

The Importance of Faith, Hope, and Love

by Dennis Lange

In I Cor.13:13, Paul wrote, "But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love". These are words that we've all heard and perhaps even memorized. When all the temporary miraculous gifts of the infant church faded away like baby food and baby teeth, those three would continue. Perhaps what we sometimes fail to realize, is just how important faith, hope, and love are.

They are so important that they are grouped together a number of times in scripture in those specific words, or by the concept expressed in other ways.

- Col. 1:3-5 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your **faith** in Christ Jesus and the **love** which you have for all the saints; because of the **hope** laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel."
- 1 Peter 1:7-9 that the proof of your **faith**, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you **love** Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as **the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.**
- 1 Thess. 1:2-4 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of **faith** and labor of love and steadfastness of **hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father.
- II Pet.1:5-11 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your **faith** supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, **love.** 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; 11 **for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."**

The repeated mention of these three as a unit should make us aware that God is emphasizing their importance to us. If we lack just one of them, we will fail to be with God eternally.

Faith:

Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb.11:6). Jesus said, "Unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). We must come to God in faith and walk by faith. The righteous will live by faith (Rom.1:17). Some have said that the first part of that verse (in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith) means that it is faith from beginning to end. We begin to live for Him by faith and we must die in faith.

Love:

Paul knew how important it was to believe, but he also showed the importance of love by saying, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing" (I Cor.13:1-3). If we don't love Jesus, we won't keep His commandments. Duty obeys in drudgery. Love sacrifices. Duty does the minimum. Love joyfully does the maximum, even to the point of giving up one's life.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton said, "Love sacrifices all things to bless the thing it loves." The song says echoes the sentiment of loving sacrifice, saying, "He ain't heavy; he's my brother."

The ten commandments were written on cold stone tablets and remained that way for some in Israel who acted as if there was no God. But God's law is to be written on our hearts. That's why Paul could speak of the labor of love in I Thess.1. It's a love that toils to the point of weariness when one considers Jesus upon the cross.

Hope

Richard Rogers said that biblical hope is desire plus expectation. We not only want to live with God eternally, but we also **expect** to live with God eternally, because of Jesus. Rogers explained it something like this:

On those days I got my report card at school, I knew from previous report cards that it might not be good news. So, as I took it home for my parents to open and see. I desired that the report was good, but didn't expect it to be, so I had no hope. As I faced my parents, I didn't desire to be disciplined, but expected to be disciplined, so I had no hope.

is desire plus expectation. It must have both elements to be biblical and for it to have meaning in our lives. We have joy when we have such hope. We have peace when we have such hope. We have love and gratitude for Jesus upon the cross when we have hope. Our lives are changed because we have hope.

Paul wrote, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." (I Cor.15:47-58). How can one know if one doesn't have biblical hope? How can one be steadfast if he may be saved eternally or may not be, if he just WANTS to be saved eternally, but doesn't know whether to EXPECT to be saved eternally or not? Paul wrote to our brethren in Galatia and told them not to grow weary in doing good because they would reap if they didn't lose heart (Gal.6:9,10). As they continued to sow to the Spirit, they expected to reap eternal life. They understood that the basis of their salvation and thus their hope was Jesus, not themselves. Therefore, they had hope.

Faith, hope, and love – these three abide. We must have all three in order to be faithful to Jesus:

One who has faith and love but no hope doesn't persevere.

One who has faith and hope but no love has nothing (I Cor.13).

One who has love and hope but no faith really only has wishful thinking because his faith is in his own works and his supposed love is but an illusion.

Consider the mountain climber who drives the piton into the peak and uses it to pull up. He must have faith in that anchor. When the top is in sight, though exhausted, he keeps going because of hope. And if he is climbing to rescue someone dear to him, love drives him on. Faith, hope and love – these three!

Feed your faith!

Grow in love!

Hang on to your hope!

Faith, Hope, and Love for Our Children

Faith:

Biblical faith is based upon evidence. We believe in God because of the evidence seen in creation. There is a mountain of evidence for believing the Bible is from God. There is also overwhelming evidence that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that He was crucified, buried, and rose on the third day. Faith in Christ comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ (Rom.10:14). A variety of evidences about these matters can be found on the seeker's side of this website.

Why do so many of our children fall away from the Lord once they leave our homes? Could it be that their faith is no different than that of Hindus and Muslims and Buddhists? Many are born into a religion, grow up in it, and accept that religion as part of their culture. Rather than choosing it because it has been investigated and found to be true, they simply inherited it. They believe it only because of their parents. When the first challenge comes, they fall away because their faith has no foundation in facts and reason. We must give them reasons for their faith.

Faith in God can be fostered and strengthened in our children by looking at God's marvelous designs in nature. We will routinely put some of these within the Faith section of the main page and a list of articles of this type can be found in the seeker's side. Other websites and sources are also available. God's design can be seen everywhere in His creation. Just as you would give your child a vitamin for his physical health, routinely give him an occasional vitamin for his spiritual health by telling him of the design of woodpeckers, or of bees, or the bombardier beetle, or the human eye and ear, etc.

Faith that the Bible is God's word can be strengthened by pointing out a prophecy, or showing how archaeology confirms the scriptures. Again, these can be given in an entire class on the subject, or a bit at a time like vitamins. The same is true as we talk about Jesus and how we know He was the Son of God and that He was raised from the dead. Study apologetics, Christian evidences, so you can teach your children and grandchildren about God, so that your faith will be strengthened also.

The faith of our children will be challenged by their peers. Their faith will be challenged by godless evolution as they are taught in one-sided classrooms. Their faith will be challenged by the media – by the books they read, by the movies they see, by the

television they watch, by the songs they hear. Their faith, as ours, will be challenged on every front. Thus, we must prepare them to meet those challenges.

Preparation for the multi-pronged, never-ending assault by the devil has to begin in the home. But elders must make sure that this preparation continues in the congregational setting – in Bible classes and in the assembly.

Some of the challenges they will face and suggestions for preparation are:

- **Evolution** – Children will meet one of the first direct assaults on their faith in public school classrooms where only one side of evolution is taught. Churches should have classes for adults and children about this matter, perhaps one before the young entire high school and another before they leave home. More people lose their faith over this one issue than any other.
- **Worldliness** – This runs the gamut from sexual immorality and drugs (including alcohol) to succumbing slowly to the busyness of the world that crowds out God. Our children must see the end result of the world's sins - the breakup of homes, disease, the waste of life, opportunity, and talent. The passing pleasure of sin comes at a high cost.
- **False religion** – In the United States, this generation will come face to face with more of the world's religions than ever before. Children must have reasons for believing the Bible and know what it teaches so they can counter the false religions they will face, even those false religions that take **some** of their teaching from the Bible. Denominations have changed what God would have men do to what THEY say and want to do. Our children need to see God as GOD, as the Lord, the one who must be heeded.

Hope:

Our children must learn that the only hope of being right before God is Jesus. One of the main reasons people don't surrender to Him is because they feel they are good enough. Yet, that is the subject most addressed in the book of Galatians and a large section of Romans and strong passages in Ephesians, as well as other scriptures. Our children must understand why Jesus had to die upon the cross. They must understand God's grace in His plan and that our only hope is to turn to Him in faith and obedience.

We must also make them deeply aware of the transitory nature of life. "The young think they are indestructible." "Youth don't think about dying, as if they were going to live forever." They must understand the weighty difference, the all-important difference between this short life and eternity, between the passing pleasures of sin and eternal life with the God who is so wonderful we cannot even comprehend Him.

Love:

We love because He first loved us (I John 4:19). Thus, our children will love God when we show them how God loves them, how He blesses them, how He cares for them, how Jesus died for them. We foster love in our children for God by making the connection repeatedly between our blessings and God from whom they flow.

Because faith, hope, and love are so essential in the Christian life, we must make sure we deliberately plan strengthen each one in the lives of our children.

Faith, Hope, and Love for the Lost

As disciples of Christ, we are to preach the gospel to the world (Matt.28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16), beginning where we live (Luke 24:47). The lost around us may fall into these three groups: (1) those we have not yet attempted to teach in any way, (2) those we have tried to interest in learning about Jesus, but who have resisted, and (3) those whom we have taught, but did not obey the gospel. Teaching about faith, hope, and love will make it easier to teach, and perhaps convert, those in all three categories. The only individual that does not need these three but only needs teaching from scripture is the individual you have taught who thinks he is a Christian, has rejected the truth, and is continuing to practice his false Christianity.

Faith:

If you've not mentioned Jesus or the church or the Bible to someone you know, there is nothing as non-threatening to that individual than to give him interesting things that provide evidence for the existence of God or that the Bible is God's word, even if he already believes. The individual who has shied away from a study of the Bible will most likely not refuse things seemingly unrelated to the Bible. The person who studied but would not obey is likely caught up in sin. But his faith in God is most likely weak also, or at least pushed to the back of his mind so he doesn't have to think about it. This person can also be helped with non-threatening "tidbits" that will increase his faith.

Here are some things you can do to provide evidence that men might believe:

- Give them short articles, clippings, facts about the complexity and design in nature. Sometimes, this type of article is found in newspapers or magazines. Search specific animals on the internet. Also, this website has very short articles about animals. Some can be found by using other links within this website. Providing this type of information can help build their faith in the existence of God.
- Give them short articles about archaeological discoveries related to the Bible. These don't have to be the latest ones that appear in the newspaper, although those are certainly timely and easy to bring up. Entire books have been written on the subject. "Did you know they once found a steele by Sennacherib of Assyria, saying that he had shut up Hezekiah, king of the Jews, 'like a bird in a cage'?"
- Encourage them to read the gospel of John.
- Give them a very specific prophecy from the Old Testament that Jesus fulfilled 500 years later, such as Micah 5:1,2.
- Study apologetics such as the information that we provide here for seekers.

No Hope:

As Christians, we must reflect upon the hope we have so that we will persevere. Those who are lost, however, must come to realize that they have no hope without Jesus. This is an extremely big problem because many who are lost, if not most, think they will go to heaven because they are fairly good people. That's the idea behind law-keeping or the works route in scripture. Virtually all of Galatians refutes the idea as do several chapters in Romans.

The lost must realize that sins must be forgiven, blotted out from their record, that they must be perfect in the sight of God, or they are lost. But the law made nothing perfect (Heb.7:19). Men tend to look at their own self-righteousness, the good things they've done. But when we face God on judgment day, all He will look at is the sin side of the ledger. Christians are forgiven by the blood of Jesus and will face no condemnation (Rom.8:1). But the lost have sin that they are helpless to get rid of.

They have no hope.

Love:

There are non-Christians who believe in God, but show no interest in studying the Bible with us. There are also those who have studied the Bible with someone in the church, but did not obey the gospel. Both groups may need their faith increased as noted above. Or they may need to understand that they have no hope. They also need to make the connection between the blessings they have in life (or have had) and God who makes it rain on the just and the unjust (Matt.5:45). Though forgiveness is conditional, God's love is unconditional. Non-Christians also receive many blessings from God. As Christians, we love Him because He first loved us (I John 4:19). But love of God may also be fostered in the lost by reminding them of the blessings they receive from God.

The greatest blessings, of course, flow from the sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross for the sins of the world. We have those blessings. But those blessings also await the non-Christian if he will only turn to God in faith and obedience. Non-Christians can thus be helped by gentle reminders of the love of God in the cross, the love of God for those who aren't even interested in Him, who soak up His blessings without gratitude.

In conclusion, there are many non-threatening things that we can present to the lost in order to bring them to the point of wanting to learn about Jesus. Even when we have tried to study with them and they have rejected that, we can still share with them many things that are related to God, without them being automatically defensive.