

# [ have faith and love ]

**:: 2 thessalonians 1.3 ::**

*We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.  
[ 2 Thessalonians 1.3 ]*

We've been taking these Wednesday mornings to go trait by trait through 1 Timothy 3 and talk about the characteristics of a Godly man.

We desire to be Godly. We desire to live the kind of life that God wants for us. So we take these lists, these Spiritual measurements, so that we can then personally and privately line ourselves up to see how we fit into these descriptions.

The Bible is God's revelation. It is His love letter to mankind. It is history and theology and poetry and prophecy. Some call it the autobiography of God. It is all of those things, but we of course remember that the Bible is immensely practical.

The Lord has come to us and said, 'Ok, I have some things to say about your marriage. I have some things to say about how you raise your kids. I have some things I'd like you to do at your job. I have some things that you need to avoid in order to stay where you need to be.' The Bible is practical.

I say that because sometimes we all have difficulty in our devotional life, in our personal study and in our prayers. Now, if we're *not* spending any time in personal study of God's word or in prayer, then we have a problem. Because here in the Word is where God has revealed Himself to us and where He has given us our lifestyle and life plan. So if we're not spending time personally looking into the Scriptures, then we need to have another conversation.

But as we study, especially in the New Testament, we discover these characteristics that God gives us so that we can line up our own lives and attitudes and opinions and see how we measure up.

Am I blameless?  
Am I a one-woman man?  
Am I hospitable?  
Am I sober-minded?  
Am I teachable?  
Am I covetous?

Guys, we need to take these things and challenge ourselves to them. We need to challenge ourselves to be more like the man that we find in 1 Timothy chapter 3 and the rest of the Bible.

Just a short verse we want to talk briefly about this morning. 1 Thessalonians 1.3. There we see a couple of characteristics that we can think about and, more importantly, that we can challenge ourselves to have more of today.

There are 2 we want to look at this morning, they are *Faith* and *Love*.

Paul says, starting in verse 3:

1 Thessalonians 1.3a - We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly...

First important characteristic we see is faith.

Romans 1.17 says that the just shall live by faith. So, bottom line, faith is something that must define each and every one of us.

So, what is faith?

Well, from God's word we learn that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Faith is a gift given to us from God. Faith is, simply put, a trust in Jesus Christ, a reliance on Jesus Christ and an assurance of Jesus Christ.

It's trusting God. Who He is. What He's done. What He still does and what He will do. That means trust in His plan and in His promises. That means trust for His work in your life. Faith is being reliant on Jesus Christ and being sure that God still has things He wants to do in and through your life. That is a characteristic that must define every one of us.

And really, it's not just faith, but it's faith that grows. Paul said that their faith was growing abundantly. That means that their confidence in God was growing. Their expectation that God was working in their lives and in their church and in their community, in the world, was growing.

We need to have faith. Faith that God can do whatever He wants and that He *wants* to do big things in His Church and in my life.

Second characteristic we see: love.

1 Thessalonians 1.3 - We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.

Here's where it gets a little more rough. I mean, faith we understand and we really desire. We're like the father of the demon possessed child who came to Jesus and said, 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!' I mean, we understand that faith is important and that God gives it as a gift and we can develop it, that we can step out in it. We get that.

But *love* is a little different. Especially when we see it like this.

Paul is rejoicing that their faith was growing and that the **agape** of every one of them for one another was increasing.

We're not so good at agape.

That unconditional, selfless, unending love.

And this is another area where we really need to check ourselves. Because, our lives can not progress, our relationship with God can not deepen, without *agape*. We know that, but we need to remind ourselves of it.

Because most people are unlovable. Most people don't *really* deserve love. And that is when God says, 'Your agape needs to increase.'

C.S. Lewis talks about agape in his book *The Four Loves*. He calls agape 'charity.' And there he says this:

*We are all receiving Charity.*

*There is something in each of us that cannot be naturally loved. It is no one's fault if they do not so love it. Only the lovable can be naturally loved.*

*You might as well ask people to like the taste of rotten bread or the sound of a mechanical drill.*

*We can be forgiven, and pitied, and loved in spite of it with Charity; no other way.*

*[We] are receiving Charity, are loved not because [we] are lovable, but because Love Himself is in those who love [us].*

- C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* pg 133

We need to love more.

We need to agape more.

We especially need to agape more the people whom we have no reason to love.

People with different beliefs than we have. People with different stances than we have. People outside of the Kingdom of God. Because that is what Jesus did. He showed them love and brought them in to hear the the truth, the Gospel, the chance for salvation.

To me, it always boils down to this: Jesus Christ showed Judas agape. Even in the Garden of Gethsemane, He called Judas 'friend.' That is love. That is how we need to behave.

Why?

1 Corinthians 13.1-3 - Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not agape, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not agape, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not agape, it profits me nothing.

Men of God, we need faith and love.

We need faith. Faith that grows. A continual belief and trust that God *wants* to do work in my life and work *through* my life. Faith that translates as a growing dependance on God's plan and provision and a growing expectancy that when I pray God hears and when I step out, God will direct.

We need love. Agape love. Unconditional, selfless, uncorrupted, unto-the-Lord love. Love that increases. So that when we interact with people, be they our families or our enemies, be they our fellow Christians or a godless pagan, we will demonstrate the love that was demonstrated for us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

That love needs to increase and abound in our lives. A love that says, 'I don't mind being mistreated, I don't mind 'losing ground,' I don't mind being humble, because Jesus Christ loves this person and so do I!'

Showing charity and affection and benevolence to *everyone* around us because we expect God to do something in our lives.

That's what the Thessalonians had, and now it's time for us to examine ourselves and see if we have it.

Like we've been saying recently, today you decide if you will have these things. If you will live in faith and love to the Lord or if you won't. You and I decide.

Now it's decision time.