

Sunday, June 13, 2010
The Big Three: Faith, Hope, and Love

Many times we can get caught in tunnel vision and not see how things are in relation to other things. Our myopic focus can cause us to miss the other important factors that are essential to the whole. The job of a project superintendent is to see that the job is built according to plans. The different subcontractors have their individual jobs to do, but all need to blend together to complete the project. Problems arise when one sub fails to see the job as a whole and only focuses on his scope of work. For example when the plumber puts his dirty hands on the wall that has already been painted because he just wants to get his job done and is not even thinking about this other finished part of the job he negatively affects the overall project.

The Apostle Paul touched on the three major factors of the Christian life but singled out love as the greatest in 1 Corinthians 13. He was not negating the others nor wanting to detract from them. He just wanted to make sure that love would be the guiding principle in all of it. I have a little analogy I use help understand this. My relationship with the Lord is like having been lost at sea. By hearing the message of the hope of salvation and being rescued through what Jesus did for me on the cross I believe in him and he puts me in the boat. His love for me fills my heart because of what he's done and I'm saved. I now have a new life in him and a destination for my life. The boat is now my life. Hope is my destination, i.e. aiming at my port-o-call "Heaven" and what pleases the Lord. Faith is the motor that powers the boat and enables me to move. And love is the rudder that enables me to aim at the destination. Love is the most important because it is what keeps me on course. It's all about relationships. God loves us and wants us to love him and one another. Without love we could have all the faith in the world but we would never get to our ultimate destination. We may feel great and powerful as we buzz around the ocean but we won't get where we were intended to go. Hope is what stirred our hearts in the first place. We have a home! We have a life. We have a future.

When Paul speaks of love here, it centers on a relationship with God through Christ first. Then secondly, and just as importantly it includes our relationships with one another. People outside of faith may agree about the love principle, but not recognize that true love cannot be understood apart from a relationship with God because God is love. Love is not a warm fuzzy feeling. It is a person. That's why faith is essential. It is impossible to please God without it. Without faith we are not in relationship with God and without hope we cannot have faith. Faith is the vision that enables me to see the hope so I can experience the love. It's the big three!

Hebrews 11:1-6

1 Now **faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.** 2 This is what the ancients were commended for. 3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. 4 By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. 5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. 6 And **without faith** it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. (NIV)

Romans 4:1-5

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? 2 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about-- but not before God. 3 What does the Scripture say? "**Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.**" 4 Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. 5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his **faith is credited as righteousness.** (NIV)

Romans 4:13-25

13 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. 14 For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, 15 because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. 16 Therefore, **the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring**-- not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. 17 As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed-- the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. **18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed** and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." 19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead-- since he was about a hundred years old-- and that Sarah's womb was also dead. **20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.** 22 This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." 23 The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, 24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness-- for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. (NIV)

Ephesians 2:1-10

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. 4 **But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved.** 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--** 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (NIV)

Romans 8:16-25

16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. 18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 **For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.**(NIV)

Colossians 1:3-6

3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints-- **5 the faith and love that spring from the hope** that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel 6 that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and

growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. (NIV)

Hebrews 6:13-20

13 When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." 15 And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. 16 Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. 17 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. 18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, **we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.** 19 **We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.** It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. (NIV)

1 Peter 1:3-9

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into **a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,** 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-- kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that **your faith-- of greater worth than gold,** which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the **goal of your faith,** the salvation of your souls. (NIV)

1 John 4:7-21

7 Dear friends, **let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.** 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because **God is love.** 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 13 We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. **Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.** 17 In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 19 **We love because he first loved us.** 20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. (NIV)

Galatians 3:1-11

1 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. 2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or **by believing** what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? 4 Have you suffered so much for nothing-- if it really was for nothing? 5 Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or **because you believe what you heard?** 6 Consider Abraham: **"He believed God, and**

it was credited to him as righteousness." 7 Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. 8 The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." 9 So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. 10 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." 11 Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, **"The righteous will live by faith."** (NIV)

Galatians 5:14

14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: **"Love your neighbor as yourself."** (NIV)

Galatians 5:6

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. **The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.** (NIV)