The Greatest of These

(by Mark Moseley)

***“But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love”*** (**1 Corinthians 13:13**). Faith is the great shield which protects us against the flaming arrows of Satan.  Without faith it is impossible to please God.  Hope is the anchor of the soul. Righteousness, purity, holiness, moral excellence, kindness, self-control, perseverance and a host of other spiritual qualities rightly belong on our list of "essentials."  But one quality stands above the rest.  One word swallows and shapes all the others – LOVE.

Love may be abused, misused, twisted, contorted and distorted.  Thus, we may find ourselves spending most of our time railing against the abuses and misuses.  We may allow our focus to be on what love is not rather than appreciating what love is.

Read the first few verses of the chapter carefully.  Having love is not the same thing as being able to properly define love!  There are a lot of married couples who can explain very well how love ought to behave in marriage.  But they have no love in their hearts!  There are parents who can offer excellent descriptions of love in the context of the parent / child relationship – who then promptly abandon their families.

The challenge for today is to answer the question, "Do I have love?" Do I have love for God?  Do I have love for my neighbor?  Do I have love for my wife / husband?  Do I have love for my children?  Do I have love for the lost?  Do I have love for the truth?  Do I have love for righteousness?

The challenge is not met simply because I can define love or because I can explain love or because I claim love or even because I do some things that display love.  Because I can do all those things and still have a hollow heart. If you find that your love is lacking, I suggest that you spend a lot more time with God.  Ask Him to pour His love into your heart.

***“And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us”*** (**Romans 5:5**).

Today's Prayer:  *"I bow my spirit before the God who is love!  Father, pour out Your love into my heart by the Holy Spirit whom You have given.  Enlighten me that I may know the height and depth and width of Your love.  Even more, fill my heart with Your love until it stretches and bursts in an overflowing of divine love.  I would have love, Father!"*

Always Stand Firm, Never Stand Still

(by Jason T. Carter)

The faith of the Christian is not just a “good feeling” based purely on emotions, but is founded upon and rooted in the faith which is revealed in the New Testament.  It is not our faith, but the faith for which we are to earnestly contend (**Jude 3**).  We are to be established in the faith (**Colossians 2:6-7**).  We should always stand firm in the faith, and never be moved from it.

While we should always stand firm in the faith, we should never stand still.  A Christian’s faith will motivate him to work for the Lord (**James 2:24-26**).  If we are not working in His kingdom, we do not have a living faith.  Jesus told His followers, ***“Go into all the world…”*** (**Mark 16:15**).  The apostle Paul encouraged those in Thessalonica to ***“abound more and more,”*** and said they ***“ought to walk and to please God”*** (**I Thessalonians 4:1**).  If we are to please the Father we cannot stand still, but we must ***“walk worthy of the calling with which you were called”*** (**Ephesians 4:1**).

**The Carpenter’s Construction**

(by Bubba Garner)

***“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’ Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ”*** (**Matthew 16:13-20**).

People were saying all kinds of things about Jesus when He polled His disciples in Caesarea Philippi. He had been called a “gluttonous man,” a “drunkard,” and a “friend of sinners” in **Matthew 11:19**. Still others thought He was John the Baptist, Jeremiah or Elijah. But Peter confessed that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

From that statement, Jesus identifies three things about His church:

1.      “**Upon this rock**.” ***“No man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”*** (**I Corinthians 3:11**). The only reason this structure has been able to withstand death, hell and the devil himself is because the church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord.

2.      “**I will build**.” Since He was given ***“head over all things to the church”*** (**Ephesians 1:22**), He is the only One qualified to be the founder and architect. And He used the finest materials imaginable to assemble her – His own blood.

3.      “**My church**.” Any church that has not been built by Christ has not been built on the foundation of Christ. The danger of this is seen in Jesus’ warning that ***“every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be rooted up”*** (**Matthew 15:13**).

These truths have not changed, no matter what people may still be saying about Jesus and His church. Make Peter’s confession your own today.