

***Love is Patient; Love is Kind***

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**God's love is positively defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4a:** "*Love is patient; love is kind.*" If we look carefully at the definitions of patience and of kindness, we'll find that they're all-encompassing. If we are patient with everyone, always—in every circumstance, in every way—and are then (on top of the enduring patience) kind, then we're practicing agape'...the very love of God that he wants for us! Some have said, "We humans can't have God's love." Not only **can** we have God's love, but we **must** have it because God expects us to have it—as we *follow* him. **We are called not to imitate God's love—agape'—but to appropriate it (to take possession of it)!**

• **God's performing love:** Agape' is first patient (longsuffering, forbearing) love, meaning *to suffer firmly and endure; to bear or to tolerate someone or something; to persist...to put up with*. If we feel that people are really trying to be helpful, we can be patient, but the test is not the best of situations, but the worst. Can we be kind after patiently enduring the following:

- rudeness; phoniness, dishonesty, and incompetence;
- placed on 'ignore' (hold) on the phone;
- incoming calls from a computer, or calling and a computer answers;
- a very long line of slow-moving people and a slow clerk;
- a person who pointed out our faults, rebuked/corrected us unfairly;
- our neighbor's dog using our yard for a 'bathroom' for years...;
- someone who talks on and on, providing every little detail;
- the car in front of us on the freeway, and the driver's inability to read signs;
- a chronically sick family member or our own lingering illness;
- a family member's addiction to alcohol, tobacco, drugs, football...;
- an elderly person or very young child who's not happy; irritable;
- our neighbor, our child's teacher, a police officer;
- family member who's always late to dinner; hard to get up; picky eater;
- road construction; detours; merging; stoplights aimed at making us late;
- someone with whom we disagree on important issues: politics, religion, parenting, etc.;
- a handicapped person, or one struggling with the English language;
- our waitress, doctor or anyone or anything that causes us to wait?

Add the horrendous: being imprisoned unfairly, burglarized, violated, attacked, tortured, family member murdered, or the atrocities that some have endured through the holocaust, war, and cataclysmic events. Then to be kind after all that patience...Webster defines kindness as *an essential quality or character; of a sympathetic, forbearing or pleasant nature, forgiving and benevolent*. **Agape' is kind after extreme patience!**

To be kind after enduring the unthinkable doesn't seem possible, but that's what God did for us! Leon Morris summarizes it this way: "Agape' is...the quality displayed in the cross...to the utterly unworthy, the unloved." Kindness following patience—after patiently waiting and forbearing, then being kind—that's how God's love performs! Dr. David Jeremiah explains: "If we are patient, we may endure and it just may be a triumph of our own strong will or obstinacy. **But to endure and be kind** is a triumph of a different nature—the nature of God!"

The Old Testament details God's long-suffering patience with his people Israel. Their fascination with the gods of the surrounding people—idolatry—doubt and unbelief should have worn God out! But his patience is mind-bending, and to realize that God was yet planning to birth agape' in the New Testament by sending his extravagant kindness through his only begotten and beloved Son...what love! God is patient and then he is kind beyond measure—*God is love!*

What keeps God's judgement from falling upon our sinful world and nation today? It is God's quality of long-suffering patience.

Robert Ingersoll, a well-known atheist of the last century, gave lectures on why he was an atheist and at the end of each lecture was known to open his pocket watch and say, "I'll give God five minutes to strike me dead for the things I've said." He would count out five minutes, and use the fact that God did not strike him dead as proof that God did not exist. It is reported that when evangelist Theodore Parker was asked about this, he said, "Did the gentleman think that he could exhaust the patience of the eternal God in five minutes."

The greatest evidence of God's long-suffering (patience) is that this world is still here, and that those who have never trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord still have another opportunity to be saved.

- Patient love is the love of *restraint*.
- Kind love is the love of *constraint*.

In other words, patient love will take anything from anyone without retaliating, and kind love will give to anyone without expecting an ROI. Agape' is not weak-kneed love, but strong and powerful and lasting. Simply put: If you have God's love, **you can't have it without God!**

**What about 'our love'?** There is only one word for *love* in the English language—so we speak of human love and God's love with little distinction. But in the Greek language of the New Testament there are separate words for three degrees of human love...and then there is God's love:

- 1) **Eros** is physical, sensual love that appears to be love at the height of selfishness. Eros says, "I love you because you give me pleasure. When you no longer give me pleasure, I will stop loving you." From *eros* comes our word erotic.
- 2) **Storge'** is for family ties (even for animals); parent to child, filial love.
- 3) **Phileo** is psychological, social love (friend); used of God and human beings (socially adaptable—often brotherly love, Philadelphia). When God asks us to have brotherly love, he is asking for our best human effort, and showing us that our best won't do—it will not go the distance!

God wants agape' for us! Look at the Lord's question to Peter in **John 21:15-17**. When Jesus asked, "*Peter, do you agape' me?*" Peter responded, "*Yes, I phileo you*". That's why Jesus asked him several times. The last time Jesus asked, "*Peter, do you phileo me?*" because that was the way Peter understood the question—Peter had not yet learned agape'. But Peter was going to need agape', if he was to *feed my lambs* as the Lord had told him. The lambs were going to tax Peter's patience to the limit and then Peter was going to need to be kind to them on top of it—Peter was going to need agape!

**Agape'** is spiritual, divine love that comes from God alone. It's reasoning, esteeming, and choosing love (not the spontaneous love we see so often today that's here and then gone). Apart from the New Testament agape' cannot be found, but it is the power that moves us to respond to someone's needs without expecting anything in return! God created agape': He is the epitome of and the definition of it—*God is love!* God's ultimate demonstration of agape' is **John 3:16** "*For God so loved the world that He gave...!*" **The measure of his love is the measure of his gift**—and he gave his most prized...his Son. **Titus 3:4** "*But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us....*" And **Romans 2:4** "*...it is the kindness of God that leads us toward repentance.*"

Patient—longsuffering and enduring—and then kind beyond measure on top of it; **we can be absolutely sure God wants us to have and to give agape'.**

Christians are commanded to love 55 times in the New Testament, and among those commands are:

- 1) “*love each other as I have loved you*” **John 15:12;**
- 2) “*love your enemies*” **Matthew 5:44,**
- 3) “*love your neighbor as yourself*” **Matthew 19:19,**
- 4) “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength*”—who can accomplish that with human love? And our love for God shows in our love for others.
- 5) Scripture enjoins husbands to “*love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it*” **Ephesians 5:25.**

Our best—*storge*’ and *phileo*—are unable to accomplish the width and depth of love in these commands—it’ll take *agape*’. God knew our love wouldn’t be enough, and so he offers us his own love through Christ, because God never asks us to do anything he intends for us to do without him!

1 Corinthians 13 is vitally and strategically located in the Bible. The spiritual gifts are bestowed in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter, and verse 31 ends with “*I show you a more excellent way.*” The 14<sup>th</sup> chapter begins with “*follow after love,*” before the gifts are put into practice. And ensconced between is Chapter 13, because love alone—*agape*’—can safeguard the use of our gifts and our abilities.

• **How important is it that we practice *agape*’?** 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 says *agape*’ **is** better than oratory, prophecy, knowledge and understanding; grander than good works, benevolence and courage to face a martyr’s death. The passage says: “*If I speak...If I have the gift...If I have a faith...If I give all...but don’t have *agape*’, than the speaking, gifting, having great faith, and giving all are empty. Because *agape*’ is the lubricant that makes the gift work smoothly in the body—whether or not the gift is exercised in love—and without *agape*’ the gift is meaningless. And furthermore, without *agape*’, Scripture says:*

*I am becoming nothing,  
I am nothing, and  
I will profit nothing.*

We will be worthless in the work of God without *agape*’!

**What about the ‘love-is-nots’** in 1 Corinthians 13? After describing to us what *agape*’ is—*love is patient; love is kind*—Paul lists all the things that *agape*’ is not: envious, boastful, proud, rude, self-seeking, easily angered, recording wrongs or delighting in evil. But *agape*’ **\*rejoices with the truth.**

If we do what love is, then we will abolish the love-is-nots! If we're patient and then kind, always, we're not going to be envious, boastful, proud, rude, etc.

- **How important is agape' to God?** He has proclaimed it to be:
  - The **priority commandment**—Matthew 22:36-40
  - The **perfect gift**—1 Corinthians 13:1-3
  - The **preeminent grace**—Galatians 5:22
  - The **permanent virtue**—1 Corinthians 13:8
  - The **proof of our *followship***—John 13:35
  - The **prerequisite to faith**—Galatians 5:6
  - The **path the Christian must 'walk'**—Ephesians 5:1-2
  - The **prescription for the home**—Ephesians 5:25, 28 and Titus 2:4b

Love is not a feeling, but a responsibility and response; and **it is at the top of God's list! What will God's love do in and through us?** Paul lists four things in 1 Corinthians 13:7 that love always does:

- 1) Love **bears** all things—describes the protection of love.
- 2) Love **believes** all things—describes the 'positivity' of love. (*Believing all things must be kept in the context of \*rejoicing in the truth.*)
- 3) Love **hopes** all things—describes the possibility of love.
- 4) Love **endures** all things—describes the perseverance of love. (*Perseverance refers to **patience through circumstances and situations.***)

- **How long will love last?** When we look at the failing love around us, we can't imagine a love that never fails. But "*His love endures forever*" appears 26 times in Psalm 136, and 1 Corinthians 13:8 says: "*Love never fails.*" Our triune God is tied to it, committed to it, and **He is it—agape'**!

- Love never fails because God never fails and God is love.
  - Love never fails because Christ is love and Christ never fails.
  - Love never fails when it is God's love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Phileo, storge'—the best of our human love will fail. Prophecy and knowledge will be set aside when their purposes are complete and tongues will just cease to be. All spiritual gifts are passing, but there is *one* that will never quit on us: God's love will continue. With that in view, we need to major on the major, and focus on the love of God, because **agape' will just keep on being *Who* it is throughout eternity!**