of others, seeking their welfare rather than only our own. **PHIL 2:3-4; 1CO 10:23-24; ROM 15:1-2**.
 3. It is loving as did Paul to forego personal rights and liberties to edify another. **ROM 14:15-21; 1CO 9:19-23**.
 - F. Paul's communication to his brethren was designed to enrich their walk with God. **1TH 2:11-12**.
 1. Believers should love one another in this manner. **ROM 15:14; 1TH 5:11; HEB 3:13; 10:24-25**.

2. We should love enough to confront a brother when his behavior is harmful to himself. **LEV 19:17.**
3. Does our communication edify? **EPH 4:29.**
- G. Paul had compassion upon the Thessalonians in their sufferings. **1TH 3:1-5.**
 1. Paul was loving as a brother. **1PE 3:8-9 c/w PRO 17:17.**
 2. Loving as a brother involves having compassion one of another which is suffering together with one another. **ROM 12:15; 1CO 12:26.**
- H. Paul loved unbelievers in that he longed for their conversion and sought to promote it. **ACT 26:28-29; ROM 10:1; 1CO 10:33.**
 1. We are to love all men by so living that we may enhance the possibility of their conversion. **1PE 2:11-12; 3:15.**
 2. To lead a man to the gospel is to do for him the ultimate good. **GAL 6:10.**
- I. Paul's abundant love towards Corinth was sadly not reciprocal. **2CO 12:14-15.**
 1. There are few pains in this world as difficult to bear as unappreciated, unrecognized, or unrequited love.
 2. Let us strive to be grateful receivers and requiters of love, and that fervently with a pure heart. **1PE 1:22.**
 3. This is the message we have had from the beginning. **1JO 3:11.**