

Love Believes and Hopes the Best

1 Corinthians 13:7

Pastor Phil Layton, GCBC, November 14, 2021

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. That's 1 Cor 13:7, today's text. Listen to J.B. Phillips NT in Modern English: ¹*If I speak with the eloquence of men and of angels, but have no love, I become no more than blaring brass or crashing cymbal.* ²*If I have the gift of foretelling the future and hold in my mind not only all human knowledge but the very secrets of God, and if I also have that absolute faith which can move mountains, but have no love, I amount to nothing at all.* ³*If I dispose of all that I possess, yes, even if I give my own body to be burned, but have no love, I achieve precisely nothing.* ⁴*This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience—it looks for a way of being constructive [or kind]. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.* ⁵*Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil* ⁶*or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails:* ⁷*Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything.* ⁸*It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen.*

That's a **paraphrase** from the original language but it's helpful to hear it in a bit different wording. We're studying v. 7 but it's helpful to hear the whole:

- Wuest NT: 'bears up under all things, not losing heart nor courage'
- Greek scholar named Thiselton translates v. 7, love 'never tires of support, never loses faith, never exhausts hope, never gives up.'¹ He gives an alternative translation faithful to the Greek 'there is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, its endurance'
- NLT (semi-paraphrase): 'Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.' NIV has 'Always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres'
- Other paraphrases: 'never stops believing, never stops hoping' (GW)
- 'Love has the power of undergoing all things, having faith in all things, hoping all things' (BBE) or 'always supportive, loyal' (CEV)

Whatever words your Bible has, these are challenging words

PRE-SERIES SURVEY: v. 4-7 uses **adjectives** for what love is and is not. Only 3% disagreed – there's actually **NO adjectives in the Greek** of v. 4-7. Everything about love is a verb (trick question I know because several look like adjectives in English translations, but in the Greek they're all verbs:). So the correct answer is **v. 4-7 uses VERBS for love**, not ADJECTIVES. That will be on the quiz, and you'll get a chance for a makeup quiz soon. **v. 4-7 is not adjectives**, not passive, all active verbs for what love chooses or refuses. ISV 'bears up under everything, **Believes the best in all ...**'

**Outline: 1. Love Bears the Worst in Relationships
2. Love Believes and Hopes the Best in Relationships**

1 Cor 12-14 focuses on Christian relationships

Next time we'll see how love endures and doesn't fail, end of v. 7, v. 8ff. How much should we endure or cover instead of confront sin? Next week. When v. 5 says love "keeps no record of wrongs," can you help someone understand how that relates to forgiving someone who has wronged them often? On the survey I gave in September, about 20% weren't confident.

Another question I asked on the form: Can you help someone understand what it means that love "believes all" (v. 7) in relation to those who hurt them or are untrustworthy? About half who responded weren't confident. My hope is that after today we'll understand more and can help others to.

Both those questions come to a head in v. 7 for this week and next

1. Love Bears the Worst in Relationships (ESV 'Love bears all things')

CONTEXT: In our pre-series survey, about half of you weren't sure you knew the **context Paul is writing** to in 1 Cor 13. Hopefully will be higher as I send the follow-up survey next week:) The context isn't a wedding, this is written for the church. It's not a Valentine's Day love poem, it's for love in very everyday relationships. **He's correcting the Corinthian church** in how their love was patient or kind, how they were proud, rude, self-seeking, etc).

Everything in v. 4-7 is to fix problems in ch 1-12. The context is the church and spiritual gifts, these are tests of how we love. The context is love to one another, so *love bears* = what's hard to bear about others, what's bad, worst.

Can include sin but also just what annoys you, their worst traits

Paul talked about this earlier in the context, same Greek word in 1 Cor 9:12 '*we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ*' (NIV). So that's the context, we put up with or bear all things for the sake of Christ's gospel. So His love isn't hindered, we '*suffer all things*' (KJV) for the sake of the gospel of Christ's love. If we can't bear sinners, it's an obstacle to our witness of His love that bears all our sins.

We're to love as Christ loves.

Jesus is patient and kind, not easily angered, not irritable or resentful. You?

In the past couple months can you think of ways you've sought to pursue love in being patient or kind, or bearing or enduring sin (v. 4, 7) in ways you don't normally by nature? I asked you that a couple months ago, about 42% of you could respond with a strong yes. I pray that will be higher now.

That's where the rubber meets the road: how do you do driving on the road? How are you doing loving people you struggle with at work, here at church?

Are you patiently bearing with your family, or are you quickly provoked? If you're honest, some of you don't bear up with those you're around, you can be a real bear to be around! Mama bears get poked, so do papa bears, cubs! If someone's been sittin in your chair, do you growl, or grumble, complain?

Col 3 commands you and me to **put on patience and kindness with humility**, *'bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love...'* (v. 12-14). So bearing all things is the opposite of complaining, and forgiveness is key to put on bearing love

What you complain about you must bear and forgive and put on love

8 of you admitted you can't think of a time you forgave someone this year.
11 of you shared you can't think of a time this year you asked forgiveness. I appreciate the honest confessing you don't confess your sin to others. But if you can go through 1 Cor 13 and not confess sin, do you know God's love? Because I love you I urge you to confess where you fall short of 1 Cor 13. Ask God to forgive you, and others to forgive you when you're unloving.

Some of you here need His love to save you and change you

2 months ago in that anonymous survey some of you admitted you don't pursue a love relationship with the Lord in His Word, you don't regularly read it (some said 0 days during the week). Over a quarter admitted maybe once or twice a week you read 5 minutes or more, 40+% said 3-4 days. I pray that grows in this time – if you need help, habits of grace SS class or get help or accountability from a loving believer to be in the Word daily.

Your personal love relationship with the Lord in the Word is where it starts. You talk with people you love – talk to God, ask His help to grow in love. 30 of you admitted you can't think of a time this year where you put a truth you learned on Sunday into practice in a way you don't normally. That's just representative of about half of adults / young adults who did the survey.

Another question on the form: In the last couple months, have you shared something about a Sunday message with another believer to encourage him or her further in a truth you heard? Over 30% of you couldn't answer yes.

40% of you couldn't think of a recent example where you were spurred on to love by another believer from a truth you heard together in church. I pray the last couple months in 1 Cor 13 you're walking in this, not wasting this.

If love is the most important command, v. 4-7 is most important on how

If you're not already, let today be the day you consider how to spur to love someone here before you leave here and plan and pursue this love this week
If love bears all things, who do you need to love by bearing their failings?

Our scripture reading in Rom 15 says we ‘*have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak,*’ for the sake of unity and God’s glory (v. 1, 5-6).

The middle of Ephesians says to God be the glory in the church, therefore walk worthy humbly gently patiently ‘*bearing with one another in love...*’ (3:21-4:2). So love bears for God’s glory and church unity, that’s the big picture. With sin there is a time to lovingly correct, to speak truth in love (4:15), but love keeps bearing, be kind, tender-hearted, forgiving (4:32). If we’re not God-centered, thinking of His glory and help, we can’t bear all.

**WE’VE GOT TO BELIEVE GOD WON’T GIVE US MORE THAN WE CAN BEAR
BUT WITH EACH TEMPTATION HW WILL GIVE US GRACE TO ENDURE**

The Psalms say sin and its consequences can ‘*overwhelm...like a burden too heavy to bear*’, but ‘*Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up...*’ (Ps 34:4, 68:19 NIV). God’s love bears all things about His people all the time and He gives us love that can bear all things. When things are hard for us to bear, God promises ‘***I will bear you and I will deliver you...to your old age I will be the same, and even to your graying years I will bear you***’ (Isa 46:4 NAS).

Isa 53 said the **Messiah** would even **bear our griefs and sorrows**, so we can bear all those things, too. Isaiah said Messiah ‘*shall bear their iniquities*’ and ‘*bear the sins of many*’ (v. 11, 4). If you wonder how long you have to bear with someone, or how, look to Jesus, who wondered that as fully man. He asked His disciples, ‘*O faithless...How long am I to bear with you...?*’ (Mt 17:17). But He helped the sufferer there and continued to bear all things with hard to bear people in the next verse. Jesus was tempted in every way as we are, but He didn’t sin in response, Heb 4 says. So in time of need, we can find His mercy to help from His throne of grace (v. 15-16). We can even ‘*bear the reproach he bore*’ (13:13, HCSB ‘*bearing His disgrace*’; or ISV ‘*bearing the insults,*’ or NET ‘*bearing the abuse he experienced*’).

Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood...

Jesus, who upholds churches in His hand, commends believers ‘*bearing up for my name’s sake*’ (Rev 1:20-2:3). He went to Calvary ‘*bearing His own cross*’ (Jn 19:17 NASB), and ‘*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness*’ (1 Pet 2:24). All things wrong about us He bears, look to His love to bear wrongs of others

Christlike Love Bears the Worst in Relationships, that’s #1

Now #2. Love Believes and Hopes the Best in Relationships

Look again at v. 7: ‘*Love bears all things, believes all things...*’ Remember the context isn’t strangers, it’s spiritual relationships. We don’t believe all things from those unknown or unbelievers or chronic manipulators. **Notice it doesn’t say** ‘*believes all things people say.*’ It’s not loving to believe all things a false religion

teaches like Mormonism. If someone with alcohol on his breath gives a sad story about why he needs money for food, love may not believe all things he's saying, it may consider how to help w/out alcohol

If a stranger pulls up in a car and invites little kids over, believing all things he says isn't loving. Nor do we have to trust all that the government tells us.

'Trust us, this is effective and safe for you and your little kids, no long-term side effects we know of yet, believe us.' For what we put in bodies or put in the minds of our kids in school, love discerns what to trust. Loving parents don't entrust their role or choices to others. Love believing the best doesn't mean you trust others know what's best for you and your family (or what the State teaches about the family and biology or gender identity). Because we love our kids, we can't believe all things CA schools teach on history or racially or sexually, just because the woke experts say so. I don't believe all things 'the science says about evolution or everything political or financial.

This verse isn't contradicting Ps 146:3 '*Do not put trust in princes*' (govt. leaders, can include local, national officials). The Bible actually commands '*do not believe*' all things in some contexts (Jer. 12:6). Isa 8:12 also warns against false conspiracies and it says '*do not fear what they fear...*' We're not to live in fear like the world or to stir up fear with conspiracy theories either. We don't trust politicians to not be political, but don't believe all things you read against politicians you don't like either. Loving Christians shouldn't believe or tweet all things they see on SM and share that may not be trustworthy. Ultimate trust is for God, we're to believe all things He says.

We're not even to trust our own hearts that can deceive us (Jer 17:9)

Even in church, Paul's about to write '*others should weigh carefully what is said,*' rather than simply believe all things people say (14:29 NIV). Instead of 'trust all things,' he writes in 1 Thess 5:21 '**test all things**' as we put on love (NKJV, or NASB 'examine everything carefully'). **The Bereans** didn't believe all things Paul said, they **checked it with what God said**, Acts 17:11.

Prov 14:15: '*the naïve believes everything, but the sensible man considers ...*' (NAS). So 1 Cor 13:7 isn't talking about believing everything without sensible consideration, or "naïve optimism."² **Biblical love isn't gullible**, susceptible to scams, or one says it doesn't make us 'foolish Pollyannas.'³

But love thinks no evil, in other words it doesn't impute evil motives or believe the worst about their heart and why they did or said something. In the context of ch 4 Paul said we're not to judge motives of men's hearts. If there's doubt, love chooses to give the benefit of the doubt in relationships.

If the reason they did that is ambiguous, love gives a generous judgment

Love believes in all things God is working for the good of those who love God, making them more like Christ, and even where unbelievers mean it for evil, God means it for good. **Christ is our example, He didn't trust sinners**, Peter says He left *'you an example for you to follow in His steps, He ... kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously'* (1 Pet 2:22-23 NASB). Jesus believed in all things His Father was at work in even sinful Peter, not because Peter was trustworthy or did much to build trust, Jesus trusted God. Despite **Peter's denials**, Jesus didn't lose faith or see Peter a hopeless case.

Believing/faith and hope and love go together (v. 13)

v. 6 says love not only believes/faith, it also *'hopes all things.'* That helps complete the picture of believing. Faith or hope isn't in man, it's in God at work in man to bring what's best. We trust and hope He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it. This hope isn't wishful thinking for the unlikely. Belief and hope look forward and ultimately Godward to what He is doing in people and in events.

It's been said *Hopes all things* means "look forward with confidence ... expect the best ... the conviction ... that God will show mercy in a person's behalf ... no matter how grim things look," and *believes all things* "means that in doubtful cases he/she will err on the side of believing others rather than suspecting them ... a person believes that God will work out his plans ... The object [of trust] is the potential good in others and in God's ability to bring good out of evil."⁴

Paul also told this same Corinthian church we need to **take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ**.

Here's a counselor's questions:

'What do I believe to be true about [this person's] attitudes? What do I think [he or she] thinks that is fueling my own emotions? Making captive thoughts obedient to Christ involves evaluating our exposed assumptions against biblical truth ... Are my assumptions ... kind [v. 4] and respectful [vs. rude or resentful in v. 5]? **Am I motivated by love and concern ...?** ... To open a heart shut to intimacy requires a commitment to trust and hope [v. 7] despite the hurt that has been experienced ... Trusting and hoping also grows out of faith in the One who is always at work in the hearts and lives of His people to increasingly transform them into Christ's likeness [cf. v. 8-12] (2 Cor. 3:18).⁵

Paul knew experientially the damage that can come when **untrusting people** assume and believe the worst: "They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple area ..." then it went badly, Acts 21:29-30 NIV. **Job** pled "**Stop assuming my guilt**, for I have done no wrong," and **Solomon** warned "**Fools base their thoughts on foolish assumptions**" (Job 6:29, Eccl 10:13 NLT).

Carson says love “prefers to be generous in its openness and acceptance rather than suspicious or cynical. Love hopes for the best, even when disappointed by repeated personal [hurt], hoping against hope and always ready to give an offender a second chance.”⁶ **MacArthur**: ‘If there is doubt about a person’s guilt or motivation, love will **always opt for the most favorable possibility**. If a loved one is accused of something wrong, love will consider him innocent until proven guilty. If he turns out to be guilty, love will give credit for the best motive. Love trusts ... Whenever there is doubt, we would rather **err on the favorable side** ... Hatred believes the worst; love believes the best. **Love is a harbor of trust** ... Even when belief in a loved one’s goodness or repentance is shattered, love still **hopes**. When it runs out of faith it holds on to hope ... God would not take Israel’s failure as final ... Paul would not take the Corinthians’ failure as final. There are more than enough promises in the Bible to make love hopeful. The parents of backslidden children, the spouse of an unbelieving marriage partner, the church that has disciplined members who do not repent—all hope in love ... **Love refuses to take failure as final**. The rope of love’s hope has no end.”⁷

This is unbelievably important and can literally change your life if you can change what you believe about others to the best and not assume the worst. So much damage in relationships in this church could be prevented if you ask instead of assume, and if you must assume or judge, assume the best. Love bears all that is hurtful and continues to be hopeful it wasn’t intended the way it felt, ‘*hope that matters may be explained and made clear...* Love will *hold on to this hope* until all possibility of such a result has vanished.’⁸

EXAMPLE OF LADY WHO LEFT CHURCH WITH HER NOSE UP

If it was sin, love never loses faith or hope in God. To *believe all* is “to see the best in others,” to *hope all* is “a refusal to take failure as final. It is the confidence that looks to ultimate triumph through the grace of God.”⁹ Love sees no hopeless cases. If someone proves untrustworthy or not believable, **Matthew Henry** says well: love “will yet hope well, and continue to hope as long as there is any ground for it. It will not presently conclude a case desperate, but wishes the amendment of the worst of men... apt to hope.”¹⁰

Several counselors note how vital this is in relationships.

Toward a spouse, **Lou Priolo** says believing and hoping all things includes “attributing the best possible motive to her actions ... “love believes all things”— i.e., it believes the best) ... Love, in the absence of real evidence, puts the best possible interpretation on the facts.”¹¹

Jay Adams: “In love, until the facts prove otherwise, you must ‘believe all things, hope all things’ (1 Cor. 13:7). That means you must give everyone the benefit of the doubt.”¹²

Love believes in all things there is more to the story we don't know, and what we think we know may have been misunderstood.

A counselor notes: Ordinary trust accepts a person's intentions as good; it puts the best possible interpretation on his actions or speech when solid reasons cannot be afforded to the contrary. One can believe that another has **made a bad decision** but still exercise ordinary trust in his motives. ... "I'll give you the **benefit of the doubt** when there is a question;"¹³

This **doesn't come naturally**. This is a **supernatural work of God**. Our natural instinct in our flesh is to think the best about ourselves and the worst about others. But I love what one of the **TableTalk devotionals** says: the gospel turns our expectations upside down. It teaches us to assume the worst about ourselves all the time and the best about others all the time. When we do this, something wonderful happens. We begin to celebrate God's triumphs in others... The hope of the gospel makes us... not threatened by those who disagree with them ... [and] much more pleasant to be around. Moreover, it means we give someone's arguments a charitable interpretation when they challenge us. We make them look the best we can.¹⁴

Prayer from Journal of Biblical Counseling *Help Me to Judge Rightly*

Lord, help me to judge others as I want them to judge me:

Charitably, not critically, Privately, not publicly,
Gently, not harshly, In humility, not pride.

Help me to believe the best about others, until facts prove otherwise—
To assume nothing, to seek all sides of the story,
And to judge no one until I've removed the log from my own eye.

May I never bring only the Law, to find fault and condemn.
Help me always to bring the Gospel, to give hope and deliverance,
As you, my Judge and Friend, have so graciously done for me.¹⁵

¹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1057.

² Ciampa and Rosner, 650.

³ Hays, 228.

⁴ Trail, *An Exegetical Summary*, 180.

⁵ Ibid. On the difficulties of trust after abuse, see also Gwen Purdie, "Rebuilding Trust," in *No More Hurting* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, Ltd., 2004), 120–151. For rebuilding trust in most interpersonal offenses, see Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 204–224

⁶ Carson, 63, or not only a second chance but forgiving "seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22).

⁷ MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*, MNTC, 353–354.

⁸ Albert Barnes, *1 Corinthians*, ed. Robert Frew (London: Blackie & Son, 1884–1885), 252.

⁹ Morris, TNTC, 181-82. Strauch, 83, notes how trusting the Lord helps him hope in His people, based on divine love, citing 2 Thessalonians 3:4-5 "we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ."

¹⁰ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2268. Another Puritan notes love would "rather be deceived in thinking well of others than suspecting evil. It is a malignity to

fasten an evil sense on a speech or action that may bear a good one.” -- *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, Volume 18 (Homewood, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2008), 312, 211.

¹¹ Lou Priolo, *The Complete Husband* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press, 1999), 211.

¹² Jay Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989), 84.

¹³ Marshall W. Hawkins, “Blind Faith?,” ed. Jay E. Adams, *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* 9, no. 4 (1989): 23–25.

¹⁴ “Love Believes All Things,” by Gabriel N.E. Fluhrer, *TableTalk*, August 2019

¹⁵ Ken Sande, “Judging Others: The Danger of Playing God,” ed. David A. Powlison, *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Number 1, Fall 2002 21 (2002): 22.