

The necessary but neglected part

Imagine a doctor who regularly neglects one part of a standard three-part procedure. As a result, the patients he treats become sicker and die. We wouldn't allow someone so inept to care for a sewer cat. We'd want that physician banned from medicine.

The Bible speaks of a three-part cure. Preachers ignore the first part. You rarely hear sermons on the topic. Why not? Many people of science and letters ridiculed ministers concerning aspects of the subject in the past. Fearful of criticism, most religious people removed the issue from their belief system. They talk about it only at funerals. Despair results. You've probably guessed; I refer to *hope*, the sister of *faith* and *love*.

Here is part of the problem. Few know how hope relates to its siblings. Even fewer know a Christian's real hope. In the mid-1800s, thousands of people traveled the Oregon Trail. Most of them set out because of a promise. They envisioned fertile, well-watered, inexpensive land at the end of their journey. Most travelers believed they could succeed. Of course, those on the journey needed to get along with those who traveled with them. Yet anticipation in that ultimate Northwest goal impelled them. Without hope, their faith had little basis and their love no unifying force.

What is your great hope? The Scriptures promise resurrection with Jesus on the Last Day. That conviction filled early Christians with purpose, and loving compassion. Does that hope keep you going in the trials and tests of life? Unless our prevailing hope is to join the risen Jesus, our faith founders in confusion and our love lacks a binding force. **"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection . . .and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection of the dead,"** Philippians 3:10,11 (NIV).

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