

The Power of Patient Love; The Most Excellent Way

1 Corinthians chapters 12 & 14 deal with the spiritual gifts. It's amazing to notice the love chapter (Ch.13) comes in the middle, which is not accidental but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit are like tools that accomplish the purpose of love- building up the body of Jesus Christ. It's love that unites the church. Paul the apostle exhorts us to practice the most excellent way, God's love (*Agape*), truly selfless and sacrificial. It comes as a fruit of the Holy Spirit, well connected with the patience (Gal. 5:22).

1Cor.13 refers to what love does. Love is patient (13:4). The word '*Macrothumei*'- Greek) for 'patience' is the third person active form of the verb. '*Macro*' (long)+ '*Thumos*' (heart/ soul) shows one's very life. We live in a world where 'impatience' as a fruit of selfishness permeates each sphere of life. Here comes the significance of patient love in all our relationship. Hence, a Christian doesn't hold a spirit of indignation, retaliation or hatred in any situation.

- **Patient love in a Family sphere.** God instituted family on earth with the purpose of intimate relationship. We find the distorted image in Adam and Eve resulted in running away from God's presence with guilt feeling, and also responding to God with lame excuses. The true ingredient for blessed family is not wealth, education, beauty or fame but the patient love. Understand each other in family requires patient love to accept the truth that marriage is a "one-flesh relationship". It would resolve most broken relationship.
- **Patient love in a Church sphere.** This is a community of love, separated from the wretched and perverted generation of this world (Acts 2:40). Everyone is unique in our community with different taste and talents, raised in different places and atmospheres. The exhortation to "be patient with everyone" (Thess. 5:14) is a message to be taken by all to resolve dissensions and disunity in the church. We need to overcome self-interest and worldliness in order to be the body of Christ. Let us receive each other in patient love.
- **Patient love in a Secular community.** God placed us in a multi-cultural context with the purpose of serving the larger society. Christians in various professions are expected to do their best. In order to get along with others, patient love is to be practiced in the working place. Peaceful co-existence is important for a fruitful service.

God bless you.

In His glorious service,

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Patient Love

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After describing the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12, Apostle Paul devotes a whole chapter to demonstrate the importance of love to the church in Corinth. It is his way of letting the believers know, one should exercise the gifts of the Spirit rooted in love. His description about love in chapter 13 begins with the phrase, "love is patient." Of all the positive and negative descriptions Apostle uses, he thought of placing patience as the first feature of love.

A common feeling most of us have experienced in a grocery store counter, doctor's office or a TSA line in the airport is impatience. The impatience causes us to get frustrated with the people around us and to lose our temper and focus. Apostle Paul understood it and was divinely inspired to challenge the believers to cultivate 'patient love' to show forth their maturity in Christ.

Impatience is often the result of human need for personal gratification seasoned with an ounce of selfishness. In this fast-paced world, people want their needs/wants to be met before others and it is mind-boggling to see that humans' innate nature have not changed much since the 1st century. Thus, verse 4 continues to be relevant in the lives of Christians even today to demonstrate their love to others just like Christ loved the church.

The patient love of God is seen in sending the only begotten son of God, Jesus Christ to save humanity that has constantly run away from His presence. Although, the word God is not mentioned in chapter 13, Paul writes the passage in alluding to the "long-suffering (KJV)" love of God in pursuing His creation to save them from the destructive clutches of sin and death despite their backslidings.

Apostle writes "love is patient" as an action to be exemplified in the life of a Christian rather than merely keeping it as an emotion. Patient loves includes the act of foregoing the past actions and continuing to love unconditionally. It is the prime feature of a mature Christian who is exhibiting the agape love.

The question remains, are we able to validate Apostle Paul's exhortation to "be patient with everyone" (Gal 5:22) in our day-to-day life bearing the tag as a Christian?