

# Faith Working by Love

by Thomas Reade

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith working by love, and how this faith is the instrument by which the sinner apprehends the righteousness of Christ.*

**Scripture:** Luke 7:44, Romans 5:3, 1 Corinthians 13:4, Galatians 5:6, Philippians 4:8, Colossians 3:12, 2 Peter 1:5, 1 John 4:7

**Topics:** "Faith And Works", "Christian Sanctification"

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## Description

Thomas Reade preaches on the importance of faith working through love, emphasizing that true righteousness comes through Christ alone, not by works. He highlights that while good works do not merit salvation, they are evidence of a transformed heart and play a crucial role in glorifying God and preparing believers for heavenly service. Reade urges believers to focus on cultivating a faith that is active in love, as demonstrated by the fruits of the Spirit and the beatitudes in Matthew 5, promoting a life of moral excellence and genuine love for others.

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## Transcript

### 16. FAITH WORKING BY LOVE

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." Galatians 5:6

When Adam fell, all his posterity fell in him. The Law being holy, just, and good, condemned the fallen race of Adam, for all that the Law can do is to convince and to condemn; but, through the righteousness of the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinner is again received into the favor of God, and accounted righteous in his sight. The righteousness of Christ is the only meritorious cause of a sinner's justification in the sight of God. In this righteousness he stands complete. In this righteousness, he claims a title to the skies. In this righteousness, he answers all the demands of the Law, silences all the accusations of Satan, and is admitted, after death, into the inheritance of the saints in light. Faith is the instrument by which the sinner apprehends this righteousness of Christ, and by means of which it is imputed to him. But faith is the gift of God, wrought in the heart of the sinner through the power of the Holy Spirit. All boasting is therefore forever excluded, since he that glories, must glory in the Lord.

As Christ trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath alone, when he stood in the place of sinners, so will he never allow sinners to share with him in the glory of their salvation. He will not give that honor to another

which is due to himself alone. Works, however excellent in their proper place, must never dare to enter into the holy of holies, where none but our Great High Priest can enter. "By his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Although the sinner is accounted righteous before God, through faith in the perfect righteousness of his dear Son, without his works or deserving, yet, faith, being the operation of the Holy Spirit, necessarily produces the fruits of holiness. Here, then, good works assume their proper place and office. Works, as well as faith, can claim no merit in the act of a sinner's justification before God; that being solely through the obedience of Christ; yet do they adorn our Christian profession, prove the reality of our faith, manifest its divine origin, evidence our being in a state of grace, glorify God in the sight of men, silence the aspersions of self-righteous opposers to the truth, and make us fit for the enjoyment and service of God in heaven.

Blessed Jesus! may I ever view you in this delightful character as- the Lord My Righteousness; then shall I stand with boldness in that day when all your enemies shall be covered with confusion. While I look to you as my only justifying righteousness, O grant that my faith may never cease to work by love. Let every day be employed in your service, that my hope, through faith in your blood, may be unclouded.

"Faith, which works by love," is the concise, but comprehensive declaration of Paul, when describing the nature of saving faith by its attendant love. No words can add to its preciousness. We may dwell upon it, and endeavor to amplify it by human reasoning, just as a small piece of gold when beaten, may be made to cover a wider surface, but we too often destroy its strength and beauty. "The word of God is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Faith in Jesus Christ begets love in the soul; the love of God shed abroad in the heart produces good works; and by works is faith made perfect. Thus the graces of the Spirit, like a chain whose links embrace and strengthen each other, are beautifully combined in the formation of the Christian character. The following passages, so descriptive of the experience of the true believer, show the beauty of Christian graces, and afford the richest matter for devout meditation. Oh! that we may read our characters in these precious lines-

"God blesses those who realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are gentle and lowly, for the whole earth will belong to them. God blesses those who are hungry and thirsty for justice, for they will receive it in full. God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. God blesses those who are persecuted because they live for God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs." Matthew 5:3-10

"We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us--they help us learn to endure. And endurance develops strength of character in us, and character strengthens our confident expectation of salvation. And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love." Romans 5:3-5

"Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always

hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. Love will last forever, but prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will all disappear." 1 Cor. 13:4-8

"And now, dear friends, let me say one more thing as I close this letter. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise." Philip. 4:8

"Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others." Col. 3:12-13

"So make every effort to apply the benefits of these promises to your life. Then your faith will produce a life of moral excellence. A life of moral excellence leads to knowing God better. Knowing God leads to self-control. Self-control leads to patient endurance, and patient endurance leads to godliness. Godliness leads to love for other Christians, and finally you will grow to have genuine love for everyone. The more you grow like this, the more you will become productive and useful in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who fail to develop these virtues are blind or, at least, very shortsighted. They have already forgotten that God has cleansed them from their old life of sin. So, dear friends, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Doing this, you will never stumble or fall away. And God will open wide the gates of heaven for you to enter into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:5-11

"Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is born of God and knows God." 1 John 4:7

O! what a happy world would this be, did all, who profess and call themselves Christians, live under the happy influence of these gospel precepts. Then men would beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and learn war no more, when the knowledge of the Lord, thus manifested by its fruits, should cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.

There is a faith which God abhors; "The devils believe, and tremble." But, Satan cannot love. "Simon himself believed;" but Peter said to him, "I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." There is a faith which God approves- "the faith of God's elect," which is according to godliness; a faith which purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and works by love. This loving faith was displayed in all its subduing power, when Jesus dined at the house of Simon the Pharisee. While a brokenhearted penitent was manifesting by her actions her love to the Savior, then Jesus turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You didn't give me a kiss of greeting, but she has kissed my feet again and again from the time I first came in. You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume. I tell you, her sins--and they are many--have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love." Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven." The men at the table said among themselves, "Who does this man think he is, going around forgiving sins?" And Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Luke 7:44-50

Many are superstitiously attached to outward ceremonies; many, also, are as violently opposed to them. Both may be equally destitute of that faith which works by love. If bitter envyings and strife tear their

bosoms, and disfigure their profession; if anathemas are hurled against each other, with all the fury of the Roman Vatican; is this, I would ask, the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus? Is this the spirit which he imparts to his followers? Is this the faith which leads to heaven?

In a spirit of love we must declare to the blinded formalist, that Christ will not accept of the form, for the power of godliness, nor the bending of the knee for the prostration of the heart. Religion without love is a mere shadow; yes, a fatal delusion. It is a road of Satan's making; and many, alas! are walking in it. Man is naturally legal. The sinner labors to save himself. No privations are too great to be endured; no mortifications too painful to be suffered, if only the tormented conscience can find rest. But, the severer the penance, the severer is the sting. Peace flies from the wretched soul which seeks for reconciliation with God, by the endurance of self-inflicted austerities. Never can rest be found until the awakened sinner casts himself without reserve on the crucified Redeemer, looking for pardon only through the merit of his blood. Then ceremonies, when used, will be used only as a means to an end. He will not rest in them, as though they possessed some saving virtue to be obtained by the mere observance of them. Or, if he worships God by some simpler form, he will not ascribe any merit to himself, by adopting what he supposes to be a purer mode of worship, knowing that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," but "the keeping of the commandments of God."

The garment of Christ was a seamless vest, emblematical of what his church should be. But alas! in every age it has been rent by schisms and divisions. Paul deeply lamented over this evil in the Corinthian church; "Is Christ divided?" "You are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal and walk as men?" In this our day, the same rending of the Church proves the carnality of our hearts, and manifests the absence of that faith which works by love. Oh! when will Christians love as brethren! Tares alas cover the gospel field! We know what enemy has done this.

Blessed Jesus, in the midst of abounding iniquity, in the midst of prevailing errors, in the midst of schisms and divisions, heart-burnings and angry contentions, enable me to embrace your truth as revealed in your word; to worship you in spirit and in truth; to walk in truth, and to follow You with a single eye, who are the Way, the Truth, and the Life. While drawing near to you in the great congregation, may my affections be spiritualized, that I may ever escape the sin of those who draw near to you with their lips, while their hearts are far from you, and who, having the form of godliness, deny the power thereof. Preserve me from the extremes of contending religionists. Keep me in the path of your commandments. Increase in me more and more that faith which works by love, and which assimilates my soul to You-

How blessed is the saint who can trust in the Lord,

Whose heart and whose hope can repose on his word;

Though tempests and storms shall his vessel assail,

His peace is secure, and his joys never fail.

His house is well founded, 'tis built on a Rock,

Though mountains may fall, he can stand the rude shock;

Midst burnings and wastings of earth and of sky,

He lifts up his head, for his Savior is nigh.

Can riches, can honor, can pleasures afford  
Such joy, and such peace, as our merciful Lord  
Vouchsafes to his people, and now will impart,  
To all who approach him with faith in the heart?  
How bless'd is the man, who, redeemed from sin,  
Has Christ in the soul, and the witness within;  
His walk will be steady, through faith in the word,  
His heart will be steadfast, through trust in the Lord.  
Thus keep me, bless'd Savior- whate'er may betide,  
Your presence can cheer, and your Spirit can guide;  
And when life is o'er, and its sorrows are fled,  
Unite me to You, as my glorified Head.

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