

Rise Up And Build

"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18

“The Greatest Of These Is Love”

(Continued from Last Week)

A Study of I Corinthians 13

By Marc Gibson

Love Is Not Provoked

The next characteristic of love mentioned by the apostle Paul is that it is *“not provoked.”* This is the opposite of a person who is always irritable and exasperated with others. The Christian who has grown in love will not easily lose his temper or quickly become annoyed with someone. We have seen already that true love *“suffers long and is kind”* (v. 4). Being an irritable and bad-tempered person is not fitting for a child of God who should be radiating compassion and good will.

Willis comments that the word *paroxuno* “means ‘to spur on; to stimulate; to stir in anger’; in the passive mood, it means to be provoked to wrath, ‘irritated or incensed.’ love does not go around with a chip on its shoulder. The injuries that come to it are borne without bitterness or resentment; it does not fly into a fit of rage” (*I Corinthians 373*). Lipscomb and Shepherd add that one filled with love “looks soberly at things; and though he may be injured, yet he governs his temper, restrains and subdues his feelings” (*I Corinthians 198*).

There are many times in life that we will become frustrated and irritated with someone or something. That is the time when love will restrain and calm us that we may treat one another with kindness and patience. May we develop this love.

Love Thinks No Evil

The next thing we learn is that love *“thinks no evil.”* The word translated *“think”* (*logizomai*) was used for entering debts on a ledger. It is the idea of keeping a running log of offenses against oneself. An individual who lacks godly love will find pleasure in keeping track of all perceived bad things done to him/her. On the other hand, one who loves God and his fellow man would never find such a practice appealing.

One commentator notes that “love does not allow its mind to dwell on the offenses that has occurred. To do this would be to allow bitterness and resentment to fill one’s life. Love will not allow that to happen” (Mike Willis, *I Corinthians 374*). If something is wrongfully said or done, a loving attitude will resist any thoughts of anger or revenge as it seeks to forgive and be

reconciled. Mastering this loving attitude will make our lives more pleasant.

The leading reason some keep track of every offense done is so that they can use it against someone later on. This attitude is poisonous to a marriage, friendship, church, or any other relationship. It is also poisonous to the soul. It refuses to forgive and forget (not bring it up again). Let your love “*think no evil.*”

Love Does Not Rejoice in Iniquity

The apostle Paul mentions next that godly love “*does not rejoice in iniquity.*” The word “*iniquity*” (*adikia*) is a general term to describe any transgression of the will of God. This tells us that love finds no pleasure in any act of sin. There is simply no reason whatsoever for the Christian to rejoice when God’s will has been violated. Yet some will be glad because it either benefits them or hurts someone they despise.

William Barclay gets to the heart of this characteristic of love:

It is not so much delight in doing the wrong thing that is meant, as the malicious pleasure which comes to most of us when we hear something derogatory about someone else. It is one of the queer traits of human nature that very often we prefer to hear of the misfortune of others rather than of their good fortunes. It is much easier to keep weep with them than to rejoice with those who rejoice. We are much more interested in hearing a spicy story to someone’s discredit than a story to someone’s praise. Christian love has none of that human malice which finds pleasure in ill reports. (*The Letters to the Corinthians, 136*).

If you feel a little twinge of glee when someone has slipped down the path of sin, you might want to consider that you also have sinned with this ungodly attitude. Remember, true love will never rejoice in iniquity but seek to restore.

Love Rejoices In The Truth

Paul next describes love as rejoicing “*in the truth.*” The truth here refers to the gospel, that which is called “*The word of the truth of the gospel*” (Col. 1:5). Love rejoices with and in divine truth when souls are affected by it for spiritual good. The apostle John wrote that he “*rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father*” (2 John 4).

William Barclay admits that this “is not so easy as it sounds. There are times when we definitely do not want the truth to prevail; and there are still more times when the last thing that we want to hear is the truth. Christian love has no wish to veil the truth; it is brave enough to face the truth; it has nothing to conceal and so is glad when the truth prevails” (*The Letters to the Corinthians, 136-137*).

Godly love will not compromise the truth by excusing the sins of friends while condemning those standing for the truth. Instead, we should speak the truth “*in love*” (Eph. 4:15). Love wants truth to prevail in every area of life and rejoices when it does. Love will also rejoice when truth exposes problems in one’s own life so that sin can be put away and obedience rendered to the saving of the soul. Do you love truth? If so, you will rejoice daily in the effective working of the truth of God.

Love Bears All Things

As Paul nears the end of the inspired list of characteristics of love, he groups four characteristics together with the like phrase “*all things*” (Gk. *Panta*). The first of these is that love “*bears*” all things. “Bear” (Gk. *Stegoi*) has two meanings: “1. cover, pass over in silence, keep confidential... 2. bear, stand, endure” (*Arndt and Gingrich Greek-English Lexicon*, 765-766).

The first meaning would agree with the principle stated in I Peter 4:8, “*And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.*” As William Barclay observes, it is the “sense that love will never drag into the light of day the faults of others and the mistakes of others. It would far rather set about quietly mending things than publicly displaying and rebuking them” (*The Letters to the Corinthians*, 137). The second meaning suggests that love can bear any fault, affliction, or injury brought against it. “The text will bear either meaning and both options suggest virtues that commend themselves to us” (*Mike Willis, I Corinthians*, 375).

As we have seen already, true love is longsuffering and does not seek its own. It will bear any injury to uphold truth and save a soul. It is also willing to keep certain matters confidential to protect and help others. Will your love bear all things?

Love Believes All Things

The second of the four characteristics of love linked together with the like phrase “*all things*” is that love “*believes all things.*” Paul is not suggesting that love will believe anything it hears or sees, as a gullible person might. Rather, love desires to believe that is true and right, both as it relates to God and man.

Love takes God at His word concerning His promises, commands, and facts. If God said it, that settles it, and we must believe it. We must believe all of it, for the entirety of God’s word is truth (Psa. 119:160). In relation to man, “when love has no evidence to the contrary, it believes the best about its fellowman. It refuses to yield itself to unfounded suspicions and doubts. It grants the brother the benefit of every doubt. Contrast tis with the “evil surmisings” of the false teacher in I Tim. 6:4” (*Mike Willis, I Corinthians* 375). Love wants to believe the best about another person and will until it is proven otherwise.

Too many times with too many people we tend to think the worst, perhaps based on personal prejudice or what someone else has told us. If you are willing to believe all that God has said, should you not follow His example and seek to believe the best about others, especially your brethren? You would want to be treated the same (Matt. 7:12).

Love Hopes All Things

The third of the four characteristics of love linked together with the like phrase “*all things*” is that love “*hopes*” all things. Hope is a wonderful attribute of love. A loveless heart devoid of hope is an empty gloomy heart. Hope is that which carries us through the difficult and perplexing days of life. There is the hope of a better tomorrow, of a better circumstance, and of a better opportunity. And then there the ultimate hope of God’s promise of eternal life (Tit. 1:2). Love opens discouraged eyes to see this hope.

Many in our world live in a hopeless state. They are “*without Christ...having no hope and without God in the world*” (Eph. 2:12). The gospel of God’s love brings hope to the hopeless. This, in turn, creates a heart that “*hopes all things.*” Pessimism is

exchanged for optimism. Down-in-the-mouth attitudes are traded for a confident outlook that finds the best in this world even in the worst of circumstances.

Love will hope for the best even when the evidence suggests the otherwise. This does not mean that it will turn a blind eye to wrongdoing, but love will rebuke the sinner hoping that he will turn from his sinful ways. God hopes all things, "*not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (I Peter 3:9). Is your love characterized by this kind of optimistic hope? (to be Continued)

Sentence Sermons:

“Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them.”

“In prayer it is better to have a heart without fancy words, than fancy words without a heart.”