

Translations

1Thes 3:9-13

- 9 For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God,
10 night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?
11 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.

(NKJ)

1Thes 3:9-13

- 9 For what thanksgiving can we render to God for you, for all the joy which we feel for your sake before our God,
10 praying earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?
11 Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you;
12 and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you,
13 so that he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

(RSV)

1Thes 3:9-13

- 9 How can we thank God enough for you and for the joy and delight you have given us in our praying for you?
10 For night and day we pray on and on for you, asking God to let us see you again, to fill up any little cracks there may yet be in your faith.
11 May God our Father himself and our Lord Jesus send us back to you again.
12 And may the Lord make your love to grow and overflow to each other and to everyone else, just as our love does toward you.
13 This will result in your hearts being made strong, sinless, and holy by God our Father so that you may stand before him guiltless on that day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns with all those who belong to him.

(TLB)

1Thes 3:9-13

- 9 For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;
10 night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith?
11 Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way unto you:
12 and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we also (do) toward you;
13 to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

(ASV)

1Thes 3:9-13

- 9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;
- 10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?
- 11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.
- 12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:
- 13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

(KJV)

1Thes 3:9-13

- 9 For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account,
- 10 as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?
- 11 Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you;
- 12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also {do} for you;
- 13 so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

(NAS)

1Thes 3:9-13

- 9 How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?
- 10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.
- 11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you.
- 12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.
- 13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

(NIV)

International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database**PERFECT; PERFECTION**

Other words are teleioo. "To perfect," "to end," "complete" (<Lk 13:32>, "The third day I am perfected," the Revised Version margin "end my course"; <Jn 17:23>, "perfected into one"; <2 Cor 12:9; Phil 3:12>, the Revised Version (British and American) "made perfect"; <Heb 2:10>, etc.); also epiteleio, "to bring through to an end" (<2 Cor 7:1>, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God "; <Gal 3:3>, "Are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" The King James Version, the Revised Version (British and American) "perfected in the flesh," margin "Do ye now make an end in the flesh?"); katartizo "to make quite ready," "to make complete," is translated "perfect," "to perfect" (<Mt 21:16>, "perfected praise"; <Lk 6:40>, "Every one when he is perfected shall be as his teacher"; <1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 13:11>, "be perfected"; <1 Thes 3:10; 1 Pet 5:10>, the Revised Version margin "restore"); akribos, "accurately," "diligently," is translated "perfect" (<Lk 1:3>, "having had perfect understanding," the Revised Version (British and American) "having traced ... accurately"; <Acts 18:26> the King James Version, the Revised Version (British and American) "more accurately"). We have also artios, "fitted," "perfected" (<2 Tim 3:7>, the Revised Version (British and American) "complete"); pleroo, "to fill," "to make full" (<Rev 3:2>, the American Standard Revised Version "perfected," the English Revised Version "fulfilled"); katartismos, "complete adjustment," "perfecting" (<Eph 4:12>, "for the perfecting of the saints").

Perfection is the translation of katartisis "thorough adjustment," "fitness" (<2 Cor 13:9>, the Revised Version (British and American) "perfecting"); of teleiosis <Heb 7:11>; of teleiotes (<Heb 6:1>, the Revised Version margin "full growth"); it is translated "perfectness" <Col 3:14>; "perfection". in <Lk 8:14> is the translation of telesphoreo, "to bear on to completion or perfection." In Apocrypha "perfect," "perfection," etc., are for the most part the translation of words from telos, "the end," e.g. Wisd 4:13; Eccles 34:8; 44:17; 45:8, suntelia "full end"; 24:28; 50:11.

The Revised Version (British and American) has "perfect" for "upright" (<2 Sam 22:24,26> twice); for "sound" <Ps 119:80>; for "perform" <Phil 1:16>; for "undefiled" (<Ps 119:1>, margin "upright in way"); for "perfect peace, and at such a time" <Ezra 7:12>, "perfect and so forth"; for "He maketh my way perfect" <2 Sam 22:33>, "He guideth the perfect in his way," margin "or, `setteth free. ' According to another reading, `guideth my way in perfectness' "; "shall himself perfect," margin "restore," for, "make you perfect" <1 Pet 5:10>; "perfecter" for "finisher" <Heb 12:2>; "perfectly" is omitted in the Revised Version (British and American) <Mt 14:36>; "set your hope perfectly on" for the King James Version "hope to the end for" <1 Pet 1:13>.

3. The Christian Ideal: Perfection is the Christian ideal and aim, but inasmuch as that which God has set before us is infinite-- "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" <Mt 5:48>-- absolute perfection must be forever beyond, not only any human, but any finite, being; it is a divine ideal forever shining before us, calling us upward, and making endless progression possible. As noted above, the perfect man, in the Old Testament phrase, was the man whose heart was truly or wholly devoted to God. Christian perfection must also have its seat in such a heart, but it implies the whole conduct and the whole man, conformed thereto as knowledge grows and opportunity arises, or might be found. There may be, of course, a relative perfection, e.g. of the child as a child compared with that of the man. The Christian ought to be continually moving onward toward perfection, looking to Him who is able to "make you perfect in every good thing (or work) to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen <Heb 13:21>.

W. L. WALKER

4. The Thessalonian Church: The Thessalonian church was a strong and flourishing one, composed of Gentiles rather than of Jews, if we may judge from the tone of the two Epistles addressed to its members, the absence of quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament, and the phrase "Ye turned unto God from idols" (<1 Thes 1:9>; compare also <2:14>). These, by common consent the earliest of Paul's Epistles, show us that the apostle was eager to revisit Thessalonica very soon after his enforced departure: "once and again" the desire to return was strong in him, but "Satan hindered" him <2:18>-- a reference probably to the danger and loss in which such a step would involve Jason and the other leading converts. But though himself prevented from continuing his work at Thessalonica, he sent Timothy from Athens to visit the church and confirm the faith of the Christians amid their hardships and persecutions <3:2-10>. The favorable report brought back by Timothy was a great comfort to Paul, and at the same time intensified his longing to see his converts again <3:10-11>. This desire was to be fulfilled more than once. Almost certainly Paul returned there on his 3rd missionary journey, both on his way to Greece

<Acts 20:1> and again while he was going thence to Jerusalem (verse 3); it is on this latter occasion that we hear of Aristarchus and Secundus accompanying him (verse 4). Probably Paul was again in Thessalonica after his first imprisonment. From the Epistle to the Philippians <Phil 1:26; 2:24>, written during his captivity, we learn that his intention was to revisit Philippi if possible, and <1 Tim 1:3> records a subsequent journey to Macedonia, in the course of which the apostle may well have made a longer or shorter stay at Thessalonica. The only other mention of the town in the New Testament occurs in <2 Tim 4:10>, where Paul writes that Demas has forsaken him and has gone there. Whether Demas was a Thessalonian, as some have supposed, cannot be determined.

SANCTIFICATION

In answer to this we must first discriminate between the ideal and the empirical with Paul. Like John <1 Jn 1:6; 3:9>, Paul insists that the life of Christ and the life of sin cannot go on together, and he knows no qualified obedience, no graduated standard. He brings the highest Christian demand to the poorest of his pagan converts. Nor have we any finer proof of his faith than this uncompromising idealism. On the other hand, how could he ask less than this? God cannot require less than the highest, but it is another question how the ideal is to be achieved. In the realm of the ideal it is always either or. In the realm of life there is another category. The question is not simply, Is this man sinner or saint? It is rather, What is he becoming? This matter of becoming is the really vital issue. Is this man turned the right way with all his power? Is his life wholly open to the divine fellowship? Not the degree of achievement, but the right attitude toward the ideal, is decisive. Paul does not stop to resolve paradoxes, but practically he reckons with this idea. Side by side with his prayer for the Thessalonians are his admonitions to growth and progress <1 Thes 3:12; 5:14>. Neither the absolute demand or the promise of grace gives us the right to conclude how the consummation shall take place.

8. Sanctification as Man's Task: That conclusion we can reach only as we go back again to the fundamental principle of the personal character of the Christian life and the relation thus given between the ethical and the religious. All Christian life is gift and task alike. "Work out your own salvation for it is God who worketh in you" (<Phil 2:12> f). All is from God; we can only live what God gives. But there is a converse to this: only as we live it out can God give to us the life. This appears in Paul's teaching as to sanctification. It is not only God's gift, but our task. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" <1 Thes 4:3>. "Having therefore these promises let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness (hagiosune) in the fear of God" <2 Cor 7:1>. Significant is Paul's use of the word "walk." We are to "walk in newness of life," "by (or in) the Spirit," "in love," and "in Christ Jesus the Lord" <Rom 6:4; Gal 5:16; Eph 5:2; Col 2:6>. The gift in each case becomes the task, and indeed becomes real and effective only in this activity. It is only as we walk by the Spirit that this becomes powerful in overcoming the lusts of the flesh (<Gal 5:16>; compare <5:25>). But the ethical is the task that ends only with life. If God gives only as we live, then He cannot give all at once. Sanctification is then the matter of a life and not of a moment. The life may be consecrated in a moment, the right relation to God assumed and the man stand in saving fellowship with Him. The life is thus made holy in principle. But the real making holy is co-extensive with the whole life of man. It is nothing less than the constant in-forming of the life of the inner spirit and outer deed with the Spirit of Christ until we, "speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head" <Eph 4:15>. (Read also <Rom 6>; that the Christian is dead to sin is not some fixed static fact, but is true only as he refuses the lower and yields his members to a higher obedience. Note that in <1 Cor 5:7> Paul in the same verse declares "ye are unleavened," and then exhorts "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump"; compare also <1 Thes 5:5-10.>)

We may sum up as follows: The word "sanctify" is used with two broad meanings: (1) The first is to devote, to consecrate to God, to recognize as holy, that is, as belonging to God. This is the regular Old Testament usage and is most common in the New Testament. The prophets showed that this belonging to Yahweh demanded righteousness. The New Testament deepens this into a whole-hearted surrender to the fellowship of God and to the rule of His Spirit. (2) Though the word itself appears in but few passages with this sense, the New Testament is full of the thought of the making holy of the Christian's life by the Spirit of God in that fellowship into which God lifts us by His grace and in which He gives Himself to us. This sanctifying, or hallowing, is not mechanical or magical. It is wrought out by God's Spirit in a daily fellowship to which man gives himself in aspiration and trust and obedience, receiving with open heart, living out in obedient life. It is not negative, the mere separation from sin, but the progressive hallowing of a life that grows constantly in capacity, as in character, into the stature of full manhood as it is in Christ. And from this its very nature it is not momentary, but the deed and the privilege of a whole life.

Theme Studies

- 2 Sam 7:18-22 Then King David went in and sat before the LORD; and he said: "Who am I, O Lord GOD? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far? And yet this was a small thing in Your sight, O Lord GOD; and You have also spoken of Your servant's house for a great while to come. Is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD? Now what more can David say to You? For You, Lord GOD, know Your servant. For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, You have done all these great things, to make Your servant know them. Therefore You are great, O Lord GOD. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.
- Neh 9:5 And the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said: "Stand up and bless the LORD your God forever and ever! "Blessed be Your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise!
- Ps 71:14-16 But I will hope continually, and will praise You yet more and more. My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day, for I do not know their limits. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.
- 2 Cor 2:14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.
- 2 Cor 9:15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!
- 1Thes 1:2-3 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,
- Deut 12:2 You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree.
- Deut 12:18 But you must eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God chooses, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all to which you put your hands.
- Deut 16:11 You shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your gates, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are among you, at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide.
- 2 Sam 6:21 So David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me instead of your father and all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel. Therefore I will play music before the LORD.
- Ps 68:3 But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yes, let them rejoice exceedingly.
- Ps 96:12 Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the LORD.
- Ps 98:8-9 Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the LORD, For He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, and the peoples with equity
- Isa 63:16 Doubtless You are our Father, though Abraham was ignorant of us, and Israel does not acknowledge us. You, O LORD, are our Father; our Redeemer from Everlasting is Your name.

- Jer 31:9 They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn.
- Mal 1:6 A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts to you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?'
- John 20:17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"
- 2 Cor 6:18 I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."
- Col 1:2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- I Jn 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.
- Rom 1:3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,
- II Th 2:16-17 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.
- Ezra 8:21-23 Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, "The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him." So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.
- Prov 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.
- Ps 115:4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of
- Luke 17:5 And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."
- 2 Cor 9:10-11 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us
- 1Thes 4:10 and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more;
- James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.
- 2 Pet 3:18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.
- Phil 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,

- II Th 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,
- I Jn 4:7-16 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.
- Rom 13:8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.
- 1Thes 2:8 So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.
- Rom 14:4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.
- Rom 16:25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began
- 1 Cor 1:4 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus,
- Phil 1:10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,
- I Jn 3:20-21 For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.
- Eph 5:27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.
- Col 1:22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight--
- Jude 1:24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
- Deut 33:2 And he said: "The LORD came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; he shone forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints; from His right hand came a fiery law for them.
- Zech 14:5 Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You.
- II Th 1:10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.
- Jude 1:14 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints,

Matthew Henry's Commentary

The mission of Timothy

Here we have Paul's great satisfaction upon the return of Timothy with good tidings from the Thessalonians, in which we may observe,

I. The good report Timothy made concerning them, v. 6. Without question, he was a willing messenger of these good tidings. Concerning their faith, that is, concerning their stedfastness in the faith, that they were not shaken in mind, nor turned aside from the profession of the gospel. Their love also continued; their love to the gospel, and the ministers of the gospel. For they had a good and a kind remembrance of the apostles, and that constantly, or always. The names of the apostles were very dear to them, and the thoughts of them, and what they themselves had received from them, were very precious, insomuch that they desired greatly to see them again, and receive some spiritual gift from them; and there was no love lost, for the apostle was as desirous to see them. It is happy where there is such mutual love between minister and people. This tends to promote religion, and the success of the gospel. The world hates them, and therefore they should love one another.

II. The great comfort and satisfaction the apostle had in this good report concerning them (v. 7-8): Therefore, brethren, we were comforted in all our affliction and distress. The apostle thought this good news of them was sufficient to balance all the troubles he met with. It was easy to him to bear affliction, or persecution, or fightings from without, when he found the good success of his ministry and the constancy of the converts he had made to Christianity; and his distress of mind on account of his fears within, lest he had laboured in vain, was now in a good measure over, when he understood their faith and the perseverance of it. This put new life and spirit into the apostle and made him vigorous and active in the work of the Lord. Thus he was not only comforted, but greatly rejoiced also: Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord, v. 8. It would have been a killing thing to the apostles if the professors of religion had been unsteady, or proved apostates; whereas nothing was more encouraging than their constancy.

III. The effects of this were thankfulness and prayer to God on their behalf. Observe,

1. How thankful the apostle was, v. 9. He was full of joy, and full of praise and thanksgiving. When we are most cheerful we should be most thankful. What we rejoice in we should give thanks for. This is to rejoice before our God, to spiritualize our joy. Paul speaks as if he could not tell how to express his thankfulness to God, or his joy and rejoicing for their sakes. But he was careful God should not lose the glory of the comfort he received in the welfare of his friends. His heart was enlarged with love to them and with thanksgiving to God. He was willing to express the one and the other as well as he could. As to thankfulness to God, this especially is very imperfect in the present state; but, when we come to heaven, we shall do this work better than now we can.

2. He prayed for them night and day (v. 10), evening and morning, or very frequently, in the midst of the business of the day or slumber of the night lifting up his heart to God in prayer. Thus we should pray always. And Paul's prayer was fervent prayer. He prayed exceedingly, and was earnest in his supplication. Note, When we are most thankful we should always give ourselves to prayer; and those we give thanks for have yet need to be prayed for. Those whom we most rejoice in, and who are our greatest comforts, must be our constant care, while in this world of temptation and imperfection. There was something still lacking in their faith; Paul desired that this might be perfected, and to see their face in order thereunto. Note,

(1.) The best of men have something wanting in their faith, if not as to the matter of it, there being some mysteries or doctrines not sufficiently known or believed by them, yet as to the clearness and certainty of their faith, there being some remaining darkness and doubtings, or at least as to the effects and operations of it, these being not so conspicuous and perfect as they should be. And,

(2.) The ministry of the word and ordinances is helpful, and to be desired and used for the perfecting of that which is lacking in our faith.

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13/Apostolic Prayer

In these words we have the earnest prayer of the apostle. He desired to be instrumental in the further benefit of the Thessalonians; and the only way to be so while at a distance was by prayer for them, together with his writing or sending to them. He desired that their faith might be perfected, which he could not be the proper cause or author of; for he pretended not to dominion over their faith, nor to have the donation of it, and he therefore concludes with prayer for them. Observe,

I. Whom he prays to, namely, God and Christ. Prayer is a part of religious worship, and all religious worship is due unto God only. Prayer is here made to God, even the Father and our Father; and also to Christ, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore Jesus Christ our Lord is God, even as God our Father is God. Prayer is to be offered to God as our Father. So Christ taught his disciples to pray; and so the Spirit of adoption prompts them to pray, to cry, Abba Father. Prayer is not only to be offered in the name of Christ, but offered up to Christ himself, as our Lord and our Saviour.

II. What he prays for, with respect to himself and his fellow-labourers, and on behalf of the Thessalonians.

1. He prays that himself and fellow-labourers might have a prosperous journey to them by the will of God, that their way might be directed to them, v. 11. The taking of a journey to this or that place, one would think, is a thing depending so much on a man's own will, and lies so much in his own power, that Paul needed not by prayer to go to God about it. But the apostle knew that in God we live, and move, and have our being, that we depend upon God in all our motions and actions, as well as for the continuance of life and being, that divine Providence orders all our affairs and that it is owing thereto if we prosper therein, that God our Father directs and orders his children whither they shall go and what they shall do, that our Lord Jesus Christ in a particular manner directs the motions of his faithful ministers, those stars which he holds in his right hand. Let us acknowledge God in all our ways, and he will direct our paths.

2. He prays for the prosperity of the Thessalonians. Whether he should have an opportunity of coming to them or not, yet he earnestly prayed for the prosperity of their souls. And there are two things he desired for them, which we should desire for ourselves and friends:--

(1.) That they might increase and abound in love (v. 12), in love to one another and in love to all men. Note, Mutual love is required of all Christians, and not only that they love one another, but that they also have a charitable disposition of mind and due concern for the welfare of all men. Love is of God, and is the fulfilling of the gospel as well as of the law. Timothy brought good tidings of their faith, yet something was lacking therein; and of their charity, yet the apostle prays that this might increase and abound. Note, We have reason to desire to grow in every grace, and have need of the Spirit's influence in order to growth in grace; and the way to obtain this is by prayer. We are beholden to God not only for the stock put into our hands at first, but for the improvement of it also. And to our prayer we must add endeavour. To excite this in the Thessalonians the apostle again mentions his love, his abounding love, towards them. The more we are beloved, the more affectionate we should be.

(2.) that they might be established unblamable in holiness, v. 13. This spiritual benefit is mentioned as an effect of increasing and abounding love: To the end that he (the Lord) may establish your hearts. Note, The more we grow and abound in grace, and particularly in the grace of love, the more we are established and confirmed in it. Note also, Holiness is required of all those who would go to heaven, and therein we must be unblamable; that is, we must act in every thing so that we may not in the least contradict the profession we make of holiness. Our desire should be to have our hearts established in holiness before God, and be preserved safe, to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that we may be unblamable before God, even the Father, now, and be presented blameless before the throne of his glory, when the Lord Jesus shall come with all his saints. Note,

[1.] The Lord Jesus will certainly come, and come in his glory.

[2.] when he comes, his saints will come with him: They shall appear with him in glory.

[3.] then the excellency as well as the necessity of holiness will appear, because without this no hearts shall be established at that day, nor shall any one be unblamable, or avoid everlasting condemnation.

Adam Clarke Commentary

1 Thessalonians 3:9

For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

[What thanks can we render to God]

The high satisfaction and uncommon joy which the apostle felt are strongly depicted in the language he uses. How near his heart did the success of his ministry lie! It was not enough for him that he preached so often, laboured so hard, suffered so much; what were all these if souls were not converted? And what were all conversions, if those who embraced the Gospel did not walk steadily in the way to heaven, and persevere?

1 Thessalonians 3:10

Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

[Night and day praying exceedingly]

Supplicating God at all times; mingling this with all my prayers; huperekperissou (grk 5760) deomenoi (grk 1210), abounding and superabounding in my entreaties to God to permit me to revisit you. How strong was his affection for this church!

[Might perfect that which is lacking]

That I might have the opportunity of giving you the fullest instructions in the doctrine of Christ, that they might have everything in the most ample detail; so that the great outlines of truth which you already know may be filled up, that ye may be perfectly fitted to every good word and work.

1 Thessalonians 3:11

Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

[Now God himself and our Father]

That is: God who is our Father, who has adopted us into the heavenly family, and called us his sons and daughters.

[Direct our way]

As he was employed in God's work he dared not consult his own inclinations, he looked for continual directions from God, where, when, and how to do his Master's work.

1 Thessalonians 3:12

And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

[Make you to increase and abound in love]

They had already love to each other, so as to unite them in one Christian body; and he prays that they may have an increase and an abundance of it; that they might feel the same love to each other which he felt for them all.

1 Thessalonians 3:13

To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

[To the end he may establish your hearts]

Without love to God and man, there can be no establishment in the religion of Christ. It is love that produces both solidity and continuance. And, as love is the fulfilling of the law, he who is filled with love is unblameable in holiness: for he who has the love of God in him is a partaker of the divine nature, for God is love.

[At the coming of our Lord]

God is coming to judge the world; every hour that passes on in the general lapse of time is advancing his approach; whatsoever he does is in reference to this great event: and whatsoever we do should be in reference to the same. But who in that great day shall give up his accounts with joy? That person only whose heart is established in holiness before God; i. e., so as to hear the eye and strict scrutiny of his Judge. Reader, lay this to heart, for thou knowest not what a moment may bring forth. When thy soul departs from thy body it will be the coming of the Lord to thee.

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary

1 Thessalonians 3:9

For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

[What]-- what sufficient thanks?

[Render to God again]-- in return for His goodness <Ps. 116:12>.

[For, [peri (grk 4012): concerning] you, for (on account of) all the joy.] It was "comfort," <1 Thes 3:7>, now it is more-- namely, joy.

[For your sakes]-- on your account.

[Before our God.] It is a joy, as in the presence of God, which will bear His searching eye; not self-seeking, but disinterested, sincere, and spiritual (cf. <1 Thes 2:20; John 15:11>).

1 Thessalonians 3:10

Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

[Night and day] (note, <1 Thes 2:9>). Night is the season for the saints' holiest meditations and prayers <2 Tim. 1:3>.

[Praying.] What thanks can we render to God, praying as we do, etc.? [Deomenoi (grk 1189), a beseeching request.]

[Exceedingly], [huperekperissou (grk 5760)]-- 'more than exceeding abundantly' (cf. <Eph. 3:20>).

[That which is lacking.] Even the Thessalonians in some things needed improvement <Luke 17:5>. Their doctrinal views as to the nearness of Christ's coming, and the state of those asleep, and their practice in some points needed correction <1 Thes 4:1-9>. Paul's method was to begin by commending what was praiseworthy, then to correct what was amiss: a good pattern to all admonishers.

1 Thessalonians 3:11

Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

May God Himself, even our Father (there being but one article, requires, "He who is at once God and our Father") direct, ' etc. The "Himself" stands in contrast with "we" <1 Thes 2:18>: we desired to come, but could not through Satan's hindrance; but if God Himself direct our way (as we pray), none can hinder Him. The unity of the Father and Son appears here, and in <2 Thes 2:16-17>; the verb is singular, as the subject, the Father and Son, are but one in essential Being, not in mere unity of will. Almost all the chapters in both letters are sealed, each with its own prayer <1 Thes 5:23; 2 Thes 1:11; 2:16; 3:5,16> (Bengel). Paul does not think the issue of a journey an unfit subject for prayer <Rom. 1:10; 15:32> (Edmunds). His prayer, though deferred, in about five years afterward was fulfilled in his return to Macedonia.

1 Thessalonians 3:12

And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

The "you" (Greek) is emphatically put first: 'but' (Greek for "and"), what concerns "YOU," whether we come or not, 'may the Lord make you to, ' etc. "Increase" or enlarge [pleonasai (grk 4121)] has a comparative force: "abound" [perisseusai (grk 4052)] a superlative force 'make you full (supplying) "that which is lacking" <1 Thes 3:10>, and even abounding. ' "The Lord" may here be the Holy Spirit: so the Three of the Trinity will be appealed

to (cf. <1 Thes 3:13>), as in <2 Thes 3:5>. So the Holy Spirit is called "The Lord" <2 Cor. 3:17>. "Love" (brotherly, toward Christians first, and philanthropic toward all men) is the fruit of the Spirit <Gal. 5:22>: His office is "to stablish in holiness" <1 Thes 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:2>.

1 Thessalonians 3:13

To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

[Your hearts]-- naturally the spring of unholiness.

[Before God, even our Father]-- rather, `before Him who is at once God and our Father. ' Before not merely men, but Him who is not deceived by the show of holiness-- i. e., may your holiness be such as will stand his scrutiny. God will judge by Christ <2 Cor. 5:10; Acts 17:31>.

[Coming], [parousia (grk 3952)]-- `personal presence. '

[With all his saints]-- including holy angels, and the holy elect of men <1 Thes 4:14; Dan. 7:10; Zech. 14:5; Matt. 15:31; 2 Thes 1:7>. The saints are "His" <Acts 4:13>. We must have "holiness" if we are to be numbered with His holy one. [Hagiotees (grk 41) is holiness in the abstract. Hagiosunee is the state of holiness: hagasmos (grk 38), the process of being made holy.] On "unblameable," cf. <Rev. 14:5>. This verse (cf. with <1 Thes 3:12>) shows "love" is the spring of "holiness" <Matt. 5:44-48; Rom. 13:10; Col. 3:14>. God really "stablishes;" Timothy and others are but instruments <1 Thes 3:2> in `stablishing. '