

1 Thessalonians 3:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

Analysis

And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you—hymas de ho Kyrios pleonasai kai perisseuai tē agapē eis allēlous kai eis pantas kathaper kai hēmeis eis hymas (ύμᾶς δὲ ὁ Κύριος πλεονάσαι καὶ περισσεύσαι τῇ ἀγάπῃ εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς ύμᾶς). Two verbs intensify: pleonazō (πλεονάζω, 'to increase/multiply') and perisseuō (περισσεύω, 'to abound/overflow')—love should not merely exist but multiply and overflow. Agape must grow toward two targets: eis allēlous (εἰς ἀλλήλους, 'toward one another,' believers) and eis pantas (εἰς πάντας, 'toward all,' including unbelievers and enemies).

Even as we do toward you (kathaper kai hēmeis eis hymas, καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς ύμᾶς)—Paul models the love he commands. His sacrificial ministry (2:7-12), anxious concern (3:5), and overwhelming joy at their perseverance (3:9) demonstrate agape surpassing professional duty. Love's two dimensions (internal to believing community, external to all people) fulfill Jesus's dual command: love believers (John 13:34-35) and love enemies (Matt 5:44). Only divine intervention ('the Lord make you') produces love exceeding natural capacity. Supernatural love authenticates Christian witness (John 13:35).

Historical Context

The Thessalonians lived in a hostile environment—neighbors had attacked them, authorities threatened them, family ostracized them. Natural response would be defensive withdrawal or retaliatory hatred. Instead, Paul prays for increasing, overflowing love toward fellow believers and 'all people' (including persecutors). This countercultural love, possible only through Christ, becomes compelling witness. Roman emperor Julian the Apostate later complained that Christianity spread because 'the impious Galileans support not only their own poor but ours as well'—enemies couldn't ignore Christians' practical love.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do you distinguish between natural affection and supernatural *agape* that increases, abounds, and extends even to enemies?
2. What evidence demonstrates that your love is growing ('increase and abound') rather than stagnant or diminishing?
3. How does Paul's modeling of sacrificial love ('even as we do toward you') challenge leaders to exemplify what they teach?

Interlinear Text

ὑμᾶς δὲ ὁ κύριος πλεονάσαι καὶ περισσεύσαι τῇ
you And G3588 the Lord make and abound G3588
G5209 G1161 G2962 G4121 G2532 G4052

ἀγάπη εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας καθάπερ
in love do toward another and do toward all as
G26 G1519 G240 G2532 G1519 G3956 G2509

καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς
and we do toward you
G2532 G2249 G1519 G5209

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 1:9 (Love): And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

Matthew 22:39 (Love): And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Romans 13:8 (Love): Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

1 Thessalonians 5:15 (Parallel theme): See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

Galatians 5:22 (Love): But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

2 Thessalonians 1:3 (Love): We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

Galatians 5:6 (Love): For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.