

Characteristics of Love (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Paul begins his list of characteristics saying that "love suffers long".
Several other versions render this "love is patient".
Philips translates, "The love of which I speak is slow to lose patience."

In the New Testament, patience is almost always used in relationship to people and not to circumstances or events.

God is the supreme example of this kind of loving patience.

Mankind has continually shunned Him and rejected His loving overtures even in the sacrifice of His Son, but God:

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

(2 Peter 3:9)

Paul next says that love is kind.

Christians can sometimes be petty, spiteful, rude and unkind.

Christians are admonished often in the New Testament to be kind toward one another:

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

(Romans 12:10)

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

(Ephesians 4:32)

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

(Colossians 3:12)

Love seeks to help, and not to harm.

Love looks to the ultimate good of the object being loved.

Paul moves from these positive aspects of love to eight negatives that must be removed if love is to prevail.

First, he says that "love does not envy,"

Second, it "does not parade itself (1 Corinthians 13:4).

This has also been translated "love is not jealous or boastful".

Jealousy and boastfulness go hand in hand.

Love does not envy what others do, nor brag about what it does.

Third, love is not puffed up (love is not proud), and it does not behave rudely (1 Corinthians 13:4-5).

The Revised Standard Version says, "It is not arrogant or rude."

Christians ought to be the most courteous people in the world.

Fourth, love "does not seek its own" (love is not selfish)

(1 Corinthians 13:5).

The RSV says that love "does not insist on its own way."

David Lipscomb wrote, "It does not indulge in inflated opinions of itself.

Another way of interpreting this phrase is, "Love does not insist on its own rights."

We must give way to the needs of others or sacrifice selfish interests for the betterment of the group.

Fifth, love is "not easily provoked" (love does not become angry easily)

(1 Corinthians 13:5).

The RSV renders it that love "is not irritable."

Philips translates it, "Love is not touchy."

Quick tempers indicate a lack of real love in the heart.

Righteous anger has its place when it is directed at the right object, but, even then, it must be controlled

"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,

(Ephesians 4:26).

Sixth, love "thinks no evil" (love does not remember wrongs done against it)

(1 Corinthians 13:5).

The RSV translates it, "It is not ... resentful."

Love does not keep a record of wrongs.

A resentful person never forgets wrongs.

God does not keep a record of our sins once they are purged by the blood of Christ.
For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.

(Hebrews 8:12)

How good are we as a forgiver and forgetter?

Seventh, love does not rejoice in things that are wrong but in those things that are right (1 Corinthians 13:6).

Many of our modern TV programs, movies and much of our music & MTV glorifies wickedness.

Such portrayals are rejoicing in the sinful acts of mankind.

Why do people gossip, backbite and carry tales?

Who would think about gossiping about someone he really loved?

We should follow Paul's injunction to think only good things about others

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

(Philippians 4:8).

Finally, Paul says that love bears, believes, hopes and endures all things.

Love "bears all things" by doing all it can to protect the reputations and good names of others and endeavoring to keep them out of harm's way.

Love does not expose or exploit, rub it in or condemn; it bears.

Even when legitimate sins are in another's life, we seek to rehabilitate them, not crush them.

Love does not seek to protect or hide sin, but it does seek to reclaim the sinner

¹⁹ Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back,

²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

(James 5:19-20).

To summarize the rest of these thoughts would be simply to say that love continues to believe in the alien sinner and the erring Christian and hopes for his or her return and gladly accepts the unbearable to await that end.