

Monday, December 3— Rev. David Rawls

Read I Thessalonians 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.

Paul is writing to the church in Thessalonica, and he is giving thanks to God for the people in this faith community, and for their faith in Jesus. He hopes to return to them someday, but in the meantime, he prays that they will continue to grow in their faith. He then prays that God will clear the way that he, Paul, will be able to return to the people so he can continue to minister and serve the people. Paul then offers this observation: May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for your neighbor, just as we have loved you. Then Paul offers this blessing: May God strengthen your hearts so you will be found blameless and holy when Christ returns.

Three things we can apply to our lives. 1) God wants you to grow in your faith, and become more mature, which can only happen when you practice faith. Faith is like a muscle, it has to be exercised. Maturity is an active process that takes place every day. 2) Growing in faith allows you to love others. As you and I grow and mature in our faith walk with Jesus, we begin to understand that as our love for God grows stronger and so does your ability to love others. You cannot love your neighbor unless you come to know how much God loves you. Once you know God's love, is when you can love others even when they are not very lovable. 3) Holiness has a direct relationship with loving God and loving your neighbor. Loving God is at the heart of being more holy. Paul prays for this to happen in the lives of the people of Thessalonica. Prayer changes everything and when you pray for others it strengthens your love for God, which in turn makes you more Holy. Consider making these three ideas a part of your spiritual journey.

PRAYER: Father God, may you help me to love others as you help me to love you. Thank you for loving me even before I knew who you were, and even before I knew that you loved me. Help me to remember the reason for this Christmas season is because you first loved me. Amen.

May I always yield my will, and seek to know and love you O God.

Rev. David Rawls