

"TO KNOW HIM IS TO LOVE HIM"

6. Attributes of God: His Patience

As we discovered in our previous study on God's mercy, there is a direct connection between His mercy and His patience. Our key verse makes that connection clear.

"But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, Longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth."

(NKJV, Psa 86:15)

In our finite human minds we might think of God's patience as the "regulator" of His righteousness, mercy and grace. He delays judgment by extending mercy and grace because of His patience.

What is Patience?

The Hebrew word "arek" in the OT means "*longsuffering, slow to anger*". The Greek words "*makrothumeo*" and "*hupomeno*" found in the NT mean "*self-restraint before proceeding to action*" and "*perseverance in the face of difficulties*" respectively. In all cases, patience is an active, ongoing action. It is dealing with something continuously. "Patiently waiting for 3 months" means being aware of the passing of time and of the event. Forgetting about it until the day or week before is NOT exercising patience!

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

Side note: Comparing Exo 34:6 with Psa 86:15 we can see that "compassion = mercy", and "mercy = goodness" and that mercy is a perspective of God's goodness.

Do not mistake God's patience for tardiness, or forgetfulness.

(NKJV, 2Pe 3:9), "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."

The only reason why God is patient with sinners is because of His desire that everyone would come to accept Jesus. It is not because He is late or because He "forgot".

(NKJV, Gen 6:3), "And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh..." (NKJV, Num 14:18), "The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and

transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty..."

The attribute of God's patience is eternal and it is infinite. However, His exercising of His patience on any particular matter, by definition must come to an end. His patience in the matter of judging sin will also come to an end. God's righteousness demands payment for sin. And on the day of His choosing, He will judge sin. "Payday, some day".

All patience originates from God.

(NKJV, Rom 15:5), "Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus,"

Apart from God, there is no longsuffering. Humanity left to its own tendencies is impatient. We see that today. As we draw near to the end of this age, people have become more and more impatient. This impatience is a direct result of an increasing rejection of God.

God's righteousness requires that He is patient.

(NKJV, 1Pe 3:20), "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."

It was approximately 120 years that Noah preached righteousness before the flood came. God was patient with Nineveh for 150 years (between the times that Jonah and Nahum preached to them). God never surprises mankind when it comes to judgment. He always gives humanity ample warning and sufficient time to repent.

Group Discussion

- One of the fruits of the Spirit is patience. When we exercise patience, what are we demonstrating?
- How does Easter/Resurrection Sunday remind you of God's patience?