

Text: 1 Thess 1.3

I was casting about for a text for communion this month and came across one when I opened 1 Thessalonians.

¹Th 1.2-3 ¶ We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers; ³ ¶ constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,

I am focusing on the three characteristics that warmed Paul's heart as he prayed for the Thessalonians:

1. Your work of faith
2. Your labor of love
3. Your steadfastness of hope

The commentaries call these terms "subjective genitives." You could translate them this way:

- Faithful work (or, work produced by faith)
- Loving labor (or, labor prompted by love)
- Hopeful steadfastness (or, steadfastness provoked by hope)

All these characteristics are more than examples of well-bread cultivation, good manners, and such. These characteristics are:

The Fruit of Redemption

They belong to us "in our Lord Jesus Christ" — in other words, if we weren't converted, if our Lord had not come, if he had never died and rose again, we couldn't have this fruit at all.

Proposition: The Lord's redemption produces fruit in our lives that glorifies Him for his work on our behalf.

I. The work of faith**A. Two great distortions of faith**

1. Easy-believism, or, "Mental assent"
2. Works salvation (faith produced by works)

B. The real change wrought by faith

1. The many imperatives of the NT become desires of the heart

2. The regular activities of the Christian life become new delights
 - a. Prayers
 - b. Bible reading/study
 - c. Church attendance
3. The pursuit of holiness makes steady progress

This is not to suggest that redemption immediately makes perfect Christians, but it does make real Christians, who work out the life of Christ in their life.

II. The labor of love

A. The difference between “work” and “labour”

“It is very close in meaning to the first, as ‘labor’ and ‘work’ are synonyms, though *kopos* (‘labor’) is slightly stronger, designating hard work.”¹

“Κόπος is earnest and toilsome service, into which the whole heart is thrown, travail of soul, often self-denial and exhaustion.”²

B. Love which produces the labour, the extra effort

1. Two commandments to love
 - a. Love God (Love Christ)
 - b. Love others

Commentaries want to make it out that this is mostly or entirely love of others... yet... can one truly love others without the Love for God and Christ?

¹ Grant R. Osborne, *1 Thessalonians: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 22.

² John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians*, ed. William Young (London: Macmillan and Co., 1877), 36.

2. Love for God and Christ best expressed, of course in love for others

Gal 6.10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

1 Pt 1.22 ¶ Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,

“The noun κόπος comprises all the labour which belongs to Christian love. This love, the image of Christ’s, is no ordinary attachment, resting on the slender basis of mere professional fellowship, but is embodied in travail, and busies itself in kindnesses of all shapes, in the doing of which it spares no pains and grudges no sacrifice (2 Thess. 1:3).”³

- Implies an extra effort, brought on by an increasing affection, produced by a maturing faith.

III. The steadfastness of hope

A. The “eschatological” fruit of redemption: hope looks forward

1. Work and labour wear even the hardest down
2. Add a dash or two of opposition and strength fades
3. Hope looks to “the author and finisher of our faith”

B. The hope produces steadfastness

“ὑπομονή is not, bearing up under evil, or the resigned endurance of it; but is perseverance or constancy, trials and sufferings being implied”⁴

1. Pushing through to the end
2. Bearing up manfully against pressure
3. Finishing the work, whatever the setbacks

³ Eadie, 36–37.

⁴ Eadie, 37.

Conclusion:

Proposition: The Lord's redemption produces fruit in our lives that glorifies Him for his work on our behalf.

The more you give yourself to the work of faith (fill your life with the Christian graces), the greater you will love *and labour* (!!!), with your eye set constantly on the future.

How is it that ordinary human beings accomplish things for God?

First, he gave himself for them, then they gave themselves to him.