

**Text: I Corinthians 13:4 (Pew Bible, pg.1137)**

**Title: “The Father’s Love”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Open your Bibles with me to I Corinthians 13. Here we find one of the most extensive descriptions of the love that God has for us, and the love that we are to have for other people. It’s amazing love!

**ILLUSTRATION** – Many of you are still celebrating the Dallas Mavericks winning the NBA championship just a week ago. Last Thursday over in Dallas hundreds of thousands of Mavs fans lavished their love on their team for bringing home the championship trophy. I read in the newspaper yesterday that President Obama called Mavs coach Rick Carlisle to congratulate him. The team has been invited to come to White House for an official recognition. Everybody loves a champion.

I remember reading in his biography that the late President Richard Nixon had a habit of calling the runner-up team to congratulate them for making it to the finals. Someone asked him why, and he replied, “Everyone loves the winners. No one ever says anything to the losers.”

This love we have described for us here on the pages of Scripture is not just for the winners. This love is also for those who fail, and who falter, and who are defeated. In I Corinthians 13:4 two different qualities of love are described for us:

### **1 Corinthians 13:4 – Love is patient, love is kind.**

**BOOKMARKS** - By the way, over the next several weeks as we study I Corinthians 13:4-8, I’m also challenging us to memorize it. So let’s just start with a review. Repeat just that first sentence. Great!

I Corinthians 13 sets out an incredible challenge to us to begin to relate to people in the energy of God’s love in us and through us. This love we’re talking about here is not just sentimental emotionalism. It is selfless action directed toward others. These verses call upon us not to *follow* our heart. I hear people say that all the time ... follow your heart. No. The Bible says that “the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure...” (Jeremiah 17:9). We must not *follow* our heart; we must *lead* our heart toward what brings glory to God and the truest good for the people God has placed in our lives.

This series is entitled “The Power of Love.” The fact is that we spend a lot of our energy trying to change other people, whether it is our mate or our kids or fellow-believers at church. Our efforts to change people generally result in frustration and failure. But God does have the power to change people, and that power is the power of love ... His love for them, and His love through us. And when people live surrounded by this kind of love, it’s a lot easier to change.

Now all the qualities of love that we are going to talk about are first and foremost qualities of our Father. We're talking about the Father's love. On this Father's Day this is a great way for us as dads to be encouraged in our love for our kids.

## **1. THE FATHER'S LOVE IS PATIENT (v.4).**

### **1 Corinthians 13:4 – Love is patient....**

Patience means to “suffer long.” God's love is willing to wait while others change.

I said before that each of these qualities of love are all virtues of our Father. We'll never learn how to be patient with others until we have experienced the patient love of our heavenly Father. Remember, this love comes from God and flows through us into the lives of others. God has shown patience to us in Christ. This is the Father's patient love toward us.

The man who, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, penned these words was the Apostle Paul. He fully understood just how much patience God had shown to him. Listen to how he talks about it:

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

So Paul testifies that he was the worst of sinners. For many years he resisted Christ and ran from Christ. But Christ was patient with Paul. He could have squashed Paul like an ant. Paul, before he was saved did his best to make life hard for the followers of Jesus Christ. But God was patient with Paul while he was on his way to turning his life over to Christ.

Talking about the second coming of Christ when judgment will come to this world, Peter says this:

**2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**

And if you haven't received Christ today, you are living on borrowed time. God has been patient with you because He doesn't want you to perish. Don't wait until it is too late.

So God's patient love is the source of our patient love for others.

The word “patience” here is the combination of two words ... macro (long-term) and thumia (passion, heat ... thermos). Combined they convey the idea of heating up without boiling over. And it is at the root of several of the other qualities of love we're going to study here in in I Corinthians 13.

This patience gives us the ability to not be easily angered. It helps us have a long-fuse rather than a quick temper. Patience enables us to be calm while others are acting foolishly. It gives us the ability to forgive and to not keep a record of wrongs.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Now God has a great sense of humor because this very first quality of love is the one that I seem to have the most difficulty with. I was in the Post Office the other day. (If you're a postal employee, don't take this personally. It's not your fault. The president just needs to get you a little more help.) The initials for the Post Office are P.O. But P.O. really stands for "patience office." I think God just sets up these shops to teach us patience. So here I am standing in line at the Patience Office and there's a guy at the counter who didn't fill out his paper work. He had a half-hour to do it while we're standing in line, but he waited until he got to the counter. Well I'm standing there just about to boil over. And I'm rehearsing in my mind what I'm going to say to the clerk at the counter, even though it's not her fault. And about that time a lady taps me on the shoulder and says, "Aren't you the pastor at Travis Avenue Baptist Church?" Oh, God has a sense of humor.

When we make the choice to be patient we learn to respond to negative situations in a positive way. Patience is what strengthens us to control our emotions rather than being overwhelmed by them. When other people offend us or annoy us, we don't lash out at them, but patiently keep ourselves under control.

Note: For many of us, anger is our emotional default when something happens that hurts or annoys us. And when that happens we are simply spreading the poison.

**FOR NOTE SHEET** - Impatience spreads the poison. Patience spreads the medicine.

Patience doesn't rush to judgment. Patience enables us to listen and to get the whole picture before we respond. Patience gives to others the permission to be human. We all make mistakes and we all fail. It gives us the ability to keep believing in and trusting another person, even when they probably don't deserve it.

**ILLUSTRATION** – I'm one of those crazy people who love long-distance running. And I've learned a lot about life running marathons. You have to be patient. Life is a marathon. Marriage is a marathon. Parenting is a marathon. Church life is a marathon. You have to be patient.

Now let me show you where the power for patience comes from. It is through the indwelling Holy Spirit that God's patient love is deposited into our lives, and it gives us the ability to be patient with others.

**Galatians 5:22 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**

And when we pray for others, we can follow the pattern Paul sets out in Colossians 1. He prays that ...

**Colossians 1:11 – "(They will be) strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience..."**

The Father's love is patient.

**2. THE FATHER'S LOVE IS KIND (v.4).**

## **1 Corinthians 13:4 – Love ... is kind.**

Patience and kindness go together. Patience is how we *react* to others in negative situations. Kindness is how we *act* toward others in negative situations. Patience withholds something ... kindness extends something.

Kindness is what makes people likeable. Stop to think about the people around you that you really like ... it's probably because they are kind to you.

**FOR NOTE SHEET** - A kind person is good *to* us and good *for* us.

Just about anybody can be kind, even someone who is not a follower of Christ. But there is a kindness that is a super-charged blessing that comes through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Again ...

**Galatians 5:22 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**

Let me show you quickly what kindness looks like:

**KINDNESS IS COURTEOUS.** It says, "You go first." The Corinthians had trouble with this one. They didn't extend common courtesies to one another when they gathered. They had something called the agape feast, or love feast, that they shared together. But there was little love in their love feast. The more well-to-do members of the church would get their early and start eating and drinking. The poor were the last to arrive and there was nothing left for them. Paul rebuked them:

**1 Corinthians 11:21 - for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk.**

**1 Corinthians 11:33 - So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other.**

Kindness says, "You go first."

**KINDNESS IS GRACIOUS.** It gives to others what they don't deserve. And remember, that's what God has done for us in Christ.

Romans 2 talks about our need to put our trust in Christ.

**Romans 2:4 - Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?**

If you haven't received Christ, you need to know that God has blessed you in so many ways. And the reason He has shown you this kindness is so that you will repent, so that you will turn from your old life and turn to Christ.

God's grace is seen in His kindness to us. Paul talks about...

**Ephesians 2:7 - the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.**

Then God's kindness to us becomes the motivation for our kindness to each other.

**Ephesians 4:32 - Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:15 - Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.**

Kindness is gracious.

**KINDNESS IS HELPFUL.** Kindness reaches out to meet the need of the moment. It is holding open a door for someone. It is helping a mom get her kids out of the car. It is letting someone get over in traffic. It is practical help.

**ILLUSTRATION** - This week I made a point to pay attention to the kindness that was shown to me. I saw it in the lady at the car rental counter that upgraded me to a larger car when she saw how tall I was. I saw it in the nurses at the doctor's office who went out of their way to make us feel at ease. And I could go on and on.

**KINDNESS IS GENTLE.** When we're kind to others it means we are not harsh in our words to them, even when we must say hard things to them. Paul said...

**1 Corinthians 4:13a - when we are slandered, we answer kindly.**

**KINDNESS IS ACTIVE.** It takes initiative. Kind love keeps us constantly on the lookout for needs that can be met and encouragement that can be spoken.

You'll never master love until you have mastered kindness.

## CONCLUSION

As I said earlier, patience is how we *react* to others in negative situations; kindness is how we *act* toward others in negative situations.

**EXAMPLE:** Jesus told a parable that illustrates this. It's found in Matthew 18 and it is about a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants who had borrowed money from him. A servant was brought to the king who owed the king the equivalent of millions of dollars. This is a parable so there is no explanation of how the servant got in such a debt to the king, but the point is that the servant owed more than he could ever possibly repay. When it became apparent that the servant couldn't pay up, the king ordered for the servant and his family to be sold to repay the debt. But the servant was desperate. He fell down before the king and begged...

**Matthew 18:26 - “Be patient with me ... and I will pay back everything.”**

The word for “patient” is the same word we find here in our text in I Corinthians 13:4. Well, what happened? It tells us that the servant’s master took pity on him and canceled the debt and let him go. You see, he showed *patience* in not reacting harshly. He showed *kindness* by forgiving the debt. Amazing!

Having been shown that kind of patience and kindness should have transformed this servant’s life, but it didn’t. Jesus’ parable goes on to explain that the servant immediately found a fellow servant who owed him the equivalent of a few dollars. He grabbed him and began to choke him and demanded, “Pay me what you owe me!” The fellow servant begged him...

**Matthew 18:29 - “Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.”**

But the servant refused to forgive the debt. Instead he had the man who owed him a few dollars thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

Remember, this guy has just been shown patience and kindness beyond description. How could he forget?

Well you can imagine what the master thought when he heard how this servant who had been forgiven an unbelievable sum of money, had just treated a fellow servant who owed him a little money. The master was furious, and had the wicked servant was thrown into jail.

It may be that we have trouble being patient and kind toward others because we have not fully come to experience the loving patience and kindness that God has shown to us in Christ.

Want to learn to be patient and kind with your spouse, with your kids, with fellow-believers, with co-workers? Come to Christ; see how much He has loved you. Let that love change your life, then let it flow into the lives of others around you.