

1 Corinthians 13:1-4 NASB “How patient is your love?”

“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have *the gift of prophecy*, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. ⁴ **Love is patient . . .**”

Today’s talk gives insights on patience.

Not everyone values that quality:

- John Dryden warned: **“Beware the fury of a patient man.”**
- Ambrose Bierce described patience as a “... A minor form of despair, disguised as a virtue.”¹
- Thomas Hardy defined it:
“Patience, that blending of moral courage with physical timidity.”²
- An old French proverb bluntly deplored it:
“Patience is the virtue of asses.”



British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher perhaps spoke for many when she observed: **“I am extraordinarily patient when I get my own way.”**

Some aren’t even patient when they get their way. During a speech, September 26th, 1938, an Austrian born fellow named Adolf Schicklgruber declared:

“My patience is now at an end.”

In saying that, German chancellor, Adolf Hitler referred to his impatience with Jews, whom he blamed for Germany’s economic woes.

Some feed that ungodly, unwarranted hate today.

1. What is patience?

In Greek the word translated **patience** literally means **“far off anger or rage,”** not easily inflamed. On our last trip to Rome, the temperature was so hot I bought a five dollar pair of **“cool”** short pants at a Rome flea market. They fit perfectly and I felt comfortable in them until I read the sewn-in warning label **“Do not have near flame.”** They were not good shorts for barbecuing or even a **“fireside chat”**.

2. When so few people believe in it, why does the Bible so highly prize patience?

¹ *The Devil’s Dictionary*, 1911

² *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, 1891

Note the contrasts between what accompanies impatience and patience in another Bible letter:

“The deeds of the flesh are evident . . . immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these . . . the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control . . .”³

We definitely live in exasperating times.

Political leaders and citizens speak outrageously.

Media highlight disputes, dissensions, factions.

Folks throw fits and twits, and endlessly tweet.

Believers wonder what they can do.

What should we do about our circumstances?

I know what I feel like doing at times.

You’ve possibly heard about Henry Cadbury--not the chocolate maker--the guy I’m talking about was a Quaker biblical scholar and professor.

One day, Cadbury had just finished pouring and spreading a new cement sidewalk in front of his home. A playful youngster skipped right down that freshly poured cement leaving mushy footprints. The usually gentle, mild-mannered Cadbury exploded.

An amazed neighbor commented:

“Henry, I’m surprised to see you so angry. I thought you liked children.”

Said Cadbury: “I do like children in the abstract, but not in the concrete.”

Like the person who stated:

“I love everyone; it’s people I can’t stand!”

Sara and John Breton published a book in the 1960s called *SHRIEKS AT MIDNIGHT* (Macabre Poems, Eerie and Humorous)

The following little poem was etched on the gravestone of a woman named Cassie O’Lang.

“Here lies the body of Cassie O’Lang!

She tried to kill her husband with a boomerang.”

Had she practiced patience, Cassie might have lived longer.

We tend to classify patience with other passive qualities such as resignation

“Just grin and bear it.”

“What else can I do?”

“We don’t have any choice.”

“No other option.”

If you feel that your options are all gone, you likely see yourself somewhere between confusion and cowardice.



This is not Cassie

³ Galatians 5:19-24 NASB

The Lord doesn't intend for us to be chickenhearted or bamboozled.

The Lord expects our patience to be courageous and confident in Him; not fearful, worried, or indecisive.

God's patience is an active quality; it isn't resignation or cowardice.

In some situations, we need to be creative.

Years ago I read about an Oregon woman, who got angry during the first spat she and her husband had.

She left home in huff and rented a hotel room. Somehow before she left, her husband on all the paper money, she'd be using, wrote:

“I love you!”

Her heart melted and she didn't stay gone long.

Today, he'd likely have to superglue an **“I love you”** note to her debit card.



There's more than one way to deal with our troubles, of course.

Another book I read in the 1960s was entitled: *Strange Facts About Death*.

Author Webb B. Garrison wrote about a fellow named James Danner who was buried with his four wives in Alexandria, Virginia.

Etching on Mr. Danner's gravestone reads:

“An excellent husband was this Mr. Danner, He lived in a thoroughly honorable manner. He may have had troubles, but they burst like bubbles, He's at peace now with Mary, Jane, Susan, and Hannah.”

We can only guess at the troubles Mr. Danner faced or might still face.

New York rabbi Alfred J. Kolatch, wrote:

“I was thumbing through a book in my library that I hadn't noticed for many years. It was *The Memoirs of Gluckel of Hameln*. This saintly Jewish woman, who at the age of 44 was widowed, sits each night—all through her period of mourning—and puts her innermost thoughts on paper.

“She has eight unmarried children to worry about as well as two married ones—and she can't sleep. Putting her thoughts on paper quiets her frayed nerves . . .

“She is writing to her children. She wants to leave a testament—a message for them. And though she is not very learned in the ways of our tradition, and though she is steeped in sorrow, she is able to say to them:

“Always remember children that the kernel of the Torah is, ‘**Thou SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF.**’ Remember this, she says, ‘even though in our days we seldom find it so; and few are there who love their fellowmen with all heart. On the contrary, if man can contrive to ruin his neighbor nothing pleases him more.’



This testament of Gluckel of Hameln to her children was written in 1690 in the city of Hamburg (Germany). . . ”⁴

Not just Jewish people, all those who believe in Christ might soon be facing difficult life decisions.

We already encounter many tough choices:

We see individual freedoms rapidly eroding and things not trending in favorable directions.

Educators teach our kids ungodly principles.

Law and order disintegrate.

Many Christians wonder why God doesn't take care of the evil perpetrators.

I don't presume to know what God has in mind.

But this seems clear: when most people turn away from God's principles is when I should make sure I get my heart right with him.

We can learn mightily from first century events. In many parts of the Roman Empire, the government came down hard on Christians.

Those harsh conditions produced the *Book of Revelation*.

Most folks regard Revelation as a symbolic book with numerous hidden prophecies.

Revelation contains many symbols, but one of its primary purposes was: promote patience among Christians who were undergoing fiery trials.

It also cautioned them about not giving in to rapidly increasing immorality around them.

One of the worst trends occurring in the first century was desire for money and power.

The Lord willing, I'll be showing biblical evidence soon that the fearsome Mark of the Beast, which has so terrified people was a disease that ravages our age--greed

We must ask ourselves whether we're becoming more like Jesus or more like some famous personality of our time.

In the midst of this turmoil, we must clarify what patience is by looking at one example.

⁴ Kolatch, Alfred J. *Sermons for the Seventies*. Middle Village, N.Y.: Jonathan David publishers, 1969. p.3.

Shortly after Jesus’ resurrection and the church began, an ambitious rabbi from southeast Turkey, a region called Cilicia, got permission from the government to go from house in cities like Jerusalem and arrest Christians.

A cadre of armed men likely accompanied him as he pounded on doors and forced people to either confess or deny belief in Christ.



Those who confessed, he hauled to jail. Rembrandt

When angry leaders convicted Stephen, the first Christian martyr, this young rabbi voted for Stephen’s execution by stoning.

This rabbi intended to eradicate Jerusalem of its believers in Christ.

Those who could fled to safer regions.

How do you feel toward the most “evil” person you know about?

That gives you an idea how church people must have felt toward this rabbi.

Do you imagine some questioning God, wondering why he allowed this stuff to happen? “Lord, can’t you do something about this guy?” “We’re not going to have a church left! You’ve got to do something about this killer.”

Do you recall how Stephen died?

On his knees he cried out: “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”

Apparently, many other believers died forgiving their killers as Stephen had.

God’s patience and love in the faces of those committed Christians finally got through to Saul.

It happened on the road to Damascus, where he intended to do more “door-knocking.”

Recall what Jesus asked him under bright lights: **“Saul, why are you persecuting me?”⁵**

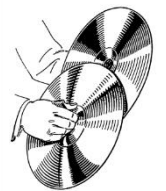
In every person he tormented, Saul probably saw a replica Jesus’ patient face.

On the way to Damascus, Christ’s love became real because Saul saw Jesus alive.

He realized the wonder of God’s love, and also that Christ overpowered even death.

How many of those Christians who suffered this deadly persecution would have guessed or foreseen that this angry rabbi would one day write the following words?

“If I speak with the tongues of men and angels, but don’t have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal . . .



⁵ Acts 9:4

Love is patient and kind.”

They couldn’t have, of course; they just patiently waited on God and his justice.

Saul-Paul also advised: “Bless those who persecute you... never take your own revenge.”⁶

Enemies tried to kill him on several occasions.

Decades later, Roman authorities arrested Paul, the man who wrote our love text.

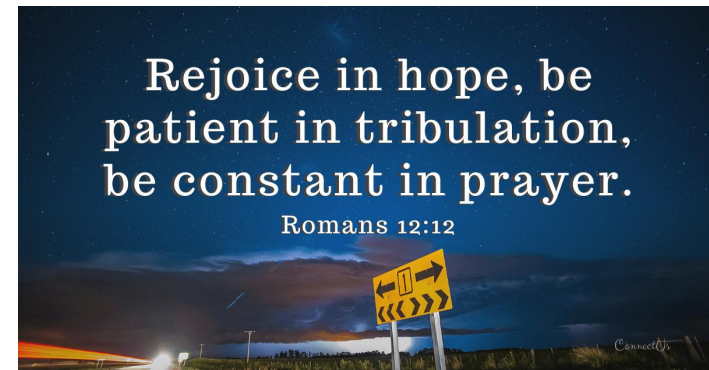
He thought he would not survive, so he wrote the following to a young minister named Timothy, who preached in one of the Empire’s biggest cities:

“I can't impress this on you too strongly. God is looking over your shoulder. Christ himself is the Judge, with the final say on everyone, living and dead. He is about to break into the open with his rule, so proclaim the Message with intensity; keep on your watch. Challenge, warn, and urge your people. Don't ever quit. Just keep it simple.

“³⁻⁵You're going to find that there will be times when people will have no stomach for solid teaching, but will fill up on spiritual junk food—catchy opinions that tickle their fancy. They'll turn their backs on truth and chase mirages. But you—keep your eye on what you're doing; accept the hard times

along with the good; keep the Message alive; do a thorough job as God's servant.”⁷

“Love is patient!”



**Christ is Savior and Lord.
The Lord willing, we'll speak more about
patience in the coming weeks.
In the meantime,
May God bless you, keep you,
and give you peace in Christ!**

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⁶ Romans 12:14 & 19 NASB

⁷ *The Message*, Eugene Peterson 2 Timothy 4:1-5