

Love to Cope

[Love] always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. **—1 Corinthians 13:7**

Why be filled with the love of God? In the time of testing, in the time of trial, does it work? And the apostle Paul pauses, almost dramatically, to show that this love of God will not only enable us to be like Jesus, but also will support us in the time of severest trial. We can put up with anything if we have this love.

The verse contains four descriptions of love: love trusts, hopes, protects, and perseveres. And these four descriptions stand alongside four envisaged situations. They are four negative situations that you and I face all the time. Paul shows how love meets each particular situation. These situations are listed in ascending order with regard to the amount of pressure that they have on us. So the minimal level, or the minor pressure, is where a wrong has been done to us. Alongside this Paul says, “Love always protects.”

Then there is the next level, that of moderate pressure where there is an external want in our lives. Alongside that Paul says love “always trusts.” Then there is a higher level, that of major pressure, where a worry totally dominates us. Alongside that Paul says love “always hopes.” But the highest level, that of maximum pressure, is spiritual warfare. Addressing this situation, Paul says love “always perseveres.” So, at each level of pressure, we are given descriptions of love, but there is more. We need to see that the grace that equips us for the situation is that which also enables us to protect, trust, hope, and persevere.

Paul is showing us the benefits that are ours that enable us to cope in the time of pressure. He says that we protect, we trust, we hope, we persevere. He doesn't say we will be

shouting “Glory! Hallelujah!” all the time. He doesn’t say, “Oh, this is wonderful!” Nothing like that. But what he does say is that it works.

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