

The Cost of Investing in Others – Part One

"...remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."
1 Thessalonians 1:3

"Work" is that which God does in the believer, as well as what the believer does. "For it is God who works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure."¹ "Labor" has to do with costly toil. One works because this is his lot in life, and it is common to all people everywhere; it is the divine plan for human life. All labor in the context of this verse, however, is sacrificial in that it is costly "love." When we see in the lives of others the work of God, manifested in the focus of their lives, it evokes our love and respect. This results in a sacred bond by which we are bound to each other in a special way. The persecution and tribulation through which the church went in no way blunted the sacrificial love they showed to each other.

The stress in the word "labor" is on the cost, exertion, fatigue, and exhaustion that it entails. "Work" may be pleasant and stimulating, but "labor" implies toil that is strenuous and sweat-producing. All people know through personal experience that "love" requires "labor," for some people are hard to love. What in life is more worthy of our love than God? We manifest our love for Him by loving others – even those who consider us their enemies.

"Steadfast/patient hope" is essential in persevering in "work," and especially in the "labor of love." Without "hope" you become "weary in well-doing" and lose motivation to continue. Without "hope" your "labor of love" will remain within the parameters of your comfort level. The promise of future gain motivates you to "steadfast/patient hope." As Paul writes in **Romans 8:24-25**: "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

¹ Philippians 2:13