

THE THREE WORKING GRACES

Preached on Lord's Day Morning, October 29th, 1854, at Oakham, Rutland

"Your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope." 1 Thess. 1:3

Ever since the fall, labour has been the appointed lot and necessary condition of man. Without labour, either his own or that of others for him, he cannot procure any one of the necessaries of life. Food, raiment, fuel, shelter, all that maintains life, or makes it endurable, are only procured by the great majority of mankind through incessant industry, manual or mental; nor can we name any one article of daily sustenance or use on which a certain amount of labour has not been expended. But though "to eat bread in the sweat of his face" was a part of the original sentence, yet has the wisdom of God turned that curse into a blessing; for without labour of body and mind, neither the one nor the other can be developed or healthy.

The analogy holds good in grace. Nothing really worth having is obtained in experience except through soul exercise, and especially by the acting of those graces which God implants in the heart. As therefore God has given us hands, that those hands may work; and as He has endowed us with minds, that those minds should be employed, so, in making us partakers of the graces of the Spirit, He assigns a certain work for those graces to perform; and, in proportion to the measure and strength of those graces, will be their spiritual activity.

But of these graces of the Spirit there are three which are pre-eminent in industry and exercise. These are Faith, Hope, and Love, which we may therefore call the three *working*

graces; nay more, it is only as they are working graces, and produce fruit springing out of that work, that they can be considered the genuine graces of the Spirit, and wrought in the heart by His divine power.

In this epistle the Apostle speaks very tenderly and affectionately to the church of God at Thessalonica. "We give thanks to God always for you all," he says, "making mention of you in our prayers." Now, what was it which seemed to kindle and keep alive in his bosom such affectionate feelings towards the church? It was because "he remembered without ceasing their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and their Father; knowing," he adds, "brethren beloved, your election of God." It was not, then, the mere grace of faith, nor the mere enjoyment of love, nor the mere possession of hope by them, which, in the sweet recollection of days of intercourse gone by, inspired his bosom with such kind and affectionate feelings towards the church at Thessalonica; but it was because their faith made itself manifest in performing a work, their love showed itself in enduring a labour, and their hope displayed itself in bringing forth a patience. And thus, as these goodly fruits visibly and abundantly grew upon these goodly trees, the sweet flowings of love and affection gushed out toward them from the heart of the Apostle, because he knew by these evidences their election of God, the genuineness of their religion, and the certainty of their salvation.

Faith, hope, and love are the three capital graces of the Spirit. They are three sisters, differing from each other in features and complexion, but of the same parentage, age, growth, and stature; and being in the closest spiritual union, they embrace and twine round each other, as the ancient sculptors represented in statuary the three Graces of the

heathen mythology. But as they are here represented not as mutually embracing, but separately acting, I shall, with God's blessing, endeavour to open up this morning,

I. *The work of faith.*

II. *The labour of love.*

III. *The patience of hope.*

And the Lord enable me so to speak to your heart and conscience, that you who possess any measure of these heavenly graces may find in your bosom an internal testimony that you have a faith not destitute of work, a love not without labour, and a hope not devoid of patience.

I. *Faith* leads the van. She is the queen of graces; and is the first grace that God by His blessed Spirit implants in the soul. But you will perhaps say, "Is not godly fear the first grace planted in the soul? for does not the Scripture call it 'the beginning of wisdom?'" True; but answer me this question. Can you fear a God in whom you do not believe? And why do you fear Him, but because you believe in His dread perfections. Fear is the effect of faith; and as the cause precedes the effect, so faith precedes fear. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is." Till we believe that He is, we neither fear nor come to Him.

But faith is the first of graces, not only in precedence, but in pre-eminence, as containing in her bosom all the rest. Thus, where there is faith, there is the presence of every other grace; and similarly where faith is not, there is the absence of all. The soul, then, that has faith, with faith has everything; and the soul that has not faith, in the nonpossession of faith, has nothing. Faith, therefore, leads

the van. She, as the queen, takes precedence; and when she enters, she comes in with all her train accompanying her.

But the Apostle here fixes his eye upon, and points his penetrating pen to, "the *work* of faith," to distinguish an active from an inactive, an operative from an inoperative, an industrious from an indolent, a working from an idling, in other words, a living from a dead faith.

i. As this is the grand point, we will now examine, as the Lord may enable, what this "*work* of faith is," that we may try by this searching test what sort of faith we possess; and, to make the ground clear, we may as well define in what this work consists. "The work of faith," then, we may lay down in a few words, is, to believe the testimony of God. But this is not all; we must add, therefore, another element to our definition, that it is so to believe in it as to hold out and on to it in spite of all opposition that may arise from without or within. But from the strength of sin, the subtlety and power of Satan, and the allurements of the world, this work of faith cannot be carried on, and brought to full, final victory without a terrible conflict; and what is true of faith, is true also of hope and love. Each, then, of these three capital graces has not only its peculiar work to do, but its peculiar opposition to surmount. As we read of the twelve men who played before Abner and Joab, that they caught every one his fellow by the head, each champion selecting his respective adversary, so we may say that faith, hope and love, in the battle-field of the soul, each has its respective adversary. So deadly is the combat between them, that one or the other must fall; and, according to the triumph of the one champion or the other, is the soul saved or lost. If faith prevail, if love abide, if hope hold out, the soul is saved. If faith were to fail, love to die, and hope to perish, the soul would be lost. I speak, you will observe, in the language of supposition; for true faith can no

more finally fail than its Author, love than its Creator, and hope than its Sustainer. The Giver must cease to live above before His graces can wither and die below. But though the victory is certain in the end, the conflict will be sharp and long. Thus in the battle-field of the soul, these three champions, faith, hope, and love, come forth clad in the armour of God, and each meets his foe in mortal combat.

ii. We will consider these three separately; and, *first, faith's adversary*. The antagonist of faith is *unbelief* in all its varied forms, sometimes as *infidelity* in the usual sense of the word, and sometimes as *unbelief* in the ordinary acceptation of the term. 1. The first, the grand work of faith is, to believe in God. As the Lord said to His disciples, "Ye believe in God: believe also in Me." And as the Apostle Peter speaks, "Who by Him do believe in God." To believe, then, in God is the first work which faith has to perform. But you say, "Does not everyone believe in God?" In a certain sense a great many undoubtedly do; but not by a living faith, raised up in their souls by the power of the Holy Ghost. The faith which they possess merely dwells in their natural heart, in their carnal mind; and is not the faith that springs out of the operation of the Spirit of God upon the soul. The faith that springs out of a divine operation has first, then, to believe in God; and one of the first things faith realises is His very being and existence; for, whatever notions dead faith may have concerning the being of a God, it never acts as if He is. Did men really believe in His dread perfections and terrible majesty, they would tremble before Him. As the Lord speaks, "Fear ye not Me? saith the Lord. Will ye not tremble at My presence?" They lack also the mark which the Apostle assigns to true faith. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." As they neither come unto Him, nor diligently seek Him, they evidently lack that faith which does both.

2. But when faith first credits the *existence* of a God, with that credit is connected a belief in the *character* of God as revealed in the Scriptures. For faith does not believe without a divine warrant, and faith's warrant is God's revelation of Himself in the Scriptures of truth. Just as when Abraham believed he should have a son by Sarah, he believed it not from nature's intimations, which were all contrary to such an expectation, but from the special promise given him by God, so faith has for its warrant God's revelation of Himself in the Scriptures of truth, and that revelation being applied with a divine power to the conscience. Thus, in believing in the existence of God, faith does not merely believe the naked, abstract truth that there is a God, the great Creator and Upholder of all things, the Maker of this earth, and of all that is upon it; but faith believes in that Lord God, who has made Himself known in the Scriptures of truth, and speaks in and through them with authority to the soul. Thus faith believes in the justice of God as revealed in His holy law, to which such a terrible curse is appended, and which by its application to the conscience produces such guilt and bondage.

3. So also in believing in God, it believes in His intrinsic and eternal *purity* and *holiness*; and from this view of Him in the reflected light of His infinite majesty is made to see itself a polluted sinner before Him. Feeling that He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity," the sinner, truly convinced of sin, falls into the dust of self-abasement before Him.

4. In believing in God, faith also believes in His *omnipresence*, that His eye and hand extend to the bounds of all creation. "If I ascend up to heaven," it says with the inspired Psalmist, "Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there also." It is, therefore, deeply and

inwardly convinced that none can escape out of His hand, and that "all things are naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

5. So living faith has a persuasion of the intrinsic and unalterable *veracity* of God; that what He has said He will surely perform, and that heaven and earth will pass away, but that His word will not pass away. It is, therefore, firmly convinced that God's curses will be as surely executed by Him as His blessings, and that His threatenings are as valid as His promises.

Now, all these things faith credits as they are spiritually revealed unto it; and immediately that faith credits them, it works towards and upon them. This working toward and upon the truth of God distinguishes the active, operative faith of God's elect from that dead faith which never rises higher than a notion or conviction in the natural conscience, lives a gasping life in a vain attempt at amendment, and dies away in a feeble resolve. A man who really believes will act. It is so in nature, it is so in grace. If I firmly believe that a certain event will take place, I act with the expectation of its taking place. If I do not so act, it shows that I do not really believe it.

iii. But faith in performing its appointed work is opposed, as I hinted before, by an inveterate and deadly enemy. This deadly and implacable foe is *unbelief*. This subtle, ever-active principle of our carnal mind is, from its very nature, so opposed to faith, that it will always work against it; and it would seem as if, whenever faith is drawn out into exercise, there comes forth, naturally and instinctively, this deadly foe to resist it, as being the main guardian of the citadel. Like the lion crouching in his den, or a snake coiled up in his hole, it lies still till trodden upon. Faith manifests the presence and

power of unbelief, as the foot of the traveller wakes up the sleeping snake. Perhaps there are some here who never knew what infidelity was, nor that the principle of it was in their hearts, until they possessed faith. Doubts as to God's eternal being and existence, questionings concerning the truth of the Scriptures, the Deity of Christ, the Person of the Holy Ghost, the mystery of the Trinity, and other such sacred points, never crossed their minds till they began to believe. I am persuaded, from what I have felt myself, that many of God's people, in all their lifetime, never experienced one doubt on these points till they possessed the faith of God's elect. Infidelity, indeed, was there before, lying deep in the recesses of the carnal mind; but it was the coming forth of Christ's champion, faith, which provoked the coming forth of the devil's champion, infidelity. As, then, Jesus Christ sets forth faith, that heavenly grace, in the front of the battle, so does Satan summon up infidelity, that subtle spirit, as his champion, and sends him forth, as Goliath of old, to insult and defy the armies of the living God.

iv. But faith does not content itself with merely believing in God. This is only a small part of faith's work, the A B C of faith's alphabet. It has to believe in Jesus Christ. So spake the divine Redeemer: "Ye believe in God; believe also in Me." Some seem to content themselves with merely believing in God; but one quickened by divine power into spiritual life can never rest contented with this first acting of faith in the heart. What? If I have no more faith than that which lays hold of God's justice, majesty, greatness, power, purity, and holiness, will this bring peace to my troubled soul, or speak pardon to my guilty conscience? I must have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, His Person, blood, and righteousness, to bring these blessings into my soul. The work of faith, therefore, is not only to believe in God, so as to fear His great name, and to lay a solid foundation in the heart for every other grace of

the Spirit to rest upon, but to believe especially in Jesus. What was the declaration of the Lord when they said to Him, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" "This is the work of God," He replied, "that ye believe in Him whom He hath sent."

But here again we find the enemy coming forth. Unbelief starts up to wage deadly war against the faith which believes in Jesus. This is faith's battle; and in overcoming this foe is faith's victory. O how many a living saint is there who wants to believe in Jesus, who longs to trust in His holy name; and yet he cannot, so plagued, so pestered is he by the risings of inward unbelief. He knows that he does not yet so believe in Him as to obtain deliverance, for he has an inward testimony in his conscience that if he believed in the Lord Jesus by the power of the Holy Ghost, it would bring the love of God into his heart, extract the sting of death, and fill him with joy and peace. But as long as he feels condemned by the law and his own guilty conscience, he has an inward testimony that he has not as yet that living faith in Christ which, he is persuaded, would save and deliver him from all his guilty fears and dismal apprehensions. Therefore he labours after this special, this peculiar faith in the Lord Jesus, that he may attain unto it, or rather that God would, of His infinite mercy, bestow it upon him. Here, then, is the main labour of faith, to believe in Jesus Christ so as to obtain pardon, peace, and deliverance. Many a poor soul is labouring hard at this work, yet with a deep and increasing conviction that it is a work which he cannot perform except by the immediate power of God. So powerful an antagonist is unbelief that, with all his attempts, he feels that he cannot subdue it, nor raise up one grain of that true faith whereby Christ is experimentally brought into the heart. But this very struggle plainly shows that there is life within—a work of God on his soul: for, from the movements of His grace, and the opposition of his carnal

mind to them, all this conflict proceeds. When, then, in due time, the blessed Spirit brings Christ near to his eyes and heart, reveals Him within, takes of His atoning blood, and sprinkles it on his conscience, brings forth His righteousness, and puts it upon him, and sheds abroad the love of God, then He raises up that special faith in the Lord Jesus whereby the soul hangs, and, if I may use the expression, hooks itself upon His Person as God-Man, upon His blood as cleansing from all sin, upon His righteousness as perfectly justifying, upon His grace as superabounding over all the aboundings of evil, and upon His dying love as a balmy cordial against all the woes and sorrows by which it is distressed. This is believing in the Son of God; believing in Jesus Christ to the salvation of the soul.

v. Thus far have I been showing what I may call (do not mistake me) a general faith (though in a certain sense special), as opposed to a particular faith. Let me show you, if I can, the difference between the two; and give me your ears for a few minutes, that you may not misunderstand or misconstrue my meaning. The faith that I have been speaking of is the faith that acts on the precious love and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, as raised up by God the blessed Spirit in the soul; and is so far a general faith, not in the usual sense of the word, but as opposed to a particular faith, given in a particular way at a particular season, and for a particular purpose. But the Lord is sometimes pleased to seal home upon the hearts of His people a promise, a special promise, as He did in the case of Abraham, when He promised him a son by Sarah. When this promise was given him, there was no prospect, according to nature, that it would or could be fulfilled. But as God gave to Abraham this particular promise, it was necessary that Abraham should have a particular faith in it, for his general faith was not sufficient—a special promise needing a special faith. Thus we

read, when the Lord showed him the stars of heaven, and said to him, "So shall thy seed be," "he believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness." Here is the distinction which I am endeavouring to show—the distinction between the faith which embraces the Lord Jesus Christ, and a particular faith acting on a particular promise. For instance, there may be circumstances of an exceedingly trying nature to you in providence, or there may be some peculiar temptation or particular besetment, some painful trial or heavy affliction, that seems to penetrate into the very depths of your heart. Now, for this, so as to be supported under it, or to be delivered out of it, you want a particular promise from God's own mouth, because, the trial being peculiar, the deliverance must be peculiar also. A general faith in the blood of Jesus, though living faith, is not directed to that peculiar trial, and therefore can give no deliverance from it.

Do you not now see the distinction between that general faith, which lays hold of Christ's blood, and that particular faith which lays hold of a particular promise? As, then, particular faith comes out to do its particular work, which is to believe that God will fulfil the promise, out rushes forth Satan's champion, *Unbelief*, that deadly foe, to work in a thousand subtle forms against faith in these divine actings. To illustrate this, though it is perhaps rather an analogy than an explanation, we may cast a glance at the way wherein Satan tempted our first parents. "Hath God said," was his subtle inquiry, "ye shall not eat of the fruit of the tree?" But had not God given them a special command that they should not eat of it? Satan, then, takes the solemn command of the Almighty, and seeks thus to overthrow their faith in it—"Hath God said, Thou shalt not do it? Believe me rather. I will show you that you both can and may eat of it, and by so doing you will be as gods." In a similar way does he act with regard to any promise that the Lord may speak to the soul. His

language is, "Do not believe God; He will not perform it for you. Besides, the promise that you thought was from God did not come in the right way; and even if it did, the difficulties in the fulfilment of it are insurmountable. Believe me, it is only a delusion, and will prove to be such." Here, then, we want particular faith to meet these powerful suggestions, and in spite of them all to believe the particular promise. Do you not think that Abraham had many a tussle with Satan about the promise that he should have a son by Sarah? Would not Satan be often saying to him, "You and your wife are getting older and older every day. How can you expect Sarah to bear you a child at her time of life?" We see the effect of this temptation in his taking Hagar to wife. But would not the father of the faithful, when he was strong in faith, answer: "Instead of believing you, and giving way to your suggestions, I hang my faith on the firm promise of God, with whom nothing is impossible?"

II. But though "the work of faith" is a sweet and blessed subject, and embraces a vast deal of experience, I must pass on to speak of "the labour of love." Faith I have described as the queen of graces, leading the van; and she is worthy of the place, well deserving all the dignity of precedence, for as she has the first place in peril, she deserves the first place in rank. But she has a tender, meek, and gentle attendant, following closely in her footsteps, not so forward in advance, because she has not the same work to perform, but more beautiful and comely, because she bears more of the image of God stamped upon her. As I have called faith, then, "the queen," so perhaps I may term "love" the Princess Royal.

Now, as faith is not idle or inoperative, so love is neither inert nor inactive; and just as faith has a work to perform, so love has "a labour" to sustain.

In nature, the very characteristic of love is to work and labour for the beloved object. How do wives show their love to their husbands? By doing all they can for their comfort and happiness. It is not by talking about it, "for the talk of the lips tendeth to penury;" and such love frequently begins and ends in mere talk. How does the mother show her love to her babe? Not by taking it on her knee, or straining it to her bosom, and kissing it as though she would almost devour it. Many a fine lady will do this who will do nothing else for it, but throw upon others the labour of attending to its wants. O how much, without any loud lip-profession, will even true earthly love do and suffer, and inflict upon itself, in order to secure the happiness of the beloved object! It is not otherwise in grace. Wherever there is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is, there must be, love to His dear name. The two are inseparable. When faith in Jesus leads the way, love immediately follows; for, directly that faith opens a door for the Lord Jesus Christ to come in, He enters with love in His hands and heart, and sheds it abroad in the soul.

But as faith, immediately it is produced, has a work to perform, so love directly it is shed abroad has "a labour" to execute. What this labour is I will now endeavour to show.

I hinted that each of these graces has its adversary. Faith has for its foe unbelief. What adversary has love to grapple with? O what a desperate antagonist! an antagonist, if possible, more desperate and deadly than unbelief itself. I need not tell you who he is. Yet, as I have to speak of his actions, I will name him. *Enmity* is the name wherewith God has named him. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Enmity, then, the enmity of the carnal mind, is love's bitter and desperate antagonist. And just as unbelief, urged on by Satan, is his champion to assail and trip up the heels of faith, so enmity, egged on by the same prince of darkness, is the

irreconcilable foe of love.

But you say, "I thought when the love of God was shed abroad in the heart it killed enmity." People tell you so; many talk of enmity being "slain," but I never found my enmity killed, dead, nor buried. Have you ever found any one member of your carnal mind destroyed or slain? If there were life and motion after death, our poor soldiers, after the battle of the Alma, need not have been divided into killed and wounded. There was no motion in the killed, after the bullet pierced the heart, and they lay stretched on the plain. So, if your carnal mind were killed, why, it would be entirely dead, and never would stir again. But are there no stirrings of it in your heart? People may talk about their enmity being slain; but if one member of the old man might be killed, so might another, until at last every member were dead, and we perfect in the flesh. It may be, it is, crucified, put off, and mortified. These are Scripture expressions concerning the body of sin and death. But show me a scripture which ever speaks of the old man being slain, utterly slain; or show me the experience of a living soul that ever could or would say it was so with him. Enmity, therefore, against God is no more slain than the carnal mind is slain; for it is the very breath of the carnal mind. But this so staggers God's people, that it is not slain; that after they have experienced the love of God shed abroad in their heart, there could still be in them deadly enmity against His blessed Majesty, that there should be such horrible risings up of blasphemous, wicked, and rebellious thoughts against the God of all their mercies, against the Lord that died to save them from the wrath to come. That they should have enmity against Him, how it pierces and wounds them! Have you never found any enmity in your mind against God's people, truth, Word, ways, and ordinances? What is all this rising up of enmity against the people of God, His words and ways, holy will and ordinances,

but the boiling and bubbling up of that enmity which is the very breath of the carnal mind?

Love, then, has to labour under and against this adversary, and against the coldness and deathliness produced by its workings in the heart. And it has sometimes to come forth into the field to labour for the Lord, weighted and pressed down by this enmity of the carnal mind, that seems at times as though it would almost strangle and suffocate it. There is not a single thing that love prompts us to do or suffer, which the carnal mind will not oppose. Not a sacrifice are you called upon to make, but the carnal mind will start up, and prompt you to indulge in some self-pity or self-indulgence, some movement of the flesh to resist it. All that you try to do to love the Lord, and to show that love to Him by words and actions, will be opposed by this subtle adversary. Against this continued opposition in the carnal mind to all it desires to do and suffer, love is called upon to labour. And here is manifested the strength of the love which dwelleth in the hearts of the saints, that though they have everything in them against which all their better feelings and all their spiritual graces are maintaining a continual struggle, they still hold on and cease not to labour. If you cannot see this plainly and clearly, just take an illustration from some of the varied relationships of life. You love your husband, your wife, your child, or your friend. Yet is there nothing in these tender relationships that very much at times tries your love? but is not the reality and truth of your love proved by your bearing all, and struggling through all, and love eventually proving victorious over all? Who is usually the greatest sufferer to be found? The person who has the tenderest feelings. What heart suffers the deepest wounds? The heart that knows the deepest love. So it is in grace. The heart that knows most of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ is the one most deeply immersed in His baptism of sufferings. Love mourns over His

absence; love shrinks from His frown; love trembles under apprehensions of having incurred His displeasure; love sighs over the daily, hourly backslidings that are continually committed against such rich superabounding love as the Lord has manifested in the garden and on the cross. Love hates the sins that crucified Jesus; love mourns over the waywardness, fretfulness, and rebellion that grieve the Spirit, and over the base returns it makes for all the mercies it has received. Thus the deeper the love of Christ is in your soul, the more you will be a living martyr; the more you will be grieved in your spirit, and the more pain and suffering will you experience from sinning as you do daily and hourly, against so gracious and long-suffering a Lord. But here is "the labour of love" to struggle through all this mud and mire and carnal opposition to the open fountain of His blood, which cleanseth from all sin.

Love, too, has its peculiar *trials*. If you have a dear friend, it may be from that dear friend will come your heaviest blow. If you have a beloved child, it may be from that beloved object your greatest affliction may arise. In a similar way in the things of God, if a man has any divine love shed abroad in his heart, the deeper that love is made known to his soul, the more will he suffer from those trials which are necessarily connected with it.

III. But we pass on to consider our third and last point, "the patience of hope." Has your mind ever been struck by the order in which the apostle puts these three graces? In reading the Scriptures we should deal with them as gold refiners with their gold-dust. They never suffer a single particle to be lost; the very sweepings of the bench and shop are treasured up because there is gold in them. So in reading God's Word, if you seek to be really and solidly edified by it, you must not pass by the least particle. There is "dust of

gold" in every word. Just observe, then, the order in which the apostle arranges these three graces. Has it never struck your mind as somewhat singular that the apostle should put love before hope? The order in which he places these three capital graces is faith first, love next, and hope last. According to most persons' preaching and speaking, hope should come first. Many who can scarcely give you any account of their faith, and a less account still of their love, will speak as though they had a good measure of hope. Scripture, as indited by the pen of the Apostle Paul, puts faith in the van, love in the centre, and hope in the rear. And does there not seem to be a reason for this? Faith leads the van, because her province is to receive the truth of God as the Spirit reveals it to the soul. Love, her meek and beautiful companion, gently follows, because what faith believes, she delights in and entertains with her warmest affections. Hope brings up the rear, as expecting and patiently waiting for the performance of those divine realities which it is given to faith to believe and to love to enjoy. Thus hope brings up the rear, because she is a waiting grace, and has to endure the attacks that may be made upon her and her companions.

Thus as faith has "a work" to perform, and love "a labour" to endure, so hope has "a patience" to manifest. The word "patience" here does not mean patience in the usual sense of the word, that is, contentment and resignation to the will of God. It means here "endurance," which is the usual Scriptural sense of the word. It is so used in Rom. 5: "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience" (that is, endurance of tribulation), "and patience experience, and experience hope." And also by James, where he speaks of "the patience of Job," by which he means Job's endurance under his trials, and coming out triumphantly of them all. And is not endurance a noble characteristic of the Christian warrior? Endurance,

something that will last, is what we want in almost everything. If we build a house, we seek to build it of durable materials. If we choose a dress, we ask if it will wear; if we form an intimacy with a friend, we inwardly inquire, "Will it last? Will he prove firm and faithful?" And especially if we have a religion, we are led to search whether that religion will hold out and endure unto the end. Thus hope, as being the grace which lives in expectation of what God has to bestow, needs, as its sustaining quality, endurance to the end.

But who is hope's adversary? I have shown you the adversary of faith. I have described to you the foe of love. Now, who is the desperate enemy of hope? It is DESPAIR. These are Satan's three leading champions. Unbelief, Enmity, and Despair. Against the last of these hope has to struggle; and how does it come off in this deadly combat? By patience, that is, endurance, by hanging on God's faithfulness, and never giving way or giving up, but clinging firm and fast even to the end. Look at a soldier. Take him into the field of battle. What quality is it which will enable him to gain the day? Is it mere strength or courage? No; another quality is wanted, endurance. Without adverting to carnal things further than to throw a light upon the subject, what quality was it in our soldiers which won the late victory at the Alma, which cost so much bloodshed? It was won by what, in common language, is called "pluck," that is, endurance. They would not let themselves be beaten; they would die on the field sooner than retreat or give way. The grand characteristic of the English soldier is—that he endures that iron storm under which most others shrink. This makes him what he is—his country's champion, and so dreaded by her enemies. So in the Christian soldier, the grand quality is endurance, and that he may possess this, the Holy Spirit inspires his breast with hope. We are therefore said to be "saved by hope." How can

hope save us? It saves us as the rear-guard may be said to save an army, by never giving way, but enduring to the last. Faith in you is sometimes very low, and you almost fear whether you possess a grain; love too seems so sunk into the very bottom of your heart that its very presence there is scarcely felt. But is hope gone? Are you sunk into despair? Do you abandon your profession? Do you forsake a throne of grace? Do you neglect assembling with the saints in the house of God? Is there not that expectation in your soul which still struggles on, maintaining its foothold, and clinging on to the last? How David thus encourages his soul: "Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him." This, then, is the reason why the apostle puts hope last. He guards the rear. Look how well this valiant soldier fights, and thus preserves the whole army from ruin. He is not active, like faith in the van; nor labouring, like love in the centre, but endures assault after assault in the rear. Have you not been tempted sometimes almost to despair? And what has held you up but hope?

One who was a greater and more deeply-experienced saint than you, once said of himself, "We despaired even of life." If, then, Paul was so brought down in his soul as at times to despair even of life, need you be surprised if you should at times sink as low? These despairing feelings arise from a variety of causes. Sometimes they are produced by the assaults of Satan; sometimes by the hidings of God's face; sometimes by guilt on the conscience through a sense of the backslidings of your heart, lip, and life. In one or other of these ways, despair sometimes gets great head in the soul; and choking work it is with a saint when this gigantic foe gets his arms round him. But hope, like the British soldier, is never conquered—never gives way. Here is called into action "the patience (or endurance) of hope." By this heaven-sent quality it endures, fights, struggles, never gives way, but

hopes against hope, even to the end. It is this "patience," or "endurance" of hope, which God crowns with victory. Look at Abraham's case. It is said of him that "against hope he believed in hope." Why? Because he was "strong in faith, giving glory to God." His hope in the fulfilment of God's promise did not give way; and God crowned Abraham's faith with fulfilment, and rewarded Abraham's hope with enjoyment, when he held the infant Isaac in his arms, or viewed him smiling in Sarah's lap.

Now, if you have these three graces of the Spirit in your soul, you will have some measure of the experience which I have been endeavouring this morning to trace out. Your faith will have a work; your love will have a labour; and your hope will have a patience. It is by the fruit growing on their boughs that the trees are proved to be of God's right-hand planting. A faith without work, a love without labour, and a hope without patience—God does not own. It has no place in God's Word, and no place in the hearts of God's people. It is a dead faith, a nominal love, and a fallacious hope, springing like the rush and the flag out of the mire and water.

If you have these three graces, with their conflicts and their victories, I may say to you what the apostle said to the Thessalonian church in the words following our text: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." Here is a proof of your being the elect of God—a faith that works, a love that labours, and a hope that endures. These are graces of the blessed Spirit, and will certainly end in glory, for their happy possessors are the elect of God; and such will find their faith end in sight, their hope in enjoyment, and their love not end, but be crowned with everlasting bliss.