

The Work of Faith, the Patience of Hope, and the Labour of Love

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

When our blessed Lord rose from the dead and went up on high to appear in the presence of God for us, as our personal Representative and interceding High Priest, he "received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." (Psa. 68:18.) Now these gifts which he received on our behalf were twofold:—First, "*gifts*," in the usual sense of the term, that is, the extraordinary gifts of the blessed Spirit, which were principally vouchsafed for the edification of the Church; and, secondly, the *graces* of the Spirit in his quickening, sanctifying power, whereby the people of God are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Now we find the word of truth drawing a very clear distinction between these two things—the gifts of the Spirit and the graces of the Spirit.

But in order to set before you this distinction in a clearer light, I will read to you the testimony of the word to the "gifts" of the Spirit as distinct from his "graces:" "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every one severally as he will." (1 Cor. 12:8-11.)

And again, "And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts." (1 Cor. 12:28-31.) We see from these passages the nature of these gifts—that they were more for the edification of the Church than the personal benefit of their owner; that some of them, in particular, as prophecy, the gifts of healing, and of tongues, were strictly miraculous, and therefore temporary and transient, passing away when not absolutely needed; that they did not necessarily constitute their possessor a partaker of grace, though he might be so, and in most cases was so; and that they differed much from each other in operation and administration. (1 Cor. 12:4-6.) The end and object of these gifts was the building up of the Church on her most holy faith, as the apostle so clearly and beautifully explains: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Eph. 4:11, 12.)

But in examining more closely the nature of these gifts, we must draw a distinction between those which were miraculous and those which were not. The miraculous gifts, such as prophecy, healing, speaking with tongues, passed away with the apostolic age, and ceased when the canon of scripture was closed. But the gifts of the ministry, as of "pastors and teachers," still abide, and will do so as long as there is a necessity for "the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ;" in other words, whilst the Lord has a people upon earth. But whether these gifts passed away as strictly miraculous or

whether they still abide in the Church for the work of the ministry, they possess alike this distinctive feature, that they are but for time, not for eternity; for the edification of others, and are neither saving nor sanctifying to the possessor; that when accompanied with grace, they are highly to be prized, but should be jealously watched over lest they puff up with pride and issue in a terrible downfall.

But the *graces* of the Spirit, as distinct from his gifts, are of a very different nature. This made the apostle say, "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way." (1 Cor. 12:31.) What was "the more excellent way"—a way excelling all the best gifts of the Spirit? The way of grace; and more especially the way of that prime grace, "charity" or love. And why more excellent? Because, unlike gifts, it never fails, but abides for ever and ever. Thus he says, "Charity [or love] never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part." And then he adds: "And now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." We thus gather up one distinctive feature of graces as opposed to gifts, and especially of the three leading graces—faith, hope, and love—that they *abide*, their seat being the heart, which the Lord claims as peculiarly his own, their Author and Finisher the Lord of Life and glory, and their end the salvation of the soul.

But there is another distinguishing characteristic of these three graces, faith, hope, and love, which is, that they are what I may call *working* graces. It is a great mistake to think that a Christian is not a worker. There is no man who works like him. As Hart justly says,

"The Christian works with all his power,
And grieves that he can work no more."

And yet with all his working it is not he that works, but the grace of God which is in him, as said the apostle of himself, and in so doing well expresses the experience of every real Christian: "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Cor. 15:10.) Thus though the Christian works, it is not really he who works but the grace of God in him, and it is this which makes a Christian such a paradox; that is, such an apparent contradiction both to himself and to others. At one time, none more earnest, more diligent, more active, more zealous, more bent upon every good word and work; and yet at another, how slothful, how indifferent, how cold, lifeless, and dead, as if he had neither a grain of grace nor a spark of feeling. Sometimes he is as watchful as a sentinel in the face of an advancing enemy, and anon drops asleep in the sentry box, overcome with weariness and listlessness. Sometimes so filled with the Spirit of prayer and supplications as if he would seize heaven by storm and take the kingdom of God by violence; and then seeming scarcely to have a breath of prayer in his soul. Sometimes he loathes and abhors himself in dust and ashes as exceedingly vile, the very worst and basest of all sinners; then again is puffed up with a sense of his own importance as if there were no such saint as he, or if a minister, no minister like him for gifts and abilities, usefulness and acceptance. Sometimes his affections are so fixed on things above, that it scorns as if he had no care and no desire for anything but the presence, love, favour, and glory of God; then at another time his heart is as cold as ice and as dead as a stone. Sometimes the things of eternity lie so weightily and yet so warmly upon his breast, that it seems

as if nothing else were worth a single thought; and then come trooping in the cares and anxieties of this present life to engross his mind and carry him away to the very ends of the earth. Thus the Christian is a contradiction to himself; and yet with all this, the point still remains good, that every grace of the Spirit in him is a *working* grace. And not only so, but every grace of the Spirit has its *own work* to perform and its own end to attain.

Look, for instance, at the words of our text, to which these remarks are meant to be introductory. We read there of "a work of faith, a labour of love, and a patience of hope." See how the apostle brings before us these three abiding, these three working graces, and how he assigns to each its particular office. He tells the Thessalonian believers that he "remembered without ceasing their work of faith, and their labour of love, and their patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and their Father;" being persuaded, from what he saw of those Christian graces in them, and their activity and energy, that they were the people whom God had blessed: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."

In endeavouring, with God's help and blessing, to unfold the mind and meaning of the Spirit in these words, I shall seek to describe, as the Lord may enable,

I.—*First, "faith" and its "work."*

II.—*Secondly, "hope" and its "patience."*

III.—*Thirdly, "love" and its "labour."*

You will observe that I have rather inverted the order of these two last Christian graces, for as they stand in our text

love precedes hope. My reason for so doing is that this is not only the spiritual and experimental order in which these three graces succeed each other in the heart, but that in which the apostle has himself arranged them in another place: "Now abideth faith, hope, love; these three, but the greatest of these is love."

I.—Let us first, then, look at *faith and its work*; and in so doing I shall attempt to show you faith under these six distinct aspects:—1, faith in its *nature*; 2, faith in its *work*; 3, faith in its *opposition*; 4, faith in its *examples*; 5, faith in its *victory*; and 6, faith in its *fruits*. For I wish to bring before you as clearly as I can a living, breathing, speaking portrait of this heavenly grace as featured in the word and as drawn upon the heart of the child of God, that you may have some testimony in your conscience whether you are the favoured partaker of it or not.

i. Now in examining the *nature* of faith, we may direct our first glance at its *birth* and *origin*, and in so doing shall soon see from the word of grace and the experience of the family of God that, like Paul's call to the apostleship, it is "neither of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead." (Gal. 1:1.)

Are we not expressly told that those who received Christ (and how could they receive him but by faith?) "were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God?" (John 1:13.) And so declared our Lord when he said, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6.) We may lay it down, then, as a most certain truth, that faith is a plant which does not grow in the native garden. Does not our Lord say, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up?" (Matt. 15:13.) If, then, faith is not to be rooted up, in other words,

if it is to be an abiding grace, it must be planted by the Father's hand, and thus testifies also James: "Every good gift and every perfect gift" (and is not faith both a good and perfect gift?) "is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17.) Faith, then, is an exotic, a tender plant from heaven's own warm, happy clime, where no cold blasts chill, no frost or ice destroys, no blighting east wind withers the flowers that ever bloom and the fruits that ever grow in that celestial paradise. If faith, then, be of this divine origin we shall seek for it in vain among the children of this world. And such is the Lord's testimony to ancient Israel, even those whom he had brought out of Egypt, and who therefore had the strongest reasons to believe: "And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith." (Deut. 32:20.) Nay, the Lord the Spirit says even more than this of that generation which witnessed Christ's miracles: "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." (John 12:37-40.) But besides this scriptural testimony, we have only to appeal to the experience of every saint of God whether he does not carry in his own bosom the inward conviction that faith, true faith, saving faith, the faith of God's elect, the only faith worthy of the name, is the pure, special gift of God. In fact, such is the express language of the Holy Ghost: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is *the gift of God.*" (Eph. 2:8.) And again: "Unto to you it is *given* in the

behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." (Phil. 1:29.) You will also find amongst the fruits of the Spirit, of which we have a blessed catalogue by the apostle, "faith" expressly mentioned: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." (Gal. 5:22.) And if a fruit of the Spirit, how clear the conclusion that her birth and origin are not of the flesh.

But now having thus hastily glanced at faith's celestial origin, we may be better prepared to examine its *nature*; what it is in itself as a peculiar and distinct grace of the Spirit. And I think that to determine this we cannot do better than take the apostolic definition given in Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Two things are here said of faith which I shall separately consider. 1, That it "is the substance of things hoped for." By "substance" I understand what we call subsistence; in other words, that faith gives a substantial existence to those things in which the soul hopes, making them real, clothing them, as it were, with life, and enduing dim and distant shadows with a present and positive existence. Not that, like a magician's wand, faith alters the nature of things, or makes that to exist which did not exist before, but it gives them an inward subsistence, so that they are as if actually present—handled, tasted, and enjoyed as personal realities. Now faith does this in several ways which we shall see better after we have considered what are—"the things hoped for." These are twofold—present grace and future glory. Thus the work and witness of the blessed Spirit, with his teachings, support, and consolations; the forgiveness of sin, a sense of God's favour, his hand to be with us all through the various scenes and changes of this mortal life, a peaceful deathbed, and a

triumphant entrance into the kingdom of God, with a blessed expectation of when Christ appears to see him as he is and to be made like unto him, are "things hoped for." Now faith gives to these things thus hoped for a solid subsistence in the bosom in various ways. First it *convinces* us of their *reality* by mixing itself with the promises, as Abraham believed the word of promise: "Thus shall thy seed be." Then it gives the soul a taste of the sweetness and blessedness of the things hoped for, for by faith we taste that the Lord is gracious, and "Unto you which believe he is precious." (1 Pet. 2:3, 7.) "O taste and see that the Lord is good." (Psa. 34:8.) As the word by which faith is raised up in the heart is "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," the eternal realities thus revealed have a peculiar weight, a weight in some degree proportionate to their importance, and this gives them a substance compared with which all earthly things are but a shadow. Be assured that if your faith do not give eternal things a deeper place in your heart, a stronger hold on your conscience, and a warmer claim upon your affections than the things of time and sense, your faith is not the substance of things hoped for, nor the faith of God's elect. Faith also gives an *earnest* of the things hoped for, for they are revealed to faith, and as this earnest is attended with the witness and the seal of the Spirit it brings joy and peace. The apostle, therefore, says, "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:22); and so testifies Peter: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Pet. 1:8, 9.) Thus we see that faith is not a notion, an opinion, or a fancy, but a most solid, substantial blessing, and as such gives eternal realities an abiding place in the heart.

But, 2. faith is also "the evidence of things not seen." What

are those things not seen? Such divine things as the mystery of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the Unity of the divine Essence; the glorious Person of the Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the blessed Spirit; the complex Person of Immanuel, God with us: the efficacy of his atoning blood as purging a guilty conscience; the suitability of his glorious righteousness as "justifying from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses;" his resurrection from the dead; his ascension up on high; his personal intercession at the right hand of the Father, his second coming in glory with all his saints and angels. These are some of the things not seen. As the apostle speaks, "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." And so, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love him." But faith sees them, as our Lord said to his disciples: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also." (John 14:19.) But how did they see him except by faith? the same faith as that whereby Moses "endured as seeing him who is invisible." (Heb. 11:27.)

Thus faith has an inward evidence, a spiritual testimony that the things unseen to mortal eye are true; and as thus endued with spiritual sight, it penetrates the veil spread over all things here below, and entering into the very presence of God, brings down the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven as personal realities. Such, then, is a short description of the nature of faith; this being its leading, its distinguishing feature, that it credits God's testimony, believes what God has said on the sole authority of his word as made life and power to the soul by the blessed Spirit.

ii. But now we come to faith's *work*; for faith is not an idle,

sluggish, indolent grace. It has much to do; yea, it has everything to do, for without it nothing is done to any purpose, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. 14:23.)

1. But what is faith's chief work? It is to *believe in the Son of God*. "This is the work of God," said our blessed Lord when asked, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John 6:28, 29.) And we have a testimony to the same effect from the pen of holy John, where he says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5:13.) But you may say, "Why, this is not such hard work." This would not be your language if you knew anything of the difficulty of faith, or if you knew the difference, the solemn, eternal difference, between a faith that is merely natural and historical, founded upon reason and argument, and the faith of God's elect which embraces for itself, under a divine and heavenly power, the Person and work of the Son of God as a living reality, and draws a holy influence out of his glorious fulness to purge the conscience from guilt and filth, and to fill the soul with all joy and peace in believing. But this difference which you know not is deeply wrought in the heart and conscience of the people of God. They well know you might as well attempt to create a new sun and launch him in the sky, as to raise up a living faith in the soul in and upon the Son of God by your own strength and power. They know it through a deep and abiding sense of the unbelief of their heart by nature, and its utter inability to raise up a faith which works by love, purifies the heart, overcomes the world, gives free access to God, obtains answers to prayer, and is attended with the sensible approbation of the Almighty.

2. But not only is it the work of faith to believe in the Son of God, but to *live a life of faith* upon him; not merely to penetrate into the presence of God and apprehend the Person of Christ within the veil, but also day by day to live upon his glorious and ever-flowing, overflowing fulness—as the apostle so sweetly describes his own experience in this matter: "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20.) This, then, is faith's work, to be ever looking to the Son of God as the Way, the Truth, and the Life; to be ever living upon his fulness, ever receiving out of it supplies of heavenly grace. But as this can only be done by prayer and supplication, it is faith's work to call upon his holy name, though sometimes it may be from the very ends of the earth; to plead with him, and talk with him as a man talketh with his friend; and thus, in the active operation and living exercise of this heavenly grace, to wrestle with him as Jacob wrestled with the angel, so as to bring down into the heart a blessing from his mouth.

3. But again, another part of the work of faith is to *stand*; for by faith we stand. (2 Cor. 1:24.) And what is it to stand? When we consider what there is in sin and self to carry us away, O to stand in the evil day, and having done all to stand! is not this the work of faith? Yes; to stand upon our feet against the floods of error which are sweeping as in a torrent round the Church; against the floods of evil which are streaming over the world; against the deluge of the iniquities of our own vile heart; against the floods of temptation out of the mouth of Satan; still to stand, and stand firmly on the ground of truth and a good conscience where the Lord has placed us,—this, this is indeed the work of faith.

4. But again the work of faith is to *fight* as well as to stand. We are called upon to "fight the good fight of faith;" and we

are told that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." So we are provided with a heavenly suit of armour, and above all with a precious shield, "the shield of faith, whereby we shall quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;" for, as Hart says,

"Christians are called not to play, but fight."

Our daily experience is more or less an experience of conflict. We have to fight against besetting sins; against the snares and temptations laid every moment for our feet; against the daily unceasing influence of an ungodly world; against the very things that our carnal heart most fondly loves; and against the workings and arguments of our natural mind, which are all opposed to a life of faith. All these things we have to fight against, and to resist even unto blood, striving against sin. But we shall see, perhaps, more clearly what the work of faith is, by examining, in the light of the word and of Christian experience, our next point;

iii. The *opposition* which faith has to encounter. Now we have to measure a man's work, not only by what he does, but by the difficulty which he has to encounter in doing it. It is like ploughing two different kinds of land: you must not measure how much work a man does in a day merely by the number of furrows he can draw; you must consider whether he is ploughing stiff clay, or light fen soil. So we must not measure the work of faith with power by the quantity executed, but by the difficulties to be encountered in doing it. It seems at first sight an easy thing to believe in the Son of God, an easy matter to live a life of faith upon him, an easy task to fight the good fight of faith. But when we come to measure the work of faith by the opposition it has to encounter in doing

these things, then we find that it requires the power of God in a man's soul to enable faith to do the work assigned to it. For look at the opposition offered to it.

1. Look, first, at the *unbelief* of man's heart. O what an opposition is made to every act of faith by the unbelief which is, as it were, the very life-blood of our natural mind! Have you never sighed, cried, and groaned under the unbelief of your heart? Have you never felt it such a heavy load and presenting such a mountain of difficulty, that when you tried with all the power of your soul to believe in the Son of God and to raise up a living faith to apprehend him in his blood and obedience, there was an opposition raised up in your heart to the actings of faith by the weight of unbelief that pressed it down? By this opposition, then, you may know something of the power of faith which is needed and the work of faith as exercised in that power to surmount this unbelief.

2. But there is also the opposition of the *reasoning* mind; for the reasoning mind of man is thoroughly opposed to all the actings of living faith in the soul. There is not an argument against the truth of God which the reasoning mind of man does not at times raise up and seek to employ against all that God has revealed in his holy word; for well nigh everything in the word of God, I will not say is contrary to, but is above reason. The mystery of the Trinity; the complex Person of Christ; his work upon the cross; his atoning blood and obedience; his resurrection from the dead; his ascension on high; and his being now in heaven at God's right hand, with the whole work of the Spirit upon the heart,—all these truths are not contrary to reason: they would not be truth if they were: but they are above it; as the Lord says, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isai.

55:8.) Now our reasoning mind is opposed to these truths, because it cannot bring them down to its own level; and not being able to apprehend them by the exercise of its own faculties, it is opposed to the exercise of faith upon them.

3. But look again at another source of opposition. How *Satan* can work upon the carnal mind, and what suggestions he can and does make use of to oppose the work of faith with power. How subtle his arguments; how strong his suggestions; how artful his insinuations; and how all are directed against the work of faith to lay hold of and live a life of faith upon the Son of God. Sometimes he insinuates, "How can these things be true?" Sometimes, "How do you know you have any interest in them?" Sometimes he magnifies the greatness of our sins before we were called by grace, and sometimes the sins we have committed since, urging from them both, "For you there is no hope, for you have sinned beyond the reach of mercy." Thus there is an opposition to the work of faith with power, not only from the reasoning of our natural mind which falls in with these suggestions of Satan, but also from the strong and subtle temptations of the wicked One, even on the ground that the very things are true which he has just before denied.

4. But there is another source of opposition still, and that is a *guilty conscience*. Nothing hardly seems more opposed to the work of faith with power than a guilty conscience; for that is closely connected with an unbelieving heart, which made the apostle say, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." (Heb. 3:12.) And why is it "*an evil* heart of unbelief" but because it is accompanied with "*an evil*," that is, a guilty "conscience?" Nor can the voice of faith be heard except as this guilty conscience is purged by the application of atoning blood; which made the apostle say, "Let us draw near with a

true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (Heb. 10:22.) But the conscience, even when it has been once purged, often, through fresh contracted guilt, sinks down into depths out of which it seems as if it could not emerge, and thus loses sight of the Person and work of the Son of God.

iv. But we pass on to our next point, which, with God's help and blessing, may give a clearer light still on this work of faith—namely, the *examples* which God has given in his word of the power of faith; and we will take two, which the Lord has especially afforded for our instruction. One is that conspicuous example, the faith of Abraham; for he is set before us as "the father of all them that believe," who are therefore said to "walk in the steps of that faith which he had being yet uncircumcised." (Rom. 4:11, 12.) Now just for a few moments take a glance at Abraham's faith, and see its nature, end, and object. The instance to which the apostle especially refers of Abraham's faith is where the Lord appeared to him in the dead of night and said, "I am thy shield and exceeding great reward;" and then took him forth and bade him behold the stars in the sky, saying, "Thus shall thy seed be." Now we read that "he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." (Gen. 15:1, 5, 6.) That was therefore, an act of justifying faith. He believed the promise of God, its coming home to his soul with divine power. But this is the point to which I wish to draw your attention, that his faith, though it was a justifying faith, yet it was of such a nature that it was believing against hope. "Who," he says, "against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of

Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform." This, then, was Abraham's faith. It was a firm credence in the promise of God made to him, and yet a faith that lived under opposition, hoping against hope, and being fully persuaded that what God had promised he would perform. Our faith, then, if it be genuine, must resemble that of Abraham. It must anchor in the truth of God as made life and spirit to our soul. It must meet with every opposition from without and within; from sin, Satan, and the world; from nature, and flesh, and reason all combined against it. But in spite of all, it must hope against hope, and be fully persuaded that what God has promised he is able to perform; and thus by perseverance and patient waiting obtain the victory. Take one more example, that of Moses: his faith was of this nature. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." (Heb. 11:24, 25.) The peculiar character of the faith of Moses was this, that though he was highly exalted and might have enjoyed all the treasures and pleasures of Egypt, yet he deliberately preferred to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy all that wealth could offer or carnal pleasure present; "having respect to the recompense of reward."

v. Now I pass on, having shown these examples, to point out faith's *victory*; for if we are to be saved, our faith must gain the day; we must have a faith that shall triumph over death and hell and gain a glorious conquest over every internal and external and infernal foe; as John says, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." This is just the state, then, in which the matter stands: we must either

conquer or be conquered; we must either gain the day and be crowned with an immortal crown of glory, or else sink in the strife, defeated by sin and Satan. But none of God's people will be defeated in the fight; and yet they often seem, as it were, to escape defeat by the very skin of their teeth; yet faith will sooner or later gain the day, for Jesus is its finisher as well as its author. He will crown the faith of his own gift with eternal glory. He will never suffer his dear family to be overcome in the good fight of faith, for he will give strength to every weak arm and power to every feeble knee, and has engaged to bring them off more than conquerors. Thus as the Lord the Spirit is pleased to work in the soul by his living energy, he strengthens faith more and more to believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God, to receive more continual supplies out of his fulness, to wrestle more earnestly with God for a spiritual blessing; to stand more firmly in the evil day against every assaulting foe; to fight more strenuously the good fight of faith, and never cry quarter until faith gains its glorious end, which is to see Jesus as he is in the realms of eternal day. Your faith may be weak; it may seem at times to be reduced to its lowest point; but as sure as Jesus has fought the battle, won the day, and is now crowned with honour and glory, so surely he will bring you off more than conqueror, as being the purchase of his atoning blood; for no member of his mystical body shall perish, but all shall be saved in him with an everlasting salvation.

vi. Now just one word about the *fruits* of faith. The grand fruit is the salvation of the soul: for this is the end of faith, "receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your soul." But every spiritual fruit hangs round faith, in rich, ripe clusters: for a faith without fruit is a faith dead before God. A faith that does not live to God's praise, walk in God's fear, delight itself in the Lord, and bring forth to his Honour and

glory, does not wear the stamp of heaven upon it. It is not accredited as being the faith of God's elect, nor does it bear a single mark of being coined in heaven's mint as bearing Christ's image and superscription.

II.—But let me now direct your attention to the second of these three abiding graces, which is another part also of our education for eternity—*hope* and its *patience*. You will observe that each of these three Christian graces has its peculiar office and operation. Faith has its work, hope has its patience, and love has its labour. To illustrate these different features, we may perhaps avail ourselves of a comparison:— Faith is like a young man in the beginning of his strength, with all the activity, and energy, and agility of youth. Hope is like a man past the activity and agility of youth, and yet possessed of a strong power of endurance of hard work, and bodily labour. And love may represent a man still further advanced in life when his constitution being inured to hard work, and he being now a thoroughly skilled workman, is able to go labouring on beneath the burning sun or amidst the winter frost without flagging or weariness.

I proposed to show you "hope and its patience." But as on a late occasion when preaching upon the gates of the city I spoke at some length on the nature of hope, and how it was raised up in the heart, I shall not now enter on that part of the subject, but shall confine myself chiefly to the description of its work which is here called "*patience*."

1. Now "patience" in Scripture not only means *patience* in the ordinary sense of the term,—that is, meekness, quietness, and gentleness, submission and resignation to the will of God, without murmuring, fretfulness, or rebellion, but it also signifies, and that more usually, what is generally understood by the term *endurance*. This we shall perhaps by and by

more clearly see to be the peculiar work of hope, and one more adapted to it than the more familiar meaning of patience, as implying resignation and submission. In religion, we want not only to commence but to go on—to end well, as well as to begin well. Hence the need of endurance.

Now when we examine the passages in Scripture which speak of "patience," we see that in them all this faculty of "endurance" is chiefly intended. The apostle says, for instance, "Let us run with *patience* the race set before us." (Heb. 12:1.) Now what quality is chiefly needed in running a race? You will perhaps say, "Swiftness of foot." It is true. But suppose the race is a long one—one of some miles. Is not something else needed then? Surely; and what but endurance—staying power, strength of wind and limb, perseverance, and that firm determination not to be beaten which would sooner die than yield? Is not this quality more needed in running a race, especially a race which is to last a whole life, than quiet submission to affliction, or what we generally understand by the word, "patience?" Take again what is said of Job by the apostle James: "Behold we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." (James. 5:11.) I would just remark that the words translated, "endure" and "patience," are the same in the original, so that we might read it thus: "Behold we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the endurance of Job." Job was not very patient, for he cursed the day of his birth, but was wonderfully enduring. How he bore up under the loss of all his children, the destruction of all his property, the fierce assaults of Satan, the taunts of his wife, the sore boils from the sole of his foot unto the crown, and, worse than all, the arrows of the Almighty drinking up his spirit. How he endured the greatest sufferings of body and mind, and by endurance proved that

"the root of the matter" was in him. This "endurance," then, is the peculiar work and province of hope. We see this sometimes naturally as well as spiritually. Many a man is very active, agile, and alert, but has no power of endurance, no hard muscle, no reserve of strength. He can do a measure of work at first, but when it comes to long toil, hard labour, and unwearied endurance of exertion, his muscles being weak and flaccid, and he possessing no strong stamina of constitution, he breaks down under the load. This, then, is the peculiar office, I might almost say the special beauty and blessedness of hope, that it is an enduring grace; a grace that wears, lasts, and holds out, and, however tried, never gives way. Have you not often found this, that give up what you may, you never can give up your hope? There you do well; for to give up hope is to fall into despair; and observe that as it is the work of faith to believe against unbelief, so it is the work of hope to hope against despair. Hope in scripture is compared to an anchor, and said to enter within the veil. Now what is the chief virtue and value of an anchor? It is not to do, to do; to work, to work; its duty is to lie still and never move; never to break, never to drag, never to come home. The anchor does its work in the dark; it sinks quite out of sight into the sand, and is so constructed that the stronger the ship pulls, the deeper it buries itself, and the harder it holds. This tenacity, this stiff obstinacy, this hard, unyielding gripe [grasp, control] is the peculiar excellency of an anchor, without which it would be altogether useless. If it be well made, if the iron be tough and well hammered, it will bite the ground and bite hard; and if the cable be equally strong, so as not to part asunder, the ship will safely ride out the heaviest storm. Such an anchor to the soul is hope—power to endure, never to break, never to give way, being its chief excellence as well as its peculiar work.

But now look at the connection between faith and hope. Faith

gives to things hoped for a subsistence, and then hope takes hold of the things that faith thus realises, and anchors in them with tenacious grasp as if it would not, could not, must not, dare not let them go, for to let them go is to be lost altogether. If ever you have had a promise applied to your mind with divine power; ever had a revelation of Jesus to your soul; a word from his mouth; an application of his atoning blood to your conscience; or any shedding abroad of the love of God in your heart, hope lays firm hold of the blessing thus communicated, and will not let it go. Just as the anchor lays firm hold of the ground, and by firm holding saves the ship; so the grace of hope saves the soul, (for "we are saved by hope." Rom. 7:24), by not letting go any spiritual blessing that ever the Lord has dropped into the heart.

2. But hope has its *opposition* as well as faith, for as faith is opposed by unbelief, so hope is opposed by despair. Despair is a most dreadful feeling, but it is one by which the family of God are often beset. We must seek relief against it by hope.

"To cause despair's the scope
Of Satan and his powers;
Against hope to believe in hope
My brethren must be ours."

Here, then, we want the anchor. The storms of apprehended wrath that beat upon the soul; the strong current of guilty fear; the tide of unbelief rising higher and higher; the rocks of open perdition that lie in sight, with breakers covering them with surf, and dashing against them so many wrecks; the fears of the mariner lest the cable should part or the anchor should come home,—all this well represents what hope has to endure, and how by endurance it overcomes all opposition. So David encouraged his soul still to hope in God

when cast down within him, under the sweet assurance that he should still praise him. (Psa. 42:11.) Hope of salvation is our helmet (1 Thess. 5:8), as faith is our shield, truth our girdle, righteousness our breastplate, and the word of God our sword. Let us, then, keep our helmet on, for to put it off is to go bareheaded into the battle.

3. But hope has its *end* as well as faith; and what end is this? all that we want and all that we desire—fruition, or enjoyment; for as faith will be swallowed up in sight, so hope will be lost in fruition.

4. And not only has hope its end, but its *fruits*; for it would indeed be inconsistent with such an eminent grace of the Spirit as hope if it were a barren tree, or, like Ephraim, bore fruit only to itself. John gives no countenance to a barren, unfruitful hope: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:3.) Now the fruits of hope are twofold—*inward* and *outward*.

Patient *expectation* is the chief *inward* fruit of hope, as the apostle speaks: "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. 8:24, 25.) To stand, then, upon its watch-tower, looking out for the Lord's appearing, who is "good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him," is a special fruit of hope, as we read: "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." (Lam. 3:26.)

To *submit* to God's will; to sit alone and keep silence, humbly confessing sin, and putting the mouth into the dust, is another fruit of hope: "He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him." (Lam. 3:28, 29.)

To *take* the Lord as our satisfying portion, knowing that in his favour is life, is another inward fruit of hope: "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." (Lam. 3:24.)

And to add another berry to the cluster, let me just name one more inward fruit of hope—a humble *recollection* of past *miseries* and mercies: "My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." (Lam. 3:20, 21.)

And hope has its *outward* fruits also, such as separation from the world; a cleaving close to the family of God; a living not to sin and self but to the Lord; and a conduct and conversation becoming such as profess to be waiting for the Lord's appearing.

III.—But as time presses, I must hasten on to the last of the three abiding graces, and the greatest of the three, which therefore I have placed last: "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." But love in the words of our text has a "*labour*" as well as faith a "work," and hope a "patience."

i. But *what* is love? for as I have defined the nature of faith and hope, so now I must speak a few words upon the nature of love. But how can I describe it, how dissect and anatomise this heavenly grace; how pourtray her beautiful features, or paint her lovely, engaging form? Love cannot be described; it must be felt to be known; but as a help to understand its nature, you may consider some of the features of earthly love. Love delights to be with the beloved object; to see the face; to hear the voice; to be near the person; to be kindly addressed by; and above all to revel in the delightful

consciousness of loving and being loved again. Such is a slight sketch of some marks of earthly love; and heavenly love, in a higher and purer sense, in those points much resembles it. Wherever the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost and the Lord makes himself dear, near, and precious, there will be a delight in the Lord's company; in looking upon the Lord's face; in hearing the Lord's voice; in enjoying the Lord's presence; and above all things, in the sweet consciousness that the Lord loves us as we love him.

ii. But this love has a "*labour*." It is not a cold, dead, sluggish grace which has no work to do and no heart to do it. It has to labour, and that very hard; for a love that will not work is a love that must not eat. But what is love's labour? Chiefly twofold, inward and outward.

1. The inward labour of love is to labour against the coldness, deadness, and hardness, and especially against the enmity of the carnal mind. For as "the work of faith" is to strive against unbelief, and "the patience of hope" to endure and bear up against despair, so "the labour of love" is to toil and struggle against the enmity and opposition of the carnal mind.

But it has also to labour under and against the *suspensions*, the jealousies, the disappointments, the denials of the smiles and presence of the beloved Object. Often, too, has it to labour in the dark, without one cheering word or encouraging look; often to sigh, mourn, and endure sharp pangs, cruel fears, and tormenting suspicions through the delay of the coming of the Beloved. "Why," it cries, "is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?" Truly this love has to bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things; for love never faileth. Like the fire from heaven on the brazen altar, love once kindled is never

suffered to go out. Thus love has to labour and sometimes very hard, in order to secure the promised blessing, and reap its choicest fruit—the sweet consciousness and enjoyment of the Lord's love. But as in the case of faith and hope, love has its peculiar *opposition*; and the labour of love is made manifest in proportion to the opposition it encounters and the triumph it obtains over it. If there were no enmity of the carnal mind, no doubts and fears, no coldness, jealousy, suspicion, or disappointment, there would be no labour of love to work against them. But by this very labour it becomes manifested as an operative grace—as "a loving, not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

Another inward labour of love is to *please* the Object of its love, by submission to his will, by patient suffering under the weighty cross, by obedience to his precepts, and a fixed determination to make his word its rule, his glory its supreme object, and his favour its highest and only reward.

2. But love has its *outward* labour as well as its inward, as we read: "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." (Heb. 6:10.) "The love of Christ," says the apostle, "constraineth us;" and to what? "That we should not henceforth live unto ourselves but to him who died for us and rose again." (2 Cor. 5:14, 15.) Separation from the world; living to the praise and glory of God; walking in his fear; a desire to please, a dread to offend our best, our only Friend; a seeking to do good to the souls and bodies of men; a godly obedience to every precept and every ordinance for the Lord's sake; adorning the doctrine with a consistent, unblameable walk, conduct, and conversation—all this will be the outward labour of love; for all these fruits show the reality, the earnestness, and the depth of that love to Christ, which is the peculiar feature of

one born of God. And as love will thus labour for the Lord, so will it labour for the Lord's people; for wherever this love is there will be a desire for their good, carrying them warmly upon the heart, sympathising with them in trouble and joy; bearing and forbearing with them in tender affection, and seeking their spiritual benefit and profit. Love will not encourage a spirit of strife and division, but rather will desire to walk in sweet union with all the family of God in a spirit of meekness, avoiding all that may grieve or stumble. This is love's labour; for all this will meet with every kind of opposition from without and within; yet love, true love, can and will conquer all.

But to draw to a conclusion, these three graces of the Spirit have each their separate work in order to keep them alive and healthy. It is in grace as in nature—with the soul as with the body; it must have air and exercise. What is our body without these two things?

Can health be maintained without them? A man may lie upon his bed or sleep in his chair till he can scarcely walk from indolence and indigestion. It is air and exercise that keeps the body healthy. So it is spiritually. The graces of the Spirit need to be often exercised and well aired to keep them healthy—aired with the pure breath of heaven, and exercised with the operations of the Holy Ghost drawing them forth into activity and energy. And just as in nature a man gains health and strength by using his limbs and working his muscles, so in spiritual things these graces of the Spirit gain strength by use and exercise. Faith by working hard; hope by enduring much; and love by labouring long in the face of difficulties, become each more strengthened, more confirmed, more active, healthy, and energetic. It is a false faith to sleep all day in the sluggard's arm-chair; it is the hypocrite's hope who endures nothing for Christ's sake; it is love in lip and

tongue and name that undergoes no labour to please the beloved Object. Look at these things in the light of your own experience. See whether you can find not only faith in your heart, but its work; not only hope, but its patience; not only love, but its labour. The apostle remembered without ceasing their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope. His eye was fixed not so much upon their Christian graces as their exercise of them. As, then, he looked upon them and saw their faith working diligently, their hope suffering patiently, and their love labouring unweariedly for the glory of God and the good of his people, he was satisfied they were the graces of the Spirit wrought in their heart by a divine power. And well may I add in the spirit of the apostle, that there is nothing more satisfying to a minister's eye or comforting to his heart than to look round amongst his people and see not only their faith, but their work of faith; not only their hope, but their patience of hope; not only their love, but their labour of love. I leave those things to your conscience, that you may examine for yourselves how far you know them by a vital experience of their truth, their reality, and their power.