

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY.

But now abideth faith, hope, love; these three, and the greatest of these is love. *R. V. 1 Cor. xiii. 13.*

The wisdom of God is displayed in the bestowal of miraculous powers upon the first messengers He sent to establish a new dispensation of favor among men. These were not ordinary messengers, but extraordinary ambassadors from the King of Heaven, who gave them as credentials the power to work miracles. When Moses was sent to the children of Israel, God gave him certain signs to convince him of His divine legation.

When the Son of God came from His Father to save the world, He did work which no other man could do, and left His rejectors without a cloak for their sin. They had seen Jesus, and had seen His Father in the work which Jesus did, and hated both Him and His Father (*John xv. 23, 24*). As God had sent Jesus into the world to save it by His life, death and resurrection, even so Jesus sent His apostles into the world to make this known, and in His name to offer salvation to every creature. He gave them the promise of the Holy Spirit and the power to work miracles. (*See Mark xvi. 15, 16; also 17, 18, 19 and 20 vs.*) He does not say "*these signs*" shall follow him that believeth and is baptized. He promises him salvation, but not *these signs*. These signs shall follow *them* that believe, that is, My ambassadors who heartily believe what they proclaim to others. Mark closes his history in recording the fulfilment of that promise, thus: "*So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God. And they went forth preaching everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following.*"

None were promised these signs but the apostles; but some other Christians received some of them through prayer and the laying on of the apostles' hands, and not directly from heaven as the apostles had. Those gifts were essential to the apostles, but only accidental to others. When Paul first preached at Corinth he came not with excellency of speech or wisdom declaring the testimony of God, and determined to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. When he told the simple story of Jesus' dying love, the Holy Spirit demonstrated its truth by the miracles the apostles wrought, and the faith of the Corinthians rested not on in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Many of them hearing believed and were baptized; so that his labors among them and the preaching of other brethren resulted in the gathering of a large and talented church, characterized by the many spiritual gifts its members possessed. Some of them had the gift of heal-

ing, others spoke in unknown tongues. Others again had the gift of prophesying, others of interpreting unknown languages, all coming miraculously from the Holy Spirit. The apostle dwells largely on these gifts in the 17th chapter of this letter, and knowing from experience the aptitude of children to prize the visible above the unseen and enduring, even to be more excited over the scaffolding used in building than over the building itself, he shows the Corinthians a more excellent way, and in this chapter goes on to show that these spiritual gifts as scaffolding were useful to the establishing of Christianity in the world, but when this was fully done, they would be taken away. When he himself was a child he spoke and acted and thought like a child, but when he became a man he put away childish things, and he urged his brethren to do religiously the same. He answers them that though he spoke with the tongues of men, and even angels, and had all supernatural knowledge, though he gave all he had to feed the poor, and even gave his body to be burned, that, without the all-pervading love of God, it would avail him nothing. "*But now abideth faith, hope, love.*"

What an unspeakable blessing it is that after miraculous gifts and supernatural knowledge have ceased that faith still abides, and brings us in confident touch with the unseen.

How mean and meagre would our understanding be of what is transpiring in the world if confined to personally what we see and hear. Few would know of the Windsor fire, or of the more recent and greater fire of London. But faith relates us to the rest of mankind far and near, that we may rejoice with the joyful and weep with those that weep. Like electricity it "overleaps time and annihilates space, and transforms our sphere into a whispering gallery."

By faith we understand that the worlds were formed by the word of God. By it we can see Abel offering his acceptable sacrifice to God, and though dead we yet hear him speak. By faith we can stand by Abraham about to offer up his son, and see Him who spared not His own son sparing the beloved Isaac, and giving His aged friend a panorama of the resurrection. By it we can see Moses choosing affliction with the people of God rather than Egypt's wealth and pleasure and sin, enduring every hardship as seeing Him who is invisible. By faith we can be familiar with Samuel, David and all God's prophets, because He has given us His faithful word and power to believe and understand it. What a double privilege! What could we do without God's testimony and without God's faith?

Better than all besides, by faith we can see Jesus coming from heaven to seek and to save that which was lost; can hear Him tell why His Father gave His only begotten Son. It was because He so loved the world that He gave Him that whosoever believeth on

Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. We can see Him going constantly about doing good, and hear Him inviting sinners to come to Him and be saved; telling in plain words how He would save them, and pleading with them to accept freely that salvation which He would die to procure and live again to bestow. All who come to Him in confidence is gladly received, saying that angels rejoiced over one sinner that repented. By faith we can see Him rejected by His own nation, condemned and crucified. We can see Him forsaken in the agonies of the cross by His own Heavenly Father, because He was dying for the sins of men. He cries at last, "It is finished," and commends His spirit unto His Father's hands. When the third day approached God raised Him from the dead, and He was seen by all the messengers whom He sent into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature, with His own promise that he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, while he that believeth not shall be condemned. These faithful men went out preaching the Gospel He gave them, and receiving into His family all who accepted His salvation. Those who came into the divine family they faithfully taught all things which He commanded them to teach. The faith which unites the sinner to Jesus and keeps him in His love, thank the Lord, still abideth. What can be greater?

And hope abideth. This hope very strongly resembles *faith*, and yet there is a difference which makes it one of the three. Each of them implies a strong confidence—a trust in the unseen. But there is this difference: Faith has to do with the unseen *past* and *present*; hope embraces the unseen *future*. It is a blessed provision of God that it still abides. Tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh *not ashamed*, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. (*Rom. v. 4, 5*). How great must be the hope thus produced, and that removes shame. When men shall meet the Judge before an assembled universe, the man with this love and this hope will be perfectly at ease. We are saved by hope. (*Rom. viii. 24*). The hope laid up in heaven coming from the truth of the Gospel saves from the guilt and condemnation of sin. How great must that be that they save? When the Savior was crucified the hopes of His disciples died also, but Peter praised the blessed God, who had begotten them again into a lively hope by Jesus' resurrection. This living hope grasped an undefiled, incorruptible inheritance reserved in heaven for the faithful. John says that every man who has in him the hope of seeing Jesus when He appears, and of being made like Him, purifies himself as Christ is pure. (*1 John iii. 3*). And this is the blessed hope that now abideth which can make a man purify himself to be like Christ. Paul speaks of those who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them, which hope we