

Your Work of Faith, Labour of Love, Patience of Hope

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Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

- [0 : 00] Let us begin our service this evening with the singing in Gaelic of Psalm 18 at verse 28.
Psalm 18 at verse 28. We'll read these words in English. The Lord will light my candle so that it shall shine full bright. The Lord my God will also make my darkness to be light.
By thee through troops of men I break, and them discomfort all. By my God assisting me I overleap a wall. As for God perfect is his way.
The Lord whose word is tried, he is a buckler to all those who do in him confide. Who but the Lord is God, but he who is a rock and stay.
It is God that girdeth me with strength, and perfect makes my way. And so on. Arlasi tu mocha'ilhu.
- [1 : 11] Esni mojia smarii. Arlasi tu mocha'ilhu. Arlasi tu mocha'ilhu.
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Arlasi tu mocha'ilhu. Arlasi tu mocha'ilhu. Arlasi tu mocha'ilhu. Arlasi tu mocha'ilhu. Arlasi tu mocha'ilhu. Arlasi tu mocha'ilhu. Arlasi tu mocha'ilhu. Arlasi tu mocha'ilhu.
Arlai Designimu. Arlasi tu mocha'ilhu. Oh Oh oh Is oh oh Thank you.
Thank you.
- [3 : 22] Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you.
- [6 : 52] Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- [8 : 12] and that your word is everything to us. It tells us who you are and it tells us where we belong and not only where we belong but who we belong to.
You are our God, you are our creator. You created us for yourself and even though we live our life here in this world and often times you are excluded from our thinking and our activities are removed from a consideration of what it means to you, our God.
Nevertheless, you are never far from us and your eye is always upon us and you are looking upon us with the eye of our God who is compassionate and patient and kind.

This long-suffering is there for all to behold. And even in the psalm that we were singing you are marked out for your grace and your graciousness.

And we bless you and thank you that your ways, as the psalmist goes on to reflect, are perfect and you are the mainstay and the support and the strength of all who have put your confidence in you.

[9 : 52] Who but the Lord is God, but he who is a rock and stay. It is God that girdeth me with strength and perfect makes my way.

We give thanks that those who are able to see that can do so without fear of being corrected because this is what it is in their experience.

And those who have not experienced it are not your people. There are times, no doubt, when your people are fearful as to the fulfilment of that in their own experience.

But ultimately, your ways are wise and your ways are good. So we pray that you would remind us afresh through your word of what you mean to your people even as they come to worship you this evening.

We bless you and thank you for your goodness and your grace for every revelation offered in experience and through your word as we said. We would ask your blessing to be upon all who are yours in the varying positions they have this evening.

[11 : 06] Positions of need. Because we are in this world and as those who are in the world this world is a wilderness to your people in particular.

It is a place that is full of dangers full of challenges that we must overcome and not able to do so without your strength.

And it is with your strength that we are over, as your servant said, that we are able to overleap a wall. Simply a statement concerning this.

The strength that is used to apportion to whosoever would solicit it. So remember your people in all the different situations that they have. Those who are ill may they seek health at your hands.

You are the great physician. Those who have physical ailments will know that they may be tried and tested as they go through them.

[12 : 10] But no matter what, the outcome will be good concerning them. These are in their lives for a reason and for some they will go through these things and emerge stronger as a result of their experience.

Those who will succumb to such illness they will emerge into the marvellous light of your own countenance as you have brought them to yourself. We would remember in your presence this evening all who have trials of faith.

This world is a crucible of testing for the saints and we we give thanks that no matter how tried they are how much the fiery trials are in their experience that you have promised that as gold they will emerge.

we pray that you would remember all whoever they are especially their grieving and at this time of world pandemic we pray that you would continue to watch over us we give thanks for the evidences there are of progress being made with regard to vaccination and the prognosis being a positive one with regard to the way this nation is emerging from it we are in your hands as far as that is concerned it's not down to man to determine what the outcome will be man proposes and God disposes we bring before you not only the cares of our nation but the cares of all the nations of the earth especially those who are suffering at this time we ask for wisdom to be imparted to the nation as it joins together to in time of general election for those who have voted may they have done so under your own guidance that which is done may not be undone those who have yet to bring their decision to bear in the ballot box we pray that you would overrule in that that your will would be done there's no doubt there's no doubt whatsoever and we pray that whatever you have determined for our good that will be what will come to the fore so bless us as a nation bless the various individuals who would seek to serve may they seek to serve you before any we remember the needs of the generation and we pray for an outpouring of your spirit thankful that we can pray for that and that as we pray that you are able to answer that prayer that we might have a day of spiritual rejuvenation that we might experience the true experience of sorrow for sin and that repentance unto life would be the experience of many we pray that that would be an accompanying to the preaching of your word by whichever means bless those who are able to gather together may the numbers increase and may we too as a congregation here see in the future that be true of us keep us in the eye of the storm with a view to your glory and all that we seek to do continue to watch over us blessing your word as we read it cleanse from sin and pardon us every transgression in

Jesus name amen we're going to read from the New Testament on the first epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians in chapter 1 1st Thessalonians chapter 1 Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus and to the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ we give thanks to God always for you all making mention of you in our prayers remembering without ceasing our work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father knowing brethren beloved your election of God for for our gospel came not unto you in word only but also in power and in the

[17 : 23] Holy Ghost and in much assurance as ye know what manner of men ye were among you for your sake and ye became followers of us and of the Lord having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost so that ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Micaiah for from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Micaiah but also in every place your faith to God were spread abroad so that we need not speak anything for they themselves show us what manner of entering in we had unto you and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come amen and may the

Lord add his blessing to this reading of his word and to his name be the praise like us now to turn to this passage that we read the focus will be on the words at the beginning of the passage particularly verse 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father God the apostle Paul clearly delights in the gospel bearing fruit in the life of gospel hearers in the opening verses of this epistle Paul refers to the church which is the result of the gospel that may seem obvious but it is often overlooked without the gospel there would be no church we can speak of conversion sanctification growth in grace growth in numbers all of which are evidences of the gospel yielding fruit the preacher and writer

John Storff seems to be in awe of the words we find in this opening passage which are addressed to a membership of a congregation that was but a few months old he writes you would think wouldn't you that it would be a very wobbly church but no Paul is confident about this church because he knows it that it is God's church he identifies three things about it it is a community of believers in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ it is a community loved and chosen of God and the third thing which we want to look at this evening sandwiched between these two things in verse three it is a community characterised by faith hope and love and this is what

I would like us to focus on very briefly this evening theologians on the basis of the Greek text insist that while the three principal graces of the Christian faith are identified and indeed highlighted linguistically the emphasis falls on the words accompany these graces that are identified namely the work of faith the labour of love and the patience of hope as Christian graces Paul refers to them often 1 Corinthians 13 now abideth faith hope and love these three but the greatest of these is love we find their love is given the priority but in other places faith and hope are given preeminence for example in

Hebrews we are told that without faith we cannot please God it is impossible the writer says in the same epistle hope is described as the anchor of the soul indeed Moses preeminent as he is as an example of faith we read that he exercised nothing less than a supreme hope in Hebrews 11 we read 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 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward while it speaks of the faith of

[22 : 58] Moses I would argue that it transitions into the equally identifiable realm of Moses' hope but I would like us to look more closely at what is spoken of concerning these graces first of all he speaks of your work of faith or as one has put it the work produced by faith now all of these are Christian graces in action and as you would imagine wherever there is faith there is the work of faith here Paul does not describe to us what that work is so we have to do a bit of digging the apostle James states that without works faith is dead so he must have some specific work or works in mind it is the kind of work that requires the presence of faith it is not in that case any manual labour or any academic exercise these are necessary in their own sphere even commendable but can be carried out without faith in

Jesus Christ again Paul says quoting the Old Testament that just shall live by faith and works are the accompanying sign of that life spiritual works that require God's help and are for his glory for many Christianity simply means being identified as followers of Christ on the basis of a profession of some sort but it must never just be that a Christian is a man or woman of faith identified by means of their faith works as one speaker puts it about a Christian in Drendil theirs is not a wall plaque or car window sticker it was a life changing encounter with Jesus Christ the kind of things we did with our life before that encounter no longer exist the apostle says you are no longer your own you are bought with a price before

Christ you were the recipient you were the beneficiary now it is done for someone else John Stott writes our faith leads us to good works without which our faith is spurious it is the works which we would not have done were it not for our faith in Jesus and not done to supplement my faith or instead of my faith I recently received a letter posted to my late mother's home addressed to the occupant of the home it was beautifully written handwritten and punctuated by various scriptural quotations albeit misapplied the writer belongs to a sect of Jehovah Witnesses and no matter how much they disputed it is their strongly held conviction that their industry as believers of this sect will add to their spiritual credit if not credibility as far as the faith of the true believer in

Christ is concerned their salvation does not hang on their industry but on the completed works of Christ that do not need to be added to however when the Apostle James uses an example he points to the activity of Abraham or Rahab to emphasize the nature of true faith the second thing that we have here without wanting to overstress or over spend too much time on one grace over another grace the second thing that we have here is that the Apostle is speaking of the labour of love the labour of love what is the difference between our work and labour in our minds there may not be much difference we often use that to imply that the reward is in our heart prompted by our hearts hearts what's the difference between work and labour one theologian explains it work points to the thing done as a matter of achievement whereas labour indicates the pain spent in doing it as a matter of exertion work we are told can be a delight labour a toil the toil is one of love in

Romans in chapter 5 and verse 8 the apostle there perhaps indicates to us the nature of what he is speaking of here God he says commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us there he is identifying the divine love and of course there is no greater love than the divine love but it is expressed in this way that Christ died for us and what could be greater as far as the exertion of love is concerned sometimes we struggle to define or to arrive at an accurate definition of the difference that there is between what

[29 : 57] Paul is speaking of here we shouldn't overestimate it because clearly the graces that are spoken of are intimately related it is faith and love and hope that's the order he follows in this epistle not the order he follows always you may point at something and say this is what I have done and there is evidence of activity and achievement whereas in the words that Paul is using here one may speak of that and the other is more indicative of the pains or the energy expended in producing that which is evidence of the work that was done the difference may be difficult to pin down but it's there the exertion itself is is not something you can see a person exert himself but the labour is speaking more of the production that results in it

Paul remembers without ceasing the work of faith the labour of love and finally the patience of hope just because it is the third does not mean it is less important but I think some are of the opinion clearly that the reason for Paul to come to hope at this point is that this epistle is called the epistle of hope by some because it majors on the second coming of Christ so what Paul is looking forward to cannot be treated lightly he is we have to understand that when we when we use the term hope we are often very loose in the way that we speak of it it is rather as

I've said often people use the term well I hope I hope for as if they were saying well I don't really know what's going to happen but this is what my expectation is although I'm not sure that it will come to that that's not the hope of the Christian the hope of the Christian is firmly ground as a Christian writer says it's not a stoicism not not a grin and bear it or grit your teeth and plough on regardless what the believer has to go on is revealed truth upon which they can rely implicitly the preacher the free church minister professor in the free church college many years ago professor R.A.

Finlayson gave a lecture on the hope of the Christian and he refers back to the Puritan experience or the what the what the older generation of the Scottish Cominanting believers spoke of us being their hope he said that grace he said is a young glory grace grace is the glory our glory in its infancy grace is the break of a glorious day a day that shall shine to its noonday splendor but hope is placing its hope in that glory so that it is a foretaste the hope itself becomes a foretaste of that glory that it is anticipating and it is the hope of glory that brings he says the foretaste of glory down and the song of glory awakens in your heart the music of glory stirs within your soul so that you have not only a foregleam of the glory but a foretaste of its blessedness

Christ in you is an experience of glory that makes the hope a foretaste of heaven begun Paul here is coming to speak much about the patience of hope there is an anticipation but in that anticipation there is a willingness to wait for it wait for it with the belief that that will be eventually in their in their possession the patience of hope is also entitled the endurance of hope and you can be patient when there is nothing else for you to be in closed in and locked room there is no escape but it is not the resignation of the passive sufferer as the fortitude of the stout hearted soldier there is a confident expectation

[36 : 39] Paul was thankful for the evidences of faith and love and hope that he heard of he took great delight in seeing it and so are we we should praise God for those who show us the example of their faith and who show us through their lives that they are engaged in activity that requires endurance and that they are looking forward with great longing to something that they are anticipating I remember reading some years ago of the illustration of a runner who had come I don't know which games whether it was the Commonwealth Games or the Olympic Games and as a result of a fall that he experienced in the earlier rounds of the race of the competition he was able to he was able to compete but his leg had been damaged as a result of a fall and although he lined up with the rest in the final competition his injury was such that there was no possibility of victory and he was asked he did indeed run in the race and he came in last and he was asked why did you bother running when you knew that there was no possibility of you winning the race well he said my country chose me to run for them my country did not send me 7000 miles to start the race but to finish the race and that's what it is for the believer they're in this race to run it to the finish knowing that once they've run the race to the finish there is a reward awaiting them and there is the blessing that is unlike any other blessing this world has to confer upon it we persevere we endure we know each one that our commitment to

Christ requires it and his promise is that for those who endure to the end they are the ones who are saved may God bless these few thoughts to us let us pray most merciful God bless your word to us in particular the graces that we are in enjoyment of may recognize them and see them come to fulfillment in our experience and may the glory be used in Christ now may grace mercy and peace from God Father Son and Holy Spirit be with you all now and always Amen