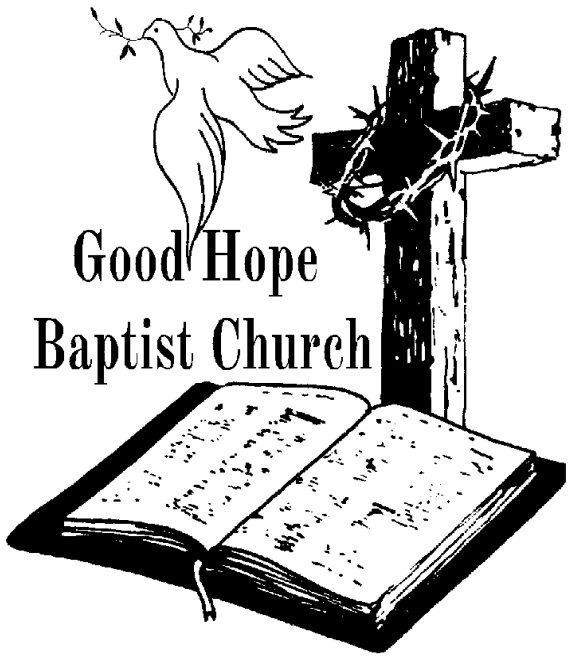
Double Thirteen

1 Corinthians 13:13



Living Together In The Love Of God

4038 Graham Sherron Rd
Wake Forest, NC 27587

Pastor David Buffaloe
Home 919-562-9456 Cell 919-600-4925
online at bibleteacher.org

FOCAL Read Responsively 1 Corinthians 13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; **but the greatest of these is charity.**

I have been told by those who are superstitious that the number *thirteen* is an unlucky number. No one really knows why that is. If you've ridden in an elevator - and most people have - you'll notice that the *thirteenth floor* is not a button you can push. The largest manufacturer of elevators, **Otis Elevators**, estimates that *85% of the buildings with elevators do not name* the thirteenth floor. That doesn't mean they don't have a thirteenth floor. They do, but they'll either skip it entirely by calling it the *fourteenth floor* or else they will use a letter like "M" or "12a" and "12b" - just to avoid that unlucky number.

Those who were sentenced to hang by the neck until dead considered the number unlucky, for there are *thirteen steps in the gallows*. Julius Caesar started a Civil War the *13th Legion*, which ended up destroying the Roman Empire. Apollo 13 was the only unsuccessful mission by the United States of America intended to land humans on the moon. The mission launched on April 11, 1970 at 13:13 CST. The explosion of an oxygen tank on April 13, 1970 caused severe problems before the astronauts were able to return to Earth.

It's strange that any American would consider 13 to be an unlucky number. *Thirteen is the number of colonies that began our Beloved United States*. The original flag had thirteen stars, one for each state. New stars have since been added whenever a new state joins the union, but the American flag to this day has *thirteen horizontal stripes*:

six white and seven red. God has blessed America, and I pray that one day America will once again bless God. I have to say that I feel that - though we have been blessed as a nation and as a people - it seems as if things are out of control right now. What's the problem? I think the problem is that our Country and it's citizens - and I include the Church in this - has forgotten that which is most important.

I don't know if you noticed or not, but our text today is a *double thirteen*. 1 Corinthians Chapter Thirteen and Verse 13. I myself don't believe that thirteen is an unlucky number. In fact, I believe that God will speak to our hearts today through this *double thirteen passage*.

Do I Have The *Genuine Faith, Hope, and Love* Or Do I Have A "Knockoff"?

ILLUSTRATE As a military man I had to take my share of bad assignments. One of the worst I ever had was my one year tour of duty in Korea. It wasn't a bad assignment because of the location. South Korea is a beautiful country, and I used to love to walk through the woods and in the hills of that place. It wasn't bad because of the people. The South Korean people were wonderful, and seemed to love Americans. I worked with some of the finest men and women I ever met while stationed in Kunsan, Korea. What made the assignment so bad was that I was separated from my precious wife and our young children for a solid year. Man, I hated that!

It was while I was in Korea that I was introduced to "Knockoffs". If you don't know what a "Knockoff" is, it is a cheaply made Korean imitation of a more expensive brand name. There were "Knockoff" Rolex watches, "Knockoff" Pentax cameras, and "Knockoff" clothing and shoes. What I really enjoyed was the "Knockoff" Niki® shoes. You could buy athletic shoes with the Niki® logo for pennies on the dollar. I bought as many shoes as I could, because my children were young and growing, and I thought "What a bargain!" It really wasn't a bargain, though. By the time I got home all of those pairs of "knockoff" shoes - even the ones I bought for my wife - fell apart. I tried wearing them myself. They looked good the shelf, but on a Korean trail the soles would just tear off. When the going got tough, these shoes fell apart. That was when I found out

> The mark on the shoe and the statement of the salesman is no proof that something is genuine. The mark of the genuine article is that it *keeps on going* in bad times and in good.

What is true in the world of manufacturing is also true in the spiritual realm.

1 Whether Faith, Hope, or Love, the genuine always remains through the good times and the bad times.

FOCAL 1 Corinthians 13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Word Study We read, **"And now abideth"**. The word **"abideth" (Greek Present Active Indicative MENO)** means **"to continue, to endure, to remain"**. That

which is genuine remains - it endures.

Trials test our faith as to whether that faith is genuine or not.

> A number of people *profess* to have faith in God, but when trials come they come apart! A genuine faith **abides** because a genuine faith trusts in the ever abiding God of the Bible.

2 Everyone on the face of this earth is tried - and Christians are tried most of all! The Scripture says:

Psalm 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all"

Did you read that Scripture carefully? The Bible doesn't tell us that the Christ follower will have *no* trials in this life. On the contrary, the Scripture promises that we will have **many trials, many afflictions.**

a We who are believers are tried by Satan.

1 Peter 5:8-9 (NIV) Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

When attacked by the devil those who have genuine faith will **resist the devil, standing firm in their faith**. One thing that should help us as believers is to understand that our suffering is not unique. **As Satan is attacking you, he is attacking other believers as well. Stand fast!** God will rescue you!

b Christ followers are also tried by the world. Jesus warned His followers:

John 15:18-19 (KJV) If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. ....

The world has two views that it offers to the Christ follower. It either *ignores us* (as it often does, as long as we're not making waves), or else it *hates us*. We who believe in Christ stand on the Word of God, believing that it is indeed His Word and not subject to change. The world doesn't like this, so it brands us as **"homophobes", "intolerant",** or **"bigoted"** if it recognizes us at all. Jesus told us that this would happen.

c Christians are even tried by other Christians.

Believers are not perfect - none of us are. The people to whom Paul initially wrote this letter to were far from perfect. The Church at Corinth was a divided Church, with every believer in it trying their best to get their own way. The Apostle told them:

Context 1 Corinthians 1:10-11 (KJV) Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no

divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

Corinth was far from perfect. And Corinth was not the only *trying and tried Church* in the New Testament. In **Acts 6** we see Christians in fighting in Church over a meal, so much so that the **Office of Deacon** was established **(Acts 6:2)**. The local Church at **Rome** had such a problem that the Apostle Paul wrote:

Romans 16:17-18 (KJV) Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. 18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

And **James warned the Church at Jerusalem**:

James 3:16-17 (NIV) ... where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. 17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

There are two things to remember when you are tried in the local Church: (1) No one is perfect, not even you, and (2) Every trial, from no matter what it's source, is used by God to strengthen your faith.

> The trials the Christ follower goes through is as necessary as the very air you breath!

Randy Alcorn wrote in his book *The Goodness of God*:

"When affliction comes, a weak or nominal Christian discovers that his faith doesn't account for it or prepare him for it. His faith has been in his Church, denomination, or family tradition, or in his own religious ideas - but not in Christ. As he faces evil and suffering, he may, in fact, lose his faith ... But that's actually a *good thing*; any faith that leaves us unprepared for suffering is a false faith that deserves to be abandoned."

Pastor John Piper says, **"Wimpy Christians won't survive the days ahead".** Genuine faith survives because genuine faith is implanted in the believer by the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not something we make, but something He makes.

Genuine faith stands the fire of affliction, because it is **God Who works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.** God is with the believer, and we are all works in progress. **We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works (Ephesians 2:8-9).** As the prophet says:

Isaiah 64:8 (KJV) But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we

all are the work of thy hand.

An unfired piece of pottery is no more than a dried out lump of mud. Fire changes the clay to china, and takes that which was unusable and makes you a thing of beauty!

If I Am Saved By Grace, I Am Called To Love

FOCAL 1 Corinthians 13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity {love}.

Illustrate A wife and her husband are lying in bed listening to the next door neighbor's dog. It has been in the next door backyard barking for hours and hours. Finally the husband jumps up out of bed and says, "I've had enough of this" and goes downstairs and out of the house. A few minutes later he comes back up to bed. His wife asked, "Honey, the dog is still barking. What have you been doing?" The husband says, "I put the dog in *our* backyard. Let's see how THEY like it!"

Vengeance never lasts, but genuine love abides. Most people today don't have a clue what *genuine love* looks like, because we have been so corrupted by the Hollywood definition.

Too many people define "love" by Hollywood. Young people "fall in love" and then later "fall out of love". What they fell into is no more love than a mud puddle is a bowl of soup!

Genuine love – the love that we are to strive toward and to exercise – is quite different from the world's definition of love. The world says "Genuine love is accepting of anything you want to do, no matter what it might be". The Lord, on the other hand, says that genuine love *absorbs* brutality while *expressing* Christian virtues. Patience, kindness, a lack of bragging about self and high mindedness, and overlooking wrongs done to self are all traits of true love.

Genuine love is *unnatural* to the flesh. I have to confess that when I am offended my first inclination is *to strike back*. This is the Old Adamic Sin Nature rising up within me. Yet if I am born again by faith in Christ then I know that I am **to turn the other cheek.** Let the godless strike back. The Godly are called to be salt and light, to be love in an unloving world.

1 Love is more than just going through the motions.

Context 1 Corinthians 13:3 (KJV) .... though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

When it was reported that **Warren Buffet gave 1.6 billion dollars to the Gates Foundation** last year, the news media went wild with praise. *Forbes Magazine* lists Buffet as the richest man in the world, with an estimated value of **62 billion dollars**. Is it good that these rich people are giving to help poverty stricken people worldwide? Certainly - from our perspective.

God says **love that costs you nothing from your soul does you no good - it's not true love.**

There is no benefit in giving a little of your overflow, not to you. Genuine love is more than just going through the motions. Genuine love costs you something outside of cash. Our Lord Jesus Christ watched the Pharisees of His day make a big deal of giving in the Temple. He watched first one then another loudly proclaim their generosity as they dropped money into the collection plate. Then Jesus watched:

Mark 12:42 (KJV) And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

This woman dropped in **the equivalent to a half cent into the collection plate**. How did Jesus respond? He said:

Mark 12:43-44 (KJV) ... Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: 44 For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

It cost this woman something to serve her God! She was doing more than just *going through the motions*. She was loving God with all she had.

One day our Lord went to visit a man named Simon, a Pharisee who had been afflicted with leprosy. Having come through a trial himself you would think that Simon would be gracious. But when Jesus came visiting, Simon tolerated Him, but gave Him little hospitality. At a certain point as Jesus reclined at the dinner table the Bible says:

Luke 7:37-38 (KJV) ... behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, 38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

Simon watched this, and within himself began to condemn Jesus. **"If this Man were a Prophet, He's know what type of woman this is!"** After a few moments Jesus, looking at Simon, said:

Luke 7:44-48 (KJV) ... Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. 45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. 48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

This woman, whose sins were great, was doing more than going through the motions. She loved Jesus, and she showed that love from the inside out.

Our Lord Jesus Christ did more than just *go through the motions* for you and I. The Bible tells us that He gave His all.

Isaiah 53:5-6 (KJV) **... He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.**

We weren't "good people who just made a mistake". We were all **sheep who willingly went astray** - and yet Jesus reached out for us all.

2 Love is a mindset that says "life is more than me".

Context 1 Corinthians 13:5 KJV **"Charity ... Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil"**

> All of the things that *love isn't* that are listed above can be summed up by saying, *genuine love* is not about me, but it's about blessing others. Love remains, but selfishness and self centeredness destroys.

Illustrate Every civilization that has ever collapsed has done so when its citizens became too "me oriented". The Roman Empire fell because of self centeredness and sin. The first generation of Israel could not inherit the Promised Land, but wandered to their deaths in the wilderness because of selfishness. We see a very graphic picture of this in **Numbers chapter 16.** Four men led an uprising in Israel against Moses. This uprising eventually led to **God bringing a plague that killed 14,700 people**. How did Moses and Aaron stop this terrible plague? The Bible says that **Moses and Aaron *stood in the gap and in love made atonement for the sinner***.

Numbers 16:47-48 And Aaron ... ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

There is a plague destroying America and destroying God's Church in America. What is this plague? It is selfishness, and lovelessness, an out of control generation that needs to be introduced to the love of Christ.

If you are born again by faith in Christ, know that God expects you as His people to be like Him. Represent Love to others. Stand in the gap like Aaron did.

If you are born again, people must see Christ in you, for they cannot see God at work without you. We can tell people "God loves you, He cares for you", and that's true. But listen Beloved.

> If people cannot see God at work through us and in us, then our faith will have no effect on our culture.

3 Love gives even to the "undeserving".

Illustrate A couple with three children waited in line at San Francisco's Pier 41 to purchase tickets for a sightseeing boat to Alcatraz Prison. The children weren't good at waiting: they fidgeted, whined, and punched one another. The frazzled parents reprimanded them to no avail. Finally they reached the ticket window. **"Five tickets, please,"** the father said. **"Two round trip, three one way."**

Dear friends, none of us deserves the love of God. None of us are good. All of us are like those children, sinners all. Yet God in love reached out to us. We as humans have a tendency to *quantify sin*. We say "that's a BIG sin" and "that's a little sin". Fact is, God views sin as horrendous, whether big or small.

> Sin, properly defined, is where the finite creature ignores the Infinite Creator and does what it wants to do.

Illustrate On January 5, 1993 **Westley Allan Dodd** was executed for murdering three boys in the late 1980's. Two things amazed me about that entire event. First, before he died someone told Dodd about the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. His last words were **"I had thought there was no hope and no peace. I was wrong. I have found hope and peace in the Lord Jesus Christ."** It amazes me that the Love of Christ will reach *anyone*, for Jesus died for *everyone*. The Bible says:

1 John 2:2 (NIV) **{Jesus} is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.**

You know what else amazed me? That when Dodd said this, many who sat watching his execution were enraged. Certainly - they thought - Jesus Christ gave Himself for those who did wrong - but not for the Dodds of this world! The strange thing is this: too many people are like **Simon the Pharisee**. They quantify sin. **"If Jesus is a Prophet, He won't touch that person"**. The Biblical fact is that God says He hates all sin - but has provided THE way of salvation in Jesus Christ alone.

Romans 10:9 (NIV) **That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

The Lord Jesus Christ died for *everyone*. He died for Dodd, and He died for me. Have you given yourself to Him?

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2 Everyone on the face of this earth is tried - and Christians are tried most of all! **Psalm 34:19**

a We who are believers are tried by Satan.
1 Peter 5:8-9 _____
_____

b Christ followers are also tried by the world.
John 15:18-19 _____
_____

c Christians are even tried by other Christians.
1 Corinthians 1:10-11; Acts 6:2; Romans 16:17-18; James 3:16-17 _____
_____
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Ephesians 2:8-9; **Isaiah 64:8**

If I Am Saved By Grace, I Am Called To Love

1 Corinthians 13:13

1 Love is more than just going through the motions.
1 Corinthians 13:3; Mark 12:42; Mark 12:43-44; Luke 7:37-38; Luke 7:44-48; Isaiah 53:5-6
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2 Love is a mindset that says "life is more than me".
1 Corinthians 13:5*;* Numbers 16:47-48 _____
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3 Love gives even to the "undeserving". **1 John 2:2; Romans 10:9** _____
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