

What we need is more faith, hope and love

If I speak human or angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a **noisy gong or a clanging cymbal**.

² If I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, **I am nothing**.

³ And if I give away all my possessions, and if I give over my body in order to boast but do not have **love, I gain nothing**.

⁴ Love is patient (**it does not demand everything now**), love is kind (**love doesn't crush people**),
Love does not envy (**it does not crave what it doesn't have**),

is not boastful (**not immodestly braggy**), is not arrogant (**superior and overconfident**),

⁵ is not rude (**ill-mannered or pushy**), is not self-seeking, is not irritable (**ill-tempered**), and does not keep a record of wrongs (**a ledger of resentments against the sins of others**).

⁶ Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth.

⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (**love withstands whatever comes its way**).

⁸ **Love never ends (it is that one enduring quality of life)**.

But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹ For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put aside childish things. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, as I am fully known.

¹³ Now these three remain: **faith, hope, and love—but the greatest of these is love**.

I want to talk about these three qualities because they are in short supply in our world right now, and we've never needed them more than we do right now.

1. Faith—what is faith? “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

Faith is an intentional state. In order to have faith and not waver, we must intentionally build our faith, exercise our faith, and recharge our faith.

How do we best build, exercise, and recharge our faith?

- **Guard your heart against spiritual contaminants—stuff that’s just toxic to our soul.**

Ex. Giving up cable news for like a month. Then, giving up all news. I gave all shows equal exposure. And instead of becoming more objective or sympathetic in my listening, I became poisoned with the rancor and acrimony inherent in those cable news formats. So, then I went the opposite way—I turned them all off—and like for the last three months—I’ve never been happier, calmer, less worried. Less burdened.

The 24-7 news cycle married to a delivery device that inundates you with information.

Now, I don’t think it’s wise to be completely ignorant of what is going on in the world. But hear me: *it’s ok to be a little more ignorant of all that is thrashing about in the world. You were not designed to carry all that. Your shoulders aren’t big enough.*

Illus. I was in England and I took a break from our church drama practice and was out on the steps—a long windy staircase in Chester, UK. I must have looked forelorn. One of the deaconesses of the church came out and asked me how I was, and I responded something like, “Just really burdened right now for the sins of the world—praying that the UK will rediscover faith in Jesus.” She looked at me and said something very freeing that I never forgot, that has saved my life more times than I care to admit in ministry—and I’m going to pass it on to you this morning: *Do you think Jesus made your shoulders to carry all that?*

Ex. Have you every walked outside after watching a bit of the news and thought, “wait a minute. Where is all that happening?”

Folks If you are struggling with the weight of this crushing world right now—listen, you may need to shut down all your apps and cable news and all that stuff. God wants us to pray for our world and the needs of the people—but you and I cannot carry all the freight of everything going on in this world.

Scripture: Phil 4:7-9 “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding (**an unexplainable inner peace**), will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (**and here’s how you get the peace**)⁸ Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell (**lodge there**) on these things. ⁹ **Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.**”

If we’re going to have a strong faith and strong hearts we have to Guard our hearts and minds against the toxic rancor and animosity and the divisive spirit in our culture.

- **Lock arms with other believers for mutual encouragement.**

Our ability to meet as a church and gather all together is weakened and compromised right now. It may be for a while until this plague gets under control. **Don’t forsake the gathering.** That’s a command. We also have a tension of obeying the law so long as they do not make unreasonable requirements to keep us from obeying that command.

Here’s how we can best obey that command right now—you can attend small groups, home churches.

Scripture: Heb 10:24-25 “And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.

This passage, in context, is not just about “not going to church.” This passage is about not abandoning the Christian faith. He is telling them to both (1) gather for mutual encouragement. (2) don’t develop the habit of not gathering. Because it is destructive to your faith.

In the coming days at CCC, we may have to gather in ways that are smaller, more house oriented, and unconventionally. **Fix your eyes on Jesus as the author and finisher of your faith.**

What does he mean by author and finisher? He means *author*—the creator and purveyor of your faith. **No one other than Jesus gets to determine the content and the direction of Christian worship.** He is the author of Christian worship and there is not higher authority. And no one can complete your faith—finish it—other than Jesus.

So, if we’re going to cultivate a strong faith we must (1) guard our hearts and minds against the toxic divisiveness in the world. (2) lock arms with other believers and be mutually encouraged by gathering. (3) fix our eyes on Jesus who alone began the work in us and will be faithful to complete it.

The second enduring quality he speaks of in 1 Cor. 13 is...

2. Hope—hold on to hope.

What is the difference between faith and hope? Faith is the impulse that will cause you to leap into the dark—hope is that quality that will hold you once you get there.

Faith is an intentional state. In order to have faith and not waver, we must intentionally build our faith, exercise our faith, and recharge our faith.

- **Hope is the byproduct of active faith. The fruit of a well-cultivated faith.**

Titus 2:13 “while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

- **Hope is refined and strengthened “while we wait”**

What are we waiting for? Could be retirement. Or a pay raise. Or, a better house, a better life. A vaccine and miracle therapies to end this living horror show that we’ve been in for 6 months. Maybe you’re waiting for social justice—all the wrongs in our culture to be righted.

Whatever you’re waiting for—even if you got it—it’s temporary.

Listen, anything else that we hope in other than Jesus will eventually disappoint us.

- Money will eventually run out.
- Health will eventually surrender to time—time is a relentless stalker. So far, time has a perfect score, a flawless record except for that one time when a man named Jesus from Nazareth raised to life from the grave and defeated time—to live forever in the presence of the Father.

Anything we trust in will eventually fail us. Which is why our hope must be in Christ alone.

And we don’t pursue that hope at the expense of hoping for life, liberty and happiness.

But *that hope* makes sense out of every other pursuit in life.

3. Love—conquers all threats.

What is Love? It's the word *agape* in Greek. It is the God-kind of love. Love is affection set ablaze by the glory and presence of the Lord. Love for God supremely above all else. Above our opinions on non-essential matters. Above our need to be right. Our insistence on being worshipped.

***Agape* love sets the heart free from the cares of this life.** That is life that is freed from the enslavement of what people think about us.

Love conquers all threats to the free heart.

Love is the highest law in the Christian life.

The well-loved person loves well. When we ground our identities in the love and care and compassion of our God.

- The Bible does not say “For God so organized the world...”
- For God so tolerated the world...
- For God so appreciated the world...
- Nope, God so loved the world that he took from us. Nope. That he gave to us.

You see the person whose mind and heart are marinated in the truths of this book—who walk with God and **cultivate a heart of faith**, evidenced by their **unshakeable unspoilable hope**—that person who knows they are **well-loved—they will love well**. They will not divide the body, but will be broken together with the body—to commune together.

- Be intentional about your faith—guard it; encourage it; fix your eyes on the author of it.
- Have a hopeful disposition—the blessed hope of Christ our glorious God and savior.

- Love God, and let God love you. His love poured out by the Holy Spirit in our hearts so that you and I will become walking-talking love machines.