

"The Key to our Happiness and Success has Three Notches on it"

"So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor. 13:13, ESV)

"And de now nyni remain menō faith pistis, hope elpis, and love agapē; · ho these houtos three treis. And de the greatest megas of these houtos is · ho love agapē" (English & Greek, Mounce)

"And so faith, hope, love abide [faith—conviction and belief respecting man's relation to God and divine things; hope—joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation; love—true affection for God and man, growing out of God's love for and in us], these three; but the greatest of these is love." (AMP)

A key is an instrument that is used to operate a lock. A simple definition of key is, "something that affords a means of access." The notches found on keys are put there to enable the key fit into a matching lock and turn it so as to open or close it.

As an adjective it could be used as, "chief; major; important; essential; fundamental; pivotal." As a verb we can use it as, "to regulate or adjust (actions, thoughts, speech, etc.) to a particular state or activity; bring into conformity. It could be used as, "to key one's speech to the intellectual level of the audience." It could be used in music in the sense of regulating *the key or pitch* of. In the computer world we use a *keyboard*. As an idiom it is used as meaning power or authority. Jesus used it this way talking to Peter in Matthew 16. As a synonym it is an answer, explanation, resolution, or a clue.

Time is generally divided into 3 parts, the past, the present and the future. The past is the past. We should learn from it but not live in it. The future will be a result of the present. The key to operating effectively in the present is Faith, Hope and Love. These three virtues have as their final scope to dispose man to acts conducive to his true happiness.

What is the three-notched key that unlocks the present and guarantees our future success? "What gives us the means of access to happiness and success?" The answer is given in this verse, "So now faith, hope, and love abide." These three supernatural principles create blessedness and happiness in a person's life.

1. Conviction. The first dimension of this is faith. God empowers us to see truth. We develop convictions out of this. One of the main meanings of "pistis" is conviction. This is the first dimension of bringing the success to our present. Conviction must always be founded in truth. We are in a day where people will not stand for principle. As the old saying goes, "If you don't stand for something you will fall for anything." This key helps us to concentrate on the things that really matter. Stop wasting your time on trying to please everyone and stand for the things that matter. Only as we develop strong convictions about God, family, country, community, etc. can we really make a difference in our world. Most folks would rather be liked than right. We must do things right to start with. It seems there is never enough time to do things right the first time but always enough time to do them over. Let us commit to doing the right thing in the present and leave the future with God.

2. Confidence. Our confidence must be built upon solid convictions. This is what gives us real hope and confident expectation for the future. Our will is so affected by the truth and the convictions we have we have that we truly believe that change of all sorts is not only possible but that they will in fact happen. "God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?" (Num. 23:19) Christ is the truth (Jn. 14:6). Without Christ is a hopeless end. With Christ is an endless hope. We must confidently be dispensers of hope.

3. Compassion. Here is how Divine Arithmetic works within the third dimension: "Add love, subtract hate, multiply confidence and divide between truth and lies." More Gospel Math, "When we share the load it is divided. When we share the love it is

multiplied.” The key to operating with conviction and confidence is found in love. Love is always founded on the goodness of God. Faith works by love (Gal. 5:6). “*And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us*” (Rom. 5:5). Love is what causes us to make a difference in our present world. Love is what propels us to give ourselves, our time, our treasure, and our talent in the present creating change for the future. You might give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. Give yourself away today and watch the change it makes on tomorrow.

These three are called Theological Virtues because they have God as their object, they are divinely imparted and they are known only through divine revelation. These three virtues are the key to our present happiness and our future blessing. “*So now faith, hope, and love abide.*” This is what we have *now* that we can rely on. They can be found in various forms. Use them to unlock the present and secure the future.

A virtue is a disposition to good acts. “Virtue is a good habit consonant with our nature.” (Augustine) These three are the key to our change. Making these three our method of operating will give us the present we desire and create the future we want.

Amen.