

Parson to Person

1 Corinthians 13

(The Greatest: Love) Part 6 & 7

~Repeated from last week~

“And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Three Things That Endure

Paul concluded this chapter by noting that three specific things will endure: faith, hope, and love.

There is no question about the eternal nature of God, the angels, the New Heavens and New Earth, all the redeemed, and the eternal unfathomable joy we will all experience in the presence of the Lord. Why then does Paul suggest faith, hope, and love? The answer is simple: faith is a gift provided every believer—a gift we cannot earn, attain, or maintain. We will always know and experience the trustworthy nature of our eternally immutable God—and that He is worthy of our confidence and trust.

Hope is not a desperate and vague wish for an elusive maybe. Hope is the very real assurance every believer has been given in the Lord. He has promised—and we will enjoy.

Love is the eternal, fundamental attribute and essence of God.

“Agape” is the “perfect” condition every believer will attain—in Christ, by Christ. “Agape” is the necessary attribute (“*for God so loved*”) in order to provide the necessary gift (“*His only begotten Son*”).

In Him we receive regeneration, justification, sanctification, and future glorification—all of which every believer will enjoy. “Agape” is indeed the attributed and soon-to-be experienced future “*perfect*” we will all enjoy. Now abides the faith that endures, the hope that will never fade away, and the love that never fails.

Faith

Faith is confidence in the unseen and unrealized.

Faith is trust in God—not trust in the things we think, like, want, etc. Jesus commanded, “*Have faith in God,*” not faith in faith (see Mark 11:22).

Having all of this in mind, let us examine the following:

a. Blind Faith?

Our faith is built upon fact. Fact that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (see Hebrews 11:1–6).

Our faith is knowable, provable, and defensible. Our faith is in The One who created us—evidenced in all of His creation. Our faith is in the truth demonstrated by the incarnation and work of Jesus: His life, death and physical resurrection. Our faith is in the objective and authoritative written word of God—which contains the history and

prophetic future of Israel, the Church, and the world. Our faith is in the completely accurate pre-incarnational prophecies concerning Jesus. Our Bible (the document of our faith) is historically correct, provides scientific insight, and geographical, archaeological, and paleontological accuracy. The Bible declares a young earth creation supported by the above—with the added genealogical tracing as definitive support. Our Bible accurately traces the history and future of the nations, their relationship to Israel, and the specified end of this present world. And worthy of second mention, drum roll please, the physical resurrection of Jesus—upon which all of our hopes are confirmed.

b. Faith in Faith?

Faith is not the substance of what we imagine, envision, or develop from personal interest, ambition or hope. It is the “*substance*” (assurance) of what God has promised and called us to wait for—in Him.

Faith teachers and so-called faith leaders have taught that one can imagine or conjure up whatever they wish by the exercise of self-generated faith. However, that is nothing less than positive thinking at best and witchcraft at worst. We are not to trust in our “faith.” We are called to trust in the Lord and in His holy word.

c. Faith in the Power of Faith

Faith in the power of faith is similar to faith in faith (mentioned above) with one distinct difference. Faith in faith

is thought to bring about whatever one dreams for or hopes for, but faith in the power of faith suggests that faith itself is a force or entity by which we can obtain what we desire. This too is a form of witchcraft.

d. Saving Faith

I. Saving Faith is More Than a Belief that God Exists

James wrote, *“You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!”* (James 2:19). This alone should put to bed the idea that saving faith is more than the simple acknowledgment of the existence of God or the reality of the person and work of Jesus. Satan and his hoards know that God exists. They know, but they are not surrendered to Him, not in obedience to Him, and in no way trust in Him for salvation.

II. Saving Faith is a Transfer of Trust from Self to God

Saving faith is a transference of trust in self to trust in the Lord. Saving faith is a complete abandonment of self-reliance, self-righteousness, self-performance and a total surrender to God alone. “Genuine faith in God is the complete and total rejection of faith in self and good works, and a complete dependence on God for His all sufficiency to save, sustain, and glorify.”

e. Faith in *The Faith*

There is only one God—and there is only one true faith. The exercise of “faith” in any other “faith” is a deception at the highest level—and of no worth at all.

As described in the book of Hebrews, the Christian faith is the Jewish realization of that which was predicted in the Old Testament. It is faith in the one and only Jewish Messiah—Jesus. *“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away... how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”* (Hebrews 2:1–4 abridged). Therefore, we must *“contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jude 3b).

f. Enduring Faith

Paul wrote that the three great attributes—faith, hope, and love will endure. Therefore, we know that faith will endure just like love and hope.

Biblical hope is not something longed for and anticipated (as described in our present American understanding). Biblical hope is the very real and present life and glory that every believer now enjoys. The life we enjoy is without end. Therefore, biblical hope endures... and faith, like hope and love, is ever enduring.

I. Enduring Faith is a Gift

Faith in God does not originate of ourselves. It originated with God, is a gift from God, is enabled by God, and sustained by God. Although there are no specific verses that explicitly state that faith is a gift, I propose the following:

- 1) If God did not choose to make Himself known to us—we would not know Him.
- 2) If God did not choose to save us—we could not be saved.
- 3) If God did not *“love us first”*—we would not love Him.
- 4) If God had not extended grace toward us—we would have no capabilities of faith, hope, or love.

Paul wrote of unbelievers declaring *“...what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them”* (Romans 1:19). Therefore, all know Him because He made Himself known.

Jesus said, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16).

John wrote, *“We love Him because He first loved us”* (1 John 4:19).

Paul wrote, *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8).

He also wrote, *“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by*

grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:4–9).

“So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

II. Enduring Faith is Based Upon the Truth

“For His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the LORD *endures* forever. Praise the LORD!” (Psalm 117:2).

III. Enduring Faith is Confident in *The Faith*

Isaiah proclaimed, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Isaiah 40:8).

“And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:1–13).

I love you all,
Pastor Paul