

# Thoughts for a New Year

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Introductory Consideration:                      How do we assess a year?

What will my...your...our...\_\_\_\_\_ be in 2017?

## The Testimony of the Church at Thessalonica:

*<sup>2</sup> We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, <sup>3</sup> remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.  
— 1 Thess. 1:2-3*

Observation #1— A Familiar Formula: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, & \_\_\_\_\_

- 1 Thess 5:8—But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.  
1 Cor 13:13—So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.  
Col 1:4-5— since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,

Observation #2— These verses give us a proper perspective on \_\_\_\_\_.

- Our faith rests on what God has done in the past.

Rom 5:6-8— For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- Love should characterize our actions in the present.

John 13:34— A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

Matt 5:43-47— “You have heard that it was said, ‘ You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?”

- Our hope is ultimately in what is to come in the future.

1 Pet 1:13— Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Cor 15:16-20— For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

*“Faith, love, and hope are here named in their logical order. Faith rests on the past; love works in the present; and hope looks to the future.”  
—J.B. Lightfoot*

Observation #3— These verses are a grid by which to \_\_\_\_\_ ourselves and our church.

*“work of faith”* — This was, in all likelihood a reference to their initial belief in Christ.

- Our initial work of faith secures salvation, but the ongoing work of faith produces growth (sanctification).

2 Thess 1:11-12— To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Discipleship is a process in which we are formed and shaped by habit and action undertaken in faith.

Luke 9:23— And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me...”

What is your plan for growth this year?

What are you going read/study?

In what areas do you desire growth or sense that you need to grow?

*“labor of love”* — Paul is probably referring here to their care for him and one another under very difficult circumstances as well as their willingness to make known the gospel in the midst such affliction.

*“labor” (kopos)* — An activity that is burdensome. In this case, the burden of loving service.

- Willingness to lovingly serve others, even when inconvenient and burdensome, is the natural outworking of true faith.
- Love for Christ and for others is the only thing that will lead us into burdensome service.

1 Cor 15:58— Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

In what ways are you planning to lovingly serve others this year?

In what ways are you planning to labor in serving the church this year?

*“steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ”*

*“steadfastness” (hypomonēs)* — The capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty, patience, endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, perseverance

- Every year contains seasons of difficulty and disappointment. When the rest of the world falls into despair, believers are to remain steadfast.
- The basis of our steadfastness is our hope in Christ.

Col 1:24-29— <sup>24</sup>Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, <sup>25</sup>of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, <sup>26</sup>the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. <sup>27</sup>To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup>Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup>For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

In what things other than Christ am I prone to set my hope upon?