

Psalm 39:12 “Hear my prayer, O Lord... for I am a stranger with You...”

Love suffers long and is kind

My paraphrase of 1 Cor 13:1-4 “Though I speak the language like a local, but have not love, I am just adding to the noise. And though my knowledge of theology may impress my peers, and though my creative vision may impress my supporters, if I do not have love, I do not impress my God. And though I sacrifice career, home, comfort, and family but have not love, I have given everything yet gain nothing. Love can endure all kinds of heat without bursting into flames of passion and anger and is able, in spite of continuing frustration, to treat others with gentleness.”

Longsuffering: (macrothumia) patient: bear long, be longsuffering, have (long) patience, be patient, patiently endure. The concept is of a substance that, though exposed to intense heat, does not burst into flame; the ability to endure the heat of frustration, insult, false accusation, and unjust treatment without reacting by giving vent with words or deeds of anger.

Kind: (chrestos) gentleness, kindness, acting to meet the need

The verse then ends with *“and is kind”*. In the face of suffering long and repeated insult and abuse, the response is one of gentleness and helpfulness. This is the exact opposite of our fallen natures: helpfulness in the face of hurtfulness. (Gentleness is not gullibility. It is not a call to wimphood or simply doing whatever others want us to do. It is, rather, a godly, gentle response to harsh people and difficult circumstances.)

This word translated *“kind”* is also translated *“gentle”* or *“easy”* when referring to Christ’s yoke. Matt 11:30.

In Romans 2:4 it is the *“gentleness”* of God that leads us to repentance. In the face of our repeated sins against God, He gives us sunshine, rain, daily mercy and constant grace. In Ephesians 4:32, it is because we have been recipients of God’s forgiveness that we are commanded to treat others with *“gentleness”*, tenderheartedness and forgiveness.

And in 1 Peter 2:3, since we have tasted of God’s *“gentleness”*, we are urged to live it out.

Now, it is one thing to respond to a *single* instance of insult or mistreatment with a gentle and gracious response. It is quite another thing altogether to *maintain* a gentle and kind spirit in the face of *repeated* mistreatment. Could I be so honest to admit that it is one thing to treat *strangers* with gentleness and longsuffering and another to treat *close family or co-workers* with gentleness when we think don’t deserve gentleness because they should know better.

One of the marks of spiritual maturity (or not) is seen in our *“normal”* response to trouble, strife and conflict. And we must not excuse an absence of love (for that is what it is) by saying *“well, that’s just not the way I am wired”*. If that is the case, we must be *rewired* by Christ. And He allows repeated opportunities to practice His kind of love through the difficulties of daily life.

Growth in love takes place in the little things of life. We must be aware that most of life is made of up of *little things*—little incidents, little thoughts, little words, little responses, little attitudes, little frustrations, little irritations. If I excuse or ignore the *little* disobediences, I will soon find it easy to ignore the larger ones.

As we seek to show love in the little things, we will make big progress in our walk with Christ and our effectiveness as His servants.

“Gentle Savior, make me gentle and kind in thought and attitude. You know it will take a miracle to transform me. I want your gentle yoke and to drink deeply of your gentleness that I might have a tender and repentant heart all day. Help me to take the troubles I face to today as an opportunity to demonstrate your kind of gentle love. Lord, you know me. You know how easy it is for me to react in anger instead of respond in love. You know how creative I can be in justifying my harsh spirit and blaming others for the way I am. I repent of my excuses. I ask for forgiveness. I ask for more than forgiveness. I ask for a forgiving, longsuffering, gentle spirit. Lord, keep my eyes on your cross and my heart in your gentle hands today. Change my heart for your glory.”

For further study: Matthew 5; Isa 42:1-12; 1 Thess 2:7; 2 Tim 2:24-25; Titus 3:2; James 3:17; 1 Peter 2:18

Remember, you are being prayed for. We love and appreciate you, too. Adios, Ron