

Love is Patient

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Date: 13 January 2019

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- [0 : 00] Well, turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 13. How important is love? How important is it that I love you?
- ! Love your neighbor as yourself.
- That's why it's almost impossible to study or to think about love too much. It's walking in the light. John says whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there's nothing that makes him stumble.
- Love is how God acts. He is always seeking the good, the blessing of others with goodwill. And so that's how his children act.
- They've learned by him. They've learned through the Spirit. So this is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are. There's no neutral party.
- [1 : 15] There's no Switzerland. There's no I'm going to sit this one out. You are either living in love as a child of God or you are living in hatred as a child of the devil.
- There's no third option. And so I have to ask myself, and I would hope that you would ask yourself, what are you doing? What are you doing?
- You can't see God. But John says if we love one another, God lives in us. Can't see God, but if we love one another, God is living in us.
- Love is God acting through us. Love is God acting in us. It's his life at work in us. The life of God in the soul of man.
- Eternal life. The fruit of that is that you love. His eternal life is love. So that's how important love is. It's the very life of God in the soul of man.
- [2 : 19] Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in him. When we love one another, God is living in us. So I can't see God, but in one way I can see him.
- I can see him in the love that we share with one another. The love that we express to each other and give to each other. And so it's not just a nice thing that we do.
- It's not just nice to see you loving each other when I see you caring for each other. It's not just nice what we just experienced down in the fellowship hall where I looked around and there were people listening and people speaking and people encouraging and people smiling and people listening intently.
- You showed your concern. Your hearts for each other. And that wasn't just a meal together. That was the spirit of God at work in us to love one another, to show each other our love.
- And that is the true test of the spirit's presence. That's the great miracle. That's what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 13. Yeah, these other things, speaking in tongues and understanding mysteries or prophesying or even great faith, those are all good.
- [3 : 45] But Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, it's love that is the greatest, the most excellent. So what good is it if I have faith that can move a mountain if then I take that mountain and put it on you and crush you with it or put it in your path and keep you from going any further?

What good is that? So to quote Alan Jackson who said, faith, hope, and love are some good things that he gave us.

But the greatest is love. The greatest is love. But why is love the greatest? Well, that's what Paul in part is answering in 1 Corinthians 13.

Why is this to be earnestly desired? Why are we to pursue it? Why are we with all of our hearts supposed to be growing in this? Why is love best? And his first answer is because love is patient.

Because love is patient. That's what we're going to talk about this afternoon. Love is long-suffering. That's the beauty of love. That it can, it's long-suffering.

[4 : 55] So here is the life of God in the soul of man. What does that look like when God's Spirit comes in and moves us to love each other?

Well, love is patient. It's long-suffering. It endures hardship. So I want you to think of romantic movies or books.

But how does the story always end in a romantic movie? Well, the big question is will they or won't they get together? Will all these obstacles, will they get over all these obstacles and they find each other?

And that's how the movie ends with them actually finding each other or actually all the obstacles are overcome and now they're together and then that's what happens.

And that's good. I mean, I think we want to say, oh, that's the world's story. Well, the problem is not that, I mean, we all have that. If you're married, they have the will they, won't they, how they find each other.

[5 : 57] That part is part of the love story. It's not the problem. The problem is, well, I want to know what happens two years later to those people. I want to know what happens after the first glow of that romantic love is done.

What happens when they actually are now committed to each other, they're in this marriage. So the movie, the book is, well, Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennett, Pride and Prejudice, they're finally together.

Yay! And that's good. But what will happen in two years' time? What's going to happen then when Mr. Darcy is sick and tired of his mother-in-law?

And if you know the book or you've seen the movie, you know she's a lady that would drive any son-in-law up the wall. So what then? And Mr. Darcy is already a pretty severe fellow.

And so come Christmas time, there's going to be an argument about whose house they're having Christmas at or where they're going or the holiday plans. And it's not like you, any of you, have ever had in-law problems or holiday planning problems.

[7 : 16] I heard it's a common thing. So what then? What happens when Elizabeth and her little temper, and she does have one, gets the best of her, and she doesn't like how he's talking about her mother?

Or she doesn't like what he's saying about his sister, her sister. And guess what? She doesn't like it and he doesn't think he said anything wrong.

Then what? And what happens when Charlotte and Mr. Collins comes over, and Mr. Collins never shuts up about Lady Catherine de Bourgh, and you just can't tell him to be quiet.

And no one is more aware of just how conceited and annoying her husband is than Charlotte. And that makes everyone think, you know, Charlotte, you're really compromised in that marriage.

You're really compromised in a bad way. And you want to shake her and say, why did you do that? It seems like you could have done better. Now, you might not recognize all those names, but I'm sure that you recognize all those situations because that is life.

[8 : 30] In-law problems, holiday problems, people talking when they shouldn't, people oblivious to their own faults, people who have made compromises, people who have made decisions that you don't like.

That's life. Life is full of pain. People hurt us. People annoy us, and people make mistakes, and people are insensitive. James says that the tongue is full of deadly poison.

Have you been bit by a tongue? No, you have. People exaggerate our faults. They minimize our virtues, and they magnify our faults when they think about us.

They don't respect us maybe like they ought to. People will speak evil of you. They will. And you will speak evil of them. Ecclesiastes says that's one reason that you don't listen to everything that everyone is saying because you know that you've done the same thing.

You've talked behind someone else's back, so you can't go around with ears wide open listening to everything. Some people will be so selfish that all they will care about is themselves, and when you talk with them, it will be just about them.

[9 : 42] Me, me, me. And everything you say will be a chance for them to talk about themselves. And then there are accidental faults that we all live with.

Sins of omission. Sins that we could have done. Things that we could have done differently. Things that we should have done that we didn't do. People are blinded and darkened in their understandings, Paul says. And in their wrongness and in the darkness of their thinking and in the darkness of their hearts, they will misunderstand you.

They will misjudge you. They will criticize you. They will misread you. One person said, we are all living in a leper colony.

That's living in a sinful world. That's what we saw this morning. That's living in a church. In a sinful, still sinful church. This is what it means to live with a bunch of oh, wretched men that we are.

And often, their sewage, their sin will get on us.

[10 : 49] And now you have the backdrop for the beauty of love. Because in the middle of all of that, love is patient. Love is patient.

That's the glory of love. That's the beauty of love. Love is patient. It's long-suffering. So instead of cursing, it blesses. And so it doesn't go around with a bitter chip on its shoulder looking at other people askew and with such pessimism.

Every little thing is not a thing to get upset and angry about. So the waitress or the waiter is slow. So instead of getting all chippy and angry with her and instead of spiraling down into bitter complaint about this and that, it is patient.

So in that situation, in that very real-life situation that we've all been in, one is of the devil and one is of God. One is beautiful.

One is ugly and common. One is this poisonous fog in the air. And another one is something that fresh breathes right out of heaven to bring into a situation.

[11 : 54] So love is long-suffering. It suffers for the sake of peace. Earlier in 1 Corinthians, Paul confronts the Corinthians for going to court, going to the law court over their differences with each other.

It was unloving. It was an unloving disgrace. He calls it utter defeat. That's what he says. And he says, why not rather be wronged?

Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong and you do this to your brothers. So are there fights at your house about who is right?

Are there fights at your house about who is right? Are there arguments about what is fair? Aren't we good at arguing over what is fair, what is right?

This is what happened last time and this is what happened the time before that. And this was the case. And so the kids, I think of this especially, the kids can be such amazing lawyers and recollecting everything that is right and fair.

[13 : 13] Then they bring it to us as the parents, as the judges of this situation to sort of divide it out. And we don't have the wisdom of Solomon to know what to say because it's all, who knows who's right and who's wrong, what's right and fair always.

My kids, and maybe adults, kids, love is patient. It's long-suffering. Love would rather be harmed and keep the peace than go to war and just get what I have.

Get what's due me. So in all your concern for your rights and their wrongs, what about love? What about love?

Are you loving your brother? Are you loving your sister? Are you being patient with them? Are you being patient with them? Love is patient when your brother doesn't feed the dog or take out the trash or do the dishes.

Love is patient with your sister or your brother when he doesn't pick up his stuff in the room. But you say, it's not right. They should do that. And I agree.

[14 : 26] They should. They should. But until they do, love is patient. So be patient with them. Isn't it better to be wronged in the matter of taking out the trash or feeding the dog than to go to war?

Love is patient. Because love is not proud. That's why it can be patient. The proud heart is always seeking what's right and what's wrong. It's very self-seeking.

Love doesn't keep a record of wrongs. Love is like Teflon pan. What you put on it, it just, you just, it slides right off. So it's not thinking about this time or that time.

Love is, doesn't keep a record of wrongs. And so, it's patient. And so, despite the fact that they're not taking out the trash like I want them to or not picking up after themselves, love says, I'm going to keep doing them good anyways.

I'm going to still bless them anyways. That's what love does. It's amazing. Love always hopes. It hopes that they'll get what they're not getting. It hopes that they'll understand what they're not understanding.

[15 : 37] And love is always hoping that eventually that person will see what they're doing and will change. Or love is always saying, I need to wait on the Lord and the Lord will bring this about and bring this change.

So love is patient with them while God changes them. And that's the glory of love. Love actually does that. In the face of sin, in the face of disappointment, in the face of everything that it's throwing at us, love is patient.

And it goes on seeking good. Now, that's the beauty of love. But that's also the duty of love. So men, if you love your wife, love, you will be patient with her.

So how are you doing with her faults, her sin? And ladies, if you love your husbands, you'll be patient with them, with their faults, their sins, their foibles, or whatever.

How are you doing? But it's not just marriage. Parents, we need to be patient with our children. And children, you also need to be patient with your parents.

[16 : 58] That needs to happen, too. And about coworkers and managers, if you love them, you'll be patient with them. That's where you spend a lot of your time, and that's where you're rubbing shoulders with sinful, normal, everyday sinners, everyday, regular people.

You need to be patient with them. So we're patient with ourselves. We give ourselves a lot of slack. We're very slow to write ourselves off. We endure a lot of pain and inconvenience and sin from ourselves.

And what Jesus says is, now you love them the way you love yourself. Love your neighbor like you love yourself. So, where does all this leave us?

just a last few things. Do you lack patience? Is that one of those areas that you really could improve on?

Do you lack patience? How do you grow in patience? I think this chapter at least helps us in this way. The problem is not first a self-control problem.

[18 : 10] It is that. I'm not saying it's not that. But it's first a love problem. You're quite patient with yourself because you're so in love with yourself.

And so, if you love that person better, if you love that person more, you would be patient with them. So you, do you need to, do you need to grow in patience? Then, work on loving that person more.

And do you want to love better? Then grow in patience. That's the other side of the coin. You want to love all those people in your life.

You want to glorify God. Do you want to shine with that light coming out of you where people look on you and say, wow, that's different. That's refreshing.

That's good. Look how they love one another. Look how he loves her. Look how he loves them or she loves them. Then grow in patience. But the all, that's easier said than done, isn't it?

[19 : 13] So you say, okay, I know what I need to do, but how do I do it? How do I do it? Well, how do you grow in patience? How do you grow in love? Well, here's the delightful answer.

And it really is a delightful answer. It's what we talked about in the adult Sunday school. Feast on God's love for you. Feast on God's love for you.

Feast on his patience with you. Feast on it. That means take it in. Not in small quantities.

Take it in large quantities. Take it in with enjoyment. Take it in. His, how he loves you. God loves you. That's why he's so patient with you.

And think about how patient he has been. Oh, what a wretched man that I am. I don't do what I want to do and the things that I don't want to do, those are the things I keep on doing.

[20 : 12] Well, that's how I feel about it. I don't do the things I want to do, but you know what? I'm not doing the things God wants me to do. And he's still patient with me. He's still holding out the hope of eternal life to me.

He's still there by his spirit with me. He loves me still. He's patient with me still. He still does me good. He forgives me again and again. I am a slow learner.

I can be completely oblivious to huge sections of my life, and yet God is so patient. So think of how he loves you. Think about how patient he is with you.

God is slow to anger, abounding in love to you. Any patience, any love that we have in our hearts is the result of his work in us, his spirit in us.

The fruit of the spirit is patience. And so he is so patient. He does love you. And so how do you grow patient? How do you grow in patience?

[21 : 21] How do you grow in love towards those people that cause you grief and heartache and pain and are so slow to understand or so quick to misunderstand you?

Well, how do you do that? You bring those people. You bring that situation. You bring yourself into the context, into the light of how God has loved you, how God is so patient with you.

So it's very easy to be impatient when we have sealed off that person or we've sealed off that situation or we've sealed ourselves off from the love of God.

When it's just me and that person and God is not in the picture, God's love is not in the picture, God's patience is not in the picture, it's just me and him, me and her, me and the situation.

There's no oil. There's no grease. It's like grinding of the gears. It's hard to be patient. So bring those people. Bring that person.

[22 : 25] Bring that situation into the context, into the light of how God has loved you. Wasn't that the point of Jesus' parable of this man who has forgiven millions and millions of dollars?

And then he goes out and chokes the servant who owed him a few dollars. That man hadn't connected what God's love and God's patience was for him.

He hadn't brought that man and himself really into the light of how God has loved him. And so you can't be patient. He's like, give me my money now. I want my rights now.

I'm all demand. No patience. So it's easy to be impatient when we've sealed that person off and we've sealed ourselves off from God's love and patience. But you put them into, you put yourself into the context, into the light, into the glory and the goodness of how God has loved you.

And you remember how patient he has been with you. Then, I don't know if easy is the word. Easier. It's easier to be patient with that person.

[23 : 38] It comes out of you. It flows out of you. Out of the fullness of that goodness. You can be patient with him. So God's love will, God's love for us will overflow to them.

And so that's your duty. That's our duty. To feast on God's love for you. Feast on it. Remember his patience. And then go and do likewise.

Go and do likewise. Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, we all struggle to wait.

To wait for people. To wait for you. To wait even for ourselves sometimes. It's so difficult for us to be patient.

And to act that way towards other people. When they're hurting us. Or when they've disappointed us. Or when they've misunderstood us.

[24 : 49] And we need, we need the work of the Holy Spirit to bring your grace and your love to bear upon our hearts.

To give us this new light and this new way of thinking and this new understanding. So please keep us from being small, crippled souls that are just so impatient and demanding.

But make us to shine. To be big hearted. To be kind and patient with one another. To have something of your heart more and more in our lives.

Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.