

The Church Of The “Less Noble”

Introduction. For 2,000 years sermons have been preached and points have been made about the noble Bereans in Acts 17:11. “Noble” means that they had a willingness to learn and evaluate something fairly. But what about the decent people left behind to work with the new church at Thessalonica?

The church at Thessalonica was founded in an uproar. For three Sabbath days Paul spoke in the city’s synagogue and his opponents were unrelenting in their opposition to the message. After a while, unbelieving Jews caused a riot in the city at which time brethren found it necessary to send Paul and Silas away to Berea (Acts 17:5-10). The Jews of Thessalonica even went to Berea and tried their best to destroy Paul’s efforts.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:3, Paul joins three familiar words together in a litany of praise for these beloved saints. How can the “less noble” make their mark in the kingdom of God?

I. **Work Of Faith**

- A. This phrase only occurs twice in Bible (cp. 2 Thessalonians 1:11), and Paul gave this compliment to no other church. What was impressive about this young congregation, with only three weeks’ instruction?
- B. “Work” refers to a deed, achievement, or function. It is a work which faith prompts; it shows that there is faith in the heart. There are plenty of people around to talk about faith, but the Thessalonians lived up to their faith rather than just talked about it.
- C. The religious world loves to talk about “saving faith,” but Paul’s view of “saving faith” is that of a “work of faith.” For the Thessalonians, it could have been a combination of spreading the gospel (1:8), benevolence (4:9-10), and loyalty to Christ in the face of severe persecution (1:6; 3:3-4, 8).

II. **Labor Of Love**

- A. This unique (as far as the Bible is concerned) expression is so compelling that it has become a common expression in the English language. Most have no clue it was the strongest of compliments paid to the “less noble” Thessalonians.
- B. “Labor” denotes an arduous, wearying kind of toil, done to the point of exhaustion. It is an effort that strains all of one’s energies to the maximum level.
 1. “Work” focuses on the deed itself and “labor” looks at the effort expended in accomplishing a particular deed.

2. "Labor" is more distinctly spiritual service -- many times it is used of spreading the gospel (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:8; 15:10; Galatians 4:11; Philippians 2:16).
- C. We labor because we love God deeply (Matthew 22:37; Jude 21). Love is the evidence of regeneration and renewing (Titus 3:5; cp. John 13:35; 1 John 2:9, 11; 3:10; 4:20). The Thessalonians rejoiced to give themselves in the service of others; their acts showed that they loved the souls of men.
- D. Today what most call "love" is really infatuation, but the Thessalonians had a love whose labor can still be seen 2,000 years later through the scriptures -- it was no passing fad (cp. Hebrews 11:4). Even under the heat of persecution the Thessalonians labored in love with, and for, the Savior. Ultimately they were just like all who have persevered under duress (1 Thessalonians 3:1-10).

III. ***Steadfastness Of Hope***

- A. Their anticipation of seeing Christ's future glory and receiving an eternal inheritance kept them holding fast to their faith (Titus 2:11-13; 1 Peter 1:3-7; cp. Matthew 13:20-21).
 1. What they desperately needed, they had -- stability. Although their entire town was enraged over the gospel, they hunkered down and made their place in God's kingdom. They labored as if their very lives depended on it (cp. Revelation 14:13).
 2. Hope transcends mere human, wishful anticipation and rests confidently in the consummation of redemption that will occur when Christ returns (Hebrews 6:9-11).
- B. Paul could encourage and teach others regarding this great hope because he was confident of it in his own life (2 Timothy 4:8; cp. 1 Timothy 4:7-10).

Conclusion. The substance of what Paul remembers about the Thessalonians is summed up in three words: "work," "labor," and "steadfastness." In turn, these three reflect three qualities of godly character: "faith," "love," and "hope." The Thessalonian congregation had only existed for a few months. This congregation has existed for a long time, but that never means that the work and labor declines or ceases. As long we have breath in our bodies, the work at this congregation must push forward.