

Faith, Hope, and Love

Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians: “remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ...” (1 Thessalonians 1:3). Let’s examine this trinity of Christian virtues: faith, hope, and love.

A “work of faith” is obedient faith. It is a faith that says, “I believe and I am going to get up today and obey.” It is a work that comes from an obedient faith (Galatians 5:6). Do you have this “work of faith”?

A “labor of love” is a love demonstrated by labor. It is a love that says, “I love the Lord and I’m going to show it today by laboring for him.” It is a love that keeps the commandments (John 14:15), a love that serves (Galatians 5:13), and a love that grows in action (1 Thessalonians 4:9-11). Do you have this “labor of love”?

A “patience of hope” is a hope that endures. It is a hope that says “I will press on toward heaven and never quit or fail”. It is a hope based upon scripture and a hope that is firm and endures to the end (Hebrews 6:17-20). Do you have this “patience of hope”?

This triad of virtues, faith, hope, and love, are abiding virtues (1 Corinthians 13:13), influential virtues (Colossians 1:4-5), and protecting virtues (1 Thessalonians 5:8). Will you be remembered for your faith, hope, and love? - *Chris Reeves*

Sentence Sermons

- Circumstances may be beyond our control, but our conduct is always within our control.
- Many local churches are full of willing people; some who are willing to work and the rest who are willing to let them.
- Let God direct your life, he knows the way you should go.
- The yoke of Christ will never fit on a stiff neck.

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Assembly Times
Sunday: 9:30 am, 10:30 am, 6 pm
Wednesday: 7 pm

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

Is It Right to Condemn Wrong?

When you read the book of Psalms you will run into some interesting reading, some of which may even be offensive to the modern ear. For example, the imprecatory psalms are a group of psalms where the psalmist wishes that God would punish his enemies. In these psalms, the psalmist uses very strong and negative language to condemn those who are doing him wrong. So, we raise the question, “Is it right to condemn wrong?”

The word “imprecatory” means “to invoke or call down evil or a curse upon a person, usually an enemy.” Many critics of the Bible who question the divine inspiration of the Bible insist that these imprecatory psalms are proof of human origin. These critics say that imprecatory psalms are hateful, vindictive, and manifest an unchristian spirit. They say that such psalms are ancient forms of “hate speech”, and therefore, are unworthy of our time and attention.

The following eighteen psalms are classified as imprecatory psalms: Psalm 5, 7, 10, 28, 31, 35, 40, 55, 58, 59, 69, 70, 71, 79, 109, 137, 139, 140. The titles of these psalms often speak of the destruction of an enemy. In the body of these psalms, you can usually find four elements present: 1) a statement of the enemy and the harm that he is causing; 2) a statement of the psalmist’s condition and how he is hurting; 3) a harsh cry from the psalmist for punishment to be inflicted by God; and, 4) a

statement about the Lord who is called upon to save the psalmist and punish the enemy.

Here is an example of an imprecatory psalm:

Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me; Fight against those who fight against me. Take hold of buckler and shield And rise up for my help. Draw also the spear and the battle-axe to meet those who pursue me; Say to my soul, “I am your salvation.” Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life; Let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me. Let them be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the Lord driving them on (Psalm 35:1-5, NASV).

Now, what can we learn from these imprecatory psalms about sin, about God, and about punishment? First, we are reminded from the psalmist about the seriousness of sin. Sin is really bad! We live in a world where many fail to realize just how heinous and ugly sin really is. Today, if anyone speaks against sin, they are considered “mean-spirited”, “intolerant”, and “judgmental”. They are said to be using “hate speech”.

Friends, we must have a proper approach toward sin. The Apostle Paul said to “abhor what is evil” (Romans 12:9). The psalmist said to “hate every false way” (Psalm 119:104). Like Phinehas, we need to try to eradicate sin around us and be zealous for God (Numbers 25:11-13).

Second, we are reminded from the psalm-

ist about the holiness of God. God is perfectly just and righteous, and as such, he has a holy hatred of all that is evil (Proverbs 6:16). God’s justice, righteousness, and holiness provides forgiveness when mans sins and punishment when man refuses his forgiveness.

Third, we are reminded from the psalmist about punishment from God. Punishment (retribution) is right, good, and godly. It is not evil (mean, cruel, or barbaric). Law, made by God or by man, without punishment or penalty would be a complete farce. Due punishment for law-breaking, in any civilized society, is to be expected (Deuteronomy 25:2; Psalm 89:30-32; Acts 25:11; 1 Peter 2:20). God is no different. He punishes the evil-doer. God also uses civil government to take vengeance upon the evil-doer (Leviticus 20:9, 13, 27; Romans 13:4).

Many people today in our modern, “enlightened” society believe that we should excuse the evil-doer, so they have trouble with these imprecatory psalms. But, the wicked are not to be justified or bargained with (Exodus 23:7; Numbers 35:31).

Yes, it is right to condemn wrong! The imprecatory psalms were not spoken out of petty malice or vindictiveness. They were spoken out of pure, unselfish zeal to defend God’s righteousness against all unrighteousness. - *Chris Reeves*