

#1 PROPERTIES OF LOVE: SUFFERS LONG

(1 Cor 13:4)

A. The ebb & flow of human relationships is fascinating & sometimes very disappointing.

1. Because the best of friends can become harsh critics of each other in a very short time.
2. Or, what appeared to be a sound marriage can quickly end in a bitter divorce.
3. A peaceful congregation can almost overnight fragment violently into several parts.
4. But more often than these horrible outcomes, the love and friendship between Christians that was at one time warm & amiable (friendly) can over time become cool & even disagreeable.
 - a. What happened? Love didn't "suffer long".

B. Peter admonished us to have a "fervent love for another".

1 Pet 4:8 – And above all things *have fervent love for one another*, for "*love will cover a multitude of sins*" (Prov 10:12 – "love covers all sins").

1. The word "fervent" means stretched out, earnest or constant (cf. Acts 12:5; 26:7).
2. When Peter said, "love will cover...sins" he was not saying that "love" will induce God to overlook our sins.
 - a. He was saying that if we have love for one another then it will cause us to quietly cover the faults of another.
 - b. For example, remember how Ham exposed the shame (nakedness) of his father Noah, while Shem & Japheth covered it (Gen 9:23).

3. Since God has a fervent love for us, then it follows that He covers the shame of our sins.

- a. He didn't expose our sins to anyone who would listen before He forgave them.
- b. He simply covered or forgave them when we sought His forgiveness. Therefore...

1 John 4:8-11, 16 – He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that **God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.** 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us & sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.** 11 Beloved, **if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another...** And we have known & believed the love that God has for us. **God is love, & he who abides in love abides in God, & God in him.**

- c. This love, of which John speaks so freely, *“is not an impulse from feelings, it does not always run with our natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered. Love seeks the welfare of all, & works no ill to any...”* (Vine's).

C. **As divine & important** as love is, we sometimes feel & act as though our love for others is wearing thin.

1. The church in Corinth faced that problem.

- a. They had divine gifts & superb teachers, & yet Paul dealt with several problems that indicated their love for one another was wearing thin.

- b. {Factions over preachers, adultery, court cases, trials in marriage, strong opinions, outspoken women, perversions of the LS, power struggles & attention seekers.}

- c. And then, like a beautiful flower that blooms in the desert, Paul described the love of God.

D. **Paul showed us** that when love is wearing thin the solution is to speak of God's love more often & more emphatically.

1. Not only that, but to prevent love from wearing thin we're going to have to work diligently to make it the framework of our lives.
2. The love that God would have us to develop is a beautiful jewel with 15 facets (1 Cor 13:4-7).
3. Paul was telling the Corinthians, "Here is love! Where is your life by comparison?"

[We also see depicted (1 Cor 13) a portrait of the Lord. Because everything we find in these verses defined the character of Jesus Christ – since He too is God.]

I. LOVE SUFFERS LONG

A. Paul begins by saying "Love suffers long".

RWP – Makrothumei: makros, long, thumos, passion, ardor. **Barnes** – "The word denotes slowness to anger or passion; long-suffering, patient endurance, forbearance. It is opposed to haste; to passionate expressions & thoughts, & to irritability. It denotes the state of mind, which can BEAR LONG when oppressed & provoked."

1. We are more familiar with the word "patience"; love is "patient".
2. Think about how patient the Lord had to be with Judas, knowing that he was a thief & a betrayer.
 - a. Do you think there were times when Jesus wanted to let the other disciples know what kind of man he was? And yet, Jesus *patiently endured* His relationship with Judas, giving him every opportunity to improve himself.
 - b. In fact, Jesus treated Judas no differently from the other apostles; He even let him take care of the money bag.
3. **Application:** there are many problems that arise in the home & in the church that are best dealt with patiently over a long period of time, rather than by allowing our irritation over the matter to provoke us to a quick & angry response.

4. Now there are matters that should be settled immediate (overt sins), but there are many more situations where an individual should be given time to apply what they have learned, time to wrestle with their conscience.

My dad tells a story about a time when he was driving the family car down a dirt road with a hill at a high rate of speed when he saw his dad watching from a distance. **He** worried that when he got home he would be in trouble, but his dad didn't mention it until several days later, & then only to draw his son's attention to the potential danger & the need to take care of their only car.

- B. **The Greeks** saw patience as a weakness; they made heroes out of their warriors & conquerors.

1. Aristotle: "The great Greek virtue is a refusal to tolerate any insult or injury & a readiness to strike back at any hurt." – *that is the radical Islamic philosophy.*
2. But aren't our great *American* heroes people who don't take any guff from anyone? Modern shows like "Survivor" feed this kind of attitude.

- C. **Look at God's men**: Joseph (**Gen 50:19-21**), the Lord (**Lk 23:34**), Stephen (**Acts 7:60**), Paul (**2 Tim 4:16**).

1. We see in them a complete absence of the spirit of retaliation; they were "long suffering".

- D. **Longsuffering or patience** just may be the greatest aspect of love. Why?

1. Because our relationship with God did not begin until we recognized that He loved us & that He was being patient with us.

2 Pet 3:9-15 – **The Lord is** not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but **is longsuffering toward us**, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, & the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth & the works that are in it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct & godliness, 12 looking for & hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, & the elements will melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens & a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot & blameless; 15 & **consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—**

The 19th century atheist Robert Ingersoll gave a speech in which He challenged God by saying, “I just dare God to strike me dead in 5 minutes for the things I’ve said.” A man in the audience replied “And did the gentleman think to exhaust the patience of the eternal God in just 5 minutes?”

Lam 3:21-23 – This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. **Through the LORD’S mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.** They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.

2. Jeremiah spoke of God’s longsuffering nature when he referred to God’s mercy, compassion & faithfulness as being new every morning.

3. That is a characteristic of God’s nature that we can rejoice in – however, there is one thing that will bring God’s patience with us to an abrupt end, & that’s when He sees us dealing impatiently with our brethren ([Matt 18:23-35](#); [Lk 12:42-47](#)).

Eph 4:1 – I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to **walk worthy of the calling** with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness & gentleness, with **longsuffering**, bearing with one another in love,

1 Thess 5:14 – Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are **unruly**, comfort the **fainthearted**, uphold the **weak**, **be patient with all**. 15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves & for all.

[Paul didn’t instruct us to tolerate sin, but to be patient in our dealings with everyone.]

CLOSING

- A. **Why does love “suffer long”?** Why does someone who loves not take revenge or retaliate.
1. Because we want to love as God loves.

 2. Because He has commanded us to love one another in this way.

 3. This is true, but aren’t we also trying to foster love in others, which might lead to their salvation; we are demonstrating the love God has for them.

 4. And we’re not going to be able to do that if they fear retaliation from us (home, church, job), because love cannot grow in the soil of fear.

5. Longsuffering would eventually make the Corinthian church a tight-knit body of Christians.
 - a. But when each was seeking his own & trying to make his voice heard above others, love was trodden under foot, & the body was dying.

6. Longsuffering (patience) will create an atmosphere where people (saints) can gently learn from their mistakes (if they will), which will prevent a much harsher judgment from God later.

[A husband refused to speak to his wife all afternoon. When she finally questioned him about it he said, "I'm trying to be patient with you for the mean thing you said to me." His wife said, "That's not patience, that's stubbornness!" She was right.]

In a future lesson, we will show that longsuffering must always ACT in kindness towards others.]

GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR SALVATION:

Hear the gospel of Jesus Christ; read it in your Bible: Acts 2; 3; 13; 17; Rom 10:17

Believe Jesus to be Lord and Christ, the Son of God and Savior: Acts 2:36; John 3:16; 8:24; 20:30-31; Acts 4:12; Titus 1:4

Repent of your sins: Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 1 John 3:4

Confess your faith in Jesus Christ: Matt 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom 10:9-10

Be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins: Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21

Be obedient to the Lord, He will be your Judge: Titus 2:11-12; Heb 5:9; 2 John 9; Rev 2:10; John 12:48