

The Patience of God – His Patience is our Salvation.

1. Kid quotes about God's patience – It seems they understand Him better than most adults do.
 - a. "God waits until he gets his turn," says Savannah, age 5.
 - b. God has patience with us "by waiting in line," says Ashton, 5
 - c. "God has patience with me and everyone else because we all mess up a lot," says Gary, 10.
 - d. "God has patience with us because he is so, so, so very nice," says Christian, 7.
 - e. "If God didn't have patience, we wouldn't be here right now," says Peter, 10.
 - f. "God has patience with us because he is perfect," says Madeline, 11
 - g. "God has patience with us because he had to sit and watch his son die on the cross," says Trey, 11.
 - h. "He is waiting for us to believe in him," adds Elizabeth, 9.
2. **Review** and other thoughts:
 - a. Over the past two weeks we have looked at a characteristic of God that is often overlooked. It is His Patience.
 - i. Writer Arthur Pink said, "*Far less has been written on the patience of God than on the other excellencies of divine character*"
 - b. But what is the Patience of God?
 - i. **The patience of God describes the power of God over Himself.**
 1. We define the divine patience as that power of control which God exercises over Himself, causing Him to bear with the wicked and put off his anger for a time.
 2. Arthur Pink also wrote: "*What but an Infinite Being could have borne with this revolted, ungodly race until now? The patience of all the created beings in heaven combined would long since have been exhausted had it been left to deal with sinful man*"
 - ii. Last week we learned that the Greek word for Patience is Macrothumeo which is a conjunction of two separate words – macro (holding out long) and thumeo (anger) – combined to mean "to be holding out from anger for a long time."
 - iii. Nahum 1:3 reads, "*The LORD is slow to anger and great in power*"
 - iv. What an incredible combination of attributes!
3. **Additional Characteristics of God's patience:**
 - a. God's patience is most clearly distinguished from His mercy.
 - b. God's mercy is aimed at mankind.
 - i. Mercy is not giving us what we deserve.
 - c. Even though you and I are the beneficiaries of His patience, God's patience is aimed at Himself.
 - i. It is a restraint placed upon His acts by His will.
 - ii. He delays giving us what we deserve while He gives us an opportunity to respond to His love.
 - iii. The patience of God is that characteristic which causes Him to sustain injury without immediately avenging Himself.
 1. God has the right, the power, the authority to punish every act of wrong doing.
 2. Yet, He restrains Himself, bearing the injury upon Himself, being slow to anger and wrath.
 - d. Ultimately, **God's patience is his power of self-restraint.**
 - e. Romans 9:22 we read, "*What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?*"
 - i. Do you see that comparison...although God is willing to show His wrath and make His power known...He ENDURES (bears the burden) with much patience the lives of people who are resistant to His grace?

1. It says that...God endures, God bears, God suffers, God puts up with our rejection of his grace, our rejection of who He is, our rejection of His love.
- f. In fact in Romans 15:5 "*The God of patience*" is one of the divine titles of God.
4. Example:
 - a. God's patience was exercised toward Israel.
 - i. First, He "suffered their behavior" for forty years in the wilderness (Acts 13:18).
 - ii. Later, they entered Canaan, but followed the evil customs of the nations around them, and turned to idolatry; though God disciplined them, He did not destroy them, but raised up Judges (deliverers) for them.
 - iii. When their sin rose to such a level that none but a God of infinite patience could have borne them, He, spared them for many years before He handed them over to the power of the Babylonians.
 - iv. Finally, when their rebellion against Him reached its climax by crucifying His Son, He waited forty years before He sent the Romans against them to destroy Jerusalem.
 - b. Think about how incredible God's patience is with the world today.
 - i. On every side people are sinning openly and without regard to His holiness. Man lives as if God does not exist.
 - ii. The divine law is trampled under foot and God Himself openly cursed and banished from public life – and if you think America is bad, go to Europe or Canada.
 - iii. It is truly amazing that He does not instantly strike down all who defy Him.
 - c. Why does He not consume mankind in a fiery blast?
 - i. Why does He not destroy us in judgment?
 - ii. Because **God's patience is meant to lead us to repentance.**
5. Over the past two weeks we looked at how God has the right and ability to strike you or I down for ANY single sin we have ever committed, yet His patience holds back because He desires that we come to a place where we change the direction of our lives.
 - a. We talked last week about the limits to God's patience, that one day it will come to an end.
 - b. I want to expand a bit upon that theme.
 - i. In the third chapter of 2 Peter, Peter is making the case that God's patience will come to an end one day. Christ will return. :
 - ii. 2 Peter 3:1-4 "*Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation*"
 1. As we have said repeatedly over these past several weeks, most of mankind does not understand the patience of God.
 2. We see it as a license or as approval rather than as a gift.
 3. We believe we have plenty of time.
 4. We do not believe in imminent judgment.
 5. We are floating down a river and are deaf to the roar of the waterfall ahead.
 6. It doesn't look like judgment is coming on the earth!
 - iii. 2 Peter 3:5-10 *For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.*
 1. We hear Peter's reply to those who think that the earth will continue on its course, that the stars will remain in place and that life as we know it will just keep on going.

2. He reminds them that “by the word of God” creation was made, that it is ultimately under God’s control and not some auto pilot mechanism of quantum physics.
 3. God has told us there will come a day of reckoning, when the judgment will come, when tribulation will be poured upon mankind, and the time of His wrath will come. Most of the middle of the book of Revelation speaks of the bowls of God’s wrath. The entire middle section of the book deal with the end of God’s patience with a world that has rejected Him.
- iv. *But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*
1. Did you ever notice that when you are young, a day seems like a long time? A week of school left seems like a lifetime? It seems as if you will never reach 12, 16, 18, or 21?
 2. Then as you get older, each day flies by faster? A day seems like a few hours to us the longer we live.
 3. It is a matter of perspective.
 4. Imagine how time looks to the One who stands in eternity? While we think a long time is a year or a thousand years, to God it is but an instant. God is not slow. And He has His reasons for being patient...He does not desire than ANY would perish but that all would come to repentance.
 - a. That doesn’t mean none will perish.
 - b. It is a statement of intent not of fact.
 - i. It means God’s wish and heart desire is that we all reach the place where we turn to Him and live for His purposes in our lives.
 - ii. But God is a gentleman and will not force you to choose Him.
 - iii. He gives you and I ample opportunity to choose Him.
 - iv. That is why He is patient with us.
- c. 2 Peter 3:14-15 *Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, (the soon return of Christ) be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,*
- i. In this passage we are told to “regard the patience of the Lord as salvation”
 - ii. Do you recall our definition of God’s patience as His power over Himself?
 1. Patience is literally "the hiding of His power."
 2. If not for the restraint God puts upon Himself, this fallen world could not exist a moment.
 3. I read a quote this week that says, “*Mercy withholds judgment, goodness restrains justice, patience curbs power, and the patience of God is the salvation of man.*”
- d. God's patience is a comfort to believers because it presents one of the strongest argument of His grace towards us.
- i. If God exercises such great patience with unbelievers, who are His enemies, how much more with us who are reconciled with Him through His Son?
 - ii. **If God were not patient, salvation would be impossible:** for this reason Peter calls God’s patience "salvation" (2 Peter 3:15).
 - iii. God’s slowness to anger is a strength possessed only by a God, because a creature is incapable of such patience.

- iv. The power of God is more manifest in His patience to a multitude of sinners than it could be in creating millions of worlds out of nothing; this was a power over Himself."
- v. Were God's judgment instantly to follow a crime, were punishment immediately to fall upon a sin, this would not be the hiding of His anger but the hiding of His patience.
- vi. If this occurred, we would see nothing but holiness in the awful display of justice.
- vii. I have to say that we need a vision of God's utter holiness to shake us out of our slumber and to recognize His awesome patience.
- viii. **Without a strong realization of what we deserve, we will take advantage of God's patience.**
- e. Will you "*regard the patience of our Lord as salvation;*"
 - i. The present tense calls for believers to continually consider the reason for the delay (in punishment), giving it careful thought.
 - ii. Peter is saying this: Jesus has waited 2,000 years to return from heaven, so that you and I who are here in this sanctuary in Madison, Ohio will not perish, but come to repentance
 - iii. Those who are living in sin need to pay attention to this point.
 - 1. If you die in your sins, it is not because of God but because of your refusal to accept the conditions of God's salvation.
 - 2. God is giving those who are lost an opportunity right now to be saved.
 - iv. If you are not under the blood, mercy and forgiveness of Christ, you need to think about the opportunity God is giving you today. The fact that God has spared you means to you salvation. Why are you here today? Surely it is for salvation

6. God's Patience with Believers:

- a. Hebrews 2:1-4 *For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, 3 how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?*
 - i. V1 – We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard.
 - 1. We take God's word too lightly. We gloss over what God has said.
 - 2. We have not been paying attention.
 - a. Illustrate what that looks like – ie. Search for Significance story about how we don't really believe what God says.
 - ii. Equally great is the patience of God WITH HIS OWN PEOPLE.
 - iii. It is even greater than in the case of the ungodly.
 - iv. God has to put up with greater provocation in the saint than in the sinner, and, consequently, His patience towards His people is greater.
 - 1. When a stranger or an enemy disregards you or treats you rudely, you expect it.
 - 2. But if one of your children or a family member treats you badly, it is more painful.
 - v. When we consider what God has done for us, what Jesus has endured for us, (and we recounted those acts today in the Lord's Supper) and contrast all God has done with our own ingratitude, our murmurings, our backslidings, our unbelief and secret rebellion and secret sins, we should realize that **the patience of our God towards the saint is greater than His patience towards the sinner.**
- b. V2 – Seriousness of God's word through angels that exacted a penalty, how can we expect to escape if we "*neglect so great a salvation?*"
 - i. If we fail to consider His patience as salvation, we are neglecting it.
 - ii. Have you neglected the GREAT SALVATION that God has given you, with patience and kindness? Have you taken His mercy and tolerance for granted by not living for Him?
 - iii. When we take His mercy, His tolerance for granted, what are we doing?

1. Several hundred years ago, William III was trying to put down a rebellion in Northern Scotland. He issued a proclamation to all the rebel chiefs to appear at a certain place on or before December 31, 1691 and take an oath of allegiance to the king. Those who did not take that oath were to be treated as outlaws and put to death. There were not many followers, so it was useless for the chiefs to rebel. One by one, they all gave in and signed their names to the paper, except one.
 2. Mac Ian was chief of the smallest but proudest tribe in Scotland. He planned to sign that paper, but it was his intention to be the last of the Scottish chiefs to submit. So, a day or two before the deadline, he started traveling to the designated spot. But a severe snow storm hindered him and he was a week late. He and his followers were killed as traitors.
 3. How long will you test the patience of God?
7. CLOSING POINT #1: 2 Peter 3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.*
- a. Peter tells us that when Christ comes again, his coming will be like a thief.
 - i. No alarms will sound; no newspaper headlines will announce it ahead of time.
 - ii. There will be no signs of his coming; there will be no way we will be able to wake up that morning and be able to say, "Today is the day."
 - iii. The day of the Lord will come upon us suddenly, the material universe all around us will be destroyed, and time as we know it will be no more.
 - b. Let me ask you this: If Jesus was coming back this week, would you do anything different?
 - i. Would you go to your wife and hold her close in your arms?
 - ii. Would you call your mom and tell her you love her?
 - iii. Would you sit on the floor and play with your kids?
 - iv. Would you pray for the people who don't know Christ?
 - v. Would you dust off that Bible and start reading it?
 - c. I bet you would.
 - i. But when you think about it, these are all things we could be doing right now!
 - ii. Why should you wait until the day before Armageddon to start doing what you should have been doing all along?
 - iii. You know what it is:
 - iv. We get so caught up with the craziness and busyness of life that we end up neglecting the things that are really important.
 - v. I don't want that to happen to you. Since Jesus could come back here at any time, let's start acting like we believe it!
8. CLOSING POINT #2: Isaiah 30:18 *Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.*
- a. God longs for you to experience His graciousness and love. He waits on high to have compassion on you and I. He has done all he can do. He sent His Son to take your place at Calvary. He longs for you to turn to Him. It is His very ache of his heart that he waits.
 - b. He waits to have compassion, but He is a God of Justice. If you refuse His compassion, you face His justice. How long will you wait? How long will you reject or refuse?
 - c. Do you remember the Dirty Harry movies? Clint Eastwood plays a hard-nosed and fearless detective. He chases a criminal down the street and fires several shots. The criminal is down on the ground and reaches for his gun. Harry points his gun at him and says, "I know what you are thinking. Did he fire five shots or did he fire six? As he puts the gun in his face he says, "So, punk, you have to ask yourself, "Do you feel lucky?"

- i. Perhaps we are in a similar situation. God has reached out to you in Christ. He has called you to believe. You have had every opportunity. The invitation is extended. How much longer will you delay? How much time is left? How far are you going to push your “luck”?
- d.