

Series: 1 Thessalonians
Title: Faith, Love and Hope
Text: 1 Thess 1: 1-4
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In Acts 17, the Lord directed Paul to Thessalonica. He preached three weeks there.

Acts 17: 2: And...reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3: Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. 4: And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. 5: But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. [so Paul and Silas left by night and went to Berea]

This is believed to be one of Paul's first letters. The brethren who God saved had experienced persecution right away. The unbelieving Jews were spreading false accusations against Paul and Silas. Paul writes to encourage the brethren and to set the record straight on how God had sent them and how they conducted themselves, contrary to the unbelieving Jews' accusations. Some thought Paul taught Christ was returning again right away. So some had quit work due to this. Paul corrects this. There was a need to exhort them to abstain from fornication. These are the subjects, among others, that Paul addresses in this letter. Most of all he declared Christ to them.

1 Thessalonians 1: 1: Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians *which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. 2: We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; [we will focus on these three things for which Paul thanked God] 3: Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;*

Paul thanked God for these brethren for what God worked in them. It was all of God. It was all to the glory of God. So Paul said, "*we give thanks to God always for you all*" in our prayers. He remembered "*without ceasing [their] work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.*"

It is these three things we will look at: the work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope. These three are in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.

THE WORK OF FAITH

What is the first and preeminent work of faith? It is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 6: 28: 28: Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?
29: Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

When God gives us grace, quickens and calls his child, he gifts us with faith in the Lord Jesus. He makes us see our sin clear unto us. God makes our inability to save ourselves by our own works clear to us. And God gives us faith to rest in Christ. He gives faith to trust that Christ has made us the righteousness of God by his obedience unto the death of the cross. Faith believes Christ has "justified us from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." Then we begin to live by faith—day-by-day we live by faith, persevering in faith that is in Christ.

Galatians 3: 11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is evident*: for, The just shall live by faith. 12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. 13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree: 14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Hebrews 10: 38: Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

Our believing, our living, our standing, our continuing to the end is in faith in Christ. We believe God our Father and his Son Jesus Christ. So we depend entirely upon God's grace and power to keep us and he shall. The same as God's gift of faith made us flee to Christ in the beginning so we continue to go to God. We continue believing his covenant promises for Christ's sake. God's saints continue asking for more grace based on his promises in Christ. And faith lives upon Christ our Bread by his continual supplies of grace

In addition, faith is a working grace. God-given faith is always accompanied by good works. Without faith in Christ nothing we do is a good work. But where God gives faith there will be good works. The unbelieving Jews lived around them. They moved with envy and immediately caused great persecution. But these Thessalonian brethren were not turned aside from believing on Christ.

Like Rahab they believed God was able to save and keep them in the midst of great danger--despite Satan's opposition, despite the frowns of the world, despite the afflictions they bore. None of these things turned them from believing on the Lord Jesus. And they not only believed on Christ, but they also labored to send out the gospel to others. They labored to send financial help to Paul and other brethren in other churches.

Those who believe on Christ continue the work of faith. We labor to send forth the gospel which declares Christ to be the only wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption of his people, no matter the opposition and conflict we face. We labor to help our fellow brethren however God will enable us. The work of faith is the work of helping needy sinners, believer and unbeliever, to hear of Christ, believe on Christ and continue persevering in faith that is in Christ. Everything the believer does has Christ as the first cause, the motive, and the end. As we labor in the faith, our confidence and strength is Christ the Captain of our warfare whom we believe.

1 John 5: 4: For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith...5: he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

These Thessalonian brethren believed that we are more than conquerors through Christ that loved us. He has delivered us from so great a death—from spiritual death and the curse by his blood and righteousness. He is delivering us in every affliction that comes to pass—he rules the wind and waves now as he did when he walked this earth. He shall yet deliver us—and he shall not lose one. This is why faith continues in good works. It is only by faith in Christ by the faith OF Christ, that we do so.

LABOR OF LOVE

That which makes faith's work accepted of God is the motive of the heart. When Christ's love is the constraint, the reason and the end purpose, for all we do, God calls it a labor of love. You will not hear God's saints boasts that their labor is a labor of love.

I recall a faithful pastor who labored in the cause of Christ more than anyone I know. On one occasion, I commented that his labor was a labor of love. His reply was, "I pray to God it is." God's saints will engage in the work of faith and it will be a labor of love. But we see enough of our sin and unbelief to never boast of anything we do. We pray that God has indeed given us a pure heart so that our labors are the work of faith and the labor of love. God's people know Christ alone is the Power and to Christ belongs the glory.

Why did the Father chose his people and give his only begotten Son to redeem us? Why did the Lord Jesus come down for his people? Why did the Lord lay down his life in place of his people and bear the sin and wrath of God on the cursed cross for his people? He did it because he loved us. Christ laid down his life for his people without a cause in us. It was simply because he loved us. God the Father and his Son manifest his love by this labor of love on our behalf. That is why when "the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost" then the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the object of our love and the motive for what we do in his cause.

2 Corinthians 5: 14: For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

When we were dead in sins, we lived only for self. If we were religious before the Lord called us, we were laboring with a mercenary spirit trying to save ourselves by our works, trying to indebt God by our works, trying to escape hell and earn heaven by our works. Now, after the revelation of God our Father in his Son, the Spirit has made us to know we are accepted in the Beloved. We are complete in Christ. Then our works have an entirely new motive. It is the work of faith and labor of love. The love of Christ constrains us to love those born of God.

1 John 5: 1: Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

By Christ making us know that we, ourselves, are one with him, we also know our brethren are one with him. Therefore, for Christ's sake, by the Spirit of the Lord, we love those begotten of him. We seek to help one another any way we can. Brethren sympathize and sorrow with one another in trouble. We rejoice when they rejoice. Brethren bear one another's burdens and forbear with one another in tender affection. God's saints do this for the spiritual benefit and profit of one another. It is all from the constraint of Christ's love who did and does the same for us.

PATIENCE OF HOPE

"Patience" is endurance. It includes meekness, quietness, submission and resignation to the will of God which all result in "*patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*" We have a good hope through grace. It is hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ has entered into the vail. We are there with him. One day he shall bring us to glory with him. This is our sure hope, our good hope.

Hebrews 12: 1: Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The grace of hope is the grace of endurance. Moses "endured as seeing him who is invisible." The trials the Lord sends are to grow us in patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 5: 1: Therefore being justified, by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3: And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4: And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. 6: For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7: For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to God commendeth his love toward us, die. 8: But in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9: Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Imagine the tribulation these brethren faced, being newly converted, when immediately their brethren began to be persecuted. Why did God do that? By the Spirit of God shedding the love of God abroad in the heart, God grew them to see his faithfulness toward them. He worked patience/endurance in them. God made them experience his preserving hand. By all this, God grew them in hope. He made them know God's love for them. This is why the Spirit of God says when the trial comes, "Let patience have her perfect work." Endure it. Patiently endure it unto the end "that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." It is not only individual trials we endure, but this whole life of faith, requires patient endurance. In individual trials, as well as the full race of our life, we have a good hope of Christ coming to deliver us.

James 5: 7: Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. 8: Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. 9: Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. 10: Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. 11: Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Job's end was better than his beginning. That is always the case when God brings us to endure in hope. Do you think seeing the members they loved persecuted, some even dying, made them think there was no hope of good coming out of it? But God worked in them what he did in Abraham though it appeared hopeless. Scripture says,

Romans 4: 18: [Abraham] against hope believed in hope that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: 20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. 22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Dwelling on past miseries is the enemy of hope. Dwelling on past mercies strengthens hope.

Lamentations 3: 18: And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD: 19: Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. 20: My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. 21: This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. 22: It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23: They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. 24: The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. 25: The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. 26: It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

May God continue to grow us in the work of faith, labor of love and patience of hope. All is in and by our Lord Jesus Christ. All is in the sight of God and our Father. He knows our need. He provides to meet our need. He is our need. Look to Christ for everything we need in this life and for the life to come. Our faith is in Christ. Our hearts are motivated by the love of Christ. Our patience of hope is in and by Christ Jesus. By faith we wait for the hope of Righteousness. One day, Christ our Righteousness shall return. Then our hope will be realized as we behold the Lord Jesus face-to-face and are conformed to his image in perfection where we will worship God forever and ever.

Amen!