

Text: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Theme: Abound in Love

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation this morning is the Epistle lesson from the First letter of Saint Paul to the church in Thessalonica, chapter three verses nine to thirteen.

Boys and Girls how are you doing today? Excellent. I have a question for you this morning, how do you know that your mom and dad love you? How do you know that your grandpa and grandma love you? Not only do they tell you but they show it in their actions. Mom and dad make sure that you have clothing, food and drink, a roof over your heads, beds to sleep in, and much more. Your grandparents may shower you with gifts or candy whenever they visit to show you that they love you. In our text for today, Saint Paul writes that we should abound in love. How can we do that? Ponder that question as you go back to your seats and those who love you.

Saint Paul is writing this letter because he had to leave the church in Thessalonica in a rush as there were enemies who sought to take his very life. Because of this, the instruction of the church was incomplete. They still had questions, especially as it related to our Lords return and the resurrection of the dead. Saint Paul was worried and concerned over the state of the

church, especially in the midst of their persecution. He awaited news from Timothy on their state. Timothy brought back a good report, that they were still holding on to the infant faith that they had been given. Saint Paul, after giving thanks to God for this wonderful news, prays that God would increase them in their love. This raises the question, what love do they need to increase in?

### **What is love?**

When we think of Love today, many people think of it purely as an emotion. Love is something that you feel, a burning passion or desire that drives you to action. Well, what kind of things do you love? Cars, money? Men and women? We say we love many things but we use the word love in different contexts. For example, I love my wife and my children, but I do not love them in the same way that I love my car, nor should I! Paul calls us to abound in agape, a love which sacrifices even of it's very self for the other.

### **Love shown in Christ**

This type of love is best shown by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. A love that gives of it's very self for the sake of the other. Our Lord shows this love for us upon the cross. There, He suffers, bleeds, and dies, for whom? For you. He does this for you, not while you were close to God, as a best friend, or a lover, or a close companion. No, Christ dies for you while you are a most hated enemy of God, dead in your sins and trespasses. Jesus sheds His holy and precious blood, so that you, a hated

enemy, would be reconciled back to God, that you would be turned from an enemy to one of His dear and beloved Children.

### **Love shown among His people**

This is the type of love that Saint Paul says we need to abound in. A love that loves everyone. Not only those who are closest to us, friends, and family members, those we like and get along best with, or those of our faith with whom we mourn, those persecuted Christians who are suffering for their faith. Rather, we also love those who are our enemies. Those who are doing the very acts of persecuting us. Those who call us horrible names. People who flip us the bird as they race past us on the highway. Those who beat us, those who abuse us. Those who persecute and kill us simply for believing in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. It is hard for us to love these types of people.

Yet, these are the very types of people we are called to show love to. These very types of people Saint Paul writes to abound in love towards. We abound in love towards all. We do this, not because we may love everyone, but because we are called to love everyone. We love everyone because Christ Himself loves everyone, and desires that everyone be saved. We have been shown the greatest love in the world, that love of Christ for us upon the cross. That is the love that we show each other and those around us, that same type of self-sacrificing love for others.

We do this, not just when we feel like it, or when we think it will make us look good to those around us. Rather, we do so even when it is hard, even when our sinful nature rebels and

does not want to be loving to that person. We show each other love, enabled by the love and grace of God, until the very end of time itself. He who has established our hearts in faith, holds us unblameable in holiness by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, until He comes again in power and glory with all His saints.

Until that great and glorious day, may we continue to abound in love towards one another and those around us, showing forth the love of Christ in our very thoughts, words, and deeds.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.