

“What quality is increasing the most in you?”

2 Thessalonians 1:1-5 NIV

“Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: (2) Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(3) **“We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.**

(4) **“Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. (5) All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.”**

If you feel you'd like to improve certain parts of your life, you are not alone.

Most of us feel that way.

We might not reveal these concerns to loved ones, but our minds often go there.

Sometimes at night we fret about it.

We anxiously toss and turn regarding things we've left undone.

Decades ago, a woman of means in her 70s asked to talk privately with me.

At her kitchen table, she told me of a dream she and her husband shared.

Because they never had children of their own, they wanted to start a home for needy kids.

To the best of my knowledge, they never completed their dream.

After the couple died, two of their nephews apparently got what the tax people didn't take.

How did the nephews handle the bequest? Only the Lord knows; I can only pray that their assets led toward something good.

Years ago a talented young pitcher received a huge bonus to play for a major league team.

When asked what he planned to do with his windfall, he responded:

“I plan to spend much of it on wine, women and song. The rest of it I guess I'll just waste.”¹

¹ Often attributed to Tug McGraw

**What about your end game?
Are you taking steps toward achieving
your ambitions?**

When we set goals for our kids, we hope:

- They will get along with others.
- Get a good education.
- Become independent.
- Attain jobs and or professional careers.
- And marry well.

Most parents think these are worthy hopes.

**But what about aims and objectives beyond
these ambitions for our kinfolk and for us?**

Certain details we too often leave undone.

Our text suggests objectives few consider.

**Imagine farmers planting in the spring
using first-rate seed and soil prep methods.**

**They look forward to long rows of healthy
green sprigs in their fields.**

Suppose next June, a farmer observes
vigorous corn plants emerging, watches
them develop strong leaves, but then
deciding those stalks need no further help.



**What would
you expect
from corn
stalks left
untended
from June
to November?**



**“Ag” people realize the need for continued
growth and development toward maturity.**

Productive plants progress toward harvest.
We human beings expect physical growth.

But we don’t always see our need to grow
emotionally and spiritually all through life.
Thus human societies often deliver seven-
foot-tall, 18 year old emotional babies. We
even see seven-foot-tall-80 year-old babies.

**How do we prepare and equip ourselves
and our kids for life and its challenges?**

**Our text guides us in growing and becoming
reliable, productive human beings.**

**Notice the growth-maturity emphasis in
this letter to the Thessalonians:**

“Your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. (4) “Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.” Their faith and love kept growing stronger.

Thessalonian faith and love worked and produced wonders.

These folk won in life-threatening tests because they kept maturing.

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul wrote:

“We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

A powerful trilogy equipped those people.

- 1. Work produced by faith.**
- 2. Labor prompted by love.**
- 3. Endurance inspired by hope.**

Failure to achieve worthwhile goals likely results from a lack of faith, love, or hope.

- Is your faith in God growing from year to year?**
- Are your efforts to imitate Jesus' love increasing in you?**
- Does your hope continue and increase that Jesus will return to judge us all and punish evil?**

In the midst of angry disputations and legal wrangling, this country and the world need more faith and trillions more acts of love.

In Christ, God freely supplies tremendous help; if we will only use it.

The Thessalonians utilized God's gifts to robust results.

Look at these mighty assets one by one:

1) Work produced by faith.

Fewer folks place faith in God these days.

Science leads us away from God, they claim.

Let me show evidence why science should point us toward greater faith in God.

God’s ways foster emotional maturity.

Without faith, we shortchange ourselves and our families.

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”²

My doctors advise me to daily take a multi vitamin/supplement.

I take a tablet designed for old guys-

“seniors,” they tactfully call us.

This supplement advertises to promote heart health, eye health, brain health, and muscle function.

I read that people who eat balanced meals—fruit, veggies, grains, etc. probably don’t need these supplements.

The fact remains that our bodies need these vitamins, elements, minerals, and various chemical compounds.

My multi vitamin container label lists 27 different supplements.

Elements our bodies need include: Calcium, Chloride, Chromium, Copper, Iodine, Magnesium, Manganese, Molybdenum, Phosphorus, Potassium, Selenium, and Zinc.



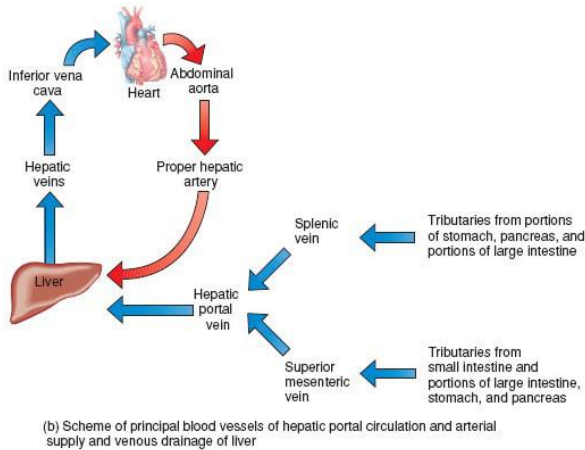
Many of these elements rarely occur by themselves so they are nearly always combined with other elements.

Your internal organs somehow recognize and extract the elements from these compounds and send them to the organ cells that utilize them.

- **Your blood stream carries zinc and B vitamins to your brain.**
- Other elements and vitamins go to your heart and still others to your muscles.

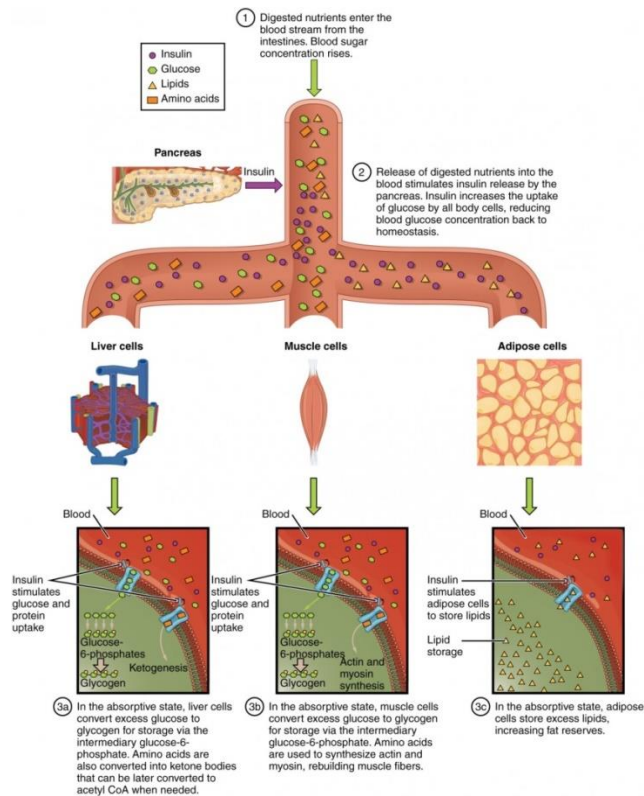
How various organs identify, separate, and distribute different vitamins, minerals, compounds, etc., I have no clue.

² Hebrews 11:6



Medical scientists keep trying to solve these and hundreds of other mysteries.

Function of the liver (core)



Do you honestly think this and other complex processes came about by accident?

Metabolic states of the body/Anatomy and Physiology

To me they indicate a Creator infinitely more intelligent than all the brightest human brains in history combined.

Human pride and ingratitude can be the only reasons we don't fall daily on our knees to honor and praise the Creator of all cosmic wonders.

Is your faith in God growing or are doubt and the world's selfish ingratitude pulling you away?

Faith in God, the Creator motivated the Thessalonians to work at doing good things.

2) Their love also kept increasing.

Love isn't simply a feeling that comes and goes in us.

After a few years into their marriage, some have told me things like: “I just don't love him like I once did. The feeling isn't there anymore.”

Or ‘She doesn't attract me anymore. It just isn't there. I've tried to get it back and it doesn't happen.’

Jesus taught that love isn't simply a feeling; true love acts lovingly toward the unlovely.

In 1953 I fell in love with a beautiful girl.

I am still in love with her, of course, but credit her loving actions that often rekindle and solidify my love.

We were married in Oregon, July 1955, and soon moved to Bartlesville, Oklahoma. By autumn, some of that first love excitement had begun to wane in us.

Our cash was so short, we even tried to borrow from the church mice I attended a small Christian college and drove a few miles to school. We had only one car that we could barely afford. Norma walked several blocks to her job at Sears where she sold appliances.

I never told Norma this, but one bitterly cold morning as she left, I watched her walk up the street toward work. She had no boots. She didn't even have socks; only bare feet in sandals, but she didn't grumble. That memory of her will not leave me.

Her uncomplaining act that day, and many since, keep making me want to recommit to our marriage. I want to make her happy not just with me, but especially in the Lord.



The Price Tower in Bartlesville, OK designed by Frank Lloyd Wright

Note: Most photos on this sermon are from Microsoft Word Clip Art

In researching *1 & 2 Thessalonians* a Greek word kept recurring that *New Testament* writers often used in the context of recalling and remembering Jesus' life.

That concept occurs throughout the *Book of Hebrews* as it repeatedly points to Jesus' superiority and our need for faithfulness.

- Recall God's might acts.
- Consider the consequences of turning away from God.

Reading the Bible helps us appreciate Jesus’ love and the perfect life-model he gave us, increase in our lives.

God’s love in Christ prompts us to keep laboring. **We’re not talking tedious grunt-style effort.**

The word indicates labor that produces good things for others, fulfills us and glorifies God.

3) What hope sustains us?

First, we refocus on the fact that Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection brought us forgiveness and the assurance of resurrection with him.

Second, we reflect on the surety that he will return to judge us all and punish evil.

That lifts a huge burden off us, doesn’t it?

Hate, resentment, and blame inflame folks the world over

Many churches get caught up in the bitter dissatisfaction and unrest.

God’s Word points us away from bitterly blaming others.

- **We tell the Good News that in his resurrection, Jesus defeated death.**
- **We let God judge others.**
- **Jesus will judge us using the same measures that we use to judge others.**
- **We make sure we “clean our own houses.” “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish,” said Jesus.**

If we will give up ordinary mud ball ambitions and pride, believe in God, live for Jesus and follow his word, God’s Spirit will live in us and always be with us.

Christ’s combined Word and Spirit can dynamically-eternally change you.

Are faith, love, and hope energetically growing in you?

Spend time in the God’s word and pray.
God bless you and help you grow in Him.

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