

II. Christ's delay in returning illustrates God's long-suffering towards mankind.

Illustration: When was the last time you exhibited long-suffering/patience towards another person? When was the last time you were intentional about enduring the pain inflicting on yourself and then responded with an attitude ready to forgive and not enact revenge?

III. As the body of Christ, we must find practical ways to manifest longsuffering towards others.

A. We must begin by considering the justice of God.

We may be concerned that our tormentor won't receive what is due him or her or perhaps get the punishment we think is due him. But, the patient person who suffers leaves it in God's hands. He is confident that God will render justice, though he knows that this may not occur until the time of our Lord's return (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7). Instead of hoping and waiting for an opportunity for revenge, he prays for God's forgiveness of his tormentors, just as Jesus and the martyr Stephen prayed for their executioners.

The person who is patient under mistreatment by others is the person who has developed such a confidence in the wisdom, power, and faithfulness of God that he willingly entrusts his circumstances into His hands.

B. We must respond without revenge; rather with Christlikeness.

God endures with great patience mankind who rebels, mocks, and sins against Him. People despise His will and law and yet He waits for them. Maybe you were one of those people.

The best way to develop this slowness to anger is to reflect frequently on the patience of God toward us.

We are like the unmerciful servant when we lose our patience under provocation. We ignore God's extreme patience with us. We discipline our children out of anger, while God disciplines us out of love. We are eager to punish the person who provokes us, while God is eager to forgive. We are eager to exercise our authority, while God is eager to exercise His love.

This kind of patience does not ignore the provocations of others; it simply seeks to respond to them in a godly manner. It enables us to control our tempers when we are provoked and to seek to deal with the person and his provocation in a way that tends to heal relationships rather than aggravate problems. It seeks the ultimate good of the other individual, rather than the immediate satisfaction of our own aroused emotions.

The person whose temperament is conducive to losing his temper must especially work at patience under provocation. Rather than excusing himself by saying, "that's just the way I am,"

**He must acknowledge his quick temper as a sinful habit before God.

**He should meditate extensively upon such verses as Exodus 34:6, 1 Corinthians 13:5 and James 1:19.

**He must also pray earnestly that God the Holy Spirit will change him inwardly.

****He should apologize to the person who is the object of his outburst each time he loses his temper. (This helps him develop humility and a sense of his own sinfulness before God.)**

****Finally, he must not become discouraged when he fails. He needs to realize that his problem is as much a sinful habit as it is a result of temperament. Habits are not easily broken, and there will be failure. But, in the words of Proverbs 24:16, "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief."**

C. We must choose to demonstrate patience to those who irritate us.

D. We must learn to patiently wait on God.

What are the differences between our impatience with God and those that wait patiently? The answer lies in the cure for impatience:

- **Believe God's promises and trust His word.**
- **Obey His known will.**
- **Leave the results to God.**

Conclusion

Adversity, trying times, slowness in God's will. Here is the key: God is working out all of His will for His purposes and our good. He has everything under His sovereign control. We see that in the lives of Abraham, Joseph, David, Job, Isaiah, and Jesus.

In light of God's long-suffering towards us, do you believe that you should be long-suffering with other people?

How patient are you towards your fellow human beings?

Have you ever thanked God for His patience towards you?

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, That you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. - Rom. 15:4-6