

The One Thing You Can't Do Without

"The Power of Loving Patience"

1 Corinthians 13:4-5 ESV Love is patient.....

Preamble Questions And Comments: One commentator writes about 1 Corinthians 13,

"What we have is the most comprehensive description of the fullness of love. Paul shines love through a prism and we see 15 of its colors and hues. Each ray gives a facet, a property of agape love."

In the original Greek text, each of these aspects is in verb form. This is significant because these four verses teach us what love is by telling us what love does. True love is never passive.

For the Christian the greatest picture of love is seen in the person and work of Jesus Christ. If we look to the cross, we see love in action. Therefore we can say that this passage is a portrait of Jesus Christ. Try reading through the text and substituting the name "Jesus" for the word "Love".

Now insert your own name in place of the word "love". When we do this simple exercise we may begin to see the importance this portion of Scripture has for our life. As stated earlier love is the greatest need of the church.

Perhaps the best thing to do with this passage is to take it slow, a line at a time, and reflect and meditate on how to apply this love to our own life.

Introduction: It may go without saying that in the western half of the world instant gratification is well...instant. So it makes sense that impatience is a problem. Gone are the days of snail mail we here in the information age travel on road rage.

Q.) In what ways is impatience magnified in our culture?

"I have not so great a struggle with my vices, great and numerous as they are, as I have with impatience. My efforts are not absolutely useless, yet I have never been able to conquer this ferocious wild beast." – John Calvin

Q.) What is at the heart of impatience?

Many people think that patience is just putting up with people. But,

A. Patience Is Not Just Putting Up With People It Is Pouring The Gospel Out For People.

The Greek word used here is never used in circumstances or events; it is always used in regard to people. We must be careful not to mistake patience with tolerance. As I have looked at my own life I have been disturbed by my ability to be indifferent

or tolerate those different than I am, but regretfully I confess I often stop short of being patient with them because I love them like I should.

Q.) In a culture that emphasizes tolerance, why are there so many intolerant people?

- *Tolerance says, "You must approve of what I do." Love responds, "I must do something harder: I will love you, even when your behavior offends me."*
- *Tolerance says, "You must agree with me." Love responds, "I must do something harder: I will tell you the truth, because I am convinced 'the truth will set you free.'"*
- *Tolerance says, "You must allow me to have my way." Love responds, "I must do something harder: I will plead with you to follow the right way, because I believe you are worth the risk."*
- *Tolerance seeks to be inoffensive; love takes risks.*
- *Tolerance glorifies division; love seeks unity.*
- *Tolerance costs nothing; love costs everything.*

We can tolerate people and call it love when it is nothing more than an exercise in endurance and endurance is just that, it is surviving through suffering. But patience is not just putting up with people it runs deeper than that, it is more powerful.

In the Greek patience literally means, *long suffering or long tempered*. In other words patience is the power to take anything from people because we love them.

"It is a word which is used of a man who is wronged and who has it easily in his power to avenge himself but will never do it." – Chrysostom

This means we are to have little irritations with people's big failings. We are to have patience with problems which may never go away. Patience with people you work with and people you live with. So you see patience is more than just putting up with people it is pouring ourselves out for people. Patience is putting our personal goals aside in order for the Gospel to go forth in power, and it is this sort of long-suffering that substantiates our claim of salvation.

B. Patience Is Proof Of Our Love Towards God And People.

Paul writing to the Galatians says,

Galatians 5:22-23 ESV *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

Q. What does Paul mean by "the fruit of the Spirit?"

Fruit is not a product manufactured by a machine. Fruit must grow out of life and in the case of the believer it is the life of the Spirit (Gal.5:25). Paul is simply saying if you have the fruit of love (sacrificial, unconditional love) it will yield the fruit of patience (long suffering), if you are not "*long suffering*" with others it maybe that you don't love them "*unconditionally*"!

So Patience is not just putting up with people, it is proof that we are loving those people and thirdly it is this patient love that has the power to change people.

C. Patience Has The Power To Change People.

Illustration: No one treated Abraham Lincoln with more contempt than did Edwin Stanton. He called Lincoln a “low, cunning clown” he nicknamed him the original Gorilla and said that a certain famous hunter of those days was a fool to wander about Africa trying to capture a gorilla when he could have found one easily at Springfield, Illinois. Lincoln said nothing. When he became president He made Stanton his war minister because he knew that he was the best man for the job. After giving him that position he treated him with every courtesy. The years wore on. When the night came that Lincoln was shot, Edwin Stanton was present in the little room to which the Presidents body was taken, looking down on Lincoln's silent face he said through his tears, “There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen.” The patience of love had conquered in the end.

Patience of this sort is considered a sign of weakness in our culture as it was in ancient times. Aristotle for example taught that the great Greek virtue was a refusal to tolerate insult or injury and to strike back in retaliation for the slightest offense. We live in a culture that says you have rights and if those rights are threatened in any way shape or form strike and strike hard.

I used to think that patience was a characteristic of a person with no conviction. That was until I became a Christian and realized that loving (sacrificial, unconditional love) patience (long-suffering) had been demonstrated with me by people but more importantly by God it is this truth which changes lives.

2 Peter 3:9 ESV The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

“The anvil is struck by the hammer and the anvil never strikes in return. Yet the anvil wears the hammer out. Patience baffles fury and vanquishes malice.” -C.H. Spurgeon

Illustration: Robert Ingersoll, the well known atheist of the last century, often would stop in the middle of his lectures against God and say, “Ill give God five minutes to strike me dead for the things I’ve said.” He then used the fact that he was not struck dead as proof that God did not exist. Theodore Parker said of Ingersolls claim, “And did the gentleman think he could exhaust the patience of God in five minutes?”

1 Timothy 1:15-16 ESV The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

Conclusion: We Find The Power To Be Patient In The Person Of Jesus Christ.

1. Love Is Long-Suffering.