

Faith, Hope and Love

TEXT: “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity.” (1 Cor. 13:13)

THESIS: We need faith, hope and love abiding in our lives.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Many believe that when bad things happen, they happen in threes.
 - a. Accidents seem to happen in threes, people seem to die in sets of three.
 - b. I have even heard once where someone’s dog got ran over, then in the same day, their cat went and ate their canary, only for the cat to choke to death on a bone.
 - c. You never seem to have just ONE disaster, you always have three, closely grouped together.
2. But then, there are others who see something else that comes in threes.
 - a. For example, vanilla, chocolate and strawberries on a banana split. That’s a good set of threes.
 - b. Companies even seem to be in sets of three: Ford, GM and Chrystler or Barnes and Noble, Books a Million and Borders.
3. But, there is some truth about things coming in threes.
 - a. We find extraordinary strength when particular elements are put together.
 - b. Take God for instance: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 - c. Or, the three indispensable qualities the Bible mentions, that, if you take them all together, it will give you the foundations for an enduring marriage, a functioning family, productive relationships, and most importantly, a successful Christian life.
4. In 1 Cor. 13:13 is where we find these qualities.
 - a. Paul says, “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three . . .”
 - b. He says they all abide, that is, they all last.
 - i. They’re strong.
 - ii. They continue.
 - iii. They abide.
 - c. And, though he does say that the greatest of these three is love, we can easily see that each one is important.
 - i. Each one needs the other two to be effective.
 - ii. So, good things, very good things, come in threes.
5. And what I want to point out is that God expects us to have these three in our lives.
 - a. God expects us to have faith, hope, and love.
 - b. In order to have stable marriages, in order to have happy homes, in order to have productive relationships (within the church and without), we are going to need all three.
6. And the first is:

DISCUSSION:

I. FAITH

- A. Paul says in 1 Cor. 13:13 that, “faith.... ABIDES!”
1. Faith is the first ingredient to living a successful Christian life, but what does it mean?
 - a. I can say, “I have faith,” all day long, but it doesn’t matter unless I know what it means to have it and how to live a life full of that.
 - b. Well, faith comes from the Greek word “pistis” and it means to “have a conviction of the truth, an assurance, to have a trusting heart.”
 2. So, to let faith ABIDE in my life, means that I assume that others around me will tell me the truth, that they want the best for me, that they intend no harm to me, that they are loyal to me through all kinds of challenges.
 - a. And, this point can be illustrated when we look at the church, the family that we have here.
 - b. To have an abiding faith in this family, means that you TRUST in them, you believe that they are trying to get you to heaven.
 - (1) And so, if I have faith in someone, it means that I never have to be afraid that their commitment to me is unsure or weak.
 - (2) And, if I have faith in someone, it means I am committed to their success, even when they disappoint me and fail me and hurt me, I believe that it was just a momentary mistake, and that, overall, that person is worthy of my trust.
 - (3) Why? Because faith ABIDES in life!
 3. And, in order for us to live a successful, Christian life...we have to have ABIDING faith and trust, not only in God, but in others around us.
- B. Where do you think most marriage problems come from?
1. I know that husbands do not listen . . . I know that people have problems with finances, but so many marriage problems involve issues of trust.
 - a. And, have you ever noticed, that even in the church, many seem to have almost abandoned trusting each other?
 - (1) And I think that has a lot to do with the society we live in right now.
 - (2) We don’t trust anybody anymore.
 - b. There’s no such thing as a handshake, and a promise to pay you back.
 - (1) Now, you have to hire a lawyer, and get a living will, just to borrow a lawn mower, or an air-compressor.
 - (2) And when you lose trust, and you lose faith in those around you...that has very serious consequences in your family, in the church, everywhere!
 2. When you no longer trust, and you no longer live in FAITH in anyone...then that relationship is going to go down, and go down quickly.
- C. It just seems like no one trusts anybody anymore and so, the strength of a

relationship depends on faith...it dwells on trust.

1. Faith must abide, it must remain, it must always be in my life if my life is going to be successful...which brings us back to God.
2. If I were to ask all of you here: Do you believe in God?
 - a. All of you would raise your hands.
 - (1) I have no doubt about it.
 - b. But if I were to say to you: "How many of you rely on God?"
 - (1) Would all those hands still be raised?
 - c. How many of us rely on God and not the security we feel from our bank account, our possessions, our paycheck, or what we've been given?
3. And that brings us back to this issue of trust.
 - a. In order for faith to abide...to dwell in my life...there must be a trust, a reliance, that I have developed toward God!
 - b. Much like the reliance developed between me and my wife, between me and my best friend...do we have that reliance ON GOD?
 - (1) Do we have that faith?
 - (2) Because without faith we can never please God (Heb. 11:6), and we can never live a successful, spiritual life for Him.

II. HOPE

- A. Faith cannot abide...faith cannot dwell where there is no hope.
 1. Hope means you have goals and visions for the future...hope is having dreams and directions in the future.
 2. Hope means knowing that your life counts for something, and that your life has a purpose, and that purpose is in God!
 3. Paul said in Col. 1:16 that, "By Him all things were created, in heaven and earth, invisible and visible...all things were created through Him and FOR Him."
 - a. Hope means you have places to go and things to do that matter.
 - b. Hope means you've started WAY BACK here...but you're headed toward something better in Christ, out there.
 - c. Hope is a powerful thing when founded in the eternal.
- B. Now...we've already seen that if you don't have faith ABIDING and dwelling in our lives, then every relationship we have will fall apart.
 1. We have to trust in God and trust in others.
 2. We have to rely on God and rely on others.
 3. But what happens if you don't have hope in your marriage, in your family, in your Christian life?
 - a. If you're in a family, or a marriage, or a church in which there isn't any sense of hope...no direction toward God...no looking forward

to the future of heaven...then there isn't anything to shoot for, and what's going to happen when there's nothing to shoot for?

- C. I mean, let's consider hunting.
1. What happens if you're duck hunting, you've been sitting in a duck blind for 10 hours in the freezing cold (icicles hanging off your nose), and not a single duck has crossed the sky all day?
 2. What happens when you go to a skeet shoot, and you have your gun ready to go, but nobody pulls the cord?
 - a. You have nothing to shoot at, and you're sitting there with your gun held in the firing position...and you get tired, and frustrated, and angry, and bitter.
- D. It's the same thing that happens in any life, relationship, church that has no hope, no goal, no vision of the good that comes in the future through God.
1. That relationship will implode.
 2. It will destroy itself.
 3. Your care, compassion, concern for EACH OTHER will collapse.
 - a. Brethren, in the church, if all we ever do is care for ourselves, and see to ourselves, and all we ever do is look to ourselves, and we shut out the rest of the world, we will eventually get on each other's nerves, and we will turn on each other.
- E. Faith has to be blended with hope...trust has to be put together with purpose.
1. There is not a single verse in the Bible, not one, that says you can be a Christian, have faith in God, and then live your life any way you want to.
 2. It's just not there.
 - a. God expects all of you. He doesn't want 10% of you, He doesn't want 50% of you, He doesn't want 99% of you—He wants all of you. Got it!
 - b. He doesn't want you cheating on Him here, using His name in vain there, not giving Him any time or resources.
 - c. He wants your life! He wants your love and affection! He wants your hope and trust to be in HIM!
- F. What does God want?
1. He wants every single bit of me.
 2. He wants my undivided loyalty.
 3. He wants me to obey, follow, and love HIM!
 4. He wants to have full, undiluted control of my life.
 - a. One person said, "Christianity...cannot be moderately important."
 - b. If God is real...if His kingdom will last forever....if His word is true and His power is the real deal...then we have no choice, but to trust in Him and HOPE in HIM!
- G. Faith must have PURPOSE, or it will die (let me say that again).
1. Faith's purpose is found in Christ.
 - a. We need to be active in the church.

- b. Faith needs purpose...faith needs hope in order to abide.
 - c. Therefore, there MUST be something to DO, in faith.
 - d. There has to be a purpose, an expectation in life.
- H. And one of the things we love to do, when we know we have to do something, is put it off!
 - 1. We love to procrastinate when it comes to purpose...when it comes to doing what is expected of us.
 - 2. I am reminded of what James says in James 4:17 "To him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin."
 - a. James is talking about the issue of procrastination.
 - b. "I'm intending to do it."
 - c. Ever met somebody who is always "aiming to do it."
 - d. I always want to say, "When? Give me a day, time, appointment."
 - (1) Will it be tomorrow?
 - (2) You see, we love to put stuff off.
 - (3) And James says that just because WE KNOW the right thing to do...doesn't mean we're going to do it.
 - (4) And James says that when we don't do it...we sin.
- I. How do you define sin?
 - 1. We think of evil activities: murder, adultery, cheating, lying, stealing, but we don't really remember the sins of omission. "To him who knows to do good and does it not, it's sin."
 - a. I can do nothing...and still sin.
 - 2. A successful Christian life is more than simply avoiding evil.
 - a. If all that the Christian life was...was a bunch of "don't's:" don't do this, don't do that, then everybody who's dead would qualify as a Christian, because they don't do anything.
- J. Procrastination kills our purpose, kills our hope.
 - 1. People says "Someday I'll..." "One of these days ..." and you never do!
 - 2. "One of these days I'm going to get serious about God. One of these days I'll get back to church...one of these days I'm really gonna clean my life up."
 - a. God says you don't have any guarantee of tomorrow, none at all.
 - b. Life is a vapor that appears for a little while, and then vanishes away (James 4:14).
- K. Remember the story that Jesus told about the talents in Matthew 25:14-30?
 - 1. The Master gave one talent to one man, five to another and ten to another.
 - 2. He left, and came back sometime later.
 - a. Two guys had doubled their talents/money. (A talent was a weight of gold.)
 - b. The third man had taken his gold, buried it in the ground and did NOTHING with it.
 - c. He didn't use it for its purpose!

3. There was no expectation gained from putting that talent in the ground!
 - a. The master said, "At least you could have put it in a bank account and received interest on it!"
 - b. The Master said, "You wicked servant!"
 - c. Why?
 - (1) What had he done? Nothing.
 - (2) That's wickedness.
 - (3) Doing nothing with your life is bad.
 - d. Make your life count!
 - (1) Know that your purpose is in Christ.
 - (2) I can do all kinds of things that keep me from doing all kinds of sins...but if I'm not doing anything for anyone else...what does it matter?
 - (3) God said it doesn't!
- L. Whatever you intend to do for the Lord...do it now!
 1. Not next week, next month, next year.
 2. Thinking about talking to a friend about Christ...inviting them to church?
 3. Do it now! Thinking about teaching a class and getting involved?
 4. Do it now! Thinking about re-doing your budget, and giving more to God?
 5. Do it now!
- M. In Luke 12 Jesus told a parable...He tells the story about a man who is very successful in life, but he had no hope in God, no spiritual purpose in life...and he made a very foolish decision. Jesus told them a parable, The ground of a certain rich man was very productive [literally, abundant crop] and he thought to himself "What shall I do. I have no place to store my crops." Then he said, "This will I do. I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones.
 1. And there I will store all my grain and my goods and I will say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take ease. Eat, drink, be merry,'" but God said to him "You fool.
 2. This night your soul will be required of you. Then whose will be these things that you possess?" (Luke 12:16-20).
- N. There must be a purpose, a hope...greater than yourself in this life and we are to abide in it.

III. LOVE

- A. Faith and hope also needs love.
 1. Faith, hope, and love abide; these three.
 - a. But the greatest of these is love.
 2. These things are all founded on love.
 - a. But love...is tough.
 - b. It's not this warm and fuzzy feeling in the pit of your stomach where everything is outlined with clouds.
 - (1) That's Hollywood love.

- (2) That's pre-teen puppy love.
 - (3) That's not love as the Bible describes it.
 - c. The Bible gives us a tough, resilient, seeking, persistent, redemptive definition of love.
- B. Love is self-sacrifice.
 - 1. Love is giving beyond what you have to give, and moving into what you DESIRE to give.
 - 2. Love is, as Paul says it, bearing all things and enduring all things (1 Cor. 13:7).
- C. Love is Selfless love like the gift of God's Son.
 - 1. And, love has to be poured out, flooded, spread about by the heart of a person.
 - 2. It is this love that is the greatest thing in all of life according to the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 3. For, selfless love is the greatest possession and gift in human life.
- D. And, this love, true agape, does not originate in the nature of man, but in the nature of God.
 - 1. God is love and the basic trait of His nature.
 - 2. The very existence of man is due to the fact that God is love.
- E. And, true love is a gift of God.
 - 1. A man can know true love only as he comes to know the love of God.
 - 2. Faith arises from the heart of man, but love is deposited or given to man by God.
 - a. And apart from God, man loves only those who love him; he either opposes or withdraws from those who hate him.
 - b. A man can only love his enemies through the love of God.
 - 3. Therefore love, being the very special gift of God, is far superior to faith and hope.
- F. Love is discovering that a family member is sick and going to them, giving them the help they need, visiting them in the hospital.
 - 1. For, love doesn't abandon them.
- G. Love finds ways, love bridges gaps, love hangs on, it endures.
 - 1. Love becomes like the father in the parable of the prodigal, just waiting until that son or daughter has spent all...and he starts that long journey home.
 - 2. Love waits on the front porch...and when that child comes home...love runs to meet the wayward.
 - a. For, love tries to understand.
 - b. Love abides.
- H. Basically, in a word, love is redemptive.
 - 1. It never ends and keeps on reaching.
 - 2. Love is paying whatever price has to be paid in order to keep marriages, families, friendships and the church strong.

3. Love is getting involved when you want to back off, and sometimes backing off when you want to get involved.
4. Love is always seeking the good of the other, and not the self.
- I. And, we must allow love to abide in us, to never depart, to continue to be present in our life, no matter what comes our way.

CONCLUSION:

1. Faith, hope, and love abide; these three.
 - a. Such a small verse and yet, so much to say on it.
 - b. And, the greatest of these is love.
2. Love even cures broken faith for if I choose to love somebody, I will build them up again.
 - a. Faith, hope, and love abide; these three.
 - b. The greatest of these is love, for love gives birth to hope.
 - i. If I choose to love somebody, I won't ever give up on what God desires for them to become.
3. Good things absolutely do come in threes.
 - a. Like faith, hope, and love. Like the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - i. The Father, who has entrusted us with His creation, and who we trust for daily bread and life itself.
 - ii. The Holy Spirit who brings hope and help in our infirmities (Rom. 8:26).
 - iii. And, most of all, Christ the Son of God, who is love Himself.
 - (1) Who is such an expression of the love of God that He was given for the sins of the world, so that the world might be saved and not condemned.
 - (2) Christ, who while we were yet sinners, loved us enough to die for us.
 - (3) Christ, whose love went to a cross, paid a price, and gave and gave and gave, and still gives.
 - (4) Christ, whose love never ends, whose love redeems, whose love is able to bear shame, endure suffering, and turn us around.
 - (5) Christ, whose love reaches to the highest heaven, and to the lowest hell.
4. That love was shown in that shed blood, and through that blood we are saved.
 - a. It is with love that Jesus says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved..."
 - i. Have you done that?
 - ii. Have you confessed your Lord, given Him control of your life, turned from your sins, and realized that He is your Savior, and without Him you are lost.
 - (1) If not...this is your chance to be made free from your sin.
 - b. And if you are Christian who has decided to love the world over your Lord, the Master waits for you to return...come in penitence telling your Father you have sinned (Luke 16:21).
 - i. So, be humble.

- ii. Come and confess your sin, and your need to be saved.