

The Established Heart

Sunday, June 21, 2020 at The First Congregational Church of
Marshalltown, Iowa

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 "And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so 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.

Introduction: First Congregational Church was established in 1868. Many other organizations, businesses especially, like to let people know when they started. If the date was some time ago, it gives a sense of permanence and stability to the organization. In these times, people who give others the impression of permanence and stability are so vital. How wonderful to be around such a person, even more so to be one of those persons yourself. The Bible speaks of people with "established" souls. They are not easily swayed or shaken; they hold their own and they encourage others to hold their own as well. Let's look at a verse that uses this word to describe the Lord's work in our midst.

meaning of "established" (Note this describes the Lord's work in our midst)

The word here translated "established" means to "set fast" or "to turn resolutely in a certain direction", "strengthen". According to Romans (16:25-27) it is done by the preaching of Jesus Christ for the obedience of God and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:9-12). We are set in every good work according to 1 Thessalonians (2:26-27) and guard us against the evil one (2 Thessalonians 3:3). The Lord establishes people in the midst of suffering (1 Peter 5:8-11)

holiness not by austerity but by the increase of love brought by the Holy Spirit

According to this Scripture, strength of character and holiness of life come with the increase of love, love of God and love of each other. One commentary (Preacher's Homiletical Commentary) puts it this way: "The apostle prays for an increase of love *in order to* the attainment of a higher personal purity. All defects in obedience issue from a defect in love. Our love of God makes us solicitous to know and obey Him and fearful to offend Him. Our love of man makes us careful to preserve his honour, life, and possessions, and in no way to impair his happiness. The whole of the law is love. There is no duty to God or man but love inclines unto, and no sin from which it does not restrain. To be unblamable in holiness, store the soul with love. When love fails, obedience and all holy duties fail."

signs

Our application is to add this passage to our prayer guide for praying for each other, but how can we know when this process is working. The context gives us indications. A person being established finds his devotion to his spouse confirmed (4:3), his desire for an orderly life increased (4:11), and his view of the future brightening with every passing year. It's not that every year gets easier, but that we draw closer to meeting our Savior with every passing year and that comforts and encourages us (4:16-17)

Conclusion: The wonderful thing about this verse is it does not describe a command toward which we must strive, but a work of the Lord in our midst. It is a blessing, and an expression of the Lord's will for us; that we be established, firm, steadfast, reliable with a sense of permanence and stability in an unstable world. An established heart is more valuable now than ever.