

The Thessalonian believers were important to Paul and he was concerned that the gospel message might be discredited by attempts to discredit the character of the missionary team. He concludes his vindication of their persons and ministry in these verses with an explanation of his response to the good news which Timothy brought from them. It reveals that Paul was especially concerned that they continue in faith and love. His words to the Galatians summarized what he regularly expressed: “the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.” Cf. Ephesians 1:15–16; Colossians 1:3–5; 1 Timothy 1:3–5; Philemon 4–5.

I. Their faith expressing itself through their love was the best news which Paul could have received.

1. It was news on the level with the gospel.
2. It was news that eclipsed his distress and persecution.
3. It was news that filled him with joy in the presence of God.
4. It was news that motivated him to pray all the more with thanksgiving.

What news thrills you most when you hear about fellow Christians? What do you want most for others, for your children? Cf. 3 John 4.

II. Faith expressing itself through love places a logical, functional priority on faith over love without diminishing the vital importance of love.

1. Paul particularly saw faith as primary (vv 7, 8, 10, 13; cf 1 Corinthians 16:13; Galatians 5:1; Philippians 1:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; Jude 3).
2. Paul does not diminish the importance of love but recognized that love was the natural and necessary, divine product of a firm faith. Cf. James 2:17; Galatians 5:22; John 15

There must be a true, living, healthy faith to produce fruit and there be fruit, if there is a true faith.

III. Faith expressing itself through love produces both temporal and eternal benefits.

1. Faith expressing itself through love produces healthy relationships here (vv 6, 9–13, 10, 11).
2. Faith expressing itself through love will be judged as good and right before God when we face Jesus (v 13; cf. Ephesians 5:25–27; 1 John 2:28–3:3).

Learn what God says. Trust God to do what He says. And love one another.

The NT writers all express the same thought though differently: the main thing is faith expressing itself in love, walking in truth and loving one another, obeying the truth and loving one another deeply.

Faith expressing itself in love should be our goal for ourselves and what we desire for others. Desiring this most for others reveals that we want God’s best for them.