

Message Three

**Faith, Love, and Hope—
the Structure of a Holy Life for the Church Life**

Scripture Reading: 1 Thes. 1:2-3

- I. Faith, love, and hope are the structure of a holy life for the church life, which is the genuine Christian life and the content of Paul's first Epistle to the Thessalonians—1:2-3; 1 Cor. 13:13:**
- A. Faith is the nature and strength of the work; love, the motivation for and characteristic of labor; and hope, the source of endurance—1 Thes. 1:3.
 - B. Faith is toward God (v. 8), love is toward the saints (3:12; 4:9-10), and hope is in the Lord's coming (2:19).
 - C. To turn to God from the idols is accomplished by faith infused into the new converts through their hearing of the word of the gospel; to serve a living and true God is by love produced within the believers by the Triune God as the all-inclusive Supplier who lives in them; to await the Son of God from the heavens is the hope that strengthens the believers to stand steadfastly in their faith—1:3, 9-10.
- II. The work of faith is the foundation of our Christian life and service—v. 3:**
- A. The word *faith* refers both to the things the believers believe in (the objective faith—Eph. 4:13; 1 Tim. 1:19b; 2 Tim. 4:7) and to the believing action of the believers (the subjective faith—Gal. 2:20).
 - B. The faith of the believers is actually not their own faith but Christ entering into them to be their faith—Rom. 3:22 and note 1; Gal. 2:16 and note 1.
 - C. Faith comes out of hearing, hearing is through the word of Christ, hearing equals seeing, and seeing equals knowing Christ—Rom. 10:17:
 - 1. When the word of the Bible is spoken to us and heard by us, we contact Christ as the living Word in the written Word, and He becomes the applied word as the life-giving Spirit in us—John 1:1; 5:39-40; 6:63.

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2. When we look away unto Jesus, He as the life-giving Spirit imparts Himself as the believing element into us that He may believe for us; hence, He Himself is our faith—Heb. 12:2a.
- D. Faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen; nothing is impossible to faith—11:1; 2 Cor. 4:18; Matt. 17:20b.
- E. Faith is the indicator of the believers' life in the enjoyment of the Divine Trinity—1 Thes. 1:3, 5, 7-8; Rom. 1:8:
 1. Faith is God's word accepted by us; because this faith is living and active, it results in the work of faith, which includes all the proper actions that issue out of our living faith—1 Thes. 1:7-10.
 2. Faith is to believe that God is; to believe that God is implies that we are not; He must be the only One, the unique One in everything, and we must be nothing in everything—Heb. 11:6; Gen. 5:24; John 8:58; 2 Cor. 5:7.
- F. The way to receive such a faith is to contact the source, the Lord, the processed and consummated God, by calling on Him, praying to Him, and pray-reading His word—Heb. 4:16; Rom. 10:12; 2 Tim. 2:22; Eph. 6:17-18.
- G. We must exercise our spirit of faith to believe in and to speak forth the Lord; faith is in our spirit, which is mingled with the Holy Spirit—2 Cor. 4:13.

III. The labor of love is the key of the fruitfulness of our work of faith—1 Thes. 1:3:

- A. Love is the intrinsic motivation, the inner life, and the real strength of our work of faith—Gal. 5:6; cf. Col. 1:28—2:1; 1 Cor. 15:58; Acts 20:20, 31.
- B. God is love; we love because He first loved us—1 John 4:8, 19:
 1. God's love motivates us, His children, to love people without any discrimination—Matt. 5:43-48; cf. 9:12-13; 27:38; Luke 23:42-43.
 2. Love motivates us to shepherd people with the loving and forgiving heart of our Father God and the shepherding and seeking spirit of our Savior

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Christ—15:3-10, 17-18; John 10:11, 16; 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4.

3. Love is not jealous, is not provoked, does not take account of evil, covers all things, endures all things, never falls away, and is the greatest—1 Cor. 13:4-8, 13.
4. The Body of Christ builds itself up in love—Eph. 4:16; 1 Cor. 8:1.
5. We need a burning spirit of love to overcome the degradation of today's church—2 Tim. 1:6-7; 2 Cor. 5:14; 12:15.
6. To overcome the degradation of the church, we need to pursue love with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart—2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Cor. 13:1.
7. Love is the most excellent way for us to be anything and to do anything for the building up of the Body of Christ—12:31b—13:1.

IV. The endurance of hope is the long life of our work of faith:

- A. The life that we have received through regeneration enables us to have a hope, with numerous aspects, for this age, for the coming age, and for eternity—1 Pet. 1:3; Titus 1:2:
 1. In this age we have the hope of growing in life, of maturing, of manifesting our gifts, of exercising our functions, of being transformed, of overcoming, of being redeemed in our body, and of entering into glory—Col. 1:27; 1 Pet. 1:3-5, 9; Rom. 8:23-25, 30; Phil. 3:21; 2 Tim. 4:7-8.
 2. In the coming age we have the hope of entering into the kingdom, of reigning with the Lord, and of enjoying the blessings of eternal life in the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens—Rev. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:18.
 3. In eternity we have the hope of being the New Jerusalem, when we will participate fully in the consummated blessings of the eternal life in its

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ultimate manifestation in eternity—Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5.

- B. The endurance of hope subdues all kinds of disappointments, discouragements, and impossibilities; it overcomes all kinds of oppositions, obstacles, and frustrations—Heb. 4:16; Phil. 2:13; 4:11-13; 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Thes. 3:5.
- C. Such endurance consummates in gaining sinners, feeding the believers, perfecting the saints, and building up the church, the Body of Christ, for the kingdom of God and of Christ—2 Cor. 6:4; 1 Cor. 15:58.

V. Our work of faith, labor of love, and endurance of hope are “according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure has apportioned to us”—2 Cor. 10:13:

- A. In spiritual work, the most important thing is to know “the pattern...in the mountain” (Heb. 8:5); if there is no comprehension of God’s plan, there is no possibility for God’s work (Acts 26:19).
- B. Every worker has a specific work which God measures to him and a pathway upon which God wants him to walk; if you are standing in your rightful position, working in your rightful service, and walking on your rightful pathway, that is the highest glory—13:25a, 36a; 20:24; 2 Tim. 4:7.