

LOVE IS PATIENT & KIND

1 Corinthians 13:1-4

Sermon for Peace Church

October 12, 2008

PURPOSE – In light of God’s love for us, call forth love for others which is patient & kind.

MAIN IDEA – The patient and kind love of God is long-suffering and fitting to our needs – with whom must you share this love?

I. INTRODUCTION

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13

Last week, we covered the first 3 verses of this chapter on the importance of love:

If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I GAIN NOTHING.

1. That last phrase is INTRIGUING.

(i) What is it that is GAINED in the life of love?

Among many “abiding” things – this might be the most important thing gained by love:

1 John 4:16 – *“Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way love is MADE COMPLETE among us so that we will have confidence on the Day of Judgment, because in this world we are like him.”*

A. What the formation of love in the life of the believer GAINS is CONFIDENCE on the Day of Judgment.

(ii) That day every person should orient their life around!

It is the day when our life will be tested to see what SUBSTANCE it has – measured by God who IS LOVE.

A. The Day of Judgement is life’s ULTIMATE EXAMINATION:

I.e. – When you’re in high school, you know what it means to orient yourself around a test. You manage your time so you can study & be prepared. Begin to pray for that day. You read. You meet with friends to study ... And sometimes you’re more CONFIDENT going into that exam than other times.

1 Jn. 4:17 – Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in him. In this way love is made complete among us so that we will have CONFIDENCE for the day of Judgment.

... because in this world we are like him.

OUR GOAL – on that day is to hear these words from God: “Hey, I know you. You’re like me. You’re family. I can see it. You belong here – in my eternal & perfect presence.”

2. So how do we GAIN CONFIDENCE for that day?

It’s by growing in the practice of love. That’s what true life with God is about: *Whoever lives in love, lives in God, and God in Him.*

And by living with God in that commitment, then love is being MADE COMPLETE AMONG US.

= It GROWS. We first met love when we met God in Jesus. It changed our lives. It changed the way we looked at others. It changed the way we treated them. It changed the way we evaluated ourselves. It changed everything! ...

When, in faith, we truly meet such love, we cannot help but be CAPTURED by it ... and want it to KEEP GROWING in us – getting ready for the Day of Judgment.

... when we will be measured by and further united to PERFECT LOVE – ULTIMATE REALITY – GOD HIMSELF

3. So LOVE LEARNS!

1 Corinthians 13 is therefore not the kind of love you “fall into” ... this is not Cupid’s love ... “I think I’m falling in love.” ... It’s not “eros” ... or even “phileo” (friendship)

The love that GROWS & LEARNS & PREPARES US FOR THE DAY OF JUDGMENT is AGAPE love.

(i) Someone once said, “When IN LOVE ends, REAL LOVE begins”.

= a love built on commitment, on knowing a covenant-keeping God

- A love that can even love our enemies!

“*Understanding, creative, redemptive good will to all men*” – as Dr. Martin Luther King defined it (from last week’s sermon)

THAT LOVE LEARNS & GROWS ... and, in growing, GAINS for your Day of Judgment!

So let’s learn as God’s Word describes this love:

II. LOVE IS PATIENT

1. LOVE IS PATIENT – What a place to start!

The Greek is a COMPOUND WORD – literally meaning “suffers-long” (KJV)

= Love suffers long with others

(i) If you’ve read the letter of 1 Corinthians, you’ll know that the church to whom this letter was first written was PRETTY IMMATURE.

- There were factions, sexual misconduct, lawsuits within the church ... misuse of the Lord’s Supper, mishandling of spiritual gifts ...

A. It would have been very easy, I’m sure, to those in that church to say: “I’m out of here! ... I’ve had it! ... Arrivaderci!”

Might you ever find those words crossing your own mind in relationships you’re in?

LOVE is PATIENT ... Love suffers long.

A. David Bast writes, *“Patience is literally long suffering. Suffering because you will be hurt and disappointed by the failures of those you love ... and LONG because, despite the pain, you persist in loving. Your refuse to give up. You won’t turn away. You don’t quit and go look for someone who is easier to care about.”*

(ii) This runs COUNTER to the pulse of our “instant” – MICROWAVE society. We want things NOW. We want others & situations to change IMMEDIATELY!

- But love, as John Ciardi put it (reading), *IS PATIENT* – *“The art of caring SLOWLY”*
= Crock-pot cooking!

When love is DIFFICULT, it must be patient.

When you’re called to love those DIFFERENT, then you must be patient.

2. LOVE SUFFERS LONG IN HOPE – that your love will change things.

- That the suffering will end.

2 Peter 3:8-9 says this about God’s patience: *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient (long-suffering) with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*

In love, God is patient with us that CHANGE (repentance, a turning) MIGHT HAPPEN.

3. But do note - even God has limits in patience! For Verse 10 immediately adds:

But the day of the Lord WILL come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

LOVE DOES NOT SUFFER FOREVER. In God's love, judgment does come! He will move on to a new age.

- (i) This we wrestle with in the journey of love, don't we? How long do I hang in there with this person? This situation? This group of people?

A. Lewis Smedes, in his book, "Love Within Limits", offers this counsel:

How long does love stick with someone? The answer in general is VERY LONG ... In God you can and must suffer long; but you need not suffer everything interminably. Perhaps you should call a halt now, but remember that your natural inclination is to cut suffering short. Love is your power to suffer longer than you think you can.

... Before you decide to stop suffering, make sure you have not lost contact with love. Keep attuned to the Spirit.

... This may be a rule of thumb: When I turn off suffering for the sake of MY pleasure, I turn off too soon.

- (ii) For love is not self-seeking – As you pray in discernment, make sure you've not lost contact with love ... with God ... with the desire to glorify Him, not self.
... and be truthful to others.

LOVE SUFFERS LONG

The Church father, Chrysostom, taught that to be patient means to gain a WIDE & BIG SOUL.

... Like God's - *"As far as the east is from the west" (wide)*

As high as the heavens are above the earth" (big)

... So great is his love for us!

III. LOVE IS KIND

Love is patient ... AND KIND – that's our other facet of love today.

- The Greek word – *chraesteuomai* – has a couple of root meanings:
One is GOODNESS; the other, USEFULNESS

1. Love is kind means that love does every-day, ordinary, simple, down-to-earth GOOD things for others.

I.e. – Opening doors, letting people ahead of you in line, taking a moment to say hi, bringing cookies to a stressed neighbor, carrying sister’s books ... LOVE IS KIND

- (i) But not just those we like. In Luke 6, Jesus said, *“Love your enemies. DO GOOD to them. Lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Your reward will be great. And you will be called Sons of the Most High ... because ... God is KIND (= same word) to the ungrateful & wicked.”*

God is kind to the ungrateful! (Ugghh!)

When someone FAILS to show appreciation for being let in your lane – and they cut you off moments later when you’re driving in another lane - ... not easy to yet be kind – to them or anyone else for a while after that!

Jesus said that God is kind even to the UNGRATEFUL!

2. The other sense of this word translated “kind” is love that is USEFUL, SUITABLE, PROPER.

- It conveys the idea that love FITS the one you are being kind to

- (i) Guys, if she likes CHOCOLATES, but can’t stand ROSES – love that is kind LEARNS and gives SUITABLY to her – even if you think that there can’t be a kinder gift to give than roses!

Love grow by becoming BETTER – as we understand others.

FOR EXAMPLE – Learning GENDER DIFFERENCES –

In his book, “Men are from Mars and Women from Venus”, John Gray writes this about SCORING POINTS WITH THE OPPOSITE SEX.

Read Gray Quote

Ah ... but love learns! There are GENDER DIFFERENCES!

- Likewise with ETHNIC DIFFERENCES – Racial sensitivity training is part of love because it helps us UNDERSTAND how to be kind to one another
- It helps us give the BEST LOVE we can.

3. Gary Chapman wrote a book titled, “The 5 Love Languages”. It also speaks to a love which is kind & “fitting”. How many here have heard of that book? I

His basic point is that there are certain acts of kindness that BEST COMMUNICATE love to us. These are our PRIMARY LOVE LANGUAGE:

(i) For some – WORDS OF AFFIRMATION – minister deeply to their heart

Mark Twain once said, “I can live for 2 months on a good compliment”.

= Words of Appreciation – “Great job” ... Words of Encouragement / confidence – “I know you’ll handle it!”

(ii) Others better experience love through QUALITY TIME – just being available for the other person. Willing to sit across the table and share what’s going on in your heart. That’s kindness being given.

(iii) For others, RECEIVING GIFTS - speaks love deeply

Because we tend to desire the kind of love we’re best at giving, note those people in your life who are good at giving gifts. They get you that little item that’s really helpful (not just another tie or bottle of perfume!)

(iv) For others, ACTS OF SERVICE – communicate kindness

I.e. – sweeping the floor, taking the car out to gas up, cleaning out the fridge

(v) PHYSICAL TOUCH – we’re all ministered to by touch – but some people feel particularly loved by coming up and giving them a hug, holding their hands, snuggling (some of your kids or grandkids are more like this, some less).

4. HOW IS IT THAT YOU BEST EXPERIENCE LOVE? Which love-language speaks to you most clearly?

- Probably you can answer that. Good! - You may want to share that with someone you’re covenanted to build love with.

- (i) But more importantly, what speaks love to those you're called to love?

KINDNESS means giving others the BEST love you can - which FITS that person.

IV. CONCLUSION

Love learns ... love grows ... love gains.

You'll notice on your sermon outline (back of bulletin) that I've left room in the conclusion for you to write down your love assignment – to pray about, to work on.

(can jot down for yourself, your prayers – just between God & you ... don't have to turn it in!)

1. What is a love SITUATION or PERSON where you need to exercise patience?
 - You've been waiting & waiting for change, but nothing's happening. You're ready to give up ... but you need to pray about it – to not lose touch with Love
 - Patience is long-suffering.

To those different, to those difficult love is patience.

2. Love is KIND. Whose love-language do you need to better learn?
 Who is God calling you to embrace in your circle of love?
 What would speak love / kindness to them?

The Word says, WE LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US.

God's love for you is long-suffering and kind. In that love, let us love others. AMEN