

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 18 October 2020. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Tapestry of Love (Part 2)

2 Peter 1:6-7

In late January of 1996, when I was in my freshman year of college, I was suddenly thrust into a new and scary chapter of my life. The Lord allowed a trial to unfold in my life--a trial so severe, that it has profoundly impacted my life ever since then. Around the middle of January of that year, I began to have a burning, piercing pain in my abdomen that was so awful, that I couldn't stand up straight. Before long, I found myself having to run to the facilities ten times per day--and then twenty times, and then thirty, and sometimes even forty times per day. I also began to lose a frightening amount of blood. As I walked around campus, I was bowed over like a hunchback, and in dire pain. I constantly had to get up during my classes, during chapel services, during church services, and during my work at my campus maintenance job, and run as fast as I could to the nearest restroom. I was severely dehydrated, and was losing weight by the day. By late March, I had lost more than 23 kg (50 lb.).

By the 7th of April, as I was sitting with some friends in the campus dining hall, I knew that things had reached an impasse. I was trying to enjoy my Easter meal of chicken cordon bleu; but I simply couldn't eat it. I was in such severe pain, that I couldn't stay seated at the table for more than two minutes at a time. That evening, I checked into the campus clinic. After being in the clinic for about a week, with no answers in sight, I was taken to a local hospital, where I was diagnosed with an auto-immune bowel disease called Crohn's Disease. After a week in the hospital, I was finally released: and I looked like a skeleton covered with skin. I was so weak from dehydration and weight loss, that I felt as though all my muscles were on fire. Somehow, by God's grace, I was able to make up the two weeks of classes and projects that I had missed, and to finish the semester with a high GPA; but I was not able to return to college for the entire next school year because of my frequent hospitalisations.

For the next eight years, I was constantly in and out of the hospital; and I ended up sitting out of college for two whole years on account of my health. I was continually in dire pain. At first, I was as thin as a skeleton; but by the summer of 1998 I had packed on about 95 pounds, on account of the heavy steroids that I had to take to stay alive. I often had huge, painful, baseball-sized cysts on my back, and an extremely painful rheumatic swelling, which made my legs lock up and swell up like balloons. My body's tissues had so deteriorated from the heavy medications that I was on, that the doctors described them as being like those of an old man. By 2002, my health was in such serious condition, that I knew that I would soon die, unless the Lord worked a miracle. That summer, after I had been ordained to the Gospel ministry at my church, I had yet another hospitalisation; and during this hospital stay, my entire colon was removed. Over the next year, I had two more severely invasive reconstructive surgeries.

But then, things began to turn around. By the spring of 2003, I was able to go off all my medicines. I was able to travel on deputation, and to raise financial support from local churches, so that I could live and do church-planting work in Ireland. In the summer of 2004, I met my wife-to-be, Katie, at her home church in Martinsville, Indiana; and in April of 2005, we were married. On 29 April 2006, we set foot on Irish soil; and the Lord has been using us ever since then to reach souls here in Ireland for Christ.

What was the reason for all those years of pain? It's simple: God was teaching me lessons of **faith**. By showing me my vulnerability and helplessness, He was teaching me to trust and rely on Him. He was also teaching me **patience**. Because of my poor health, I had no idea how I would ever be able to minister in Ireland, nor how I would be physically able to support a wife and family. I had to learn to be patient, and to wait on the Lord. The Lord was also teaching me **godliness**. There was a lot of worldliness and carnality in my life, which God had to weed out of my heart. (When you're lying in a hospital bed thinking about the real possibility of death, you tend to think about such things!) He was also teaching me **brotherly kindness**. Because of the suffering that *I* was going through, I was learning to have compassion toward my brothers and sisters who were in need, and to show heartfelt comfort to others who were suffering. Most of all, I was learning how to **love God** as I never had before. Little by little, step by step, God was moving me from faith, to virtue, to knowledge, to temperance, to patience, to godliness, to brotherly kindness, to charity.

In our last message from **2 Peter 1:5-7**, we saw how virtue, knowledge, and temperance are part of charity. Now, in this morning's message, we will see how patience, godliness, and brotherly kindness are woven into the tapestry of charity. The title of this message is *The Tapestry of Charity (Part 2)*.

Read 2 Peter 1:5-8.

I. Patience is part of charity (v. 6)

The fifth spiritual quality that God wants us to "add on" to our lives is **patience**. Like all the other spiritual qualities, patience is part of charity. You cannot have true love without having patience. Let's turn to **1 Corinthians 13**, and see how patience is woven into the tapestry of "charity."

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4, 7.

Paul says that charity "*suffereth long.*" He also says that charity "*beareth all things,*" and "*endureth all things.*" In other words, "Love is patient." It is part of the very fabric of love. If you have godly love, then you will also have patience--both in your relationship with God, and with your fellow man.

First, let's see how patience shows itself in our love for God.

Read James 5:10-11.

If there were ever a man who needed patience, it was Job. God put Job to an extreme test. In one day, God allowed Job to lose literally everything, except for his life, and his wife. (And even his wife turned against him!) Yet, despite his failures, Job exercised great patience as God dealt with Him. Job suffered long, and patiently bore the sufferings to which he was appointed. He refused to curse God, or to charge Him foolishly. Why? Because he loved Him!

Now, there is something you need to understand. The fact that God commands us to be "patient" in our relationship with Him does not imply that He has wronged us in some way. It doesn't mean that *He* can make mistakes, and that we must therefore bear with His faults. It's just the opposite! *We* are at fault. *We* are sinners. *We* have wronged *Him*. It is because of our sinful nature, and because of our tendency to go our own way, that God, in His love, must

often put us through tests. He desires to weed out sin from our lives, and to conform us into the image of His Son. However, in order to do this, He must often allow trials in our lives. Through these trials, we learn to trust and rely on Him; and as our faith in Him grows, we also learn patience. We learn how to wait on Him. Let's see what Paul had to say about patience.

Read Romans 8:28-29.

Romans 8:28 is one of the most comforting verses in the Bible. When we are going through trials, it is a comfort to know that *“All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* However, this isn't the end of Paul's thought. In **verse 29**, Paul reminds us of *why* God takes seemingly bad things in our lives, and turns them around for good. He does this in order that we might be *“conformed to the image of his Son.”* God wants us to be like His Son. He wants us to imitate His holy character. In order to do this, He works all things (including the “bad” and unpleasant things) together for our good. Christian, God doesn't bring trials into your life because He doesn't like you. He sends trials because He *loves* you, and wants you to be more like His Son! It is a *privilege* to go through sufferings. It is God's way of teaching us the character of His Son; and part of His Son's character is patience.

Now, if you want a mind-boggler, I have one for you. Have you ever stopped to think that Jesus, while He was on earth, “learned” obedience? **Hebrews 5:8** says that Jesus *“learned...obedience by the things which he suffered: and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”* Now, what does this mean? In what sense did Jesus “learn” obedience? Does this mean that Jesus was a disobedient sinner who needed to go through chastisement from His Father in order to learn how to obey? Absolutely not! Christ never had any sin in His heart!

Now, *we*, on the other hand, *are* sinners; and as sinners, we must often “learn” obedience by suffering the unpleasant consequences of our own *disobedience*. But not so with the Jesus. As the God-Man, He was *“holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners”* (**Hebrews 7:26**). In what sense, then, did He “learn obedience” by the things which he suffered?

Well, it's simple. When Paul says that Jesus *“learned obedience,”* he is simply saying that Jesus became *acquainted* with the human experience of obedience. As the second Person of the Godhead, He had been obedient to His Father from eternity past; but now that He had taken on human flesh, He had to be obedient in His *humanity*, as well. As a Man, He was put to the test through a lifetime of suffering; and because He passed every test perfectly, He was able to become our sinless Substitute for sin. He was *“made perfect”* (in other words, “fully equipped”) to be the *“author of eternal salvation.”*

Let that sink in, brethren! In order to “learn” (or “experience”) obedience as a Man, He, like us, had to be put through *testing*; and through His tests, He demonstrated *patience*.

Jesus *trusted* His Father in all things. He had perfect faith in Him. Therefore, He was **patient** as His Father put Him through trials; and through all this, He showed His **love** for His Father.

All these qualities work together, brethren. You cannot have charity without having all these other qualities. You can't have love toward God without first having *faith* in Him. Faith is the

foundation. If you can't trust Him--if you aren't really convinced that He is all-wise, and that He works all things together for good--then how can you have *patience* as God puts you through trials? And if you are impatient with God as you go through trials, how can you truly love Him? You *must* have faith in God, so that you can have *patience* as He deals with you, and thus show your *love* for Him.

Now, let's look at the second aspect of patience. Not only does patience show itself in our relationship with God: it also shows itself in our relationship with our fellow *man*.

Now, patience with our fellow man is very different from our patience with God. In our relationship with God, *He* is sinless, and *we* are sinful. Thus, we must be patient as God puts us through the trying process of being conformed to the image of His Son. However, in our relationship with our fellow man, we *both* are sinners. We *all* tend to be prideful and selfish. Therefore, we must be patient and longsuffering toward each other, as God deals with *all* of us! If you want people to be patient and longsuffering with you, then you must be patient and longsuffering with them. Jesus said, "***Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets***" (Matthew 7:12).

Of course, Christ is our ultimate example of patience. Can you imagine the patience that Christ must have had as He dealt with His disciples during the 3 ½ years of His ministry? It seemed, at times, that they were progressing spiritually; but then, they would go right back to the same old bickering and squabbling over the old subject of "who is the greatest." Imagine if your Creator were standing right in front of you, and He could see right into your heart. Would you feel uncomfortable? That's what it was like for the disciples! They were in the presence of God Almighty in human flesh! He could see right into their hearts! They couldn't hide anything from Him. Yet, even though Jesus knew all the sin and infirmity that was in their hearts, His rebukes were surprisingly seldom. When Jesus did rebuke them, He did so directly and firmly, yet gently and lovingly (and in few words).

Christian, the next time you get impatient with your brother in Christ, remember how patient Christ is with you! This doesn't mean that you shouldn't confront a brother about a sin in his life; but it does mean that you shouldn't be self-righteous. It means that you shouldn't jump down your brother's throat every time he rubs you the wrong way. The next time you get impatient with your spouse over something that he or she isn't doing right, and you are tempted to get angry, and nag, scold, or lecture him or her about it, remember how patient Christ has been with you. Don't jump on your spouse, or on your child, or on your friend or neighbour, or brother in Christ, every time he or she does something that isn't right. Instead, respond with love and kindness, and set the example—even if the other person isn't doing the same toward you. Should something need to be addressed, pray for wisdom as to the right time and way to address it; and when the time comes to address it, speak softly and humbly. **Proverbs 15:1** says, "***A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words*** (angry, sarcastic, harsh words) ***stir up anger.***"

Charity "suffereth long." Charity "beareth all things." Charity is patient. How much is this spiritual quality showing itself in your life, Christian?

II. Godliness is part of charity (v. 6)

(Read verse 6 again.) The sixth quality that Christians must “add on” is godliness. Like all these other qualities, godliness cannot be separated from charity. Godlessness and love cannot co-exist. By the way, when I say “godlessness,” I don’t mean “*really* bad sin”; I simply mean “sin.” Sin isn’t godly; it’s *ungodly*. If you are exercising true charity, then you will treat sin like the bubonic plague. When you *do* sin, you will immediately and genuinely seek forgiveness, cleansing, and power to overcome that sin, so that you will not continue to grieve the God whom you love. Let’s turn, once again, to **1 Corinthians 13**, and see how godliness is woven into charity.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:5-6.

Please notice what Paul said in **verse 5**. He said that love “*doth not behave itself unseemly.*” In other words, love does not act inappropriately, or indecently. This is true, first and foremost, in our relationship with God. If you love God, then you will not act “*unseemly*” toward Him.

Now, I have often used the marriage relationship to illustrate our relationship with God; and so, I will use it again. Think of a marriage relationship. If a man say that he loves his wife, yet he loves to spend time with other women, and isn’t opposed to being alone with them, something isn’t right! There is a lack of love toward his wife, or else he wouldn’t be seeking a relationship with other women. If a man say he loves his wife, yet he looks at porn, he doesn’t love his wife; he disrespects and insults her. If a woman say that she loves her husband, yet she is involved in an emotional relationship with another man, and shares things with him that she should be sharing only with her husband, she doesn’t love him. This is “*unseemly*” behaviour.

So it is in our relationship with God. If we love Him, then we won’t behave “*unseemly.*” In other words, we will avoid sin. We will shun rebellion and disobedience. John wrote in **1 John 2:4-5**, “*He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*” Should there be sin in your life, yet you are not turning from it, how can you say that you love God? What love you may have for Him is small. If you would have *charity* in your life, you must be adding *godliness* to your life.

Now, let’s talk about how godliness is woven into our charity toward others. Notice what Paul says in **1 Corinthians 13:6**. He says that charity “*rejoiceth not in iniquity.*” In other words, if you love someone, you won’t try to get him (or her) to join you in sinning; and you won’t be *secretly happy* to know that that person is sinning. This is *never* the mark of someone who has love in his heart. It is just the opposite. Ungodliness and love do not go together.

Read Romans 1:28-32.

Why do we secretly love to see others sinning? Because it makes us feel better about ourselves. It makes us feel as though we are more righteous than we really are, because, “After all, I’m not as bad as so-and-so is.” It makes us feel that “God shouldn’t judge me, because that person is doing it, too.” Whether the “other person” be your brother or sister in

Christ, your wife, your husband, your dad, your mom, your child, your friend, your employer, your co-worker, your neighbour, or your enemy, you are *not* exercising love toward that person if you inwardly rejoice to see that that person is sinning. Remember what Adam did when he was confronted by God about his sin of eating the forbidden fruit? He blamed Eve! He said, “***The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.***” Adam found a perverse, twisted comfort in the fact that “She did it, too.” In fact, he said, “She did it first!” This wasn’t love on Adam’s part: it was ungodliness. He took pleasure in the fact that his wife had sinned, too. It eased his guilt. By the way, did you notice that Adam indirectly blamed God, as well? He said, “***The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat***”? Without saying it outright, Adam was saying, “It’s your fault, too, God!” The moment ungodliness entered into Adam’s heart, love for God and for others went out the window. There can be no love without godliness.

Of course, this goes directly against the thinking of the world. We live in an age when multitudes of people live in secret or open fornication or adultery; and they think it’s O.K., because it’s “love.” No, it’s not love! God says that true love does not behave itself unseemly, and does not rejoice in sin. Some people use harsh, unkind, sarcastic words with their friends, family members, or spouses; and they excuse it by saying that it’s “just the way we express our love.” (Lovers always quarrel, you know!) Friends, this isn’t love! It’s pride, selfishness, and self-righteousness on both people’s parts! It is *ungodliness*, not love. Many people think they are showing “love” to their families by staying home from church, because, after all, “family time” is more important. My friends, this is not “love.” Love that does not have time for God is not true love, because it lacks **godliness**. True love *comes from* God, and is placed in our hearts by God, as we allow Him to do so. It is then directed back *toward* God, and toward men.

Christian, are you adding to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness?

III. **Brotherly kindness is part of charity (v. 7)**

(**Read verse 7 again.**) The seventh spiritual quality in Peter’s list is “brotherly kindness.” “Brotherly kindness” and “brotherly love” are the same thing. They are both translated from the word *philadelphia*. In the New Testament, *philadelphia* speaks of the love that Christians should have for fellow Christians; and, just like all these other spiritual qualities, it is part of the very fabric of charity. You cannot separate love for the brethren from charity, because charity extends both to God *and* to all men (saved and unsaved alike). If you can’t show “brotherly kindness” to your brother in Christ, how can you possibly show love to someone who doesn’t know the Lord? Most importantly, if you can’t love your brother, how can you love God?

Read 1 John 4:19-21.

Now, let’s return to **1 Corinthians**, and see how brotherly kindness fits into charity.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:5.

The phrase “*brotherly love*” isn’t in this passage; but the concept is there. We see it in Paul’s statement that love “*is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.*” A Christian who is filled with brotherly love is not “*easily provoked*” by his brother. He will not get offended, and develop cold, sullen, icy grudges; nor will he react in explosive anger at the slightest provocation. When there is a genuine cause for offence, a Christian who is filled with brotherly kindness will address the matter to his brother in humility and love, without talking to anyone else about it. Brotherly love is part of the very fabric of charity.

Brotherly love also “*thinketh no evil.*” What does this mean? Well, let’s see what James has to say about it.

Read James 3:8-18.

Please notice what James says in **verse 14**. He says that the words that come out of our mouths proceed from our *hearts*. Your heart is like a spring, and your words are like the water that comes out of that spring. If you have trouble speaking peaceably, even to a brother in Christ, the issue is not with your tongue, but with your heart. By the way, I would remind you that James is not talking merely about our relationships with *unbelievers*. He’s also talking about our relationship with other Christians! To those of us who are saved, Christ is our Peace; yet, our old, sinful nature is *not* bent toward peace. When we allow our old nature to control us, our relationships even with the people whom we should love the most will suffer.

So, what is the solution? If you have trouble with the words that come out of your mouth, what should you do? Do you just throw up your hands and say, “Well, it’s already in my heart, so I may as well say it. There’s no changing what I feel.” No, this is not what to do! If you give in to your feelings, you *will* be defeated. However, if you surrender to the Holy Spirit, and let Him have control, He will take away bitterness, wrath, envy, and anger, and replace it with brotherly love. Let’s look again at **verse 17**. (**Read verse 17 again.**)

What is the “*wisdom that is from above*”? Is it simply an attribute of God? No, it is more than that. The “Wisdom that is from above” is also a Person! It is Christ Himself! One of Christ’s many wonderful names is “the Wisdom of God.” In our own strength, we cannot tame our tongues; but *Jesus*, who is the Wisdom of God, *can* tame our tongues! *He* is peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, and without hypocrisy; and He can communicate this holy character to *you*. Go to Him for help, and let Him fill you with godly wisdom. He imparts a *new* heart, and a *new* spirit. He will give you the power to bless men instead of curse them—even if they say things that are unkind or hurtful.

Christian, do you have an abundant measure of “brotherly kindness”? Do you love your brothers and sisters in Christ, and spend much time on your knees praying for them? You can *say* that you love God; but if you don’t have much love for the brethren, a claim of love for God rings hollow. Do you need to add more “brotherly kindness” to your life, Christian? The more you add brotherly kindness to your life, the more you will have godly charity!

Conclusion: We’ve seen how faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, and brotherly kindness are woven into the tapestry of charity. These truths are convicting, are they not? Who among us does not struggle with patience, godliness, or brotherly kindness? There is none. We all need more of these qualities in our lives. This is why Peter urges Christians to “add” these things to our lives. Perhaps

it's been a while since you've asked the Lord to develop these things in your life. If so, why not talk with Him about it this morning?

Perhaps you are not sure that you are truly a child of God. If you be not saved, all these things that we are talking about are moot points. You may have a certain measure of *human* love; but if Christ be not in your heart, you cannot have the kind of charity that the Bible talks about—because *God* is the Author of that kind of love. If you have never been saved, won't you repent of your sin today, and place your faith in Christ, so that He may enter into your heart, and fill it with His love?