

"THE THINGS THAT ARE REMEMBERED"

"Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." I Thessalonians 1:3.

Someone has said that as red, yellow, and blue supply in their combination all the other colors, so, by a sort of moral analysis, faith, hope, and love lie at the foundation, or enter into the composition, of all other Christian excellences. Certain it is that no deed we shall ever perform will be worth remembering or have in it any lasting force unless it is vitalized by one of these graces. Whether purposely or not, Paul has set forth in His reasons for remembering these Thessalonian friends the only valid reason why any of us shall ever be remembered.

It is worth while for us to note that Paul speaks of these three virtues or graces as working factors. He remembered not the faith of these people as a matter of creed, but he remembered their work of faith, which is a very different thing. He remembered not merely that they were kind and gentle and loving in their disposition, but he remembered distinctly their labor of love. Not love venting itself in smiles, nor even in cheers; but love harnessed down to service and hard work. He remembered their hope not as a mere careless optimism of spirit, but he remembered the patience of their hope, the courage that could bear burdens day after day, that could struggle against odds without being discouraged, and confidently continue to look for the better day to come.

Now, the only permanent things you and I are to accomplish must be in this spirit: that faith is idle unless we set it to work, and work is useless unless it is born of faith; and even a work of faith amounts to nothing so far as permanence is concerned unless it is carried on for love's sake. It is love which lifts all toil and service up out of the lowland of slavery and makes of them something high and splendid. Work thus becomes unselfish, and is lifted into a realm where it is worth remembering. The most common kind of work becomes beautiful in its heroism when it is done in faith, and for love's sake, with hope of helping humanity.

Whenever Paul prayed, he remembered his friends at Thessalonica, and whenever he recalled them his first feeling was one of gratitude to God for the Christian record which, as individuals and as a church, they displayed. It was a record of actual faith, industrious love, and tenacious hope. And not Paul alone. The plural implies that all three missionaries prayed together. It is our duty to be grateful for personal benefits; but it displays a broader and nobler generosity when we express our thanks on behalf of others. Paul thanked God for: --

I. The Work Of Their Faith.

1. What the work of faith is.

- (1) Faith is the commencement of the spiritual life.
It is the eye and hand of the soul by which the sinner sees and lays hold on Christ for salvation.
- (2) Faith is the foundation of God's spiritual temple in the soul.
- (3) Faith is the awakening of the soul to the reality of life.
- (4) Faith is the inspiration to discharge the duties of life. It is the propelling and sustaining motive in all Christian toil. It is characterized by decision, calmness, and energy.

2. The Work of faith as applied to the Thessalonians.

The adoption of faith as the principle of their lives meant to the Thessalonians: --

- (1) A full persuasion of the truth of the gospel.
- (2) A steadfast adherence to it in the midst of trial.
- (3) An abandonment of many vices.
- (4) A great change in their lives.
- (5) A consistent endeavor to cultivate the Christian excellences.
 - a. Sincerity.
 - b. Humility.
 - c. Purity.
 - d. Temperance.

- (6) A continuous effort to extend the gospel.

3. The work of faith as applied to us.

- (1) With regard to God.
It causes us to:
 - a. Depend on His guidance.
 - b. Trust in His help.
 - c. Use His power.
 - d. Bide His time.
 - e. Aim at His glory.
- (2) With regard to ourselves.
 - a. To believe that God has qualified us for a certain work in a certain way.
 - (a) He has qualified some mentally.
 - (b) He has qualified some physically.
 - (c) He has qualified some financially.
 - (d) He has qualified some spiritually.
 - b. To believe that God intends and will help each to work in his own way.
 - c. To believe that God will accept and strengthen us as we grapple with our tasks.
- (3) With regard to our work.
 - a. To believe that we are divinely called to it.
 - b. To believe that it is worthy of our best.
The best energies that we can devote to it.
The best time that we can spend in its preparation and execution.
The best appliances we can use in it.
 - c. To believe in its ultimate success.
- (4) With regard to others.
 - a. To believe that they need our service.
The sinful need cleansing, the degraded need elevating, etc.
 - b. To believe that our service will meet their needs.

II. The Labor Of Their Love.

Love has its labor. The word translated "labor" approaches the meaning of painful effort. Labor is harder than work. It implies great effort, toil, and trouble. Love to God and love to man are necessary for the hardest work. The strength of love is tested by its labors. We show our love to Christ by what we do for Him. Love intensifies every faculty, moves to benevolent exertion, and makes even drudgery an enjoyment.

1. The labor which love implies.

- (1) Great anxiety for the temporal and spiritual well-being of others.
- (2) Self-denying exertion to promote that well-being.

The labor of love suggests the sacrifices which we are ready to make for the objects of our love. We are not merely to wish well to others and to rejoice in their good; that implies no laboriousness of love. But, we are to burden ourselves with the wants of others and to undertake labors on behalf of the sick, the poor, the oppressed, the ignorant, and the erring. The Thessalonians were full of the labors; their church life had become one labor of love, a putting forth of painful effort for each other, without a thought of reward, with only the desire to please the Master.

2. The labor which love inspires.

Love is the mightiest motive; the one which never fails. Christian work is animated by the following three-fold motive: --

- (1) The work is worth doing.
- (2) God is worth serving.
- (3) Souls are worth saving.

3. The labor which love does.

- (1) It undergoes any sacrifices.
- (2) It succumbs to no fatigue.
- (3) It spares no energies.

III. The Patience Of Their Hope.

Hope was the characteristic grace of the Thessalonians. It was hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, which is more exactly defined in this epistle as hope with regard to His coming. It was a hope which burned in them with extraordinary intensity. Their hope involved: --

1. A sincere conviction that Christ would come again.
2. A thorough preparation for His coming.
3. An earnest expectation of His coming.
4. A longing desire for His coming.

Conclusion:

Faith is the commencement of the spiritual life; it is seen by its works; and it refers to the past. Love is the progress and continuance of the spiritual life; it is seen by its self-denying exertion; and it refers to the present. Hope is the completion of the spiritual life; it is seen by its patience and endurance; and it refers to the future. Faith is to work, love is to labor, and hope is to endure.