

ADVENT ~ Day 9

December 8, 2008

Scripture Passage:

[READ 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10](#)



"remembering before our God and Father your
work of faith and labor of love and
steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."
- 1 Thessalonians 1:3 -

What an incredibly uplifting passage! The Apostle Paul opens his first letter to the church in Thessaloniki with a greeting of mutual love, hope, grace and peace found only in God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Then Paul shares how he is so encouraged by the faith of the Thessalonian believers, that he is moved to give thanks to God for their work of faith, labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord, Christ Jesus.

What was it about these 3 things that caused the Apostle Paul to continually give thanks to God? Let's take a closer look.

1. **work of faith:** The way the Apostle Paul worded this is very significant. Notice here that Paul specifically writes, "work *of* faith", not "work *to have* faith". As we know it is clear in Scripture that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus, it is a gift of God, NOT by works, so that no man can boast ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)). We also know that the word "of" is an adjective that indicates: ownership, belonging, origin, or source of the noun it follows. Therefore, the "work" someone performs does not necessarily prove they have faith, instead a person's faith will be proved by the work that belongs to it. ([James 2:18](#))
2. **labor of love:** The same truth that applies to "work *of* faith" applies here as well. The small two letter word "of" plays a huge role in what this phrase means. Labor *of* love, means that the labor performed originates, and is owned by love. And what is love? Well, the more accurate question is, Who is love? And we find the answer in 1 John 4:16 - "*So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*" Therefore, according to Scripture, labor performed without God, is done without love. What we as human beings call "love" is not true love at all. For most of us, love is only a feeling. And as feelings do, they come and they go. If we throw love into the category of feelings, why then are we surprised that it comes and it goes? We shouldn't be. Love is not a feeling, but an active choice. Does love *include* feelings? Of course it does. God is love and God feels. But love is stronger and greater than our feelings. That's why a labor of love is not capable of being manufactured by human means. We may have strong feelings, affections and warmth towards one another, but eventually, our "passion" will fade away and so will our labor that belonged to it. But all things from God are eternal and have everlasting effect.
3. **steadfastness of hope:** The Greek word used in this verse for steadfastness is: *hupomone* which means: *constancy; endurance; in the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and*

*sufferings; a patient enduring, sustaining, perseverance.*¹ Now, let's take a look at what the word "hope" means. Unknowingly, most of us use its connotative definition (implied meaning: that something *might* happen), rather than its denotative meaning (explicit meaning: that something is *definitely* going to happen). Truth be known, the word "hope" is synonymous with the word "trust". That's why God tells us to put our hope, that is, our trust in Him alone. When we hope in Christ, we're not saying we think He *might* come through for us; instead we are saying we *know for certain* He will. Therefore, steadfastness of hope means that hope owns our endurance, our patience, our loyalty even through the toughest trials and sufferings. And who is our hope? His name is Jesus, and He is the owner, the Master of our hope; that's why it can be steadfast; because He alone does not fail at anything, but is victorious in all things! What an incredible promise!

This is what it all boils down to: it doesn't take a Christian to dig wells and provide clean water, or feed the hungry, visit those in prison, cloth the naked, mentor the under-privileged, or build homes or churches. While all these things are worthy causes God's children should engage in, it doesn't take a Christian to perform these well-meaning deeds.

We know this to be a fact as we look around our world and see multitudes of non-believers doing all these things. And while it doesn't take a Christian to perform these acts of kindness, it does take a Christian to do them perform works of faith, labors of love with steadfastness of hope. It also takes a Christian to perform such acts of kindness with great patience and endurance in the midst of sufferings, afflictions and any other hardships that may come their way, with humility. Only a Christian can balance the pain and sorrow of suffering, while still finding the joy in all their trials; without complaining ([Philippians 2:14-15](#)). Why? Because only Christ Jesus can miraculously balance these two opposites: joy and pain. Not that Christians always work this way. But my point is that we, as Christians are capable of living this way, but unbelievers are not; as this is only a supernatural work of God, in His children. And this is what causes the world to wonder, to wonder "Why?"

Thoughts to ponder:

What works of faith and labors of love can I participate in during this time of Advent? How can I tailor my pre-Christmas activities to include these things and give gifts of eternal impact? If I profess my steadfast hope is in Christ, how am I proving my profession by the way I live?

Glorious, mighty, merciful Father God in Heaven, thank You for Jesus!

It breaks my heart just thinking about those who do not know you and live moment by moment, sometimes in great distress, trials and afflictions, only to leave this earth and enter into eternal torment. This thought compels me to cry out to You for strength and courage to preach Your Good News to anyone You choose to send me to, whether family, friend or stranger.

Jesus, I'm so thankful You came! And I look so forward to Your return. Please help us all remember to cherish this time we have with You! This precious time You've given us to participate in Your Kingdom work; to share in Your sufferings so that we might also share in Your glorious inheritance.

Thank You for choosing us and giving us the choice to choose You! May our lives cause Your name to be praised! I love You Jesus! Amen.