

ESF, Lord's Day service message
2/12/2023

Love is Patient and Kind

1 Corinthians 13:4

Love is patient, love is kind.

Some years ago, at a farm in the state of Maine, a teenager, Arthur Hinkley, lifted a 3,000-pound tractor with his bare hands. He was not a weightlifter. But his friend, Lloyd Bachelder was pinned under a tractor and screaming for help. Hearing the friend screaming, Arthur somehow lifted the tractor enough for his friend to wriggle out.

When love is expressed through action, it has enormous power. It may give you extraordinary ability to overcome a formidable obstacle.

1 Corinthians chapter 13 has been known as the chapter of love in the Bible. In this chapter, Paul teaches what love is through actions and attitudes. True love is more than a feeling or a word. It's more than what we feel or say. It's an attitude and a behavior. It has an action. 1 John 3:18 says, "*Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.*"

There are several key actions and attitudes in true love. Today, among them, we want to learn about patience and kindness as actions and attitudes in love.

Love is patient

The word "patient" here is the Greek "makrothumeo," which means attitude and actions of long-suffering, forbearance, perseverance, and endurance toward people who trouble you or hurt you.

Patient means refraining from avenging, although someone may have the right to avenge. An ancient theologian Chrysostom said of this word, "*It (patience) 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.*"

Patience is self-restraint. It endures much and refuses to retaliate. Its primary concern is for the welfare of others.

Paul urged the Christians to “*be patient with everyone*” (1 Thessalonians 5:14). Everyone includes those who frustrate you, trouble you and hurt you.

Patience also carries the idea of long-suffering.

Patience puts up with someone else's shortcomings. Patience is not indifference, which has an attitude that “I don't care about another brother or sister.” Indifference toward another person is not a sign of love. Patience is showing concern for the person who behaves selfishly and hurts you. Patience is putting up with a person regardless how the person behaves.

How can we be patient?

Patience isn't always easy for us, is it? A man's car stalled in heavy traffic as the light turned green. All his efforts to start the engine failed, and a chorus of honking behind him made matters worse. He finally got out of his car and walked back to the first driver and said, "I'm sorry, but I can't seem to get my car started. If you'll go up there and give it a try, I'll stay here and blow your horn for you."

#1. Constantly receive God's immense patience.

The Scriptures use this word to refer to God's immense patience toward sinful man. 1 Peter 3:20 says, *to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently (makrothumia) in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.*

Some people misunderstand God's patience as evidence of either the non-existence of God or God's indifference in men's lives. Robert Ingersoll, a well-known atheist of the last century, used to give God five minutes to strike him dead, in a supposed proof that God did not exist. Someone said, “Did this gentleman think that he could exhaust the infinite patience of God in five minutes?”

It is God's patience that prevents the world from being destroyed. It is His patience and long-suffering that allows time for men to be saved. 2 Pet 3:9 says, *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. While we were unloving and unwilling, He was willing to wait on us. When you remember how patient God has been with you, and are thankful for God's immense patience, God's patience remains in your hearts. And by God's Patience in you, you can be patient with others.

Paul testifies to this truth in 1 Timothy 1:16, *I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.*

#2. Constantly trust that God is in control.

When we trust that God is in control in every situation we are facing, we can be more patient. Patience is "*a calm endurance based upon the assurance that God is in control.*"

Although people may do bad things to you, and you may feel that your life is controlled by them, trust that it is not people but God who is in ultimate control.

When you are patient with others, especially with those who wrong you, for a while, you may look like a loser, even a fool. But in the end, when you are patient with them by trusting that the Lord is in control, the Lord will give you peace of mind in spite of troubles they bring to you. The Lord will enable you to overcome the troubles victoriously.

When Abraham Lincoln was living in Springfield, Illinois, there was a man named Stanton. No one treated Lincoln with more contempt than did Stanton. He called him "a low cunning clown." Stanton nicknamed him "the original gorilla." He said that a hunter was a fool to wander

about Africa trying to capture a gorilla when he could have found one so easily at Springfield, Illinois. Lincoln said nothing.

Then, when Lincoln was elected president, he made Stanton his war minister. Lincoln said that he chose Stanton because he was the best man for the job, and he treated Stanton with courtesy. The years wore on. The night came when the assassin's bullet murdered Lincoln in the theatre. In the little room to which the President's body was taken stood that same Stanton, and, looking down on Lincoln's silent face, he said through his tears, "There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen."

With patience, you can rule the hearts of others, even your enemy in the end.

Love is kind.

Kindness is the more active side of patience. This word is "chresteuetai" in the original Greek Bible text.

This word means speaking with a gentle tone of voice when others are provoking, irritating, frustrating, or hurting you. Kindness knows how to speak in a healing tone of voice. It is the opposite of speaking with demanding, harsh, sharp, bitter tone.

It means serving others graciously. Kindness is treating others gently, whether they deserve it or not. It means to be helpful, willing to assist, or willing to furnish others with what they need. This kindness brings peace to us when we are struggling with troubles.

There is a story of kindness in a busy airport. A line of travelers was waiting to buy tickets. The line grew so long and moved so slowly that people were stressful. At the moment, two women carrying large suitcases started elbowing their way to the front. A man near the head of the line saw that the two women were pushing and shoving. The situation was getting out of control. That moment, the man offered the two women his own position. Then, the man picked up his own luggage and walked to the back of the line. This response took everyone,

including the two women, by surprise. Suddenly, a stressful situation turned into a peaceful atmosphere.

Kindness is identifying with people in pain, with problems and weaknesses. Kindness looks for a way to enhance, heal, and help people regardless of who they are and how they behave. It means bearing other person's burden, carrying it together with the person. Jesus explains this point clearly by the parable of a Good Samaritan. He placed the victim wounded by robbers on his donkey and paid the bill for his medical treatment. It cost him to be kind. It cost him time, effort, money, inconvenience. It took courage to show kindness on a dark road known to be frequented by violent robbers (Luke 10:29-37).

Kindness in action is powerful!

Kindness has the power to move people's hearts. Alexander Maclaren once said, *"If you want to win the world, melt it, do not hammer it."* Kindness will do more for each other than a million times of hitting each other with a verbal or physical hammer, even if one person is right and another person is wrong.

An extraordinarily beautiful woman married an exceptionally ugly man. When a family friend once asked how such a beautiful woman could have married such an ugly man, she replied, "He has never once hurt my feelings."

A lady was standing at a bus stop one day waiting for a bus. She was a little nervous because she had just cashed her tax return check and had a lot of money in her purse. She noticed a shabbily dressed man standing nearby, and soon another man walked over to the gentleman, put some money in his hand, and whispered in his ear. Moved by this touching act of apparent kindness, the lady felt convicted to do the same, and so she walked over to the man, put a \$10 bill in his hand, and simply whispered in his ear the words, "Never despair, never despair! "

The next day the lady found herself on the same street corner and noticed the man walking rapidly toward her. He pressed some money

into her hand and whispered back, “Here is \$110, lady. Never Despair. I paid off your kindness at 10 to 1.”

Of course, things may not turn out that way always in our lives when we show kindness to others. But kindness will make a positive impact. It will change us. It will make everybody happier- not only those who receive our kindness but also ourselves.

Then how can we be kind?

Some people may be born with a kind character. But many of us may not have a kind character. Even if someone is born with a kind character, they can't be kind to their enemies. Being kind to enemies isn't in man's natural character. It comes from God. When we know the kindness of God and receive it, we can also be kind as He is kind.

#1. Be thankful for God's kindness to you.

Kindness is the very nature of God. Titus 3:4-5 says, *but when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.*

God's love is kind. God's kind love actively works for our good, producing in us ultimately a new person, bestowing on us a righteousness that is apart from our own merit, but which is based solely on the merit of another, namely Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-7).

God is kind toward us because this is His very nature and disposition. Jesus teaches how we can be kinder by the kindness of God in Matthew 5:43-45, *You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

God's kindness in Christ is praying for our enemies. While Jesus was agonizing in extreme pain on the cross, He prayed for those who crucified him: *“Father forgive them for they do not know what they are*

doing” (Luke 23:34). This prayer was not only for the people who crucified Jesus but also for you and me. Because of our sins, He was crucified. We have crucified Jesus by our own sins. If we look up to Jesus on the cross who prayed that prayer for us, and thank Him for His unfathomable sacrifice, the power of His forgiveness comes into our heart and flows through us. That power enables us to pray for our enemies as Jesus prayed. That is how we can be kind to our enemies.

#2. Receive patience and kindness as a fruit of the Spirit.

Paul lists patience and kindness as the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5. In other words, patience and kindness are to be produced in our character through the working of the Holy Spirit in us.

To receive patience and kindness as the fruits of the Spirit in our lives, we must surrender to the conviction of the Spirit moment by moment. Usually, the Holy Spirit convicts us to be patient and kind to people with whom we spend most of our time. The first test of our patience and kindness is in our homes, in our churches, and in our workplaces. It's often easier to be patient and kind to a stranger than being patient and kind to the people close to us, who love us the most. It's sometimes easier to be patient and kind to someone else's children than to our own. It's sometimes easier to be patient and kind to a neighbor than to our own spouses. It may be easier to be patient and kind to the believers of other churches than to our church people.

But being patient and kind occasionally to our neighbors, to strangers, or to someone whom we do not see that often, cannot shape our character. Although it may be better than not being patient and kind to those people, it does not represent the fruit of the Spirit. To possess patience and kindness as fruits of the Spirit, we need to obey moment by moment what the Holy Spirit convicts us to do for the people closest to us in our everyday life.