

46-13-09-Practicing the Presence of Love

love, Holy Spirit, patience, benevolence, envy, boasting, arrogance

1 Cor 13:4

Practicing God's presence replaces the presence of past immaturity.

INTRODUCTION:

–1 Cor 13 is a list of *loving behaviors* applied by practicing v.11. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Replacing *childish ways* with *childlikeness in Christ* brings spiritual maturity. The list *describes God* (“**God is love**”), so love's behaviors are already inside us– Rom 5:5b. God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Love's behaviors come from *the Trinity* living inside us, but we put them into practice by having a *childlike receptivity* to the Holy Spirit. –Our past *inner child* may cope with life immaturely. If our *adult life* is controlled by immaturity, inner healing helps us “put childish ways behind” and *grow in love*. *Healing is centered in Love's presence*. **HOM.idea**. With that in mind, let's explore love's descriptions in v.4 *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. First, love is...*

I. Patient (*able to wait or endure; lit, long-spirited, long-tempered*)

- A. [Wiki (adapted): “Patience is the ability to endure difficult circumstances; to persevere in the face of delay; to tolerate provocation without annoyance or anger, to remain steadfast under the stress and strain of long-term difficulties.”] What a great virtue! *But why might children not learn to have it?*
1. Did parents *shield them from difficulties, delays, distresses?* Or, did anger at enduring such things get stuck deep down inside?
 2. As an adult, a pampered inner child may pout, “*I don't deserve having to wait or endure this!*” A frustrated inner child may explode, “*Somebody's in for it! I'm done putting up with this!*”
- B. *God is love*, so **Love is in control** of *difficulties, delays, strains, stressors*. (We can choose old childish responses, **or** a childlike receptivity to our new disposition of love now residing within us.)

TRANS: We do **not** throw out our *inner child* but we help that child to *heal and grow up through divine love*. **Practicing God's presence replaces the presence of past immaturity**. Next, love is...

II. Kind (good, benevolent; **lit.** being useful, [blessing and helping others])

- A. [**Aristotle** defined *kindness* as “helpfulness towards someone in need, not in return for anything, nor for the advantage of the helper himself, but for that of the person helped.”] Unkind adult behavior may be in an inner child’s upbringing, where parental kindness was not exemplified or where benefits were bestowed only when arbitrary conditions were met.
- B. “God is love,” and love is kind— **Titus 3:3-5**, At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the **kindness and love of God** our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of **rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit**.

TRANS: *New birth* doesn’t banish our past. It renews our inner child “by the Holy Spirit.” We replace unkind habits with the “kindness and love” of God inside us. [When *old patterns* tempt us, we can sing the Eph 4:32 song: “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you. Ephesians 4 and 32.”] Next, love is...

III. Not Envious (not covetous or jealous; **lit.** not hot, [burning])

- A. Burning desires can be godly and good, but we’ll get burned by longing for what doesn’t belong to us. [One psychological article said envy “occurs when a person lacks another’s superior quality, achievement, or possession and either desires it or wishes that the other lacked it.”]
- B. *Envy* is infant humanity’s original sin, getting worse as the world ages. (*Childish discontent ignites an adult zeal that burns for what others have*, but it only fuels the fire of never having enough.)
- C. Love quenches envy’s flame with the peace of godly contentment— **1 Tim 6:6**, But godliness with contentment is great gain. (Why is that so?)

TRANS: To an *envious soul* seeking itself in *things outside itself*, Jesus asks, “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?” The “great gain” is finding ourselves in *Love’s contentment*. Next, love is...

IV. Not Boastful (vainly displaying, showing off; **lit.**, from braggart)

- A. In **v.4**, *Love is patient, love is kind*. It does **not** envy, it does **not** boast, it is **not** proud. Such *negatives*, while *unattractive*, are *diagnostic*: vain displays of positives try to make up for negatives. (It doesn’t work, but it can reveal an insecure inner child behind a boasting adult.)

- B. Showing off ability, knowledge, status, what we’ve *done*, who we *know* is a cry for *recognition*, for *acceptance*. (But the real need is *self-acceptance*, which comes by *Love’s acceptance*— **Eph 1:6b** (NKJV), [by grace in Christ, God] “has made us **accepted** in the Beloved.”)

TRANS: When *God’s acceptance* cancels our *insecurity*, we become concerned about others— **Phil 2:4-5**, Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. **Your attitude** should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. *How?* By practicing His presence. Lastly, love is...

V. Not Proud (arrogant, conceited, haughty; **lit.**, over-grown, inflated)

- A. *Pride* explains our *fallen human condition*— **Prov 16:18**, Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Stolen fruit from “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” killed us spiritually by making us *morally independent*: able to decide “good and evil” on our own.)
- B. We are *meant to feed* “on every word that comes from the mouth of God,” but, from childhood to old age, we keep eating that autonomous “knowledge” of *right and wrong*. (Unless, *childlikeness* says, “Teach me,” *childishness* will say, “I know better than you do!”)
- C. An adult *pride of knowledge* rocks our world with clashing claims of what’s correct and incorrect. (To resolve the *moral chaos from Eden’s forbidden fruit*, we must reconnect with Love— **1 Cor 8:1b-3**, We know that we all possess **knowledge**. Knowledge **puffs up**, but love builds up. The man who **thinks he knows** something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who **loves God** is known by God. (Humans are never perfectly right, but we’re always profoundly wrong without love!)

CONCLUSION:

—**Practicing God’s presence** is practicing the presence of Love. AND Love’s behaviors, put into practice by childlike receptivity to the Holy Spirit, **replaces the presence (and the practice) of past immaturity**. —The question Jesus asked the lame man bears repeating again and again in our lives: “Do you want to get well?” Because of *Love’s presence within us*, our transformation is guaranteed, if we “want to get well.” So, let’s say, “Yes” to Christ’s question and be healed from *all childish ways* by embracing the *childlikeness of Love*!