

The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians

The Characteristics of Love

1 Corinthians 13:6-8

1. Love _____ (v.6)
Paul's final contrast (vs. 4b-6a) is between its responses to truth and unrighteousness. Unrighteousness properly summarizes the wickedness of the world and its systems (cf. Gen. 6:11; Rom. 1:18, 29; 2 Pet. 2:15) and truth properly summarizes God's revelation of Himself in this world (John 11:17; 14:6; 17:17). It is the enemy's desire for Christians to be alienated from the truth (cf. Gen. 3:1), but it is the believers' joy to find fellowship with the truth (cf. 2 John 4).
2. Love _____ (vs.7-8a)
Paul's four positive statements about all that love does are hyperbolic (v.7; cf. vs.1-3) and are summarized in the one negative statement that follows (v.8a).
 - A. Love Bears All Things
This word's exact meaning here is debated. The basic meaning is "to cover" and its cognate noun is the word translated "roof" (cf. Mk. 2:4). Love toward others characterized in this way covers over their faults or shortcomings so they are not a deterrent for fellowship (cf. 1 Pet. 4:8). It does not coddle sin but protects the sinner from gossip and ridicule (cf. Prov. 10:12).
 - B. Love Believes All Things
This love is not characterized by foolish gullibility, but a desire and willingness to believe. Love that is characterized by believing all things related to God is confident of the truth of God's Word even when that seems foolish to the world (1 Cor. 1:18; cf. Acts 26:24). This activity of love toward others is devoid of cynicism and interprets their actions in the best possible way.
 - C. Love Hopes All Things
Love that hopes in God is confident that He will accomplish all that He has promised to do, and He can be trusted in all things (cf. 2 Cor. 1:10). A love characterized by continuing hope toward others is optimistic; this is a love that expects God's sanctifying grace to mature His people so that their lives will demonstrate this maturity (cf. 2 Cor. 10:15).
 - D. Love Endures All Things
This word is almost always used to describe steadfast endurance in the context of persecutions or provocations from adversaries (cf. Matt 10:22; James 5:11; 1 Pet. 2:20). Those who have this enduring love will not abandon give up and abandon the Lord or His people in the face of any persecution or hardship (2 Tim. 2:10; Heb. 12:3).