

## *What Motivates Us?*

Being active is an integral and important part of life. Some of the things that we do are enjoyable others are not. Some things we feel are mandatory others are optional. Some things are easy to do others are difficult. Then there are those tasks that seem to require every drop of endurance, every ounce of ability and a super level of commitment. How frequently have we heard “When the going gets tough the tough get going.”

But why do we do the things we do? People, circumstances, ideas, values, feelings and numerous other influences push us along. These influences often shape what we begin and determine what we achieve. Therefore, looking at what motivates us could be a worthwhile endeavor.

It is within this context that I find the Biblical text 1Thess 1: 3 (NIV) very instructive. In it the Apostle Paul tells the Thessalonians that he always remembers

*“ ... your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ”.*

Three principal motivators are identified: **Faith**, **Love** and **Hope**. Of particular interest to me is the apparent progression in Paul’s statement. This leads me to dwell for a while on the thought that: work is produced by our fundamental belief system, our extra service is best prompted by love, and when all seems lost genuine hope takes us along.

### **Work produced by Faith**

What we do, how we conduct ourselves and our affairs are set within the background of what we believe. Over the recent past there has been repeated evidence of how faith (a belief system) can produce very striking effects. Some inspired by their faith inflict pain; others inspired by their faith provide relief for the suffering. It is therefore necessary that we carefully and constantly examine what we believe.

From the Christian perspective, after man was created he was commissioned to work:

*“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it”, Genesis 2: 15 (NIV).*

Should we see work therefore as a divine duty? We need to keep in mind that God is deeply interested in what we are doing. We should ask God to put us in a “garden” to work it and take care of it, and with His help we make it beautiful.

*“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him”, Colossians 3: 17 (NIV).*

As our faith is tapped, stirred we produce more work: Work that is positive and noble. This association is made clearly by James:

*“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? ... faith ... if it is not accompanied by action is dead. ... I will show you my faith by my deeds.” James 2: 14-18 (NIV).*

Do we believe *“do to others as you would have them do to you”*, Luke 6: 31 (NIV)? Do we believe *“love your neighbor as yourself”*, Mark 12: 31 (NIV)? If we have faith we will have deeds that match that faith.

Much of our faith-produced work should involve prayer:

*“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but ... against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Ephesians 6: 12 (NIV).*

And for this, thank God for the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1: 8).

### **Labor prompted by Love**

Sometimes the tasks are more challenging and the assignments so much more demanding. The work involved can better be described as labor, and we then need to dig deeper for the motivation. Natural disasters in populated areas present occasions for labor and toil. There is demand for long hours of search, rescue and restoration operations under some of the most severe, treacherous and heart-wrenching conditions.

Such times of labor and toil demand that faith be wrapped in love. Love for God, love for our family and relatives, love for our neighbors, love for our colleagues and peers, love for ourselves, indeed love for all.

It is a love that prompts us to go beyond the call of duty. A love that births great acts of courage, of mercy and of sacrifice. In 2 Corinthians 11: 23-29 (NIV), the Apostle Paul outlines how love-enriched faith prompted him to labor and toil even while being battered and persecuted (flogged, stoned, shipwrecked)

*“... I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled ... Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?”*

When work turns to labor and toil we should be prompted by love.

### **Endurance inspired by Hope**

Sometimes everything seems so overwhelming. In those times faith tells us we should continue, love tells us we should give it all we have. But it seems meaningless, fruitless. In those times there has to be hope. Hope that there'll be victory, that there'll be relief, that there'll be a dawn after the darkness.

For the Christian there is hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. We have a leader who is in control, who knows what he is doing, and who has our best interest at heart.

*“But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain”, 1 Corinthians 15: 57-58 (NIV).*

This is our hope. Many through the ages have persevered, endured and triumphed because of this hope. A hope built on faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ; a hope enriched by God's love and expressed through that same love, which we now have for God and our fellow man.

What motivates us? What Faith is it? Is there Love? Is it Hope in our Lord Jesus Christ?