

Title: Works of Three Graces

Text: 1 Thessalonians 1: 3

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1 Thessalonians 1: 2: We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; 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; 4: Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

Wherever the Spirit has given life—God gives the gift of faith, hope and love in Christ. Sinners cannot produce these gifts. By nature we are dead. Every good and perfect gift is given of the Father from above. (Eph 2: 8, 9)

But where God gives these graces there will be these works because God never fails to “do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight.”

Title: Works of Three Graces

Divisions: 1) work of faith, 2) labor of love, 3) patience of hope

Proposition: The graces of faith, love and hope result in good works in Christ Jesus.

I. THE WORK OF FAITH

Faith's chief work is to believe on the Son of God, 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.

Believing is resting in Christ—in his blood and righteousness for your complete acceptance with holy God. Believing is trusting Christ has "justified us from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." Believing is trusting you have an Advocate with Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous and he is the propitiation for our sins. We believe God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins because in Christ, God is just and the Justifier—Christ everlives to make intercession for us. Faith is the believer's spiritual sense. By faith we “taste and see that the Lord is good.” (Ps 34: 8) “Unto you which believe he is precious.” (1 Peter 2: 7)

Secondly, faith's work is to live day-by-day by faith. (Turn to Galatians 2)

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

Galatians 2: 16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. 17: But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. 18: For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19: For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh

I LIVE BY THE FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD, who loved me, and gave himself for me. 21: I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Thirdly, faith's work is to stand by faith.

Ephesians 6: 13: Wherefore take unto you the whole ARMOUR OF GOD, that ye may be able to WITHSTAND in the evil day, and having done all, TO STAND. 14: STAND therefore, [how do we stand?] HAVING your loins GIRT about WITH TRUTH, and HAVING on the BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS; 15: And your FEET SHOD with the preparation of THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 16: ABOVE ALL, TAKING the SHIELD OF FAITH, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17: And TAKE the helmet OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the WORD OF GOD: 18: PRAYING always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, AND WATCHING thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Our believing, our living, our standing by faith—is by God's grace alone so we must continually take the whole armor of God, continually asking God for grace for ourselves and for one another

Faith's work is also described as a FIGHT.

1 Timothy 6: 12: Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

We face much opposition and conflict: our own unbelief and sins, the influence of ungodly world, the subtlety of Satan. But our confidence is Christ the Captain of our warfare.

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?

We are more than conquerors through Christ that loved us. Christ our Shield and Defender has, is and shall save all who trust him and none shall be lost. Every work done in faith is a good work.

Illustration: Some think seeing is believing. But faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. The sky without one visible column makes us appreciate that God holds it up. One column would spoil it. So if we had one visible column then faith would be made void.

II. THE LABOR OF LOVE

Love can only be known by having it. Wherever the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the object of our love. And love "labors" for one reason—the love of Christ for us.

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, [what does his love for us constrain us to do?] that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

True love puts the one it loves first. Love does not live for self but for Christ who lived and died for us.

When you love someone—above all things you desire to be pleasing to that one, you do not want them to have suspicions about your love for them. We know God's love is everlasting, unchangeable, sovereign love. It was not that we first loved God, but that he loved us—his love is unchanging toward his elect. That makes the believer want to show him our love for him even more. We want the constant presence of the

Lord, to hear his Voice, to have the approval of our Beloved. His smile toward us is our only reward. And his frown the greatest thing we want to avoid. True love lives to praise and glorify God who first loved us.

So this labor is first, against the coldness and the hardness of our flesh. We labor to show our love to Christ:

- By submission to his will
- By adorning the doctrine of Christ in our walk
- By making his glory our supreme aim

Secondly, love toward Christ labors in love to our brethren.

Hebrews 6: 10: For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

We love Christ because he knows us—intimately—he has made us one with him as a husband and his bride. Knowing this oneness we have with him, we know that all those who are his have this same oneness—what we do to them we do to him.

Therefore, those born of Christ our Beloved, love those begotten of him. We seek to do good to our fellow believers: sympathizing with them in trouble and rejoicing when they rejoice, bearing one another's burdens and forbearing with them in tender affection, seeking their spiritual benefit and profit. True love lays aside malice and guile and hypocrisy because true God-given love hates strife and division, but loves unity. Though we meet with every kind of opposition from without and within; true God-given love never faileth.
LOVE WILL REMAIN, WHEN FAITH AND HOPE BECOME SIGHT.

III. THE PATIENCE OF HOPE

Just as faith has its work, as love has its labor, so hope has its patience. "Patience" includes meekness, quietness, submission and resignation to the will of God. But patience means here, "endurance."

Hebrews 12: 1: Let us run with PATIENCE the race set before us." (Heb. 12:1.)

The grace of hope is the grace of endurance.

Moses "endured as seeing him who is invisible."

Illustration: A Father Carving the Turkey for a Large Family. The children have their plates ready. But each child has to wait. The father fills each plate in the order he will: maybe the sick one first, perhaps the strongest child he makes wait. Sometimes, he is saving a choice piece for one child in particular. But you have to be patient to get that part reserved just for you. God the Father has a portion designated for each of his children. Patiently wait upon the Lord.

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 endured the loss of all his children and all his property, the assault of Satan, reviling from his wife and fleshly pain from head to foot and in spirit. But in the end the Lord crowned him with the crown of life—the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

It is easy to despair. But hope is our protector against despair. Hope is described as the helmet in God's armor.

1 Thessalonians 5: 8:...putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

A helmet covers the head. Hope is the protector of the conscience against despair.

Romans 4: 18: [Abraham] against hope believed in hope...

Our own carnal reason is the enemy of hope. Our natural reason is totally contrary to all things spiritual.

1 Ti 3:16 And without controversy GREAT is the MYSTERY of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

- The trinity of God is a mystery
- The Son of God made flesh is a mystery
- Christ made sin is a mystery
- Christ raised from the dead is a mystery
- Sinners made the righteousness of God, made one in Christ, is a great mystery
- Christ from heavens glory feeding a multitude with despised things as he did the fish and loaves is a great mystery.

These are hidden mysteries of God which are contrary to natural reason and natural sight. But God said, Isaiah 55:9: For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Illustration: The anchor on a boat. An anchor works unseen, in the depths. The harder the waves, the stronger the opposition, the more firm an anchor digs in and holds. Hope is compared to an anchor.

Hebrews 6: 19: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; 20: Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Brethren be sure to get this: Dwelling on past miseries is the enemy of hope. Listen to Jeremiah

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.

But dwelling on past and present mercies is the strength of hope.

Lamentations 3: 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.

Hope makes us cleave to God patiently enduring, rather than giving up and turning again to this world.

1 John 3: 2: Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3: And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

IN CLOSING

These graces are strengthened by exercise. The Holy Spirit is continually exercising these spiritual graces. God in his wisdom has:

- Left sin in our flesh for this purpose
- Left us in this world for this purpose
- Has united us together for this purpose.

So as your faith is tried look to Christ the Faithful. As hope is tried look to Christ who for the joy set before him patiently endured the cross, is now seated at God's right hand. As your love is tried look to Christ who loved us and gave himself for us.

And remember these graces are to benefit your fellow brethren. I am as encouraged in you, as Paul was for them, and I truly can say of you what Paul said of them:

1 Thessalonians 1: 2: We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; 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; 4: Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

Amen!