

## Love's Four Sweet Companions!

One preacher labeled 1 Corinthians 13:7 as "Love's four sweet companions." Four things love is: strong, believing, hopeful and enduring. These four amazing qualities define, determine and designate Christian love. Consider the four Greek words for "love." "Eros" is passionate love, with sensual desire and longing. "Storge" means "affection" in modern Greek; it is natural affection, like that felt by parents for offspring. "Philia" means "friendship" in modern Greek, a dispassionate virtuous love, a concept developed by Aristotle. "Agape" means "love" in modern Greek, such as in the terms, "I love you."

Love Bears All Things (v. 7a)

The word "bears" means "to protect... to guard... to shield." Either way, Paul brings an important truth along with 1 Peter 4:8: "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins." Love does what is necessary to help a person. True love is eager to protect a person from harm, ridicule and embarrassment (cf. Genesis 9 – Noah and his sons, Luke 15 – Prodigal's Father).

Love Believes All Things (v. 7b)

Love is not suspicious nor quick to misjudge others and is not always ready to believe the worst about another. Never believe a lie, but we never believe evil unless the facts demand it. We choose to believe the best of others. In believing all things, love makes a conscience choice to walk by faith rather than by what is seen. "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Love Hopes All things (v. 7c)

Hope sees the beauty in another person. It sees not only what a person is, but also what that person can become. Love has a confidence in the future, not a pessimism. When hurt, it does not say, "It will be this way forever, and even get worse." It hopes for the best and it hopes in God. Hope is the belief in things not yet seen or fully experienced.

Love Endures All things (v. 7d)

We can bear all things, believe all things, and hope all things, but only for a while! The greatness of "agape" love is that it keeps on bearing, believing and hoping; it doesn't give up. It destroys enemies by turning them into friends. Enduring love is to hold on year after year, to never give up or give in. Love is longsuffering under pressure; it does not weaken under stress or strain.

May we live and love in such a way to protect, trust, hope and preserve. In doing so, our lives will become pictures of determination to do what love does.

By Mark N. Posey