

# The Patience of God – God Demonstrates His Patience

## 1. Introduction

- a. I was doing my quiet time on Monday morning when I ran across a passage that leapt off the page. It so stirred my spirit, that I felt that the Lord wanted me to preach a sermon series on the subject that the passage spoke about.
  - i. As I researched the subject...the subject of God's Patience, I became troubled. I discovered most sermons on the subject of patience look at the patience we have and ignore the patience of God. This is a serious mistake, because the patience of God is closely related to both His Holiness and His Love.
    1. **God's patience is what holds back His wrath from consuming all that is contrary to His holy nature.**
    2. God's patience also communicates His love for us.
  - ii. Over these next few weeks, we will look at:
    1. The demonstration of God's patience.
    2. The limits of God's patience.
    3. God's patience as salvation
    4. The reproduction of God's patience (include examples)

So we will start to try to understand His patience by looking at HOW God has demonstrated it to people like you and I.

2. *1 Timothy 1:12-17 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; 14 and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. 15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. 16 Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. 17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen..*
  - a. This entire passage should shake us awake. It is so rich in what it says about the patience and love of God.
  - b. Ask yourselves today, have you ever sinned...succumbing to a temptation and afterwards, in the grip of guilt and shame realize that you deserve punishment and even worse, that you deserve to be cast away from God for your act of rebellion?
    - i. Every Christian I have ever known has experienced this on more than one occasion.
    - ii. They have felt the power and pain of their sin and they have experienced the guilt and condemnation it deserves.
    - iii. And apart from the incredible patience of God, we would be swallowed up in punishment and condemnation.
    - iv. Paul realized this; he saw that Christ had no obligation to save him after he had persecuted the church, yet that is exactly what Christ did...forgive him and then used him in a powerful way to advance the kingdom of God.
  - c. Let's examine this passage and look at what God can do with a life that He holds in the palm of His hand.
3. *v12-14: I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; 14 and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.*

- a. Paul is overflowing in thankfulness that Jesus Christ His Lord poured His strength into his life and “counted him as faithful” and then pressed Paul into service (diakonai) despite his background, despite his life of sin, despite the way he opposed God.
- b. Paul was painfully aware of the change in direction that the grace of God brought to his life.
  - i. Before encountering the risen Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9), he lived for the sole purpose of persecuting the church out of existence. And this he did this out of his twisted commitment to God!
  - ii. He was truly a religious, anti-Christian fanatic. When we first meet him is when he stood by in approval of the stones being thrown at Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 7--8). Here is what the book of Acts says of him: "*But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison*" (Acts 8:3; see 9:1-2).
- c. Does any of us here expect Saddam Hussein to become a Christian and do mission work in Saudi Arabia for Jesus? **Why not?** Well, nobody in the church thought that Saul of Tarsus had a chance either. He was the worst enemy the church knew of in their day.
  - i. Listen to his own description of himself in Acts 26:9
    1. "*So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.10 "And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them.11 "And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities*
    2. Do you see anything in this man that deserves God’s grace? Had Saul of Tarsus done anything to indicate that there was any hope for his conversion? No!
  - ii. Listen to Ananias’ reply when Jesus told Ananias to go to him and heal him from blindness.
    1. Acts 9:10 *Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Behold, here am I, Lord." 11 And the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, 12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight."*
    2. God is telling Ananias that Saul is in town. And God gives Ananias a seemingly dangerous, if not, impossible assignment. "*Ananias, go to the house of Judas and find Saul.*"
    3. 13 *But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Your name."*
    4. Ananias is questioning the wisdom of the Lord here. “Who, Saul? Lord do you know what that guy has been doing lately? Lord, surely you don’t mean that! Not Saul of Tarsus!”
    5. This would be the equivalent of, out of the blue, God telling one of us to go to Afghanistan and tell Osama Bin Laden about Jesus.
  - iii. Later, Paul’s describes God’s work in Romans 5:6-10
    1. *For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the*

*death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

- iv. This truth of the gospel of God's grace was something Saul of Tarsus never got over.
    1. He lived the rest of his life constantly amazed at God's incredible love and Jesus' unlimited patience.
    2. His message never failed to center on this truth.
    3. He defended this message to his grave.
    4. Grace from heaven for the hell bound sinner, like me, says Paul, has shaped my life. It has made me want to give every ounce of energy I have to Jesus and his cause.
    5. How about you? How do you respond to the work and love of God?
  - d. In his writings, Paul described himself in the past as a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13-14), yet he experienced God's mercy (v. 13).
    - i. He was saved. And more than that, **God placed him into service** (diakonai).
    - ii. He is the picture of the impossible case. God loves the impossible cases.
    - iii. Are you an impossible case? Have you done such terrible things that you think that God can't forgive you or if He saves you, that He will never use you?
      1. Well I don't know how many people you killed, or whether you have blasphemed God, or if have you tortured the innocent, but Paul did.
      2. And God didn't put Paul away on the shelf and say, "sorry buddy, but you have had some disqualifying sins in your life, you can only sweep floors and sit in the back pew the rest of your life"
      3. Paul doesn't deny that God had that right to say that.
      4. But God did something extraordinary.
      5. God took this hopeless, impossible case and conformed him to become an Apostle and a person who wrote over 1/2 of the New Testament!
      6. If Paul were to apply for a ministry position in most churches of our day, he would be disqualified by his past.
  - e. Yet, Christ picked the chief of sinners to demonstrate to us today what his mercy and power can do in a life.
    - i. **Don't ever dare say of God that He doesn't have the power or the right to use you or someone else. God is the Potter.**
  - f. Paul's past did not disqualify him from serving God; God's mercy and grace were enough to cover, and enable him to serve God. We should never feel that our past makes us "unusable" by God
  - g. I saw a quote this week from a coach whose players had said that they really didn't "deserve" to win. He replied, "what does deserve have to do with anything?" That ought to be our reply as well.
4. *v15-17 15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. 16 Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. 17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*
- a. V15 tells us why Jesus came...to save sinners. Don't ever forget that. He didn't come to make you the center of the universe, He didn't come to worship you, He didn't come to give you a new car and a better job...He came to save you – which means to make you whole by restoring you and I to a relationship with God.

5. I love v16 in the Amplified version: 16 **But I obtained mercy for the reason that in me, as the foremost [of sinners], Jesus Christ might show forth and display all His perfect long-suffering and patience for an example to [encourage] those who would thereafter believe on Him for [the gaining of] eternal life.**
  - a. **God demonstrated, God displayed, God put up for public notice... His perfect patience in the life of Saul (later who we call Paul).**
  - b. He wants you and I to understand this wonderful characteristic of His nature that extends His hand of grace and withholds His wrath.
6. **Let us do a quick word study of this word for patience.**
  - a. Makrothumeo is a combination of macro (long, far away) and thumos (burning anger) literally long-temper (as opposed to "short tempered), which means "a long holding out of the mind before it gives room to passion."
  - b. Makrothumia is the capacity to be wronged and not retaliate. It is the ability to hold one's feeling in restraint or bear up under the oversights and wrongs afflicted by others without retaliating. It is manifest by the quality of forbearance under provocation
    - i. Vine says makrothumia is the opposite of anger. It follows that a lack of patience often leads to wrath or revenge.
  - c. Chrysostom defined it as the spirit which has the power to take revenge but never does so. Lightfoot defined it as the spirit which refuses to retaliate.
    - i. To make an analogy—Have you ever seen a puppy and a very large dog together? The puppy yaps at the big dog, worries him, bites him, and all the time the big dog, who could annihilate the puppy with one snap of his teeth, bears the puppy's impertinence with a forbearing dignity.
    - ii. The most amazing thing about it is that it is used in the New Testament to describe the attitude of God towards men (Romans 2:4; 9:22; 1 Timothy 1:16; 1 Peter 3:20).
    - iii. If God had been a man, he would have wiped out this world long ago; but he has that patience which bears with our sinning and offers grace and mercy at the cross.
7. All of this to say, God has the power, the right, the ability, the holiness to extend judgment upon not just mankind in general but to any one of us at any moment in time.
  - a. Last week, I reflected upon a fall I had from a 30 foot tree when I was 14 years old. My friend and I were building a ladder up a tall tree in the middle of the woods where we would build a high tree house. My friend had left for the evening. I had just one more board to nail onto the tree. I put in one nail and then did something remarkably stupid. I held onto the board that I had just nailed and got ready to nail another nail into it. The board came loose and backward I fell, spinning over to see the ground rising up to meet me. Whump. I can still hear that horrible sound as I hit the ground with the full sprawl of my body like a belly flop in water. I somehow regained consciousness and looked around me. My glasses were broken in 3 places, I was covered in mud from head to toe. I hurt all over. And a foot away from me was the board with a nail facing up. Another few inches away was the hammer that flew from my hand. Either of which could have killed me if the fall had failed to. And no one would have known where to find my body.
    - i. My reflection was this... God could have, and would have been perfectly within His justice and perfect holiness in demanding of me my life that day, but in His rich mercy, He allowed me to live, knowing I would sin, and continue in rebellion for another 11 years. It was by His grace alone that He permitted me to stay alive. **In hindsight, I understood His incredible patience He extended to me that day.**
8. **The well-balanced Christian must have two responses to this passage:**
  - a. On the one hand we walk with head up, shoulders free of the burden of sin, knowing that Jesus paid it all and nothing can now snatch us out of our Father's hand.
  - b. On the other, the remembrance of the condition of total depravity and lostness from which He saved us; not so that we might continue to walk in breast-beating guilt and anguish, but so we

might remain acutely aware of the mercy and grace that saved us, that in our gratitude we will love Him more.

- i. This awareness protects us from the temptation to judge another as worthless or unable to be reached by the grace of God or be used by God.

9. Speaking of judging another as useless or unqualified, I have one more story to tell:

- a. One night in a church service a young woman felt the tug of God at her heart. She responded to God's call and accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior. The young woman had a very rough past, involving alcohol, drugs, and prostitution. But, the change in her was evident. As time went on she became a faithful member of the church. She eventually became involved in the ministry, teaching young children. It was not very long until this faithful young woman had caught the eye and heart of the pastor's son. The relationship grew and they began to make wedding plans. This is when the problems began. You see, about one half of the church did not think that a woman with a past such as hers was suitable for a pastor's son. The church began to argue and fight about the matter. So they decided to have a meeting. As the people made their arguments and tensions increased, the meeting was getting completely out of hand. The young woman became very upset about all the things being brought up about her past.
- b. As she began to cry the pastor's son stood to speak. He could not bear the pain it was causing his wife to be. He began to speak and his statement was this: " My fiancée's past is not what is on trial here. What you are questioning is the ability of the Blood of Jesus to wash away sin. Today you have put the blood of Jesus on trial. So, does it wash away sin or not?" The whole church began to weep as they realized that they had been slandering the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Too often, even as Christians, we bring up the past and use it as a weapon against our brothers and sisters. Forgiveness is a very foundational part of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the blood of Jesus does not cleanse the other person completely then it cannot cleanse us completely. If that is the case, then we are all in a lot of trouble.

c.

Your response today is to reflect upon the incredible grace and patience of God. If you have been resisting following Jesus, you need to know that God's patience is not unlimited, it will someday come to an end. He has the right to demand an accounting of our lives at any moment.

If you belong to Jesus, consider how you look upon others. Have you forgotten where you came from? Have you lost sight of the mercy extended to you? Won't you give it as you have received it?