

Love Bears All Things

“Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” [ESV]

「 Introduction 」

We so easily see the faults and weaknesses of others, yet we rarely see our own faults clearly. Even as we claim to love someone, we hold onto their mistakes, pass their weaknesses on to others, and dig up the past to wound them again. The Scripture states the core attribute of love: **“Love bears all things...”** (1 Cor. 13:7).

Here, “bears” does not simply mean enduring unconditionally. The original Greek word *στέγω*(*stegō*) carries the meaning “to cover, to shelter, to protect.” Love does not expose another’s faults and condemn them but embraces their weakness and covers it with grace.

「 The Difference Between “Patience” and “Bearing/Covering” 」

The “patience” in verse 4 and the “bearing/covering” in verse 7 are clearly distinct in the original Greek.

1) ‘Is patient’ in 1 Cor. 13:4

- Greek: *makrothumeō* (μακροθυμέω, from *makros* + *thumos*)
- Etymology: A compound of *makros*(μακρός), meaning “long, far” and *thumos* (θυμός), meaning “mind, anger, passion.”
- Meaning: To take a long time to become angry, mainly referring to long-suffering patience toward others.
- Keyword: Waiting

2) “Bears” in 1 Cor. 13:7

- Greek: *stegō* (στέγω)
- Etymology: Derived from the noun *stegē* (στήγη), meaning “roof, covering”.
- Meaning: “To cover as a roof”, “a roof that blocks out wind and rain”, referring to protection over another’s fault, weakness, shame, or external hardship.
- Keyword: Covering

「 Stegō(στέγω): Insights from Theologians 」

1) BDAG Greek Lexicon

“To protect or preserve by covering; to keep confidential, cover over, keep secret.”

2) Charles Hodge (Commentary on 1 Corinthians)

“Love covers all things. It conceals the fault of others, rather than exposing them.”

3) William Barclay (Commentary on 1 Corinthians)

“Love can protect; it can throw a blanket of silence over the faults of others.”

「 The Redemptive-Historical Flow of “Bearing/Covering” in the Scriptures 」

1) Old Testament Foundation: The Garments of Skin and the Mercy Seat

- Genesis 3:21 “And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.”
- Exodus 25:17,22 “You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold... There I will meet with you.”
- Explanation: The fig leaves humans used to cover their own shame (human effort) quickly withered. God shed the blood of an animal to make garments of skin, perfectly covering their shame. This concept of ‘covering’ continues into the tabernacle’s mercy seat. In Hebrew, “to atone” (*kaphar*, כָּפַר) means “to cover. The mercy seat covered the ark containing the tablets of the testimony, and as blood was sprinkled upon it, God’s wrath no longer fell on the sinner and became a place of forgiveness (Lev. 16:14–16).

2) The Declaration of the Psalms: The Blessing of 'Being Covered'

- Psalm 32:1 "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."
- Explanation: David wrote this psalm after committing the terrible sins of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. The blessing David enjoyed was not that he had never sinned, but that even though he had clearly sinned, his sin was, by God's grace, 'covered'.

3) The Fulfillment in the New Testament: Christ, Our Propitiation

- Romans 3:25 "whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins."
- Explanation: The Greek word translated 'propitiation' here, *hilastērion* (ἱλαστήριον), is the same word used for the Old Testament tabernacle's 'mercy seat' (the cover of the ark). In other words, Jesus Christ, by shedding His blood on the cross, has become the true mercy seat that covers our sins.

「 We Are People Who Have Been Covered 」

God's profound love was revealed in Jesus Christ as 'the grace of covering'. God did not expose our shameful disgrace and wretched faults to the world and abandon us. Instead, Christ has covered our sins by shedding his blood on the cross, forgiven us, and given us merciful grace so that we could rise again. The reason we must cover the faults of others is that we ourselves have been covered by God's grace.

Love Is Like a Bandage

To love is to cover. Love is not pointing out and exposing wrongs but covering and concealing faults. Covering can lead to two opposite outcomes. Just as something rotting will rot further if merely covered up, a wound left untreated and merely covered will only worsen. Love without truth is no longer love (Ch. 8). On the other hand, there is also covering meant to heal, like applying a bandage. A bandage effectively blocks outside germs from entering while allowing the wound to heal without being disturbed. Covering the shame and wounds of sin in this way helps them to be effectively healed and restored. [Lee Kookjin, 『Love』]

「 Application: Like Shem, Like Japheth 」

When Noah became drunk with wine and lay naked in his tent, Ham saw his father's nakedness and told his brothers, but Shem and Japheth turned their faces away, walked backward, and covered their father with a garment (Gen. 9:20-23).

The descendants of Ham (Canaan) who exposed the shame were pushed away from the center of redemptive history, but Shem and Japheth, who 'covered' their father's shame with a garment, became central figures in the grand drama of the gospel, in which God 'covers' the sin of all humanity with the blood of Jesus Christ. God made the actions of Shem and Japheth a foreshadowing of the perfect 'covering' that Christ would one day accomplish.

[Discussion Questions]

Question 1.

Like Noah, we too are sometimes imperfect people who make mistakes and expose our shame. Let us share about a person or an experience where someone covered your faults or shame.

Question 2.

William Barclay described love as throwing a 'blanket of silence' over the faults of others. God has already given us that 'blanket of silence' called love. Take a moment to check the inventory of your own 'blanket of silence'. Who is someone you need to quietly cover with that blanket right now? Share why that person comes to mind.

Question 3.

If there was a recent time when you failed to cover someone's fault, reflect on why you couldn't do so. It may not be easy to share but take some time to reflect and share humbly.

*For our final small group meeting of 2026 (Ch. 10), we will memorize 1 Corinthians 13 together. Let's prepare together over the remaining time, taking the Word to heart.