



guidelines for living

a 5 minute message

November 8, 2017

WHEN THERE'S HOPE

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love.... 1 Corinthians 13:13

Centuries before Christ, a Greek philosopher named Thales said, "The most universal thing is hope, for hope stays with those who have nothing else." In a period of time when everything was changing, in a period of tremendous personal loss, the Apostle Paul penned the inspiring words, "And now these things remain: faith, hope and love..." (1 Corinthians 13:13). The second of these qualities, hope, is to life what oxygen is to breathing. Where there is hope, there is life. And when hope dies, life itself begins to ebb away.

Medical science has proved that people can endure almost limitless hardships--near starvation, physical and emotional abuse, and even long periods of sustained illness--as long as hope is alive in the heart of a person. The suffering caused by World War 2 is still a vivid picture in the minds of many. It takes more than a few years to erase the blight on humanity that was caused by the concentration camps of the Third Reich, yet out of these hideous circumstances came the importance of hope for tomorrow.

The Saturday Review published an article entitled, "What Hope Does for Man." The article was written by Dr. Harold Wolff, then professor of medicine at Cornell University Medical School. In this article, Dr. Wolff discussed the importance of hope for those who underwent imprisonment in World War 2. I quote Dr. Wolff: "In short, prolonged circumstances which are perceived as dangerous, as lonely, as hopeless, may drain a man of hope and of his health; but he is capable of enduring incredible burdens and taking cruel punishment when he has self-esteem, hope, purpose, and belief in his fellows." The editors of the *Saturday Review* prefaced the article with these words: "Hope, like faith and a purpose in life, is medicinal. This is not merely a statement of belief, but a conclusion proved by meticulously controlled scientific experiment."

In cataloguing those three eternal virtues, it is interesting to notice how the Apostle Paul sandwiches hope between faith and love. Could it not be that Paul so put them in this order because of the relationship that hope has to faith and love? Faith



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precedes hope, but hope is so closely related to faith, that at times it is impossible to separate the two. One writer of Scripture defined faith, saying that it is "being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1). When you have faith in a person, hope is born in your soul. Faith in God produces a hope that rescues you from the despair of the most difficult circumstances. When you trust God to answer your prayer, hope is gradually born in your soul--hope that cannot be defeated. How else can we account for the lives of Christian martyrs, who faced the persecution of heathen Rome? How else can we account for the suffering that men and women endure in the hideous conflicts of war?

The message of the Gospel is a simple one that still produces hope in a hopeless world: "God so loved the world that He gave..." In short, it tells us that you are never so far from the cross that you cannot find a lasting hope. The Scripture says that hope which comes as the result of a personal experience with Christ is an anchor to your soul. Hope links you to God as an anchor holds a ship in angry waters.

If there is one lesson our generation should have learned--whether it is coming from Bosnia, Berlin, or Beijing--it is that men can never produce lasting hope in our world.

But there is hope which comes from above, the hope of heaven which transcends the failures of men. It's the only way to find faith, hope, and love.

Resource reading: 1 Corinthians 13:1-8