

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXII

December 2, 2012

No. 49

## Love's Fourfold Summation

(Jerry Fite)

**P**aul reminds us in I Corinthians 13 that love is what we do, not merely what we feel. It is the active goodwill toward others. Love's action encompasses a proper attitude toward self issuing into a proper action toward others. One might be susceptible of remembering all the wrongs people do to them when they are “*puffed up*” in their own heart regarding themselves. But love “*does not vaunt itself*”, nor does it “*take account of evil*” that others do (*I Corinthians 13:4-5*).

After revealing eleven distinct “actions” and “inactions” of love, Paul writes that love “*beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things endureth all things*” (*I Corinthians 13:7*). It is as if Paul is summing up the distinct characteristics of love with an all encompassing and final fourfold action. Love's actions reach a crescendo with these final four words.

Love bears and endures all things. Two distinct words are conveying distinct but related meanings. The word “bear” literally means to “cover” like one

being covered by a “roof”. “Enduring” denotes patiently bearing under something without giving in to the weighty circumstance. When one goes to one in private and addresses the wrong done to them instead of first broadcasting to all what evil the person has done to them (*Matthew 18: 15*), are they not “bearing” or “covering” the wrong? Are they not acting in love for the person's soul, while still protecting them from the glares of others? When all is done and no repentance is offered, one might have to “endure” or bear up under the wrong.

Some see the bookends of “beareth” and “endureth all things surrounding the inner “believeth” and “hopeth all things”. They see love continuing to believe and hope in God when things are difficult as they bear and endure hardships. This is a godly attitude and a necessary action of the Christian. However, Paul is stressing throughout these verses love's action toward others, not one's attitude toward God. So how can believing and hoping relate to others in this context?

When we trust or believe that one has acted in a proper way when we hear rumors of improper action, we are manifesting love for that person. When we trust their motives were pure when having to do something that is controversial, we are “believing all things.” When truth proves otherwise, we still hope pure motives and proper actions will ensue.

Looking back at the eleven characteristics of love we can see how they fit in this fourfold summary. One seeking always to protect or cover others will probably not be puffed up people seeking to exalt oneself; will not be easily provoked, nor be quick to seek one's own ; but will be kind and not act unseemly. When one believes regarding others, they will probably not be people whose hearts are filled with envy. They will not be the type who rejoices in unrighteousness, but are people who rejoice in the truth. They will continue to hope for the best in others instead of taking account of their evil. In the end they will continue to endure, for love suffers long. Love never fails!