

Revival Which Must Be Recovered

by Alan Redpath

The sermon emphasizes the importance of revival and living a three-dimensional Christian life with faith, hope, and love, and challenges listeners to examine their faith, love, and hope and make sure they are working, laboring, and enduring in their lives.

Duration: 53:43

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 1:2

Topics: "Revival", "Faith in Action"

Description

Alan Redpath emphasizes the urgent need for revival within the church, drawing from the example of the Thessalonian church, which became a model of faith, love, and hope amidst adversity. He highlights the importance of turning from idols to serve the living God and the necessity of bearing the marks of the cross in our lives as a testament to our faith. Redpath challenges believers to reflect on their own faith, love, and hope, urging them to live a life that demonstrates the reality of Christ's power and presence. He calls for a revival that transforms not just the church but also the world, reminding us that our methods may change, but our message remains the same. Ultimately, he encourages a deep, personal relationship with Christ that leads to a life of service and witness.

Transcript

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, and to the Church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ, grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father, knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance.

As you know what manner of men you were among you, we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost, so that you were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place.

Your faith to God's word is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves show unto us, show of us, what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead,

even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. Let us bow before him in prayer, again praying together in your heart with me on behalf of us all.

Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. Speak just now some message to meet my need, which thou only dost know. Speak now through thy holy word, and make me see some wonderful truth thou hast to show to me.

For Jesus' sake, amen. As we continue considering the vital priority task of the Christian, the communication of our faith in the context of the 1960s, we have thought, first of all, about the relationship which has to be restored. The lordship of Christ in all of our lives.

The responsibility that we must realize. He has chosen us that we might be light, reflectors of light, in this world in which we live. Now, we approach the same subject from another angle this morning.

The revival which must be recovered. The revival which must be recovered. And our key text from the chapter which we read together is verse 7. So that ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

I don't need to tell a group of people like this that these are days of unprecedented challenge for us all as Christians, caused mainly, partly at least, by the population explosion in the world. The net increase in the world population is at least 75 million a year. The population has trebled in the last century and is now well over three billion, three and a half billion people.

Also, the challenge of the revival of non-Christian religions. Islam and Mormonism are having a millennium these days, accompanied by a resurgence, tremendous upsurge of the cults such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Moral Rearmament, all of them on the move. Accompanied with all this, there's the challenge of secularism and communism, a philosophy of life which wasn't heard of 60 years ago and now has at least one-third of the world's population under its control and a great influence on the remaining two-thirds.

But the Church has never chosen the climate in which it should work. God chooses the climate. It's for us so to be in tune with heaven that we're prepared to alter our strategy to suit the challenge of the day.

Our message is unchanging, but our method is different. It's hopeless once the Church uses the motto, as it was in the beginning, is now, ever shall be. The methods must change as the days go by.

And these are days of tremendous change on the mission field. No longer is missionary work, missionary society centered, it is local church centered. No longer is the missionary a leader, he's a helper, training the nationals into Christian leadership.

We hear a tremendous lot today about mission fields and doors being closed. I have been in a great number of mission fields in the last two years and that is just not true. Certainly doors are closing to missionaries, the type of missionary to which we've become used.

But there's scarcely a country in the world which is not wide open to people who are prepared to go and never come back. We had a conference on world missions in Moody Church a few years ago when about 700 or 800 missionary leaders from this land and missionary statesmen were met together under the auspices of IFMA. One session was held on the subject of Europe and at the end of the session when several hundred people were present, the people leading it came up with the resolution that immediately Europe needs 700 more missionaries.

Listening to that session but not participating in it was Dr. Rene Pasch who is president of the Emmaus Bible School in Switzerland. He was to speak at the following session and when he stood up to speak I shall never forget how he began his message. He said, I have listened with interest to your resolution regarding Europe.

Allow me to say as a Swiss national that we do not want one missionary in Europe. We want people who are prepared to come and live and die with us. That's the kind of missionary that's needed today.

To that kind of person every door of every nation is wide open. I know personally families in China and Russia today in government positions who are there to serve the nation but are there primarily as Christians. Scarcely a door closed, wide open to people who have the know-how and various professions but are there to serve the Lord, are prepared never to come back.

Days of challenge, days of change and perhaps worst of all days of chastening for the church. Maybe that's because we carry the needless divisions of western culture and western Christianity into eastern and new cultures. What a pity we can't love each other.

What a pity we must do this kind of thing and project theological differences on minor issues which have no significance on the mission field and cause division, endless division. I remember dear old Vance Havener from North Carolina. I wish I could imitate his accent.

I remember him standing up at Moody Church and saying, when the tide is out every little shrimp has to have its own puddle. Oh, but he said when the tide comes in and when the tide is out every little shrimp has its own puddle. Marked, independent, separated, we must have our own work.

Oh, that God would send in the tide. A national leader in India last November said to me, we cannot reach 500 million people in this country except the Indian church experiences revival. We can't reach 50 million people in Britain.

We can't reach 200 million people in the United States unless the church in Britain and the church in America has revival. And that brings me right away to consider with you this morning an example of a New Testament church living in revival. He became examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

You remember the founding of the church at Thessalonica? Act 17 has the story of it. The Aetuciples were accused of turning the world upside down there. There dwelt in Thessalonica, to use the quaint language of the authorized version, certain lewd fellows of the baser sort.

Living letters paraphrase translates it more happily, I think. Certain worthless loafers are interested that they existed in the first century as well as the twentieth. They were there, Thessalonica had its share of them, and the church there started amidst bitter opposition.

Paul and the others with him had to flee for their lives. It was in this climate that this church was formed and really became a church that was an example, a pattern to all New Testament believers. He were an example to all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia, because there sounded out from them the word of the Lord.

In every place their faith to God was spread abroad. Others needn't to speak anything. This church was on the ball.

Every member of it was propagating what it believed. It was living in revival. I would like to put a window into this text, if I may, that to me at least has shed a flood of light upon how all this happened and made me cry out for it to God in my own heart.

Just look with me a minute in John chapter 20, the twentieth chapter of John's gospel. The first Easter morning, in verse 19, when the same day at evening, the first day of the week, the doors were shut, the disciples were together, uncertain and afraid. And Jesus stood in the midst of them and said, Peace be unto you.

And he showed them his hands and his side. Verse 24. But Thomas, one of those disciples, wasn't with them.

He was the doubter, the skeptic. The church was falling apart already, and he was among those who had drifted off. Then the other disciples said unto him, when he came into the room when Jesus had left, we have seen the Lord.

And he said, except I shall see in his hands a print of the Lord. And he said, I will not believe. And he said, I will not believe.

And he said, I will not believe. I can hear him saying it. And after eight days, the disciples were together again.

And Thomas was with them this time. And then Jesus came and doors being shut and stood in the midst and said, Peace be unto you. Then he spoke to Thomas personally and said, Thomas, Thomas, reach here your finger, behold my hand.

Reach hither your hand and put it in my side, and don't be faithless but believing.' And Thomas answered, My Lord and my God, I don't believe, I don't know, but I don't believe he ever did put his finger into his hand and thrust his finger into his side. He saw them. He saw the nail prints.

He saw the wounds of Jesus. That was enough, and it brought him in full commitment and full surrender to the feet of Christ, and from that moment onwards it was, My Lord and my God. And Thomas was one of those who was in the upper room praying for ten days, one of those who at Pentecost was filled with the Holy Ghost.

My Lord and my God. But what that got to do with 1 Thessalonians 1, 7, just everything, everything. For Thomas said, Except I see in his hand the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, I will not believe.

The print of the nails, and the word that is translated in verse 7 of chapter 1 in Thessalonians 1, ye were examples, that's exactly the same word, the print of the nails. What the print of the nails were to Thomas, these Thessalonical Christians were to the world. They had upon them the marks of Calvary.

They were branded men. They bore upon them the marks of the cross. And this twentieth century civilization which has gone stark staring mad on almost every issue, has every right to look at us and say, Except I see the marks of the cross upon you, I won't believe you.

I'm not interested in your doctrine. I'm not interested in what you say about life. I'm not interested in your Christian faith.

I'm interested in you. Do you bear the examination of reality? Are there the marks of the cross about you? Is there anything about you that reminds me that Jesus died and rose again, and is able to save to the uttermost? Except I see the marks of the cross, the print of the nail, I will not believe. And this is the kind of revival that we need in our church today.

This is the kind of thing that I need in my life every moment of every day. It's the kind of thing that you need, my friend, this morning, the print of the nails upon you, the marks of Calvary. But how did they get it? How did they come? I have no doubt about that, because I turn to the third verse of this chapter and I read this, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, your labor of love, and your patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

You notice three great words of Christian experience, faith, hope, and love ring around in your Bible. These Thessalonian Christians were living a three-dimensional Christian life. Faith, that's depth.

Love, that's breadth. Hope, that's length. They'd faith, they'd hope, they'd love.

I know a lot of people who have got a lot of faith. They're sound, sound asleep, many of them, but they're sound. They believe everything that they ought to believe.

They dot their I's and cross their T's correctly, but you touch them, it's like touching an icebox. There's no love. They're as hard as nails.

I know a lot of other people who have a lot of love, who say, well, you know, it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere, not realizing that we can be sincere and sincerely wrong, but they've no faith. And lots and lots of people today who have no hope, but when you meet a Christian who's got faith and hope and love, you really meet somebody. Strange that this world, this generation, doesn't produce more of them.

Perhaps we don't give God time. I think that's it. We're too busy, too much of a hurry.

I remember meeting a generation ago, a year ago, years ago now, a man like this. Have you ever heard of Bishop Taylor Smith? You may have read some of his books. He was a bishop in the Anglican Church.

I only met him on one occasion. We had a Bible Day in London, a day of exhibition of Bibles and Bible messages and so on, and I remember on this day I was in charge of a bookstall. It was when I had just started in Christian work and I was looking after this bookstall and I thought it was a very important job, but I'd been looking after it for about three hours and nobody had been near it, when suddenly along the aisle of this enormous building there walked Bishop Taylor Smith.

I knew it was he because he carried his presents well in front of him. And he was dressed, of course, as a bishop ought to be. And when he came up to my bookstall, he stopped and he turned inside it and picked up a book.

And my heart missed a beat and I said to myself, how on earth do I speak to a bishop? I'd never met one to that point. And then just as I was thinking that out, he said to me, young man, that was true at the time, young man, what are you thinking about now? That's quite a question to be asked by a bishop. So I thought I'd better be honest and I said to him, sir, I was wondering why a bishop in the Anglican Church should be interested in reading a book called Questionable Amusements.

And I thought that was a good answer. But you know, he put that book down and he walked past me majestically. And with a little twinkle in his eye, he said to me, young man, that's a very questionable amusement on your part.

I never met him again, but I was conscious in those two minutes of having been in the presence of a man of God with a sanctified sense of humor. In parentheses, may I just say, I hope that your Christianity never robs you of your sense of humor. I hope it sanctifies it, but you need every bit of it.

But you know, it was said of Bishop Taylor Smith that anybody coming within a mile of him was in great danger of getting converted. And every morning at four o'clock, he would awaken and using his bed at his altar, he would say, Lord, your instructions for today, please. What are your orders today, Lord? He was a man of a tremendous brain, great theologian, brilliant, could outmatch anybody in our country.

But in his relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, he was just like a little child, so tender and intimate in his relationship with Jesus. My friend, that's how I want to grow old. That's how I trust that all our lives will mature into the simplicity of a relationship with Christ, which is just like that.

And it's the outcome of living a three-dimensional life which has faith and hope and love. Nothing complicated about it. The complicated person is the little man, I don't mean physically, but spiritually, who's lost the reality of Jesus in what he believes about him, in his doctrine.

But the big man, the man of stature, the man of spiritual maturity, is the man who's got a profound knowledge of an indwelling Christ as his life. And there's nothing between him and the Savior. But I notice this also in this verse.

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, your labor of love, your patience of hope, you see, they had a faith that worked, they had a love that labored, they had a hope that endured. How did their faith work? Well, just glance down with me to verse 9. How ye turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven? They turned to God from idols, their faith worked. They served the living and true God, their love labored.

They waited for his Son from heaven, their hope endured. Say, does your faith work? Does your love labor? Does your hope endure? Let me just look at these three things very quickly with you, because I believe that this is the revival that you need, that I need, that the Church needs today. Does your faith work? Has it turned you to God from idols? There are tremendous things happening in many different countries today.

Indonesia is an example, where not one but thousands of people are turning to find Christ as Lord. Same thing's happening in Brazil, same thing in Central America, same thing in parts of Africa, wonderful movings of the Spirit of God, but listen, it's one thing for a man to turn from idols of wood and stone to God, it's another thing for a Christian in this country turning from self to Jesus. Does your faith work? Has it brought self crashing to the ground? Has it replaced self with Christ? Does your faith really work? Has it turned you from idols to God? Let me ask you, no, I don't want to ask you this, but I want that the Spirit of God would ask you, tell me, what's your idol? I'll tell you.

It's what you think about when you're alone. It's what your thoughts turn to automatically when you're by yourself. It's the person or the thing that immediately you're by yourself, like the needle turns to the north, your thoughts revert to him, to her, to that.

What's your idol? Think about it. I repeat, it's one thing for a whole tribe to turn from idols of stone to God. It's another thing altogether for me to turn from the worship of myself to the worship of Christ.

Does your faith work? You see, God is always wanting to reduce you and me to a minimum in order that he may do in us and through us his maximum. He's always seeking to make us small that he might be great. Some years ago at Moody Church, I had a long-distance call from a man who was chairman of the board of elders of a particular church some distance away, and he was asking me, saying that there was need of a pastor in his church, and they were wondering whether I knew anybody who might fill the pulpit.

So I mentioned several men whom I knew at that time were probably seeking a move and would consider it. We talked about it for a long time, we went on talking for quite a while. I didn't mind, it was his call, he was paying for it.

After about twenty-five minutes, he suddenly said to me, well, he said, thank you very much, that's very nice of you to tell me all that about these men, but none of them are big enough to fill our pulpit. I hope he didn't think I was rude, but I couldn't help saying to him, sir, are you quite sure you don't mean they're not small enough for your pulpit? Some of us get too big for God to use, get in God's way, too important, think too much of ourselves. And all the time, all the time, God is seeking to turn us from the idol of self to Jesus.

And, you know, your conversion didn't do it, did it? Oh, potentially it did, potentially it did, for at that moment you received Christ in your heart as your Lord, but experimentally it hasn't, for self still is in business, still trying very hard, still working at the Christian life. You see, my friend, God's moral demands don't change when I become a Christian, but it is no longer I who have to meet them. He who is the lawgiver on the throne in heaven is the law keeper in my heart.

Got it? He who gives the law from the throne keeps it in my life. He who gave the law himself keeps it. He who makes the demands meets them.

While all the time we're trying to do it, he can't do anything. When I struggle for victory, I'm heading for defeat. The trouble is that we're weak enough not to do the will of God, but we're not weak enough to get out of business altogether.

Only absolute disillusion, complete despair with myself will make it possible for God to move in and to do it all for me. Wouldn't you like to know what God expects of you in the Christian life? Well, I'll tell you. Quite something for a preacher to be able to tell an audience what God expects of every one of you.

But I can. I'm not clever, but I can. I'll tell you just exactly what God expects of you.

Do you want to know? Absolute failure. Complete, total failure. He regards us all as an absolute write-off.

All he wants is that I would be prepared to go to the cross and be branded and be crucified with Christ. Like Paul said, henceforth let no man trouble me. I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

I am crucified to the world and the world unto me. A man who's prepared to die, who's prepared for self to get out of business and for Christ to replace his idol. Their faith worked.

Does your faith work? Has it done that for you? Are you able to say with Paul, oh, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me? How many, many, many Christians begin the Christian life by trusting and go

on by trying. Begin by receiving the death of Christ for forgiveness for all my sins and then try, try desperately hard to overcome all my sins. Have I really understood that the cross has accomplished two things for me? First, in his death, he's forgiven me for what I do.

In his risen life, he saves me from what I am. Most of us have settled for a half salvation. We're glad to be saved from what we do, but we go on sinning.

Over and over again we say we won't do it, we'll try harder and work harder at it and we'll stop it and know that it'll never happen again, but it does. And our conversion hasn't made a scrap of difference except that in Christ there's no condemnation and all our sins, in the plural, have been forgiven. But I'm still mastered by the principle of S-I-N in capital letters.

Like the Apostle Paul who wrote as a Christian, with my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? Is there no way out? Can't I escape from it? Allow me to quote Dr. Graham Scroggie, who used to say that trouble with the church is that so many of us are on the right side of pardon, but the wrong side of power. The right side of forgiveness, but the wrong side of fellowship.

The right side of Easter, but the wrong side of Pentecost. We're out of Egypt, but we're not in the land. We sing some lovely hymns in our hymn books, and we'll go on singing them till our dying day, but you'll forgive me saying so.

They haven't any foundation in the scripture. Land me safe on Canaan's happy shore. What will you do in the swelling of Jordan, which all speak of Canaan as heaven? Canaan isn't heaven, at least I hope it isn't, for when I read my Bible I find the only difference in the experience of the people of God in Canaan was that in the wilderness it was battle and defeat.

In Canaan it was battle and victory. But in heaven there won't be any battle. Oh, we've only a few years here to get victory, we've all eternity to celebrate it, and what a tragedy if we get there and we've had a half salvation.

We've been saved from what we do, but we go on doing it simply because we've never entered into the experience of being delivered from what I am by the saving life of Christ in my heart. We play in Britain a game which, not surprisingly, Americans find somewhat hard to understand, and that is the game of cricket. It's a very exciting game because test matches are played between England and Australia, or England and the West Indies every now and again, and when a test match is played it lasts for five days, and it begins every day at 11 and stops at 1 for lunch, begins at quarter to and then stops at 3.30 for a cup of tea, and then starts at 4 and then stops at 6.30, and that goes on for five days.

It's very exciting. I remember when I was in Chicago a series of test matches were being played in London between England and Australia, and I was very, very anxious to know the results. Do you know I bought every Chicago newspaper and I couldn't find a word? And when you buy a Chicago newspaper, brother, you buy a library.

It was the Daily News and the Tribune, all the American, all the rest, and I had to stack, and I thumbed through every page and not a word. All they were interested in was somebody called the, you know, Cubs, Sox, or something. I can't remember now.

And I couldn't understand that, and they couldn't understand me, see? But a friend of mine in London knew that I would be interested, and he sent me a daily paper. It came by airmail, and I opened it with great excitement. And I knew where to look for the cricket news, right on the front page.

What Harold Wilson and company were doing didn't matter in a test match. And right on the front page, what do you think I read? In great big capital letters, England facing defeat. Oh, that was a sad day for me.

I went into Moody Church office and nobody cared. And, uh, and, uh, I couldn't get home. Not that if I could, I could have done anything about it except to weep with those who wept.

But two days later, another paper arrived, and I opened it with a sense of foreboding. But what do you think I saw this time? England in sight of victory. And in two days, the whole situation had been transformed.

Listen. Are you... You listening to me? Are you facing defeat? Or are you in sight of victory? And the prayer of my heart is that this week will not pass before you've entered in to the principle not only of forgiveness for what you do, but into the principle of deliverance from what you are. Because upon you, you're prepared to have the marks of the cross.

Does your faith work? Does your love labor? Are you serving the living God? Let's be very down to earth about this and very simple. I've got a quick eye to discern when people are in love. Uh, it isn't only the dreamy look they have, but it's the obvious desire to be in each other's company.

The quick departure from a church service after the benediction as quick as possible. Holding hands and then away from the crowd alone. The sheer delight of intimacy.

That's love. The hallmark of love is intimacy. You love Jesus? Do you? Say.

How much time are you alone with him? Oh, I know, it's all very well for me to talk to a bunch of students who are under pressure constantly with study. And there's no one more conscious of the fact that I myself have many times lost this battle in my Christian work. But I come back again to the simple question.

If I love Jesus, I want to be with him. Does your love labor? Have you been with him today and told him that you love him? Opened your heart to him, been open with him? Just told him everything? Is he real to you like that? Does your love really labor? Do you remember when the Apostle Paul was converted on the road to Damascus? And the Lord sent an unknown disciple called Ananias and said to him, Ananias, go into Damascus and give Paul back his sight. Ananias, he protested and said, Lord, I can't do that.

He's been an enemy of the church. He's persecuted every Christian, killed all he can. I dare not do it.

Ananias said, Jesus, don't worry about him. Don't worry. For Ananias, behold, he prayed.

And the mark of the man's conversion was that he was down on his knees. That was the authentic mark in heaven. Somehow the angels seemed to pull their wings as they saw a self-righteous Pharisee down on his knees.

Behold, he prayed. And I've often thought along the corridor of my memory in the past and wondered what heaven would say. Behold, he preaches.

Behold, he works. Behold, he serves. Behold, he sings.

Behold, he teaches. Oh, God. Behold.

I have so broken his heart and I have so put him in a state of absolute self-despair. Behold, he prayed. Does he love labor? I was out in Congo last year.

Went into a mission station. Saw a lady. Oh, she must be 75, I would think, translating the scriptures into the languages of the people.

I went up to talk with her and I said to her, say, when are you getting your next furlough? She said, in heaven. In heaven. I went to Thailand with the OMF for a field conference.

The field conference was a girl. She was about 40 years of age. She was being pushed round in a wheelchair.

She was crippled with polio. I was very interested in her because I saw the radiance in her face and the look in her eye. I asked Dr. Sanders, the director of OMF, what was the story.

Oh, he said, on her first term of service, about 15 years ago, she was hit with polio and had to be invalided home, but she wouldn't stay. Nothing would keep her home. So we accepted her back.

And now she's in our biggest hospital in Thailand, at Maram. She's doing secretarial work, pushed around in a wheelchair all the time, and she's absolutely radiant. Does your love labor? How much does it cost you to be a Christian? I say this because I'm not preaching at you, I just want to be right alongside you, but I think into the future of every one of our lives, and I know that God's wanting to do one thing, and that's brand us with the cross, make the authentic marks of a disciple upon us and give us the revival that we need upon a life crucified with Christ.

The Holy Spirit comes in all his fullness and all his power to meet every demand that God will ever make upon us, and we enter into the luxury of Christian living, not the drudgery of trying and struggle, but the sheer luxury of proving the sufficiency of God in every situation. But before God brings you and I there, he puts us into something. And I just wonder as I look out upon a thousand people here ten years ahead, over how many of you will heaven to be able to rejoice and say, there's a man, there's a girl that I can trust anywhere because wherever they are, they seek only my glory.

I know there are crucified men, crucified girls that don't care about anything except the will of God, and they're only there serving me because it costs them something. And I wonder over how many heaven will have to weep and say there's another fellow girl. He went to Moody Bible Institute, she did, ten years ago to get trained into Christian work.

She lost out along the way. She became involved in boyfriends and girlfriends, sex, other interests. She lost out.

And now I've had to put her on the shelf. Can't use her. Useless.

God forbid. I remember a minister saying to me some years ago, I learned the sin which has ruined my life in the ministry when I was a boy of seven. Jesus has saved you from what you do.

Has he saved you and delivered you from what you are? And because of that, because he has done that, and you have the thrill of his life in your heart today, and there's a glow of reality of heaven, why you'll have labor? I work, I labor, said the apostle, according to the power of him who works in me mightily. It

isn't my own inadequacy, but now it's all the sufficiency of Christ, and in his strength and his power, I labor for him. Just one more word.

Does your hope endure? They waited for his son from heaven. How do you define hope? I'll define it this way. Expectation plus desire.

You may desire to get A grades in all your subjects, but you may not expect it. You may expect to be fired from the institute, but you don't desire it. But when you link expectation with desire, that's hope.

Their hope endured. They waited for his son from heaven. And that isn't a daydream, but it's something that puts urgency, burden, concern, love in our hearts.

Don't any of you come up to me and ask me what I think is the Lord's program for his return? Am I post-trib, mid-trib, or pre-trib? I know what I am. But I'm not going to allow that issue to separate me from other believers. A friend of mine who was pastor in a church in Chicago went away for six months to the mission field alone, without his wife.

When he came home, the church board decided they'd put on a banquet for him at the airport, take his wife, and they'd have a celebration. When they went out to O'Hare Field, it was a foggy night, and all the planes were hours late, and they went round to every plane on which they thought he might come in. But he wasn't on any of them.

He looked at every timetable, nothing doing. No schedule seemed to be right. And an hour went by, fussing round, looking at timetables, until, until one of them said, I think he'll be on this one.

Let's all go to this gate. And then they couldn't find his wife. She disappeared.

Oh, they thought all the party has fallen apart. What's the use of it without her? So they went to the gate and said, well, we'll find her later. And when they went to the gate, what do you think they found? They found the minister's wife in the arms of her husband.

She'd been looking for a person. They'd been watching a timetable. They waited for his son from heaven.

Any day, even today, he may come, but perhaps not for a long time. But they waited with expectation and desire, knowing one day for all of us there's a moment coming. And oh, what a moment it'll be when I stand alone before him and give an account to him of the things done in the body.

What a humiliation on that day to find there are no scars, no marks of the cross, no love that's labored. I'm saved, but by the skin of my teeth. What a thrill to hear him say, well done, good and faithful servant.

Does your faith really work? Does your love labor? Does your hope endure? I close with this illustration. During the war, last World War, when Britain was absolutely alone and the Battle of Britain was being fought, down in southeast England, when Britain was enduring terrific air raids every night, there was a little air base, quite a big one actually, but comparatively small, judged by this country, down in the southeast coast. And if you'd gone there this particular evening, you would have seen six pilots, fighter pilots, and six gunners, and six planes.

All that was left of a whole squadron. They were sitting in a mess room, drinking coffee, smoking. It was nighttime.

They hadn't had their clothes off for two weeks. They were unshaven, dirty. Many of them were bleeding and bandaged with wounds they had had.

And as they sipped their coffee, there came a message from headquarters in London. Enemy approaching over the channel. Estimated strength 500.

And immediately they were on their feet. They'd left their coffee and cigarettes. One of them dashed to a radio communication and just said, Message received and understood.

And in two minutes they were up in the air to fight overwhelming odds. Six against 500. Has the message been received and understood this morning? Brandon, bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Therefore upon my life there's come all the fullness of his power. Therefore forevermore my love will labor. And I'll wait for that day when I shall see his lovely face.

One bright golden morning. And it will be worth it all when we see him. Shall we pray? Dear Lord, we ask thee that thou wilt make us, all of us, who are just nonentities, nobodies.

Make us willing, ready for anything. Willing that our lives may be at thy disposal now and always without reservation. That upon them there may be the marks of the cross.

That the Christian life to us may not be a struggle and a battle and a fight. To do in our own strength what we can only fail in doing. That may be a life of faith in which we draw moment by moment from thee in us.

To fight the battle through us for thy glory. Lord, may thy Holy Spirit write thy word deeply upon our hearts. And may the grace of God and the love of the Lord Jesus and the fellowship and power of the Holy Spirit be with us now and until he come.

Amen.

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