

ENDURETH ALL THINGS

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After Donald Trump became the Republican party nominee for president of the United States, the political left began using the slogan, 'Love trumps hate.' Democratic party candidate Hilary Clinton used the slogan a number of times in her campaign, and she concluded her campaign with these words; "When your kids or grandkids ask what you did in 2016, you'll be able to say you voted for a stronger, fairer, better America. An America where we build bridges, not walls. Where we prove, conclusively, that yes: Love trumps hate." Those who oppose Trump think that he is a hateful bigot. They think that love is morally superior to hate, and that love will overcome hate. Some of them, however, are hypocrites. They engage in violence, all in the name of love. On the day of Trump's inauguration, many people gathered to protest. A few gathered to show support for the new president, and to oppose the protestors. As the protesting crowd chanted, "Love trumps hate," one of them set a supporter's hair on fire. The hypocrisy is obvious to all. David Jaroslav said, with a sense of irony, "Love trumping hate involves a lot more assault and arson than I expected." Pagans speak much of love, but they do not know what love is. At least, they do not understand Christian charity. They think love means tolerating everyone and everything. Of course, this is impossible. They cannot tolerate any intolerance, especially from the Christian Church. There is a sense in which love is tolerant. Pagans, however, typically tolerate the wrong things.

Saint Paul wrote of Christian love, "Charity 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" (1 Corinthians 13:4-6) In other words, love is slow to anger, and does good, not evil, to an offender; love does not have ill will toward someone who possesses something it wants; it does not boast in order to receive praise, and to belittle others; it does not behave inappropriately; it does not place its own interests above the interests of others; it is not easily irritated or aggravated; it does not think badly of people without a good reason; it takes no pleasure in sin and misery, but rejoices in what is right.

Saint Paul summarizes the character of love this way: "Charity ... beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." "Charity ... beareth all things." That is, it covers over offenses; it overlooks indignities; it ignores injuries. Noah Webster defined 'bear' as 'To suffer without resentment, or interference to prevent; to have patience; as, to *bear* neglect or indignities.'" In this life we will face many offenses, both real and imagined. We will be deprived. We will be treated badly. We will be treated rudely. We will be persecuted. The offenses may be small: an unkind word, or an inconsiderate act. The offenses may be great: slander, or imprisonment, or violence. The pagan way is to respond to such maltreatment in kind, to repay evil for evil. So, and unkind word is met with an unkind word; violence is met with violence. The Law of God does demand "life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." (Exodus 21:23-25) However, this is the rule for civil justice, the rule for the civil magistrate. It is not the rule for interpersonal relations, not the rule for the citizen. In Jesus' time, however, some in Israel had wrongly applied the Law to their personal relations. Jesus corrected them in His Sermon on the Mount. He said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." (Mathew 5:38-42) Jesus did not mean that the Christian ought to do nothing about evil, even less that he ought to indulge a man in doing evil so that he might do even more. Jesus wished evil to decrease, not increase. He spoke here in hyperbole. If the Christian is wronged, he is not to do the same to the

one who wronged him. As Saint Paul wrote to the Romans, “Recompense to no man evil for evil.” (Romans 13:17), or, as Saint Peter put it, “Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing.” (Romans 13:17; 1 Peter 3:9) The Christian is to do what he can to be at peace with people, without himself doing evil. He is, as we say, to go the extra mile to keep peace. This is the way God is. He overlooks many offenses; offenses by those who are His people, and those who are not His people. In fact, until the death of Christ, God did not reckon with sin. (Romans 3:25) However, it is not simply that the Christian ought not to do evil to one who has done evil to him; he is to do good to those who mistreat him. Jesus also said, in His Sermon on the Mount, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48) God loves His enemies, and is good to them. The Christian is to be like his Father in heaven, and do the same. This is charity: not to repay an offender in kind, but to do good to him. This is what the apostle meant when he wrote, “Charity ... beareth all things.”

Saint Paul also wrote that “Charity ... believeth all things, hopeth all things.” Here the apostle relates charity to faith and hope. In the western Church tradition, these three are the theological virtues, as distinct from the cardinal virtues, namely, prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude. The cardinal virtues are those that are understood and practiced by all people, as people; the theological virtues are those that only Christians truly understand and practice, by the grace of God. Saint Paul tells us that charity, or love, believes all things. Of course, the apostle does not mean that love believes everything without qualification, even contradictions, errors, and lies. (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12) Rather, he means that love believes everything that is true, especially the truth of God’s Word. It is not so much that He believes in God, that is, that God exists, as that He believes God; he trusts in God, and he believes what God says. So, the Scriptures tell us that, when God made a promise to Abraham, “he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6) A young child is uncorrupted. He loves his parents, and he innocently believes whatever they say, even the lies they may tell him. The Christian is to love God this way. He is to innocently believe whatever God says, knowing that God will tell him no lies. Jesus Himself, said, “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.” (Luke 18:17) The Christian believes everything that God says, even if it is disagreeable to him. He has ears to hear, and eyes to see. He loves the truth, because He loves God, and God’s Word is truth. He believes God, because God cannot lie. (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18) He believes the best about God, and, when it seems that life is difficult, and God is uncaring, charity trusts that God is loving and compassionate and almighty, just as He says He is. The Christian believes that God loves Him, and cares for him. He believes that God will provide for him; that He will give him everything He needs, if not everything he desires. Saint Paul tells us that some perish, because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” (2 Thessalonians 2:10) Christian charity, the Christian’s love for his neighbor, is similar. It is not naive. It is not credulous. It does not dispense with reason and critical thinking. It is not foolish. Charity is, however, charitable. It is open-minded. It gives a fair hearing. It is trusting. It does not judge a person harshly or unfairly. It gives a person the benefit of the doubt. It does not rush to judgment. It does not jump to conclusions. It is not prejudiced. It is not ready to believe the worst about a person, but ready to believe the best. It does not listen to gossip. If the Christian thinks someone has wronged him, he suspends judgment. He trusts that there must be a good explanation. Love believes the best about the future of the world, not because men are naturally good, but because God is, and He has promised to save the world, and not to condemn it. (John 3:17)

Charity believes all things, Saint Paul wrote, and it hopes all things. Webster defined ‘hope’ as ‘To place confidence in; to trust in with confident expectation of good.’ Hope is not wish or desire. It differs from them in

that it includes the expectation of obtaining the object hoped for. According to Webster, “Hope therefore always gives pleasure or joy; whereas wish and desire may produce or be accompanied with pain and anxiety.” Hope is sometimes indistinguishable from faith; yet, here the apostle does distinguish them, as he does elsewhere, as when he writes, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1) When they are distinguished, faith is the grasp of something in the present; hope, the expectation of something future. The one who loves God believes Him, and hopes on Him. The Psalmist cried out to God for deliverance from his wicked countrymen, and he spoke to himself, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, *who is* the health of my countenance, and my God.” (Psalm 43:5) He trusted God to deliver him. The Christian hopes in God, and, in particular, hopes for the return of Christ to raise the dead, and to render final judgment. When Saint Paul was, at the behest of the Jews, on trial before the Roman governor, Felix, Saint Paul testified, “But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” (Acts 24:14-15; Acts 23:6; Acts 26:6-8) The unbeliever has no hope. He has no hope, because he has no faith. (Ephesians 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:13) He does not love God. Charity is hopeful. It is not cynical or pessimistic about God, or about the future. Neither is the Christian cynical or pessimistic about his neighbor. Charity believes in a person; it hopes for the best about him. If the Christian takes offense at something, he hopes it is because of a misunderstanding, a misunderstanding he hopes to clear up. Charity is not belligerent; it does not relish conflict; rather, it seeks peace. So, in any perceived slight, the Christian hopes that the offender meant not to be offensive. He goes to the him in good faith so that he may explain himself, and so that the two may resolve the matter peacefully. Charity believes in a person; it does not give up on him. It graciously and patiently works with a person in order that it may help him. In *Pilgrim’s Progress*, the Giant Despair captured Christian and Hopeful, and locked them in his dungeon. When Christian despaired of life, it was Hopeful who sustained him. He told him not to give up hope, that God would make for them a way of escape. He reminded Christian of how strong and courageous Christian had been in the past. He told him, “But let us exercise a little more patience; remember how thou playedst the man at Vanity Fair, and wast neither afraid of the chain, nor cage, nor yet of bloody death. Wherefore let us (at least to avoid the shame, that becomes not a Christian to be found in) bear up with patience as well as we can.” Encouraged by Hopeful’s words, Christian prevailed. The Christian hopes for the best, not only about his fellow man, but about the future of the world. He hopes this, not because he believes that men are naturally good, but because he believes that God is good, and that He has promised to save the world, and not to condemn it. (John 3:17) The Christian does not grumble or complain against God or against man; he is joyful in the hope that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

Saint Paul wrote that “Charity ... beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things.” He finished his description by writing that “Charity ... endureth all things.” That is, charity does what is right, no matter what. It is even. It is constant. It is steadfast. Charity is unwavering in its devotion to God and to man. It suffers hardship with grace and mercy. It believes in God, and in man. It hopes in God, and hopes for the best in man. Charity bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things. Charity is both faithful and hopeful.

Saint Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity.” (1 Corinthians 13:13) We walk by faith, and not by sight. We live in expectation of the return of Christ, and in resurrection and eternal life. Faith, hope, and charity are three great virtues, virtues that only Christians possess. Of the three, love is the greatest. When the Christian sees the Lord, his faith will become sight, and his hope will fulfilled. Love, however, never ends. It is eternal, because God is love.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*