

## Faith, Hope and Love Thessalonians 1:2-7

**We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. [NIV]**

With these words, the Apostle Paul commends the Thessalonian Christians for the authenticity and example of their identity in Christ. He speaks of them as a people hallmarked by faith, hope and love, and cites as the evidence of these qualities, their work, labour and endurance. As we encounter these words, what do we imagine Paul to have observed within these believers that led him to such a conclusion?

With the hindsight of many centuries of Church life, it is easy to assume that the endeavours of which Paul spoke were pursued within the activities and programmes of a local congregation. This may indeed have been true, but is this the only context in which these principles can apply?

The letter makes clear that the circumstances in which the Thessalonians lived out their faith were by no means easy; their situation is described as “in the midst of severe suffering”. They were clearly a church that engaged with and were impacted by the community of which they were a part. Many Christian believers find their workplace the most difficult of all contexts to express their faith identity, so might resonate with the struggles encountered by these early believers. It is tempting in such circumstances to “hide our light under a bushel”, often not so much because we are ashamed of our faith, but there simply seems no way of connecting it with the everyday world of work.

But the qualities of hard work and endurance are highly valued by almost any employer, and Paul makes a clear connection between our capacity for this, and the nature of our belief and relationship with Christ. Faith keeps us going when others might be tempted to give in; love inspires us to give more of ourselves to the task than might normally be expected, and that sense of being part of a greater and higher purpose enables us to endure the struggles and frustrations of the immediate.

It may not be easy to perceive of how we can make our faith known in the workplace, particularly when it seems to be a hostile and difficult environment. But these words offer a fresh perspective on this - as we re-affirm our faith, love and hope in Christ, Paul observes that it affects the way that we go about the tasks before us. Our work itself becomes the evidence of our living relationship with Him; we become an example that is worthy to be followed, a convincing proclamation of the Gospel that is not confined to words alone.

So as you engage in your work today, do so with a renewed sense of who you are in Christ and an openness to the power of the Holy Spirit. As you do, even in the toughest of circumstances - trust your actions to speak louder than words.

### **Living Christ,**

**Fix my eyes anew on Your unchanging nature,  
And kindle within me the faith that I need for this day;  
Remind me again of Calvary's immeasurable sacrifice,  
That knowing I am loved, I might better love others this day;  
Inspire me afresh with the eternal promise of Your Kingdom,  
That assured of its hope I might endure the struggles of this day,  
So that eyes fixed on me,  
Will encounter Your presence in all that I do. AMEN**