

# THE FAITH & HOPE OF LOVE IN RELATIONSHIPS

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## INTRODUCTION:

- A. Among some of the most famous passages of scripture is Paul's discussion of the characteristics of true love in 1 Corinthians 13. It's read at many weddings and is preached from often from numerous angles. Even people who aren't religious appreciate the words & recognize them as timeless truth
- B. Two of the characteristics of love have to do with the confidence, trust, & faith it places in others. Verse 7 says love believes all things & hopes all things. What does this mean & how does it apply to us?

## LOVE BELIEVES ALL THINGS... LOVE HOPES ALL THINGS

### A. Getting A Better Understanding Of What These Phrases Mean:

1. It helps to understand what something means by seeing what it does not mean (**Proverbs 25:19**)
  - a. Love does not mean being gullible or naïve in our relationships or our dealings with others
  - b. It's not the suspension of common sense or of sound judgment; it is not knowingly walking into an ambush. Love doesn't give the benefit of the doubt when there is no doubt
  - c. **Illustration:** Man in Gadsden who was marginally faithful at best. Someone suggested to give him a class and that might make him more faithful. What about his lack of preparation in teaching Bible class? What about the negative example & influence?
2. Now, what does it mean for our love to believe all things or hope all things (**2 Thess 3:4**)
  - a. Roberston Word Pictures: On "believes all things" says "Not gullible, but has faith in men" and on "hopes all things" says "Sees the bright side of things. Does not despair"
  - b. It's like the saying I try to live by: "Always assume the best until the worst is proven."
  - c. This means that we don't approach others with cynicism or pessimism... We don't deal with people expecting the worst to happen and assuming the worst about them
  - d. Love gives people the benefit of the doubt – It expresses faith and confidence in them
  - e. **Quote:** "Love considers a person innocent until proven otherwise. Hatred leaps to the conclusion that the worst-possible explanation is the correct one; it finds reason to mistrust, to see everything in the worst possible light. Love leaps to the conclusion that the person loved is in the right; love opts for the most favorable explanation. Love holds out hope that the person loved will be vindicated—while praying for the truth at the same time. Love welcomes the idea that a person is better than we thought, or more blameless than expected. Love roots for it all to be a big misunderstanding instead of for there to be sin. Love errs on the side of trust."
3. This characteristic of love involves risk & is difficult, but it's the nature of true love!
  - a. Charles Schwab went to court and winning a nuisance suit at age 70. Given permission by the judge to speak to the audience, he made the following statement: "I'd like to say here in a court of law, and speaking as an old man, that nine-tenths of my troubles are traceable to my being kind to others. Look, you young people, if you want to steer away from trouble, be hard-boiled. Be quick with a good loud no to anyone and everyone. If you follow this rule, you will seldom be bothered as you tread life's pathway. Except you'll have no friends, you'll be lonely, & you won't have any fun!"
  - b. This love means sometimes we will suffer heartache, we will be disappointed and let down, occasionally taken advantage of, and maybe get into some tough situations

- c. Sometimes our fears and doubts about people will be proven true, but if we are going to err on the one side or the other, isn't it better to err on the side of too much trust?

## **B. Bible Examples Where We See This Characteristic Put Into Action:**

1. Of course the greatest display of love believing and hoping all things is exemplified by Jesus:
  - a. In His call of the apostles, He called them not for what they were but for what they would become. The apostles were certainly slow in understanding and developing the faith they needed, yet Jesus was patient. He placed faith and hope in these men.
  - b. Later, when Jesus warned Peter about how he'd soon deny him, Jesus spoke with confidence of Peter's return and future faithful service **(Luke 22:31-34)**
  - c. Now there is probably some divine foresight in all of this, but the point remains... Jesus consistently shows the kind of love that assumed the best until the worst was proven
  - d. This loving optimism for people allowed Him to build relationships with the lost and reach those whom the Jewish religious leaders could never and would never help! People came to Jesus partly because He would give them an opportunity & believed in them
2. As Paul writes to the Christians at Corinth he certainly has some tough things to say, however, he maintains this characteristic as well: **(2 Cor 7:12-16)**
  - a. Paul knew his previous letter would cause them some grief, but the grief was necessary to bring about their repentance. His words were certainly bold and harsh, but in love
  - b. At some point, maybe when Paul sent them the previous letter, he sent Titus to go check on them. Even after writing the difficult things in the previous letter, he boasted about them to Titus before he sent him there. He believed in them in spite of it all!
  - c. Think of the relationship of preachers today with churches they've previously worked with or are intimately acquainted with. How many will talk like Paul is? Isn't the opposite much more common? They'll speak of everything that's wrong, not what's right!
  - d. Notice how Paul says that everything he wrote to them was true (including his rebukes) but his boastings to Titus have also proven to be true. They upheld his confidence!
3. On another occasion Paul used his believing and hoping all things as a motivating tool to get the Corinthian Christians to be more benevolent **(2 Cor 8:10-11, 22)**
  - a. One year before this they had started an effort to raise money for the needy saints in Jerusalem. Their zeal for the work was good, they started so well, but never finished
  - b. Paul could have been pessimistic and said, "As stingy as you Corinthians are, I'm not at all surprised that you have not completed this work... Quit being so self absorbed!"
  - c. Instead he utilizes a much more effective tactic – He expresses confidence in them **(9:1-5)**
  - d. He shows faith in these people to the point of boasting about their giving spirit to others... Wouldn't it be embarrassing for them if they failed to finish this work? His faith isn't unfounded... He'd seen their start & knew they could finish, they just need motivated
4. When Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon he was placing confidence in both of them that they would respond in a Christ-like manner **(Philemon vs. 4ff)**
  - a. Paul makes a sacrifice here since Onesimus would have been useful to him as well as the gospel. He also takes risk by sending him back to Philemon with a letter in hand... If he was totally sure of Philemon's response much of this letter would be unnecessary
  - b. Was Paul saying these things about Philemon just to butter him up? These things are true and they show Philemon why Paul hopes and believes the best in him.

- c. Notice **verses 17-20** – Philemon had so often refreshed the hearts of the brethren, now Paul requests that he do this thing that would refresh his heart as well
- d. See now **verse 21** – That’s love isn’t it! Paul places his confidence in Philemon’s character
- 5. The Hebrew writer speaks of his “confidence” in the Christians he wrote to (**Hebrews 6:4-6, 9-12**)
  - a. He paints a very serious picture of what it means to fall away & the hopeless circumstance of a person who just continues on sinning willfully without regard to Christ’s death
  - b. It’s vital for us to hear just how serious sin is & to guard ourselves against growing callous to the sacrifice of Jesus, lest we drift so far away spiritually we don’t come back!
  - c. In the midst of all of these warnings it’s almost as if the writer sets down his pen and smiles as he thinks of them. He was certain this would not happen to them and it wasn’t an unfounded confidence... They had given him a good reason to feel sure
  - d. In Hebrews 10 he gives some very stern warnings, then he says, “BUT...” – He gives the warnings then immediately expresses his confidence saying we aren’t like that... we’re the kind of people who keep on believing unto salvation (**Hebrews 10:39**)

**C. Let’s consider some specific application on how love would believe all things and hope all things:**

1. As we’ve talked about before, when we see lost people do we see suspects or prospects? Are we writing people off thinking they have no chance before we give the gospel a chance?
2. When others say something that hits us the wrong way, how do we react? Do we give them the benefit of the doubt, hoping that they meant well, believing their intentions are good?
3. If a person sins, personally against us or publicly, & seeks forgiveness, what’s our response? Do we believe they are sincere or do we question their motives? Do we have hope that they have changed, or do we fully expect (or in a twisted way desire) them to keep sinning?
4. If we run into one who has hurt us or disappointed us in the past & they speak to us (or forbid it, HUG us) what are our feelings? Do we instantly assume they are being nice & friendly just to make us mad or rub something in our face, or do we give them the benefit of the doubt?
5. If a person hits hard times, do we start thinking about how they have squandered their money, done something to deserve losing their job, or in some other way brought the difficulties on themselves? Or do we give them a chance and help them, believing and hoping for the best?
6. There is a place for rebuke, but we should not get so caught up in seeing the bad in people that we are unable to see what is their potential & good. Do we seek to believe & hope in them?

**Conclusion:** C. S. Lewis: To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket -- safe, dark, motionless, and airless--it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.... The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers of love... is Hell.