

1Thessalonians 12-02-10b

We're in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, picking up in verse 3. Paul says, we, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, give thanks to God all the time for all of you. Mentioning or remembering is a better translation, you in our prayers. And then remembering without ceasing.

Remembering, you have ergo teis pisteos, remembering constantly your work of faith. This is a genitive, and forgive me for doing a little bit of grammar here, but it's important because there are different kinds of genitives. If I say the love of Christ compels us, or the love of Christ constrains us, what do I mean? Well, is this the love that we have for Christ is compelling or constraining us? Or does it mean the love that Christ has for us? If I say the love of Christ, is it Christ loving us, or is it us loving Christ? It could be a subjective genitive where Christ is doing the loving, or it's our love for Christ.

I could say my love of ice cream is making me fat, and I'd be pretty clear that I'm the one loving the ice cream, and the ice cream is not loving me. But if you say the labor of love or work of faith, what is this? Is the work producing faith, or is the faith producing work? Is the love producing labor, or is the labor producing love? Is the hope producing patience, or is the patience reflecting hope? Which is it? Well, depending. You could say that this is work from faith.

This would be your genitive of source, rather than a subjective genitive. Labor proceeding from love, because you love, you work, and so on. This could be adjectival, so that it is faithful working, and loving labor, and hopeful patience.

See what I mean? What exactly is the relationship between these words? It could be that your faith is shown in your work, your love is shown in your labor, your hope is reflected in your patience, and the Greek is susceptible to all of these interpretations. Well, here's the thing. What did we say at the beginning? Do you remember the very first couple of words in this letter? Paul, Silas, and Timothy, and he's not writing as an apostle.

It's familiar and informal. Well, this helps us when we come to this. What is it that Paul would be remembering? Is he kind of like a pope looking down and saying, you know, I judge the quality of your spiritual life to be thus and so, and based on my authoritative perception, here's the judgment seat.

This is sort of like a mini judgment seat of Christ here. Would that be the way he's talking? No. This isn't a top talking to a lower level.

This is straight across, isn't it? This is friend to friend, brother to brother, small group to small group, right? So what is it that Paul, and Silas, and Timothy remember? They remember the output from the character and the spiritual qualities of these people toward them. There would be a danger if you said, I, Paul, the apostle, am writing to you to tell you that you've done a good job and your faith and your love and your hope are of such and such a quality, and people would say,

ah, I've got a ticket into the heavenly realms. Everything's working out great here.

I've got the official grade for my spiritual life. And Paul has carefully constructed this introduction to make it clear to them that he is speaking on a personal level, and what he remembers is the expressions of their faith toward him. They worked on his behalf.

They labored out of love for him. And they were patient because of their Christian hope, their spiritual expectation, and it was reflected horizontally. It was reflected person to person.

This is an intimate, individual recollection of relationship and treatment in the church at Thessalonica, in that group. And so this is the way he's speaking. He says, we remember.

He doesn't say we're judging in the abstract. And by the way, Paul does this in some other letters. Think about him talking to the Corinthians.

I have heard that there are wars and divisions among you. This should not be so. And he's not saying you warred and divided against us.

He's saying this is between you all, and as an apostle, I am telling you you're messed up and you need to straighten this out. And he corrects and rebukes and instructs as an apostle based on their behavior. This is a completely different thing.

So it helps us having this context. Now, the word here is one that is addressed in the lexicons. When you talk about work, and this is *ergos*.

There's a rowing machine called an ergometer. You know what meter means? You're going to measure something. And *ergos* means some hard labor.

You start pulling on that oar handle, trying to get that little odometer deal to flip over. And I can tell you from experience, it is hard. You have to work out.

You've got to spend time getting yourself in shape to do well on an ergometer. And if you're trying to work your way into a seat in a boat or whatever, one of the things the coach looks at is, well, how much power have you got? And it'll be reflected in you set the thing for your body weight. You know, can you pull your own weight in a boat? And then in such and such a time, how many times can you spin that thing over? It's a measure of this particular kind of work.

And it is work that moves something. It's work that makes a difference. Now, it's one thing to say, I have faith.

I believe. I trust. But it's kind of an abstract thing.

Paul didn't say, I'm impressed with what you say about your faith, or I'm impressed with how holy an expression you had on your face as you talked about things of the faith. What does he say?

You did work that reflected, that manifested your faith. You would not have done this kind of work if you weren't trusting God, trusting the promises of God.

This would be, I will do things because I know God will take care of me. You know, when Paul was talking about giving to meet the needs of other believers in Jerusalem, and he said, my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. You can put yourself out on behalf of these people, not because you know them and you love them and you have a personal concern, but because you trust God.

And you know that this is right in his eyes and it is a form of service. And it is a way to express and manifest that you actually believe what God says. So I've ended the first session by asking the question, how do we do this? What kind of work of faith would we have? Well sometimes we have to work at not doing things.

Sometimes we have to work at not being worried, at not fretting, at not getting too constrained and involved and wrapped up in circumstances. And it takes work. And how do we extricate ourselves from the grip of tasks and requirements and responsibilities? We look to God.

He says, sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Take no thought, don't excessively concern yourself about what you will eat or what you will wear. Your Heavenly Father knows you have need of these things.

And so I relax. I work at relaxing. I work at being indifferent to things that people in the world might get very uptight about.

And I do it out of faith. My faith relaxes me. My faith gives me peace.

My faith reminds me of God's grace. Grace to you and peace. And I lay hold of it by faith.

I don't have grace and peace because Paul prayed for me to have it, do I? I have grace in my life and I have peace from God because I have rested in the promises of God. I am confident of His provision. I look for the areas where His grace is expressed and reflected.

This is faith. And sometimes it is work. We also do work because of the promises of God.

God has promised that our efforts will not be forgotten. God is not unrighteous to forget, Paul says in another place, your work of faith and your labor of love. God doesn't forget it.

It's written in the books. The Lord Jesus, when He's looking for overcomers, doesn't miss our quiet endeavors that are based in our faith. I don't have to toot my horn.

I don't have to try to get myself noticed. I don't have to ingratiate myself. I don't have to somehow bribe my way into good standing or into the affections of a boss or somebody that's in authority.

I can rest because I trust that God will promote me when I need promoting. And God will keep me

where I am if I shouldn't be promoted. I don't have to get into self-promotion, self-advertisement.

I don't have to get excessively defensive if I am attacked. And we're going to get a great example of Paul doing the right kind of defense under attack, under slander in this letter. If someone is wildly slandering and abusing and tearing down your reputation, making false accusations, what is the appropriate level of response? What is the nature of that response? Should we be completely quiet and say nothing? If we say something, what should we say? How much should we say? All of this, we rest in faith.

And it's a work. It is an output that is based in our faith. Ergos from Pisteia.

Well, the second thing he mentions is labor of love. This word labor is kapos, K-O-P-O-S. And the literal meaning of kapos is a beating.

When you get to the end of a really hard day and you say, I am beat, what are you really saying? I feel as though somebody has beat me with a big stick. That's what, you know, I'm just beat. Think about the word beat.

It doesn't mean tired. It means laid into with some object. And that's literally what kapos means.

It means a beating. It means weariness as though you had endured physical abuse at the hands of others. Mugged, flogged, abused in a gross physical fashion.

That's what kapos means. This is laborious, sweat-filled, straining, painful labor. This isn't just, well, doesn't it feel good that we got the lawn mowed and all of the leaves raked and the clippings gathered and we put them all in bags and it's, you know, it's time for a mint julep now.

Here we've got all this done. This is dragging yourself back. This is if you've ever baled hay all day long in the hot summer sun, when you get to the end of that and there's nothing on you that doesn't hurt, there's nothing on you that isn't sticky and sweaty and scratchy and all your nerves are complaining inside and out or any other, you know, extensive.

That's what kapos means. Now, labor of love. Why would you put yourself in that condition? You think about Jason in Thessalonica.

He was literally beaten. He was literally had all of his possessions taken from him and placed in jeopardy. He's on the hook.

If Paul so much as shows his face in the town, Jason and his family can go to jail and his holdings can be entirely wiped out. He's ruined in the community. There's people who have blacklisted him and are boycotting his business and his cold shoulder.

His kids are being mocked in school and he's paid a price six ways to Sunday. Why? Because of his love and his hospitality toward Paul and Silas and others who are with them. He has kapos of

agape.

Kapos taste agapes. This is sacrificial love in the genuine sense. And Paul and Silas don't forget this.

They say, you know what? Extraordinary people. They are confident in the promises of God. Here they are.

They're fairly new believers. They've just come to knowledge of Christ. We've told them some of God's promises.

We've told us some of the things that Lord Jesus said. If you have my words and keep them, I and my father will come to you and make our home with you. They're taking that to the bank.

These people are so trusting in God. They've got such a strong faith for being so young in the faith. And look at what they have endured because of their faith.

And it didn't turn them. It didn't dampen them. It didn't dissuade them.

It didn't turn them back. They've clung to it. They've stuck with it.

And look at what they have endured, this hard, sweating, painful expression of love. Love that costs you something. Love that takes it out of you totally, but you do it anyway.

Love that strains to the uttermost. That's what kapos, labor doesn't even touch it, doesn't get the hem of the garment of what this is. This is the spouse caring for the husband or wife who is no longer able to control their bodily functions, whose mind is gone, who is just a shell.

But they love them. They love who they were. They love the person that they married.

And they say, you know, I will see you again someday. And in the meantime, even though you don't recognize me, you don't know me, you're nothing but a but a gigantic, almost insuperable task. I love you.

I am committed to you. I remember you and I honor your memory. I honor that commitment that I made to you.

And I know if the situation was reversed, you would be just as committed to me. I do it before the Lord God. I do it as unto the Lord Jesus.

And that's kapos. Paul and Silas and Timothy remember this. And when they pray, they lift these people up before God and they say, Lord, if you were ever looking for believers that you could bless, think about those people.

We remember what they did for us. They treated us as they would have treated the Lord Jesus

himself at great personal cost. They trust your promises.

And what's the third thing? Patience of hope. This is hupomone. And you remember meno means to remain and hupa means under.

You bear up under. You're being crushed with a load and you bear it. You carry it.

You keep going. You don't drop. You don't let it crush you.

You don't let it stop you. You don't let it impede your progress. Whatever the load is, it's carried.

Hupomone, endurance of hope. Things may be tough. I've given you this example many times, but to me, it's the ultimate one in human life.

You think about what a woman goes through in childbirth. Why would she go through that? She's waiting for that little baby. She's waiting for that addition to the family, the expression of the union of the husband and the wife.

Here's this person that partakes of both, is an expression of both, is the fruit of both. And the woman goes through the closest thing to hell on earth in natural childbirth, looking ahead in hope of this little child coming forth. And when you say endurance of hope, that's what comes to my mind.

When they say push, you say pushing is going to hurt. Hey, I'll push because that's going to bring this hope about. I'm looking ahead to what is going to be produced.

And we endure. We're faithful. We persevere.

We are consistent. We don't swerve. We don't change.

We don't default. We don't get apathetic or indifferent. Why? Because the hope is real.

It is the substance of what we cannot see. Paul says, we have seen all of these things in this relatively young Christian group in Thessalonica. And he says, we just can't help thinking about you and remembering you and praying for you when this comes to our minds.

You are so impressive in these three areas. Your faith, your hope and your love are just pegging the meter in every way. And where is it in our Lord Jesus Christ? And it is in the sight of our God and Father.

Remember that locative idea? You are the group in God, the Father. That's how he began the letter in God, the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. And these expressions of your spiritual vitality are in the sight of our God and Father.

Now, that very last phrase, our God and Father, you may have heard in the past of something

called the Granville Sharp Rule. Well, which in essence is this. If you have two nouns joined by Chi, like Theos, Chi, Pater, and the first noun, Theos, has the definite article, Ha-Theos or Tu-Theu, and the second noun does not have the article.

Those two nouns refer to the same entity, in this case, the same person. So you have Ha-Theos, Chi, Pater, our God and Father. It's not our God is one person and Father is somebody else, right? This is your classic Granville Sharp situation.

Well, there are other places where this occurs. The famous one is Ephesians 4.11. You remember he gave some apostles and some prophets, some evangelists and some hoi, you know, poimenoι, pastors, Chi, didaskaloι. Well, poimen in the plural has the article, didaskalos in the plural does not, and they're joined by Chi.

So he gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some individuals are pastor-teachers or teaching pastors, teaching shepherds. Poimen actually means shepherd. But it's this very same construction and in the same way that our God and Father is one entity.

Ha poimen chi didaskalos and those are plurals in Ephesians 4.11 are talking about the same individual. There are other examples. I'm looking at Wiest who has a little one page blurb on this in his Treasures from the Greek New Testament.

He points out other passages such as Romans 15.6. There's a whole list of them here. But this is one of them. Now, why is this important? Well, we saw one recently in 2 Peter.

In fact, three times, 2 Peter 1.11, 2 Peter 2.20, and 2 Peter 3.18. And we made note of this when we were in 2 Peter. All three of those are this same construction where it says, Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Well, it's not talking about Lord God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the Lord. Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is both things.

And it becomes especially pertinent in 2 Peter 1.1 when it says, God and our Savior Jesus Christ. God and Savior. God has the definite article.

Savior does not. Theos has the article. Soter does not.

Talking about the same person. God and Savior. So these are helpful clues for us when we see this construction and see how consistently its meaning is reflected.

And this is one of them. So this is in the sight of our God and Father. He is both things at once.

He is our God. That's the authority. That's the creator.

That is the potentate of the universe. All powerful, all knowing, all of his regal, kingly, overwhelmingly superior attributes. At the same time, he is pater, familiar, loving, embracing, forgiving, gracious, compassionate.

All of the things that an ideal father would be. You think about the father of the prodigal son. And you get the idea that Paul is both things to these people.

He is apostle and brother, apostle and companion, apostle and friend. And he is speaking at that brotherly, affectionate, friendly level in this letter because he is able to express appreciation in a way that doesn't go to their head, doesn't give them false notions about their faith, doesn't give them false notions about their spiritual status that might distract them or might think, well, I've already been judged righteous by the apostle Paul, so that's all I need. And it's kind of like people who got an indulgence from the Catholic Church or from the Pope and they thought, well, I've got my get out of hell free card, so I'm good to go.

I can do whatever I want. I can trample my marriage and trample my business covenants and trample all my promises because I've got this stamp of approval from the authorities. Well, Paul is careful not to, because they're young in the faith, not to put them in that position, not to say, here's an apostolic judgment of your spirituality.

He says, look, we have personal experience of your tremendous faith and hope and love. Well, by way of application, we should have and give this personal experience to one another. It ought to be evident in our gathering, in our group, that there is work that reflects our faith, that is grounded in our faith, that is motivated by our faith in the promises of God, in the clear teachings of scripture.

We believe those things, so we are not afraid. We don't give grudgingly or out of necessity. We're not doing things to be seen out of others.

We do it because we know God in heaven is looking. We are in the sight of our God and Father, and that's the basis of our faith. We will put ourselves out sometimes to an extreme if necessary because of agape, because of the love we have for one another, because we are in Christ.

We are headed to the same place. We are part of the same body, part of the same fabric of God's plan and purpose, saved by the same blood, belong to the same Father, have citizenship in the same heavens, and we endure. We persevere.

We don't give up. We don't quit. We don't get discouraged.

We don't flag. We don't fall away. We don't divert.

We don't detour because that constant hope is real in our minds. This is something to cultivate. How do we cultivate these things? The question I ask at the end of the first session, how do we get these things? Well, awareness of their nature and their basis is certainly helpful.

But day by day, notice the reason Paul can talk about these. These weren't flashes of faith. These weren't instances of love.

These weren't momentary glimpses of hope. These were moments of work, and labor, and patience are ongoing. This is climate, not weather.

This is states of being, not mere episodes, right? So how do you have a continuation? How do you have an ongoing status like this, instead of just flashes in the pan? I want the lights on. I don't want them to blink once an hour. When it's dark at night, I don't want a flashing light.

I want a constant light. We want constant faith, constant hope, constant love, as is reflected here. Well, how do we sustain that? Well, if your lights are battery operated, you've got to make sure those batteries stay charged.

And that's our meditation. That's our prayer life. These things don't come ex nihilo.

They don't come out of nowhere. They don't come because we wish we had them, certainly not in retrospect. We charge our spiritual batteries, not only by attending Bible class, which is very important, but by reviewing what we learn in Bible class.

Daily meditation, minimum of three times a day in prayer, evening and morning and at noon. Pray and cry aloud. Daniel, windows open toward heaven.

Dr. Griswold is preaching that sermon this Sunday night on the radio. With windows open toward heaven. And he isn't deterred by the fact that people are going to send him to the lion's den over it.

And that they've gotten the king to foolishly pass a decree against it. He didn't hide his prayer under a bushel. He didn't say, well, I'm just going to pray here looking straight ahead.

Nobody in the restaurant will know I'm praying. He opened his windows. He did his custom.

He got down on his knees and he prayed in full view. Why? It's a part of his necessary continuing spiritual life and communion with God. And he wouldn't compromise it for anything.

Do we let our schedule get in the way of meditation? Do we let the affairs of this life stop us from musing and spending time digesting and thinking about the pertinence and the applicability and the implications of the things we learn in Bible class? You cannot sustain work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope without meditation on the Word of God. Bible class a couple times a week will not cut it. The occasional fervent prayer in extremis will not cut it.

If you want this continuous work and labor and patience from faith, hope and love, it requires consistent, regular meditation and prayer. There is no other way. Do you want to try to get your car to go down the road by one cylinder hitting every couple of minutes? Or do you want all four, six or eight cylinders hitting exactly when they're supposed to in order, in sequence, on time? That's what makes an engine go.

That's what builds speed and power. It's exactly the same in our spiritual life. The Thessalonians grasped this as soon as Paul taught it to them.

And it made sense to them, and they're doing it. And Paul says, we can't get you out of our minds. Every time we pray, we lift you up before God the Father and before the Lord Jesus Christ, because you have latched onto this.

Somebody said somewhere that the Thessalonians were perhaps the Apostle Paul's favorite church. He has more good things and less bad things to say about them than anybody else in the New Testament. And you can see why.

He hasn't gotten five verses into this letter before he is talking about what impressed him about them. And it isn't just that he is impressed. This is in the sight of our God and Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's what really counts. Well, we'll pick up here in the end of this first paragraph in Thessalonians chapter one next time. Father, thank you for the truth of your word and the power that it has to transform us and to motivate us, to change us within, to renew us and to strengthen us with might to thoroughly equip us for every good work.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will imbue us with a sense of urgency and a sense of the importance of laying hold of these things and living them out day by day, hour by hour in the time that remains to us in this life. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.