

LOVE, PATIENCE, AND FORGIVENESS

(1 Thess. 1:1-4)

Introduction:

1. Almost every problem in the brotherhood will find its root in a lack of love, patience, or forgiveness. What makes it such a problem is that the commands unto love/patience/forgiveness are obvious, but the fulfilling is much more difficult than the acknowledgement.
2. Notice Paul's words to the church in Thessalonica. He commended them for their "work of faith", their "labor of love" and their "patience of hope". Let us consider Paul's statement and make application to the benefit of the body of Christ today.

Discussion:

I. Labor of Love.

- A. Hard lesson = love is laborious, hard work at times. "Labor" translated from Greek word *kopos* meaning "labor, trouble"; from a root meaning "to beat" as one's breast in grief/sorrow. Compare with 1 Cor. 15:58 = "*labor* is not in vain in the Lord" and 1 Thess. 2:9; 3:5.
- B. Love of People.
 1. Love of self can be a labor, both to acquire (Matt. 22:39; Eph. 5:28-30) and to overcome (Luke 9:23; Matt. 22:39).
 - a. Love of self can be inhibited by "stinkin' thinkin'". Many times people put down others as a means of elevating self. This barrage of negativity can produce a false opinion of one's self, especially if a child of God.
 - b. Self love can also be inhibited by not understanding the conviction of sin properly. It is not to be a goad unto self-despising, it is to be a persuasion unto asking, seeking, and knocking; unto Christ (Rom. 3:23 + 6:23 + 7:24 yields to 7:25ff). Peter as our example, not Judas.
 2. Love of brethren can be a labor.
 - a. It might be a labor of overcoming self-love/focus.
 - b. It might be a labor of covering a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8; Matt. 18:21, 22; 1 Cor. 13).
- C. Love of God.
 1. Love of God can be a labor because it entails the denial of self (J.O.Y. = Matt. 22:37).
 2. Love of God can be a labor because it entails total sacrificial obedience (John 14:15; 13:34; 15:13, 14).
 3. Love of God can be a labor because we will not love our brother (1 John 2:3-11).

II. Patience of Hope.

- A. There are two main words that are translated as patient/patience in the NT: *hupomone* = "endurance"; literally "to remain under" (1 Thess. 1:3); and *makrothumia* = patience; literally "big heat/passion" (Gal. 5:20, 22; 1 Thess. 5:14).
- B. Patience with People.
 1. Patience with self must be understood and exercised properly (Heb. 5:12-6:3; Jer. 31:34).
 2. Many recipes/admonitions unto patience towards others are found in the NT (Rom. 12 (esp. vv 10-19); 1 Thess. 5:11-22).
- C. Patience with God. This may seem a strange thought, but it is a biblical one. Our patience with God grows with our understanding, and eventually becomes tied to our faith/trust (Is. 30:18; 40:31; Rev. 8:9-11).
- D. Think of the words for deeper understanding. Our growing passion for God (*makrothumia*) enables us to stay under the persecution (*hupomone*). Knowing our Lord and where he is enables us to overcome the world (Heb. 6:19, 20; Rev. 3:21).

III. Forgiveness = a Work of Faith.

- A. One of the works of our faith is in the fulfillment of our Lord's commands regarding forgiving one another (Matt. 6:14, 15; 18:21, 22).
- B. Forgiving people.
 1. We must forgive ourselves properly. We must recognize that our forgiven sins are forgotten by God and we ought not dwell upon them. At the same time we are not to continue in sin that grace may abound, nor are we to pretend that we have never sinned or do not continue to sin from time to time (Jer. 31:34; Phil. 3:13; 1 John 1:5-10; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Pet. 1:9; et al).
 2. We must forgive others properly; bearing patiently, lovingly with those who are striving/growing, but not presuming to forgive the sin unto death (1 Pet. 4:8; Luke 17:3; 1 John 5:16).
- C. Our forgiveness is never to God, for He is perfect. As our understanding of God grows, so too our confession ("amen-ning") of His goodness will grow.

Conclusion:

1. Love, patience, and forgiveness are so intertwined as to be inseparable. But the root of it all is love. We can try to be patient and forgiving without love but we will fail; and fall short of the will of God.
2. Our active, persistent love allows us to be patient with one another and to forgive one another. When we love patiently and with forgiveness we are most like our God.
3. Invitation.

MORE ON "LOVE, PATIENCE, AND FORGIVENESS"

1. We must understand love and pursue it to fulfill God's will for us.
 - ▶ 1 John 4:7-21 = it's kind of a love thing.
 - ▶ 1 Cor. 13 = this is what true love is.
 - ▶ Rom. 12:9-21 = this is what true love looks like when applied to the brethren.
 - ▶ This is why the apostle John is documented as have made the loving of one another the main thrust of his ministry.
2. Being patient with those we love is easy, or at least easier. But let us be balanced in our understanding.
 - ▶ Patient is not permissive.
 - ▶ Patient is not apathetic.
 - ▶ Patient is not patronizing.
 - ▶ Patient is lovingly edifying.
3. Forgiving those we love is easy, or at least easier. But let us be balanced in our understanding.
 - ▶ We cannot forgive those God will not forgive. Do we love more than God?
 - ▶ Sin cannot be forgiven away, it must be paid for and then forgiven.
 - ▶ We must use our Bibles and our brains when engaging in forgiveness.
 - ▶ Many times our "forgiveness" can only be prayer and hope (1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Cor. 13:7; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60; Rom. 9:1-5).
4. Love!! Love as God loves and you will be patient as God is patient and you will forgiving like God is forgiving. Christ-likeness begins and ends with love.