|  |
| --- |
| **Love Bears All Things, Believes All Things, Hopes All Things, Endures All Things**  **By Rick Renner** |
|  |
| *Charity [agape love] suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. — 1 Corinthians 13:4-7* |
|  |
| As Paul continues giving us the characteristics of *agape* love in First Corinthians 13, he moves to the next four points in his message. He explains to the Corinthians (and to us) that genuine *agape* love “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things” (v. 7).  The eleventh point that Paul makes in this wonderful text is that love “beareth all things….” The word “beareth” is the Greek word *stego*, which means *to cover*, as a roof covers a house. Built within the word *stego* is the concept of *protection*, exactly as a roof *protects, shields,* and *guards* the inhabitants of a house from exposure to the outside influences of weather. The roof of a house is designed to shield people from storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, rain, hail, snow, wind, blistering hot temperatures, and so on. This protection is vital for survival in most climates, preventing people from either freezing to death or burning as a result of continual exposure to sunlight.  By using this word *stego* (“bear”), the apostle Paul is giving us a powerful illustration. First, we must understand that there are many different seasons to life, and not all seasons are pleasurable. In fact, some seasons of life are very stormy and difficult. There are moments when external circumstances assail us from without. If we have no shield to guard us during these stormy times, it becomes much more difficult for us to survive spiritually.  Paul lets you know that *agape* serves like a protection for you. Like the roof of a house, a friend who moves in the *agape* love of God will stay near in times of trouble. That friend will hover over you to protect you from the storms of life. Rather than expose you and your flaws to the view of others, a person who operates in this kind of love will *conceal, cover,* and *protect* you, for real *agape* love is always there in times of trouble to lend support.  **The phrase “beareth all things” could be translated:**  *“Love protects, shields, guards, covers, conceals, and safeguards people from exposure.…”*  Paul goes on to mention the twelfth characteristic of *agape* love, saying that love “…believeth all things….” The word “believeth” is actually the word *pisteuei,* which is the Greek word meaning *to put one’s faith or trust in something or someone.* The tense used in the Greek text lets us know that this is a constant, continuous entrusting of one’s faith in something or someone — involving a “never-give-up” kind of belief that something will turn out the very best. In light of this, the Greek phrase could actually be taken to mean that love “believes the best in every situation.”  Don’t misunderstand; *agape* love isn’t stupid, nor is it blind. It sees everything — the good, the bad, and the ugly. But because *agape* is so filled with faith, it pushes the disconcerting, disturbing, negative realities out of the way. This doesn’t mean *agape* ignores problems or challenges. It just makes a choice to see beyond the problems and conflicts, to strain forward to see the highest potential that resides in every person.  Let’s apply this to your children. Perhaps it is true that they are having problems right now or that they have done some things in the past they shouldn’t have done. But there is still hope! Today is a new day, and *agape* simply cannot give up believing that they will turn around! You see, the *agape* love of God just doesn’t know how to quit! It hangs on even when the going gets tough! It just keeps believing the very best, no matter what.  So I urge you to take a good, honest look at yourself to see if you are operating in this kind of high-level love. Do you strain forward to believe the best, or do you pick people apart and point out all their flaws and weaknesses? Do you see their potential through the eyes of love, or do you look on them through eyes of criticism? *Never forget that love believes the best!* |