

The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians

Abiding Faith, Hope, and Love

1 Corinthians 13:13

1. _____
As Paul concludes his magnification of love as a Christian virtue, he compares it with two other virtues that have hardly been mentioned in this letter. The love that Paul has been describing is a love that is rooted in the Lord and grounded in what He has done for us (cf. Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:19), and which then permeates all aspects of life and ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-3).
 - A. Faith: The faith that Paul has in view in our text is that faith through which we are saved (1 Cor. 2:5; cf. Eph 2:8) and which characterizes our life and ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-3). When distinguished from hope, faith is a confident assurance of the inviolability of those things which God has promised and which we cannot see (cf. Heb. 11:1). Faith does not require the absence of experienced verification (cf. John 20:29), but faith is characterized in our current state as confidence in what we cannot see (cf. 1 Pet. 1:8).
 - B. Hope: The hope that Paul has in view in our text is that which anticipates with and confidence the future blessings and rewards that God has promised (cf. 1 Cor. 9:10). When distinguished from faith, hope is an assured and confident expectation that God will do what He has promised but has not yet done. Similar to faith, hope is related to those things which we cannot yet see (cf. Rom. 8:24-25). Paul will later emphasize the future ramifications of our present hope in the gospel (1 Cor. 15:19).
2. _____
Faith and hope, along with love, are those things which abide. This is in contrast to those things which will be done away (vs.8, 10) or will cease (v.8). The gifts of prophecy (similar to the other revelatory gifts) are given for specific purposes (cf. Eph. 2:20; Rev. 11:3) but are not intended as an abiding gift for believers. In contrast, faith, hope, and love are virtues that Christians are to strive for and to be characterized by (cf. 2 Tim 2:22; 1 Pet. 3:5).
3. _____
Love is the greatest of these three virtues because this is the only one of the three which we experience now that we will experience in the same way for the rest of eternity. After the consummation of God's plan, we will no longer believe in that which we cannot see, nor hope for what we have not yet experienced, but we will continue to love the Lord and His people.

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