

**The meaning of Christianity**

Christianity is a Person  
(Therefore a Relationship)

Christianity is a Revelation  
(Therefore an Authority)

Christianity is a redemption  
(Therefore a Dynamic)

Christianity is an Experience  
(Therefore a Decision)

**The Gifts of Our Father:  
Faith, Love and Hope**

Abilities Given in Salvation

Primarily Decisions

Inseparably Related to Practice

Intimately Related in Life

**Introduction**

- A. The Bible continually emphasizes the necessity of a correct response to God. This response is characterized by faith, love and hope. Whatever we think, desire and do, all of our attitudes, aspirations and actions must be in harmony with and in the context of trusting God, loving God, and making Him the object of our hope.
- B. At first glance this appears to be very confusing and difficult. It is such - particularly for the believer who has been a Christian for a number of years and has not been correctly taught. Once we live incorrectly, we establish certain patterns of life which are not easy to evaluate nor to correct. Such patterns continue to hamper us and lead us into defeat.
- C. One of the first steps in solving this problem and being led into a life of spiritual freedom and fruitfulness is the topic before us. We must understand the basis, the source, or the foundation of genuine faith, love and hope. The Biblical basis of a correct response to God is twofold.

**I. Preliminary Observations and Definitions.**

- A. The **ability** to express faith, love and hope is given in conjunction with salvation. They are included in the "gifts of grace"

Eph 2:8,9

*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.*  
NIV

- B. Faith, love and hope are primarily **decisions**—a choice of the will. While emotions are involved they are **not the basis** for such decisions. Valid choices of express faith, love and hope can be made even though one's emotions may seem contradictory.

Rom 4:18;

*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."*  
NIV

Heb 4:1,2; 11:24-29

- 1 *Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. 2 For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.*
- 24 *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.*
- 29 *By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.*
- NIV

(Note the words that indicate decisions of faith.)

- C. Faith, love and hope are inseparably related to **practice**. The evidence of their genuineness is found in such application to life.

James 2:14-19

- 14 *What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*
- 18 *But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.*
- NIV

- D. Faith, love and hope are **intimately related**. Note such significance in

Rom 5:2-5;

- 2 *through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 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.*
- NIV

1 Cor 13:13;

- 13 *And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*
- NIV

Gal 5:5,6;

- 5 *But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.*
- NIV

Col 1:4,5;

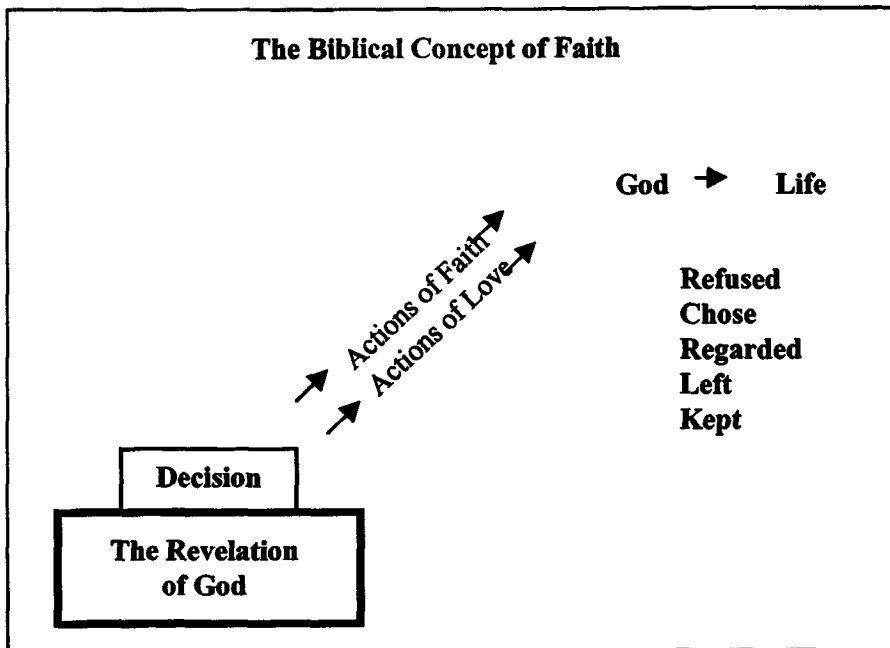
4 *because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints— 5 the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel*  
NIV

1 Thess 1:3; 5:8;

3 *We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*  
8 *But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.*  
NIV

Heb 6:10-12.

10 *God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. 11 We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. 12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.*  
NIV



**II. The Biblical Concept of Faith**

A. A provisional definition/explanation of faith.

*Faith is the response of the total person, to God as a person, in loving submission, trust and obedience, in and through the Person of Jesus Christ as the revelation of God and Redeemer of mankind, Who as the Sovereign Lord offers Himself to the believer, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the Scripture, as his daily sufficiency.*

Or, briefly stated, *Faith is a decision to take God at His Word and obey Him in the attitude and practice of constant trust.*

**B. Faith is based on the Person of God and His Word.**

1. It is vitally important to keep before us that the object of our faith is God Himself— the Person. He is the Living God, infinite in His faithfulness and power.

- a. The illustration of Abraham.

*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. " 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. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*

Rom 4:18-21

- b. The illustration of David

*David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I will strike you down and cut off your head...for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands. " 1 Sam 17:45-47*

2. Faith is based on God through His Word, the living and powerful Word of truth.

- a. The Illustration of Paul

*Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you. ' So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. Acts 27:23-25*

- b. The Illustration of Abraham (See section B. 1,a above)

**C. The importance and necessity of faith—believing God.**

1. Consider the content of these warnings and exhortations.

*Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. Heb 4:1,2*

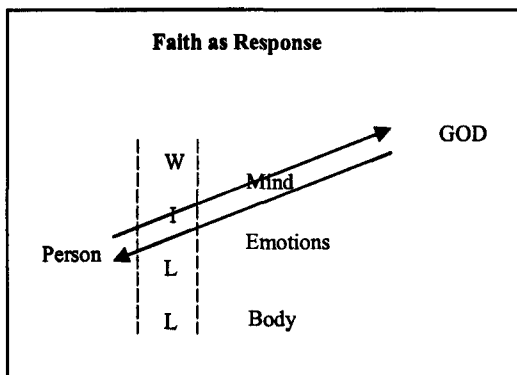
*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must*

*believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Heb 11:6*

*If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord. James 1:5-7*

*But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 1 Tim 6:11,12*

*Holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. 1 Tim 1:19*



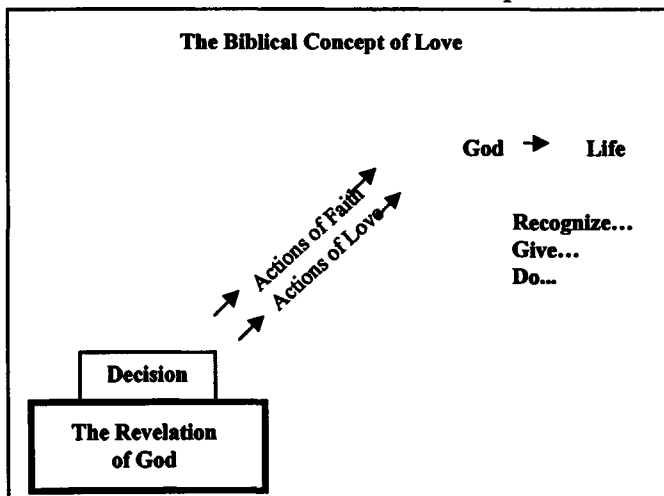
2. What does doubt and unbelief "say?"

a. Concerning God—unbelief states clearly:

- "I don't believe You can be trusted."
- "I do not believe You will keep Your Word."
- "I do not believe You have the wisdom to help me."
- "I do not believe You have the power to back up Your own Word."
- "I do not believe You care enough for me to help me."

b. Concerning ourselves—unbelief states clearly:

- "I choose to be an unbeliever in this matter."
- "I do not need to trust God in this area—I can take care of it."
- "I would rather not risk trying to trust God, He may fail me."
- "I'm not going to seek God and His Word in this area of my life."
- "I want to be a 'double-minded' person and not trust God."
- "I do not want God's help in this area—I'm going to do what I want."

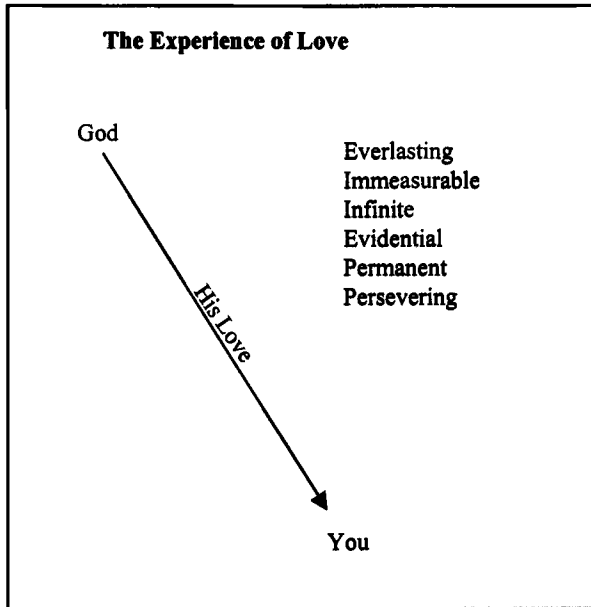


**III. The Biblical Concept of Love.**

A. A provisional explanation/definition of love.

*The recognition of another person as a person by giving that person the Biblical rights of personhood; giving that person their rightful place in one's life; and*

*doing what is right by that person, sacrificially, for their good.*



B. Some explanatory observations regarding love.

1. In His Love toward us God distinguishes between who we are and what we do. And, we are to do the same in our love for one another.

Matt 5:43-46;

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?"  
NIV

1 Peter 4:8

8 *Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*  
NIV

2. Love is proven only by its application to life.

1 John 3: 16-20

16 *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. 19 This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence 20 whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.*  
NIV

3. Love as a decision to obey God may contradict our emotions.

Matt 5 :43-46

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?"  
NIV

4. To love God means:
  - a. We must recognize and respond to Him as the great and infinite Person He is.
  - b. We must give Him His rightful place in our life.
  - c. We must take our rightful place in His life as responding to His invitations.
  - d. We must do what is right toward Him sacrificially because He is worthy.
  
5. We cannot love one another while despising one another and holding others hostage through grudges, bitterness, unforgiveness, manipulation, intimidation, self-righteous attitudes, planning methods of control, and the resistance of self-protection.

C. The importance of loving God.

1. It is the first commandment.

Matt 22:37-39

*37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*  
NIV

2. It is the virtue to be sought above all others.

1 Cor 12:31; 13: 13;

*31 But eagerly desire the greater gifts.  
13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*  
NIV

Col 3:14

*14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*  
NIV

3. It is a necessary requirement for exercising faith.

Gal 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

4. It is an evidence of genuine sonship.

John 13:34,35;

*34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*  
NIV

**1 John 3:16-18**

*16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

NIV

5. It is inseparably related to obedience.

**John 14:15,23,24;**

*15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command. 23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.*

NIV

**1 John 5:3**

*3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,*

NIV

6. It is the catalyst for understanding and obeying all the Bible.

**Matt 22:40**

*40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

NIV

**How to Love God**

1. Meditate on who He is
2. Repent of all failure to love
3. Choose by faith to love God
4. Express love in actions

- D. Consider the content of these warning and exhortations regarding loving God.

*Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ' This is the first and greatest commandment. the second is like it: 'love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. "*

Matt 22:37-40

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*

1 Cor 13: 1,2

*He who does not love me will not obey my teaching These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. John 14:24*

*If anyone does not love the Lord—a curse be on him. 1 Cor 16:22*



*This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. 1 John 3:10*

**Love is a Response**

A response to His invitation to escape death and enter life.

A response to His invitation to enter into a living relationship with Himself.

A response to His promises regarding the very best of life.

A response to joy, security, and fruitfulness based on His character.

**E. What does failure to love God "say."**

1. Concerning God—failure to love Him states clearly.

"God is not worthy of my love."

"God wants to reign over me that sounds like 'dictatorship.'"

"God can't and won't give me what I really want—my own way."

"God can't be trusted—love is risky."

2. Concerning ourselves—failure to love Him states clearly.

"I don't have the time love takes time—and I'm too busy."

"I choose to protect myself from love and God—I've been hurt."

"I know I should love God but I've tried and it involves conflict."

"I want to love God but I can't in myself. I'll wait until He loves me more."

**The Concept of Hope**

In the future



Actions of Faith = Hope  
Actions of Love = Hope

Refuse hopelessness

Choose hope

Act on hope:  
in faith  
and love

Decisions

The Revelation  
of God

**IV. The Biblical Concept of Hope**

- A. A provisional definition/explanation of hope.

Hope may be explained/defined as: *The interpretation of the future on the basis of the Scripture, through faith and love, so that one's attitude is characterized as the certainty of faith's expectation.*

**Some Essentials Regarding Hope**

- I. Hope is a decision  
A decision to exercise faith (Rom 15:13)
- II. Hope is an attitude regarding the future  
“The certainty of faith’s expectation”
- III. Hope is not primarily an emotion  
“Who against hope believer in hope” (Rom 4:18)
- IV. Hope is an attitude regarding the future  
“Hope that is seen is not hope” (Rom 9:24,25)
- V. Hope is associated with believing  
“In believing ... hope” (Rom 15:13)
- VI. Hope and believing are empowered by God  
“... hope ... power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13)

**B. Some explanatory observations about hope.**

1. A person can live without hope only by repressing their insecurity and finding false security in an illusion (idol). The most popular illusions are false religious beliefs, money, possessions, friends, education, I.Q., or the view that death ends everything.

1 Thess 4:13

*13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.*  
NIV

2. When the Christian tries to live outside the will of God in some areas of life, his view of hope suffers. And, the vacuum is quickly flooded with hopelessness and despair.

Ps 32:3,4; 51:3;

- 3 *When I kept silent,  
my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.*
- 4 *For day and night  
your hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was sapped  
as in the heat of summer. Selah*
- 3 *For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is always before me.*  
NIV

Is 59:9-15

- 9 *So justice is far from us,  
and righteousness does not reach us.  
We look for light, but all is darkness;  
for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows.*
- 10 *Like the blind we grope along the wall,  
feeling our way like men without eyes.  
At midday we stumble as if it were twilight;  
among the strong, we are like the dead.*
- 11 *We all growl like bears;  
we moan mournfully like doves.  
We look for justice, but find none;  
for deliverance, but it is far away.*

- 12 *For our offenses are many in your sight,  
and our sins testify against us.  
Our offenses are ever with us,  
and we acknowledge our iniquities:*
- 13 *rebellion and treachery against the LORD,  
turning our backs on our God,  
fomenting oppression and revolt,  
uttering lies our hearts have conceived.*
- 14 *So justice is driven back,  
and righteousness stands at a distance;  
truth has stumbled in the streets,  
honesty cannot enter.*
- 15 *Truth is nowhere to be found,  
and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey.  
The LORD looked and was displeased  
that there was no justice.*  
NIV

3. In contrast to the Christian, the Bible describes the non-Christian as being—in reality—without hope.

Eph 2:12.

- 12 *remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.*  
NIV

4. In the Bible the word "hope" is used in regard to a person's immediate or remote future.

Rom 8:24,25

- 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

5. In contrast to popular usage, the word "hope" is used in the Bible as something that is certain and sure. That is why the coming of the Lord Jesus is called "The blessed hope."

Titus 2:13

- 13 *while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,*  
NIV

6. Hope is not primarily a feeling. It is a virtue, a capacity, an enablement, a quality inseparably related to faith and love. For hope to be experiential it must be "used" as a function. The believer must choose make a decision to believe- and then act on what has been promised in the Bible regarding that decision. When this is done then it is hope that is the characteristic of our experience as "the certainty of faith's expectation."

Heb 11 :1

- 1 *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*  
NIV

7. The believer's hope is based in God as He has spoken to us through His Word. In fact one of the names of God is "The God of Hope."

Rom 15 :4; 15 :13;

- 4 *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*  
 13 *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*  
 NIV

1 Peter 1:21.

- 21 *Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.*  
 NIV

8. Hope is one of the great benefits given to us in salvation and is particularly related to the Resurrection of our Savior from the grave.

I Peter 1:3

- 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,*  
 NIV

#### **The Encouragement of Hope**

- I. A definition of hope  
 "The certainty of faith's expectation"
- II. The basis of hope  
 "The God of Hope" (Rom 15:13)
- III. The content of hope  
 "Through ... Scripture might have hope" (Rom 15:4)
- IV. The Context of hope  
 "and now abides faith, love, and hope" (I Cor 13:13)
- V. The Promise of hope  
 "I will never leave you: (Heb 13:5)  
 "I will supply your need" (II Cor 9:8)  
 "I will work everything for your good" (Rom 8:28)
- VI. The importance of hope  
 "And hope maketh not ashamed" (Rom 5:5)  
 All summarized in Rom 15:13

#### **C. The importance of hope.**

1. Hope is included in virtues of importance.

1 Cor 13:13

- 13 *And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*  
 NIV

2. Hope is the express will of God for every believer.

Rom 15: 13

- 13 *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*  
 NIV

3. The Holy Spirit gives Hope support and strength.

Rom 15:13

*13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*  
NIV

4. Hope is a vital part of faith and love when these are applied to the future.

Rom 4:18-21; 5:3-5; 8:23,25

*17 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.*  
*3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 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.*  
*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. 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*  
NIV

5. Hope produces many helpful by-products.

a. Hope produces rejoicing.

Rom 12:12

*12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*  
NIV

b. Hope produces joy and peace.

Rom 15:13

*13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*  
NIV

c. Hope produces patience.

1 Thess 1:3

*3 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*  
NIV

- d. Hope produces a helmet-like protection.

1 Thess 5:8

8 *But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.*  
NIV

- e. Hope produces assurance.

Heb 6:11

11 *We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.*  
NIV

### **Conclusion**

- A. The importance and value of these three virtues are overwhelming. Every believer will struggle in developing them into all the areas of life. It is imperative that we do not give up the struggle through discouragement or opposition. God's help is available.
- B. God has designed Christianity to work. And, faith, love and hope are the threefold (really three strands in one) way(s) we respond to God. Therefore, for Christianity to be practical, power and to work in our life they must be applied to our daily problems.
- C. A suggestion regarding how to apply faith, love and hope to a problem.
1. What essentially is the problem? Isolate it. Write it out. Become very clear at this point.
  2. What passages or Biblical principles apply to this problem? Be thorough.
  3. What is to be done to do to apply these passages or principles. Is it to pray, to trust, to apologize, the confess, to change priorities, to get help, to assume responsibility, etc. etc.?
  4. What is the next step? It is to put the answer to # 3 into practice by the exercise of faith, love and hope. And then, persevere, in spite of circumstances.
  5. If the problem persists (don't overlook the enemy or subtle self-centeredness) then ask for help and healing prayer.