

The Greatest of These Is Love (Devotional)

At the conclusion of 1 Corinthians 13, the Apostle Paul's great dissertation on love, he writes, ***"So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."*** (1 Corinthians 13:13 [ESV]) The value of faith in the life of the believer is undeniable. There is no disputing the fact that every heroic biblical character was an individual who exhibited great faith, whether it was Enoch, Noah or Abraham. As the Hebrews writer tells us while referencing the Old Testament great figures of faith, ***"Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword."*** (Hebrews 11:36-37 [ESV]) Throughout the harshest of treatment, they and others, such as Paul, all fought the good fight, they finished the race, and they kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:7). Without faith, there would be no salvation. Without faith, we would remain forever lost. Without faith, we could never be pleasing to God. The Hebrews writer tells us in Hebrews 11:6 [ESV], ***"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him."*** Many times we hear of individuals coming to faith in Christ and living a life of faith. Hebrews 11 is dedicated to lauding those who displayed great faith in God. Without faith, we would remain lost in our sins because we would never come to Christ, and without faith, we would remain living our lives in disobedience to Him. Faith often motivates us to move forward even when the odds are against us. In a sense, then, we can see how faith is closely related to hope, and this connection is particularly brought out in Paul's letter to the church in Rome: ***"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us."*** (Romans 5:1-5 [ESV]) It is hope that keeps us going when the situation we face seems impossible. It is hope that brings the expectation that we will obtain something specific we desire. Think of how life would be without hope. Hope is a gift from God that can bring joy in the midst of very difficult circumstances. Hope is what encourages us that victory is not only possible, it is imminent, and it is the hope that God will keep His promises that brings about ***"the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding"*** (Philippians 4:7 [ESV]) during our most difficult of times and trials. The reason, though, that love is ***"the greatest of these"*** is that it was love that motivated the Father to send His only Son to die for us (John 3:16). Without God and His love, there would have been no redemption for mankind. Not only would we be without love, but without the redemption that was precipitated by love, there would also be no faith and no hope. Nothing else matters without love. It is at the core of every other good thing in our lives, and that is the point Paul brings out so elegantly and magnificently in his great chapter of love.