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God is Patient and Longsuffering

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GOD IS PATIENT AND LONGSUFFERING

THE DEFINITION INVOLVED

- This attribute has to do with God's restraint concerning His righteous wrath and judgment in the face of rebellion and sin.
- It is the demonstration of patience and endurance when one is being provoked or injured.

THE AREAS INVOLVED

- **Those referring to God Himself:**

"Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ" (2 Thess. 3:5, NKJV).

"And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth . . .'" (Exod. 34:6, NKJV).

'What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction" (Rom. 9:22, NKJV).

". . . by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love . . ." (2 Cor. 6:6, NKJV).

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness . . ." (Gal. 5:22, NKJV).

". . . who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water" (1 Peter 3:20, NKJV).

"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, NKJV).

- **Those referring to all Christians in general:**

"But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience" (Lk. 8:15, NKJV).

"By your patience possess your souls" (Lk. 21:19, NKJV).

"And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance..." (Rom. 5:3, NKJV).

“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus” (Rom. 15:4, 5, NKJV).

“... strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy...” (Col. 1:11, NKJV).

“... that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:12, NKJV).

“For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise . . .” (Heb. 10:36, NKJV).

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us . . .” (Heb. 12:1, NKJV).

“And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise” (Heb. 6:15, NKJV).

“... knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James. 1:3, 4, NKJV).

“Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful . . .” (James 5:7, 10, 11, NKJV).

“... rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer . . .” (Rom. 12:12, NKJV).

“Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ” (2 Thess. 3:5, NKJV).

“Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:7, 8, NKJV).

“Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass” (Psa. 37:7, NKJV).

“... with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love . . .” (Eph. 4:2, NKJV).

“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering . . .” (Col. 3:12, NKJV).

- **Those referring to Christian leaders:**

“But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses...” (2 Cor. 6:4, NKJV).

“But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness” (1 Tim. 6:11, NKJV).

“. . . that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience . . .” (Titus 2:2, NKJV).

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all” (1 Thess. 5:14, NKJV).

“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient . . .” (2 Tim. 2:24, NKJV).

“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2, NKJV).

“. . . and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you . . .” (2 Peter 3:15, NKJV).

“The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation” (Num. 14:18, NKJV).

“But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth” (Psa. 86:15, NKJV).

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy” (Psa. 103:8, NKJV).

“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4, NKJV).

“However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life” (1 Tim. 1:16, NKJV).

- **Those referring to unbelievers:**

“Do not boast about tomorrow for you do not know what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1, NKJV).

“Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near” (Isa. 55:6, NKJV).

“And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ ‘So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God’” (Lk. 12:19-21, NKJV).

“For He says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2, NKJV).

“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years’ (Heb. 3:7-9, NKJV).

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’” (James 4:13-15, NKJV).

As these verses testify to, while God’s patience knows no depth limitation (Rom. 5:20), it does, however, possess length and breadth limitations! In other words, God’s patient extension of grace to the unsaved could be likened to many radio and television ads that advise: “Act now and send in for this remarkable product, as the offer may be withdrawn at any time without previous notice!”

The terrible and tragic words of Jeremiah summarizes all the above:

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!” (Jer. 8:20, NKJV)

- **The following three poems, one directed to the unsaved, one to the saved, and the final to both, capture something of God’s patience and longsuffering:**

A. To the unsaved:

*The clock of life is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop
At late or early hour.*

*To lose one’s wealth is sad indeed,
To lose one’s health is more,
To lose one’s soul is such a loss
That no man can restore.*

*The present only is our own,
So live, love, toil with a will,
Place no faith in “Tomorrow,”
For the Clock may then be still.*

(Author, Robert H. Smith)

B. To the saved:

*He’s still working on me
To make me what I ought to be.
It took Him just a week to make the moon and stars
The sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars.
How loving and patient He must be—
For He’s still working on me!*

(Joel Hemphill, Universal Music Publishing Group)

C. To both:

*Patience is a virtue,
Possess it if you can.
Seldom found in women,
And never found in man!*

THE ILLUSTRATIONS INVOLVED

On a personal note, the following events happened in the two churches I pastored prior to my coming to Liberty University in 1972. One involved a black belt former Marine; the other, an article in a farm magazine.

- **The black belt former Marine:**

He had been a violent but hopeless drunkard for many years. But then, this pitiful creature met Jesus and was gloriously saved! Thus, this new convert was now spending all of his time witnessing for the One who set him free. Much of these soul-winning activities would take place in the local bars and taverns in our city.

During one of these Jesus-sharing events he was suddenly and viciously attacked by a God-hating giant of a man who threatened to kill him. After quickly struggling to free himself, this former Marine began both running and praying as fast as possible. I listened, fascinated, as he told me the contents of the prayer. As I remember it contained the following:

“O God! Please don’t let this guy catch me! If he does, you know what will happen. I’ll have to kill him! Oh, how terrible to think that the very man I was trying to keep from hell, would go there, delivered by my own hands!”

And the intended lesson? Simply this—meekness is not always a sign of weakness! Thus, like his Savior, my friend was displaying patience and longsuffering!

- **An article in a farm magazine:**

Just prior to my marriage, I was pastoring a small rural church in Illinois whose members for the most part were farmers. On one occasion a member called my attention to an article in his farm magazine written by the editor who suggested that while he was not a religious man, still felt the biblical plan of working six days a week and then resting on the seventh was a good one indeed. However, in the next issue the editor received an angry response from an irate reader who wrote:

“I’m disgusted! Cancel my subscription! Your advice about not working on Sunday is pure hogwash! Here’s why: This year I plowed my ground on Sunday, planted my crops on Sunday, and harvested them on Sunday. What’s more, I made more money

than those church-going farmers did. So, here we are in October and nothing has happened to punish me, proving that God had nothing to do with the situation!"

Well, at the bottom of this letter the editor had added the following:

"Dear Sir, God does not always close His accounts in October!"

A GLORIOUS MUSICAL SUMMARY

*Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side.
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change, He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*

*Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake
To guide the future, as He has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know
His voice Who ruled them while He dwelt below.*

*Be still, my soul: when dearest friends depart,
And all is darkened in the vale of tears,
Then shalt thou better know His love, His heart,
Who comes to soothe thy sorrow and thy fears.
Be still, my soul: thy Jesus can repay
From His own fullness all He takes away.*

*Be still, my soul: the hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord.
When disappointment, grief and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.*

*Be still, my soul: begin the song of praise
On earth, believing, to Thy Lord on high;
Acknowledge Him in all thy words and ways,
So shall He view thee with a well pleased eye.
Be still, my soul: the Sun of life divine
Through passing clouds shall but more brightly shine.*