

Does Love Bear All Things or Bare All Things?

Joe Slater

Paul answered the question in the title: love *“bears all things”* (1 Corinthians 13:7). Paul’s word for “bear” derives from the roof or covering of a building. A good roof is struck by rain and sun, but protects you from exposure to them. Just so, a loving person sees the sins of others, but seeks to protect the wrong-doer from public exposure as much as possible.

Unfortunately, baring all things has become far more common than bearing all things. And I don’t mean just scanty clothing (or the total lack of it), though that, too, is epidemic in our culture. Primarily, I’m talking about the malicious delight taken in exposing the sins of others. It’s painfully obvious in political campaigns and “gotcha!” journalism. But it also impacts the church negatively. While I don’t endorse everything he says, John MacArthur’s comments about this are helpful:

“Love bears all things by protecting others from exposure, ridicule, or harm . . . Even when a sin is certain, love tries to correct it with the least possible hurt and harm to the guilty person . . . There is perverse pleasure in exposing someone’s faults and failures . . . It is that depraved pleasure that sells magazines and news-papers that cater to exposés, “true confessions,” and the like . . . Love has no part in that. It does not expose or exploit, gloat or condemn. It bears; it does not bare” (via preceptaustin.org).

Make no mistake, the time comes when sin must be exposed and dealt with decisively, just as a malignant tumor must be removed. I would prefer, however, that my surgeon excise the tumor by careful, skillful use of a scalpel rather than chopping me to bits with a meat ax! May we have the same loving consideration toward our brethren in Christ!

A Terrible Thing To Waste!

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God” (Hebrews 5:12, ESV).

In reading a biography recently, I came across this interesting story. A longtime nominal church member in Kilsyth, Scotland suddenly started taking a serious interest in the faith. He began to doubt if indeed he was a Christian at all. He then took steps to make his calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10).

The event that sparked this change of heart was the installation of elders in his congregation. He noted that some who were appointed were much younger than he. Yet he had to admit that they were better qualified. He realized that, at his age, he should have been able to teach others. But he knew that he was not able to do so. It is not a sin to be ignorant. It is a sin to remain ignorant. We have incredible opportunities to learn. What are we doing with our opportunities?

I am reminded of an experience Eugene Bunkowske related from his time in Nigeria. Early in his work, Dr. Bunkowske had been involved in giving away free Bibles to those who needed them. One man who received a Bible returned after some months to ask for another Bible. He was asked if he had been making good use of the one given earlier. He said that he had been making very good use of the Bible. He often had to travel by public transport, which is very dangerous in Nigeria. But since he received the Bible, he had always torn a page out of it whenever he had to take the bus. He put the page on the seat of the bus before sitting down. Since he had been doing so he had been in no accidents. But the Bible was getting low on pages, so he wanted another one.

What a waste! But no more wasteful than those who fail to study their Bibles, and who fail to profit from the teaching offered freely by the church.

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)

SURPRISE!

“Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished” (Mark 5:42 NIV).

The New Testament has about 15 different Greek words for “astonishment.” Each has a common idea of surprise, but each has its own nuance. For example, the word in our text above is similar to our expression “I was beside myself with astonishment.” I suppose each of us, if we had been there and witnessed Jesus raise this little dead child, would be beside ourselves!

When was the last time you were pleasantly surprised by something totally unexpected? Was it a raise? A promotion? An award? The appearance of a loved one? I’ve seen video of a veteran coming home to surprise his family? I’m sure you’ve seen a few of these surprise homecomings too. I’ve even seen the family dog as surprised and ecstatic over the return of his master! These are very moving.

Do you know what amazes me? It never ceases to amaze me that my Lord even cares, in the least, for me. Like you, I’m a sinner. I let him down. I fail to live up to what He expects of me. Kris Kristofferson’s song, “Why Me, Lord” says it better than I can.

“Why me, Lord? What have I ever done To deserve even one of the pleasures I’ve known? Tell me, Lord, what did I ever do That was worth lovin’ you, or the kindness you’ve shown?”

I never want to take such love for granted. Although we are not worthy, He sees us as worthy. As “The Man From La Mancha” sees the peasant girl, Dulcinea, as a princess, Jesus sees us, the church, as His bride! By treating us better than we deserve, we are empowered to become more like our Savior!

We just might be surprised at the change that may overtake us if we loved like Jesus. And the beautiful part of this is that others may be changed by such love too. What a pleasant surprise!

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)