

Thankful For Faith, Hope, and Love

Joe Slater

When you hear of faith, hope, and love together, you might think of 1 Corinthians 13:13 where Paul wrote that these three things, the greatest being love, would abide even after miraculous gifts ceased. Years before Paul wrote to Corinth, however, he commended the Thessalonians and thanked God for their “*work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope*” (1 Thessalonians 1:3). And during his first Roman imprisonment, Paul once again thanked God, this time for the Colossians and their “*faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,*” their “*love for all the saints,*” and “*the hope which is laid up for you in heaven*” (Colossians 1:3, 4).

Faith is not mere mental assent of the existence of Jesus; rather, it is our confident, obedient trust in Him. Because we believe He is the Son of God, and because we place our trust in Him, we gladly obey Him. This goes far beyond our initial obedience in repentance, confession, and immersion. As with the Thessalonians, ours must be a faith that works.

In fact, that faith must work “*through love*” (Galatians 5:6). Paul wrote that even mountain-moving faith that didn’t have love was useless (1 Corinthians 13:2). He went on to describe numerous things that love does – not that it merely feels emotionally, but that it does actively (e.g. it suffers long, rejoices in truth, bears all things, etc.).

The same confidence in Jesus that motivates us to work also gives us hope. Did not our Savior say He was going to prepare a place for us, and would receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also? (John 14:1-3). This hope is not mere wishful thinking! Biblical hope is a strong desire coupled with a confident expectation of receiving that which we desire – namely,

an eternal heavenly home with Christ. As we anticipate that home, let us have the same “*patience of hope*” the Thessalonians had.

I am thankful for the work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope shown by my brethren in this congregation. May God help us to maintain that faith which works through love as we look forward to dwelling together with the Lord forever!

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Cause For Thanksgiving

In 1909 the average hourly manufacturing wage was nineteen cents; today’s average sits at over thirteen dollars (note: this article was written in 2010).

In 1890 employees were expected to put in a work week of sixty hours or more; today the average is closer to thirty-five.

Vacation days were unheard of in 1890; today’s workers enjoy an average of ten vacation days each year.

At the turn of the twentieth century, one of every ten babies did not survive childbirth; today, infant deaths are a rarity.

Life expectancy in 1900 was a mere forty-seven years; today, you and I may expect to live well into our seventies and beyond.

Even the poorest among us are faring better than in times past. Among those officially designated as poor, seventy percent own cars, ninety-seven percent own one or more color televisions, and a staggering two-thirds have air conditioning.

One thing is unarguable: we have more, enjoy more, possess more – and yes, discard more – than our parents and their parents ever dreamed of. But are we content? Are we satisfied? Are we thankful?

Paul’s inspired instruction could not be more relevant: “Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God, and God’s peace, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6, 7, McCord)

--Dalton Key (Tulsa, OK) via *Old Paths*

EXTREMISM AND THE GOSPEL

I do not like extremism. I am not one of those fans who insists on watching every game. Nor do I paint my face or wear funny clothes to show my loyalty. I have my preferred brands, but I acknowledge that other manufacturers have good products. I like pork better than chicken, but I have no objection if you prefer chicken to pork.

On the other hand, I cannot understand a half-hearted approach to serious matters. Justice is not served when criminals are sentenced to less than they took. A theft of \$100 is not justly punished with a \$99 fine. The entire amount should be repaid, and a sum adequate to cover all costs should be added. That is not extreme; it is simple logic.

If we really believe that the Son of God surrendered the glories of heaven for a life of poverty and a painful death, it will make a very notable difference in our lives. If there is not a notable difference, evidently we do not really believe.

To insist that everyone should have our same brand preferences or that everyone make our same food choice is extreme. To recognize that everyone ought to know, love, and serve Christ is not extreme. Either the gospel is true, in which case everyone needs to hear it and respond to it, or it is false. On this issue there is no middle ground. We need to agree with the apostle Paul when he said to Agrippa, “*I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become as I am*” (Acts 26:29, ESV).

We used to hear it asked: “If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” Surely anyone who really believes the gospel will be leaving enough evidence for a speedy verdict. The world will surely call such a person an extremist, a madman (Acts 26:24). So it was for the early disciples, and so it should be for us.

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)