"Put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience... Put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity" (Col 3:12-14).

**Patience and Love**

Without the "love" how difficult the "patience" and other things would be! Even in our relationship with God we see love and patience linked: "May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ" (2Th 3:5). Unless we love God wholeheartedly, we are more likely to blame him for our trials and troubles than to lean on him as we endure them. The strength for our patience with God comes from our great love for him.

In the same way, our love for one another is the root of our patience or longsuffering in dealing with one another. Paul goes on to say that patience, and its companion graces, make for unity and peace rather than blame and complaint. He then says, "And beyond all these things put on love which is the perfect bond of unity" (Col 3:14).

Now true love itself is not an easy thing to understand, nor an easy thing to do. What often seems to be love, turns out to be a figment, an imitation rather than the genuine article. There are certain attributes of love which we have already heard Paul mention in this lesson. We can more easily understand the nature of true love, and how it leads to patience, by considering its attributes among which are compassion and humility.

**Patience and Compassion**

We may define the meaning of “compassion” as a heartfelt sympathy for a person's plight such as to evoke “tender mercies” in making a judgment of that person. Compassion leads us to treat the person with mercy, kindness, and patience, rather than with harshness.

Compassion is even more than sympathy, and extends to empathy. We feel the pain in the other person. This evokes a loving understanding that makes us repond appropriately to what that person says and does. Hence we are patient, forbearing, and tolerant. Love helped us to understand, and understanding led us to be kind and patient.

John Bradford (1510-1555), an English Protestant Reformer and martyr, when he saw a criminal going to execution for his crimes, said, “There but for the grace of God go I”. That famous phrase well expresses the heart of compassion, but also expresses humility.

When we have compassion, there is involved the knowledge that we ourselves could easily be in the same plight as the one we feel compassion for. We have only narrowly escaped, and have God to thank.

Without that humbling view, our compassion would be little more than condescending pity. That's why Paul links compassion with humility as he does again in his letter to the Philippians: "If there is compassion... with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself" (Php 2:1-3).

**Patience and Humility**

Jesus has compassion for us in our burdens. And what does he say? "Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Mt 11:28-30)

The humility of Christ in his love for us makes him compassionate and patient toward us. He does not judge us with harshness, but with kindness. He does not punish us, but shows us mercy —if we come to him for help.

In his exhortation to Timothy, Paul connects "love, patience, meekness" (1Tm 6:11). Many people fail to be loving and patient because they are not meek and lowly.

You might say, “Well Mr Graham, I'm having trouble being loving and compassionate, I'm having trouble being patient, and now you want to pile another obligation upon me to be meek and humble. I cannot carry all that load.”

No, you don't understand. If a child were having trouble carrying a carton of milk and a loaf of bread, would it be fair to give them something more to carry? Yes, it would, if it were a bag to put the milk and bread in, and make them easier to carry. Think of humility as a carry bag for love and patience, not as an extra burden.

See? Now perhaps patience and love will be possible for you.