

## Vital Christianity 1 Thessalonians 1:3

**Objective:** For people to realize and nurture essential characteristics of vital Christians.

**Reading:** 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10.

**Memory:** 1 Thessalonians 1:3

### **Introduction:**

1. Is your Christianity “comatose”? as in a coma; lethargic; drowsy; dull; sluggish; having lost all or part of the power of sensation or motion, as in a hibernating animal.
2. There must be something we can do to re-vitalize, to keep our Christianity alive.

### **We must nurture those qualities which ensure our Christian vitality.** (HOW?)

In 1 Thessalonians 1:3, the holy Apostle, Paul, mentions three Christian graces, which form the essence of a strong, lively, Christianity. They are **Faith, Hope, and Love**. But people cannot see them. (What color is **Faith**?) *We can only know them by the fruit they produce.* The fruit of these 3 Christian graces is what made the congregation in Thessalonica so very effective in its Christian life. Their Christian vitality is a natural outflow of the Faith, Hope, and Love. These are the things we need to foster to keep a vital Christianity.

*The first is:*

### **I. FAITH:** (του έργου της πίστεως)

#### **A. Faith is confidence in God.**

1. Hebrews 11:1, **“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”**
2. Not just that He exists, but that He cares and has worked and is working in the lives of men and women. That **“...he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”** (Hebrews 11:6b)
3. Look what He did with Abraham, David, Solomon, even Job! Won't he do the same for you?
4. He has always been there for those who believe He exists and earnestly seek Him.
5. If He has worked for others who trusted Him, He will work for you also!
6. How can your Christianity be slack if you maintain this kind of faith?
7. Do you have this confidence? If so, it ought to be reflected in your life!

#### **B. Notice that Faith works.**

1. It does things; produces deeds. Moves us to do things that are pleasing to Him. “Works”.
2. Verse 3a; **“We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith...”**
3. “Work” is tasks, projects, activities which faith has inspired. Building, classes, VBS efforts ...
4. James 2:17-18, **“In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds. Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.”**
5. Because we believe, therefore we DO things.
6. Where is the silly arguing over whether we are saved by works or faith? Can't separate them!!!!
7. See the work it produced in the Thessalonians; Read 1 Thessalonians 1:5-8a.
8. Does it produce works in you? How does your faith really affect your actions??
9. Some things you simply must DO if you believe.
  - a. Stand for Christ. Seek honor for His name.
  - b. Teach others of Christ. He came to save the lost – we must let them know.
  - c. Changes in lifestyle. He came to show us the Way; we must follow.

*The second is:*

### **II. LOVE:** (του κοπου της αγάπης)

#### **A. What is love?**

1. Basically, a self sacrificing attitude towards others. A desire to work for their best.
2. This love is the attitude God has for us. John 3:16, **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”**
3. It is a continuing relationship between God and His people, which exists through Christ.

4. αγαπη = that love which characterizes God's very nature and has its very origin in God. It is emulated in us as we reach out to others.

#### B. Notice that love labors.

1. Love manifests itself in labor. This is HOW it shows itself.
2. Not much difference really between **labor** and **work**, but probably emphasis on toilsome, wearisome tasks - that which is not prompted or motivated by promise of reward but is done out of personal regard for someone or something.
3. What keeps you doing something when there are no suitable wages?
  - a. Picking up trash along roadside? Changing diapers? Tending the ill or handicapped?
  - b. Striving to teach, influence others? It involves going beyond what was necessary.
  - c. Preaching truth and righteousness even when no one seems to care.
4. See an example of the Apostle's own labor of love in 1 Thessalonians 2:8-12.

#### C. The Labor of Love has both horizontal and vertical dimensions.

1. Service to God, out of love for God. Matthew 22:37-40.
2. Service to God's creation – man, out of love for fellow man.

The third is:

### III. HOPE: (της υποουνης της ελπιδος)

#### A. Hope is an expectation of good things to come.

1. If all were glorious and peaceful here, there would be no need for such a thing as hope.
2. Hope is a longing for, a looking for something in the future. An expectation of things not seen.
3. Romans 8:24-25, "**For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.**"

#### B. Notice that Hope inspires endurance.

1. The expectation of better things to come enables us to patiently endure difficult things. It gives us the will and the ability to carry on without grumbling or complaining.
2. How can you patiently endure saving your money when you would like to do all sorts of fun things with it? Because you have an expectation that in the future, when you have saved enough, you will get that car and have more enjoyment than to have an ice cream cone now.
3. How can a mother hen sit so patiently on a nest for 3 weeks? Hope of the hatching of the brood.
4. Not an apathetic, passive attitude or spirit, but rather one of positive, active, perhaps even aggressive endurance. One that keeps on keeping on when others would give up!
5. I will maintain a walk pleasing to God; because I know what is coming!
6. Term is used historically of either an athlete or a soldier who is able to endure the attacks of an opponent and then still have enough energy, stamina to mount his own counterattack.
7. The example is 1 Thessalonians 2:14-15.

#### C. Hope has one focus = Christ ! And all that He means.

1. Christ is the reason for our good expectations in the future. Redemption, heaven! Peace!
2. This concept of Revelation 2:3, where Christ tells them "**You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.**"
3. Will He be able to say the same about you?

#### So What?:

These 3 qualities of faith, love and hope, enabled the tiny congregation in Thessalonica to not only exist in the face of great adversity, but to grow spiritually, and reach out and to have a global impact. They will do the same for us.

Revelation 2:2, says, "**I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance...**" The KJV translates; "**I know thy works and thy labour, and thy patience...**" The same three fruits we have been talking about. May God be able to say this same thing about you personally, and us collectively.

Winston Churchill is quoted as recognizing that "*Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing happened.*" I hope and pray that this is

not true of us. I pray that your awareness of Christ Jesus will continually produce things in your life. Make sure your **Faith** produces works, that your **Love** prompts you to labor, and that your **Hope** in Christ Jesus inspires you to patient, steadfast endurance!

**Vital Christianity**  
**1 Thessalonians 1:3**

**Reading:** 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10.

**Memory:** 1 Thessalonians 1:3

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The Apostle mentions three Christian graces, which form the essence of a strong, lively, Christianity. These are the things we need to foster to keep a vital Christianity.

**I. FAITH:**

A. Faith is confidence in God.

Hebrews 11:1    Hebrews 11:6b

B. Notice that Faith works.

1 Thessalonians 1:3a    James 2:17-18    1 Thessalonians 1:5-8a

**II. LOVE:**

A. What is love?

John 3:16

B. Notice that love labors.

1 Thessalonians 2:8-12

C. The Labor of Love has both horizontal and vertical dimensions.

Matthew 22:37-40

**III. HOPE:**

A. Hope is an expectation of good things to come.

Romans 8:24-25

B. Notice that Hope inspires endurance.

1 Thessalonians 2:14-15

C. Hope has one focus = Christ ! And all that He means.

Revelation 2:3

**So What?:**

Make sure your **Faith** produces works, that your **Love** prompts you to labor, and that your **Hope** in Christ Jesus inspires you to patient, steadfast endurance!

**Action:** (Specify an action or change you will make in your life as a result of this message.)

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**Date:** (When you will check to verify that you have done it.)

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