
Church in Campbell Weekly News

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In this message we shall consider what it means to have our heart established blameless in holiness. First Thessalonians 3:13 says, "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." Three important words here are heart, blameless, and holiness. What does it mean to have our heart established blameless? This certainly is an unusual expression. Of course, this establishing is not our work; it is the Lord's doing.

HOLINESS AND SANCTIFICATION

What is your understanding of the phrase "blameless in holiness"? The words "in holiness" do not qualify the verb "establish." Rather, they qualify the word "blameless." In this verse Paul is not saying that the Lord establishes our heart in holiness. Instead, he is saying that the Lord is making our heart blameless, and making it blameless in holiness. Thus, we need to find out what it means for our heart to be blameless in holiness.

Second Thessalonians 2:13 says, "But we ought to thank God always concerning you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." This verse speaks of salvation in sanctification, and 1 Thessalonians 3:13, of being blameless in holiness. To be in holiness is different from being in sanctification. Of course, holiness and sanctification both refer to an element that is holy. However, holiness refers to the element itself, and sanctification refers to the process of being made holy, the process of being sanctified. A process is going on to make us holy; this process is sanctification. Therefore, to be in holiness is to be in the element, and to be in sanctification is to be in the process of being made holy.

God's salvation is in sanctification. This means that God's salvation involves a continuing process through which we are being made holy. As this process is taking place, we enjoy God's saving power. Holiness is the element of God's holy nature. It is in this element that we are to be blameless.

Once again I would like to take as an illustration the simple matter of making tea. Tea is an element, and "tea-ification" is the process of making tea. Suppose you have a cup of plain water. In order to tea-ify the water, you need to place a tea bag into it. When a tea bag is first put into water, the water may seem to remain the same. It seems to be little more than plain water. But after a period of time and some action of stirring, the water will become tea-ified; that is, tea is added to the water and mingled with it. Hence, we may say that the water is under the process of tea-ification. Eventually, the tea is in the water, and the water is in the tea. This means that the element of tea is

mingled with the water. As a result of this tea-ification, the tea and water are blended together to make one beverage. Actually, this kind of drink is tea-water.

For the tea to be in the water is one thing, but for the water to pass through the process of tea-ification is another. In like manner, we need to be blameless in the element of holiness, and we also need to undergo the process of sanctification so that we may enjoy God's salvation daily and even hourly.

FAITH AND LOVE

If we have a bird's-eye view of 1 Thessalonians, we shall see that the first three chapters make up one section, and the last two chapters make up another. We have seen that this Epistle has a basic structure containing three elements: the work of faith, the labor of love, and the endurance of hope. Paul speaks of this in 1:3: "Remembering unceasingly your work of faith, and labor of love, and endurance of hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father." With this structure as a basis, Paul says in 1:9 and 10 that the believers turned from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for His Son from the heavens. In chapter two we have the fostering of a holy life for the church life. This fostering is the work of a cherishing mother and exhorting father. The result of the proper fostering is that we walk worthily of God, who calls us into His own kingdom and glory (2:12). In order to have such a walk, we need to be perfected in our faith, and we need to increase and abound in our love. In chapter three Paul is deeply concerned about the Thessalonians' faith and love. According to 3:10, his desire was to perfect anything that was lacking in their faith. Yes, the Thessalonians had faith, yet it needed perfecting. Paul longed to see them in order to perfect what was lacking in their faith. In 3:12 he goes on to say, "And the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love to one another and to all, even as we also to you." As believers, we all need to be perfected in faith and to increase and abound in love.

In verse 13 of chapter three we see the specific reason we need to be perfected in faith and to increase and abound in love: it is that the Lord may establish our hearts blameless in holiness. The establishing of our heart is the issue, the result, of the perfecting of our faith and of the increase and abounding of our love. The Lord is doing a work of building. This building work is to establish our heart. Our heart needs to be built up, to be established blameless. Later we shall seek to explain what the word blameless in verse 13 means.

In 3:13 Paul says that the Lord will establish our hearts blameless in holiness. He does not say that our heart will be established blameless in purity or in cleanness. The New Testament emphasizes the matter of a pure heart. The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). Paul exhorted Timothy to be with those who call on

the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22). Furthermore, in Psalm 51:10 David prayed that the Lord would create in him a clean heart. Why, then, does Paul not say blameless in purity or in cleanness, but instead says blameless in holiness? The reason is that the book of 1 Thessalonians is on a holy life for the church life. The conclusion of the first section of this Epistle, composed of chapters one, two, and three, is that the Lord will establish our heart blameless in holiness.

I believe that we all have faith, love, and hope. We have turned to God from idols, we are serving the living God, and we are waiting for the coming back of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, we have faith, love, and hope, and we have the turning, the serving, and the waiting. But we still need to be perfected in our faith. In 1 Thessalonians faith refers to our believing ability and also to what we believe. Faith, therefore, is a great matter. The aspect of objective faith, the things we believe in, is a vast field including many things. The messages we have put out over the years have covered different matters in this field of faith. These messages show us how much the Christian faith, Christian belief, comprises. It even includes the matter of the mingling of the Triune God with saved and regenerated human beings.

Through the preaching of Paul, the Thessalonians heard the gospel. This means that they heard the faith. Not only did the Thessalonians hear the faith—they received it. However, because Paul was with them such a short time, approximately three weeks, he could not have presented all the contents of the New Testament faith. No wonder he was eager to visit them and see them face to face in order to speak further to them concerning the faith and to perfect them in the faith. Like the Thessalonians, we also need to have our faith perfected.

The Thessalonians had faith and also had love. As believers in Christ, we also love one another. The divine love is without measure; it is immeasurable. Hence, we need to increase and abound in our love.

If we are perfected in our faith and if we increase and abound in our love, we shall have a living, a daily walk, that is worthy of God's calling. If we would have this kind of living, the Lord must set our heart on a fixed foundation. This is to establish, to build up, our heart.

A CHANGEABLE HEART

Instead of having an established heart, most Christians have a changeable, movable heart. We need a heart that is solidly established, not a heart that is changeable. According to our natural birth, however, our heart is changeable. The most changeable thing about us is our heart. For example, in the morning a brother may be very kind to his wife. But during breakfast he may become bothered by something and treat her in an unkind way. This is an illustration of the changeableness of our heart.

Our heart is changeable not only in relation to other people, but even in our relationship with the Lord. God is the unchanging One; He never changes. We are the ones who are changeable, and we are changeable in our heart. For this reason, Paul was

concerned that the hearts of the new believers at Thessalonica would be set, built up, and established.

Verse 13 opens with the word “that.” The Greek word here actually means “in order that”; that is, it indicates an issue, a result, of the foregoing verses, especially verses 6 through 12. We need to read verses 6 through 13 as a complete section. Then we shall see that verse 13 is a conclusion of what Paul covers in this section. In these verses Paul's concern is for the Thessalonians' faith and love. His desire is that their faith would be perfected and that their love would increase and abound in order that the Lord may establish their hearts.

(Excerpt from Life-Studies of FIRST Thessalonians. #20)

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Burdens for Church Prayer

- 2014 renew our consecration and new beginning.
- Establish a prayer life individually and corporately to seek God's desire for all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth.
- Building up a healthy life practices and opening our homes to raise up our next generation.
- Pray for the campus work and for the remaining fruit at West Valley College.
- Pray for our reaching out to Campbell community.

Announcements

- Life-study of First Corinthians 69
- HWMR: 2023 Thanksgiving Conference. Week 3
- 3/5 (Tue.) 7:30pm Prayer meeting at Campbell meeting hall
- 3/9 Zoom. 3/30. In-person. Location TBD. Lessons on shepherding
- 3/15(Fri) South Bay Chinese speaking Bible True Forum
- 3/29-31, 4/5-7: Alpha house blending, sign up : https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13nX7IX8K_bZ-iBLP6T5foDTDpP6mm3Hr9C4XpsYqYtc/edit#gid=0
- Please pray before the Lord then sign the service sheet to commit the service burden from the Lord
- Financial Giving:
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Church in Campbell book room account (PayPal):
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