

Forerunners for Christ Los Angeles

February 12, 2024 – Praying the Apostolic Prayers – Erlinda Cruz

Apostolic Prayers: Calling for Reformation – Part 2

Paul gives thanks that their love is increasing: “love all of you have for one another” (v. 3). If their love for one another is growing, it can only be because they are Jesus’s disciples. Did not Jesus Himself say that such love would be the distinguishing mark of His followers (John 13:34–35)? When Christians do grow in their love for one another, for no other reason than because they are loved by Jesus Christ and love Him in return, that growing love is an infallible sign of grace in their lives.

As Paul hears reports of the Thessalonians, he is struck by their growing love. Such love must be the work of God, and so it is to God that Paul directs His thanks.

Most emphatically is this particular display of love, a signal demonstration of grace: “all of you” in the Thessalonian congregation have been caught up in it, not some small, spiritual elite. This is the stuff of revival, and Paul is grateful.

Paul gives thanks that they are persevering under trial... because they have love for each other, strength to persevere is on them. Courage is released because they are together. There’s trust and confidence that they will not be betrayed, but will be upheld even in times of persecution.

“Rather, he is saying something like this: ‘Have you noticed how powerfully the grace of God is operating in the lives of the Thessalonian believers? The way they withstand the pressures of persecution and of assorted trials is truly remarkable, a compelling testimony to the grace of God. Fortified by their growing faith and love, they just press on and on. What an example! What an encouragement! What an incentive for the rest of us!’ Thus, his boasting is nothing other than more praise and thanksgiving to God, uttered in the presence of other churches. So what do we thank God for? Elsewhere, Paul tells us to set our hearts on things above (Colossians 3:1). If what we highly cherish belongs to the realm of heaven, our hearts and minds will incline to heaven and all its values, but if what we highly cherish belongs to the realm of earth and the merely transitory, our hearts and minds will incline to the merely transitory. After all, the Master himself taught us that our hearts will run to where our treasure lies” (Matthew 6:19–21). - *DA Carson*

(To be continued.)