

Patiently Waiting

Illustration: How grateful are you for the patience of God towards others? How about God's long-suffering to you? Then, how patient and slow to anger are you to your spouse, child, friend, neighbor, fellow-driver on the Hannegan? Or towards someone who doesn't agree or like you? I have a long way to go, but it must begin with considering the patience God has had with each of us.

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. - Psalm 145:8

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. - James 1:19-20

Longsuffering. What does the word mean? The word is used a few times in the KJV but translated in the newer versions as *patience, forbearance, perseverance*. The word could be divided to mean *suffer long*. The Greek word *makrothumia* comes from 2 Greek words meaning *long in time + wrath or temper*. The word means then *to wait patiently and exercise self-restraint when one is stirred to wrath*.

Overall the word means *patience that bears us under trials and circumstances, enduring them even for a length of time, and looks to not retaliate or get back at a person who may be opposing them*. The definition of longsuffering then is "the quality of putting up with other people, even when patience is sorely tried" (Cole 167).

I. **Patience characterizes God as He is slow to condemn and judge us and lovingly cares for us despite our rebellious tendencies.**

God is the Source of longsuffering because it is a characteristic of Himself. See Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; 145:8. Longsuffering is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

A. God exercises His long-suffering towards the unrighteous. Rom. 9:22; I Pet. 3:20.

B. The Bible attests that God is long-suffering with His people.

C. God's kindness leads man to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

God chooses to not enact His divine penalty on sinful humanity immediately and in doing so demonstrates the *riches of His kindness* (what is suitable or fitting to a need) towards us.

D. God patiently waits for us despite the fact that we often provoke Him to anger and live at times defiantly against His authority.

E. God perseveres even as He suffers alongside of us.

F. God is steadfast and endures as He manifests His patience towards us.

God has every right vested through Him as Creator of mankind to exercise His condemnation and judgment upon the sinner. Yet, He gives so many opportunities. While God is bound by His holy character to punish sin, His loving nature delays that punishment in order to give the sinner an opportunity to repent and turn from his/her sin.

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

Conclusion

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?