

Spiritual Gifts: *The Three Supremes*

(*Faith, Hope & Love*)

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The Three “Supremes” – Faith, Hope & Love

Last week I spoke about the spiritual gift of faith. How many of you have the spiritual gift of faith? Please raise your hands. Someone told me that they were afraid to raise their hands because they thought it was a trick question. OK, now that you’ve raised your hands, *prove* that you have faith.

Today, I’ll be speaking about the Three Supremes.

Faith is built upon the foundation of God’s *love*. We find this truth expressed in the most cherished and well-known verse in the Bible – John 3:16.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

love → faith

Our heavenly Father demonstrated His immeasurable, unfathomable and undeserved love for us through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. As a consequence of His proven love for us, we are to believe in Him – *faith!* The love *of* God produces faith *in* God.

Faith is one of three spiritual gifts discussed in the “love chapter” of the Bible. 1st Corinthians chapter 13 talks about the three supreme gifts: faith, hope and love.

Three in One

Before addressing their differences, let me share with you what they have in common.

These three gifts are intimately related to one another. All three of these gifts are given to each and every Christian. And each one of us here can grow in any of these three gifts. They are truly the best gifts and God graciously offers these priceless gifts to us without partiality.

In Ephesians chapter 6 Paul exhorts God’s people to “put on the whole armor of God,” including the “shield of faith.” In his first epistle to Thessalonica, Paul refers to all three supreme gifts as part of our spiritual armor.

1st Thessalonians 5:8 putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

You can study 1st Peter chapter 1 for a practical examination of these three gifts and how they interact with one another.

Courage

These spiritual gifts of faith, hope and love share much in common. One area of commonality I would like to briefly emphasize is that of *courage*. All three of these gifts give the believer courage. God, in ages past and through Jesus Christ today, repeatedly encourages His people to “Be strong and of good courage.” The spiritual gifts of faith, hope and love encourage, embolden and empower Christians to “be strong and of good courage.”

The apostle Paul writes that faith and hope both strengthen and embolden us.

Ephesians 3:12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.

2nd Corinthians 3:12 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech –

The apostle John tells us that love is courageous, indeed, *fearless*.

1st John 4:18 perfect love casts out fear

God has truly gifted His children with *courage* via the gift of the three supremes and through Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit, the source of these gifts.

The Spiritual Gift of Faith

The gift of faith enables us to *stand* on the promises of God. Faith relies on *God's* promises, on *His* character, on *His* love. Faith *trusts* in God and His providence.

In addition to giving us courage, faith *purifies* our hearts (Acts 15:9). As author Charles Swindoll writes, “faith doesn’t necessarily change the circumstances; it changes *us* so we can handle them.”¹

Faith is also a *shield* to protect us from the evils of Satan and this world.

Ephesians 6:16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Faith *strengthens* us with the conviction that God can do *anything* – that *nothing* is impossible with God.

Romans 4:20-21 He [Abraham] did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

The gift of faith doesn’t have all the answers, but it knows that God *does* – and therein lies our hope.

The Spiritual Gift of Hope

We can stand on the *promises* of God through the gift of faith. The gift of hope is the *safety line* which secures us to the next world even as we inhabit this world. Hope enables us to overcome and to endure. Indeed, hope gives us an *expectation* of the fulfillment of God’s promises and *endurance* to wait on the Lord.

We read of this in ...

Hebrews 6:19	This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil.
1 st Peter 1:3	... has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
1 st Peter 1:13	and rest [fix] your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
1 st Peter 1:21	... your faith and your hope are in God.
Proverbs 10:28	The hope of the righteous will be gladness,

One of the byproducts of hope is joy.

hope → joy

Just this week I heard a song about hope. I think it's title is "Great Expectations." The gift of hope *has* great expectations. In knowing God's character and power, His majesty and love, the gift of hope *expects* the greatness of God to shine in our lives. The song "You Are Able" expresses the truth that God can do so much more than we can ever dream. The gift of hope *amplifies* our dreams, *expands* our horizons. The gift of hope knows that God is much greater than we can ever imagine, and that gift of hope allows us to inhabit His promises in this life as we journey to the next.

Which brings us to ...

The Spiritual Gift of Love

We can *stand* on God's promises through the gift of *faith*. We are *elevated* to the heavenly realm through the gift of *hope*. The gift of *love* makes it all *worth while*. Love gives *purpose* and *meaning* to our lives.

1st Peter 1:22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.

Our love should be *expressed* from a pure heart.

Galatians 5:6 faith working through love

Our faith should be *expressed* in and through love.

The spiritual gift of love is God's greatest gift to us. It began with His love for us demonstrated at the cross. We love Him because He first loved us. And He has placed *His* spiritual gift of love within us – to love Him, to love each other, and to love those who are still in the world.

The greatest commandment is to love God with all our hearts. Do we? Do we love God with all our hearts? Is our love for God momentary or eternal? As human beings, we tend to live in the moment, but God is leading us into eternity.

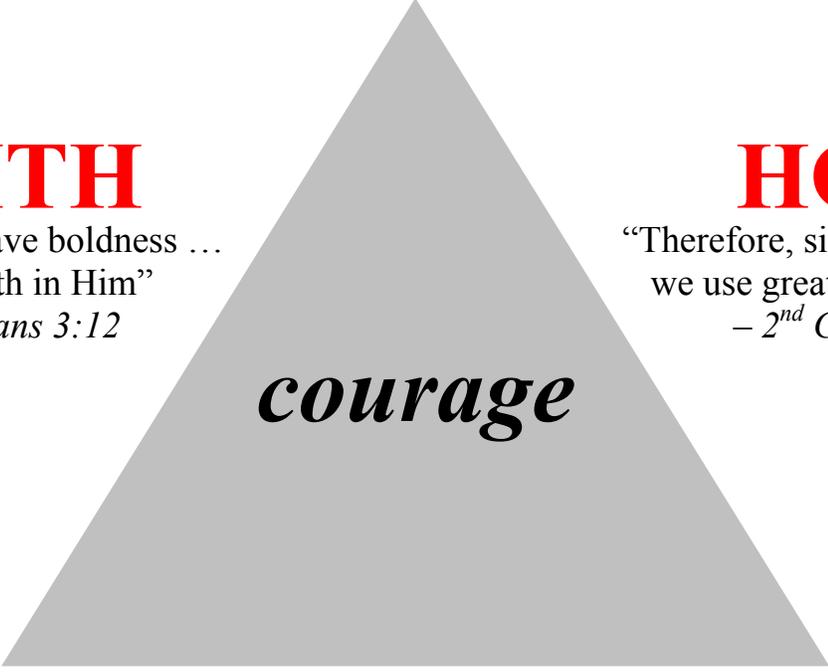
God is transforming our hearts – through these three supreme gifts – into the heart of Jesus Christ. God is perfecting us, transforming us, conforming us to the image of His perfect Son. God is accomplishing this transformation through the three supreme spiritual gifts. This perfect love we are to have is both a goal and a process. We grow in love, just as we grow in faith and in hope.

FAITH

“in whom we have boldness ...
through faith in Him”
– *Ephesians 3:12*

HOPE

“Therefore, since we have such hope,
we use great boldness of speech ”
– *2nd Corinthians 3:12*



courage

LOVE

“perfect love casts out fear” – *1st John 4:18*

In Conclusion

- ◆ **Faith** gives us the *courage* and *boldness* to begin and to fight the battle. It gives us *certainty* of victory in Christ.
- ◆ **Hope** provides us with the endurance, joyful optimism and *expectation* of victory.
- ◆ **Love** is both the *source* (motivator) and the *goal* (fruit) of the Christian experience. Love is the foundation and the capstone of the Christian life.

Faith gives us courage to take the first step. Hope gives us optimism to move forward. Love is the end result of the process. As we walk in faith and hope we experience and are enveloped by God’s love and in the situation or circumstances we exhibit *His* love.

Brethren, in our lives we have unanswered questions, unresolved situations, relationship issues – a whole host of trials and circumstances to contend with. God has given us these three supreme spiritual gifts to meet those challenges in our lives.

Let me encourage you to take the first step. Take the step of faith. Know that God will be with you and that He will embolden and empower you to be victorious. The first step is the hardest. But after you have taken that first step of faith, His hope will fill you to expect the victory. And you will rest in His love. God will give you His peace through whatever you are experiencing.

May God's spiritual gifts of faith, hope and love dwell richly within you and may you rest in His peace and His love. Amen.

Announcement

Next week we will be putting on Baltimore's second annual Passion Play, focusing on God's perfect love. We will rehearse the sacrifice of our Savior – our Brother – Jesus Christ.

Endnotes:

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, "Faith That Endures in Times Like These," 1993, pg. 23.