

“Love ...”

“... suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil, rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faith ...” (1 Cor. 13:4-8a).

Bible readers are aware this familiar passage would be better remembered had the ASV translated the word “love” as “charity,” but in our modern-day parlance, the definition of love as the apostle gives it hardly fits our conception of “charity.” “Charity” in our modern world might not have a single quality of the “charity” of the King James Version. However, laying aside the glaring difference, the two translations bear a remarkable similarity to each other; each giving seven positive traits of “love” and eight negative ones.

It scarcely needs to be said that Paul defines “love” as man manifests it to man: God is “longsuffering” to us; it is not true that man is “longsuffering” to God. Thus, as Paul notes, love ...

SUFFERETH LONG. Love toward our fellow man means we are slow to anger with him; that while he may have faults, we remember our own. It is well exemplified in God’s attitude toward us “the Lord is not slack concerning his promises as some count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish ...” (2 Pet. 3:9).

IS KIND. One of the virtues of Solomon’s worthy woman is that the “law of kindness is on her tongue” (Pro. 31:26). The wise man wrote that that which makes a man to be desired is his kindness (Pro. 19:22). “Kindness” suggests “compassion.” The gentle treatment the good Samaritan gave to him who “fell among thieves” demonstrated kindness or compassion.

ENVIETH NOT. He who loves does not envy — feel displeasure — at the good fortune of others. He rather can rejoice in that one’s good fortune; and can be happy that something good has come into that person’s life.

VAUNTETH NOT ITSELF. The thought here is that he who loves is not boastful of his accomplishments. He is reluctant to mention his achievements. Rather he let “another man praise him,” not his own lips (Pro. 27:2). A boastful person, or a braggart, loves himself and seeks to exalt himself.

IS NOT PUFFED UP. He who loves is not filled with pride at who he is, what he has, or what he has done. The wise man has much to say about pride, but humility is a quality which, when manifested to others, shows love.

DOETH NOT BEHAVE ITSELF UNSEEMLY. Love does not take advantage of another and is content always to be and do that which is above reproach.

SEEKETH NOT ITS OWN. Love is not intent on promoting its personal interest but desires and seeks to advance the interests of others. The needs of others take priority above his own personal wants.

IS NOT PROVOKED. The KJV puts this "*is not easily provoked*" which seems to be the heart of the statement. Love does not have a "short fuse," but rather is longsuffering in dealing with others.

TAKETH NOT ACCOUNT OF EVIL. Love does not look for evil in others; rather it attempts to discover the good. Nor does it have a certain number of offenses it looks for to cut off association with someone else.

REJOICETH NOT IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS BUT REJOICETH IN THE TRUTH. Love is not glad when someone stumbles or "gets what he deserves." He finds no happiness that calamity comes to another who is obnoxious and deals unfairly with others. Rather, love is able to rejoice when fortune smiles on someone else, although he is personally bypassed.

BEARETH ALL THINGS. This word is sometimes used to mean to cover, conceal, or hide and Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4:8 that "*love covers a multitude of sins.*" But the word "bear" can also signify to bear up, to endure, to be patient. Such is likely its meaning here. The "all things" which follow this and the following three qualities must be understood in a limited sense. There are some things which it is neither right nor praiseworthy to bear, believe, hope, or endure.

BELIEVETH ALL THINGS. Love thinks the best of all until grudgingly shown otherwise. It does not have suspicious motives; nor is not ready to believe the worse in reports of others. It wants to see the best of all.

HOPETH ALL THINGS. Love hopes that whatever ill surfaces in others, the motive and aims were good. It hopes for a good ending for all circumstances.

ENDURETH ALL THINGS. We have now come full circle from love's first defined characteristic: "*Suffereth long*" to "*endureth all things.*" Thus the apostle has shown the qualities we ought to manifest in our dealings with

other men. He has laid out for us what it means to "*love thy neighbor as thyself.*"

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