

THE PATIENCE OF GOD

Int.

1. Aim: To describe the characteristic of God which is so needed for all of us.
2. One of the important characteristics of God is His Patience: Romans 15:5 NKJV
 "Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus,
3. Scriptures that teach this that God is Patient
 - a. Ex. 34:6 "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,"
 - b. Ps. 86:15 "But thou, O Lord, [art] a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."
 - c. I Pet. 3:20 "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."
 - d. II Pet. 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
4. Longsuffering = patience
5. The bible teaches us to be patient - Jas. 5:7-8 "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. 8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."
6. If God requires us to be patient then it is only right that He be a patient God. And He IS.

Discussion

I. GOD IS LONGSUFFERING

- A. No one can claim that the God of the Bible is mean, angry, unreasonable and impossible to satisfy.
- B. The very term longsuffering means literally a long temper. Note:
1. "**Longsuffering** is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy, and is used of God" (Vine, PC Study Bible).
 2. Therefore, all of the judgments revealed in the Bible, even those in which God struck people dead, only came after a tremendous amount of patience on God's part.
 3. None of these examples were an over-reaction on God's part, including such passages as Acts 5:1-11.
- C. When God gave the order to exterminate entire cultures because of their persistent evil, this only came after years and centuries of patience.
1. The Canaanites were not removed from the land of Canaan until after at least four centuries of extreme patience (Genesis 15:16).
 2. If people are tempted to complain about God's judgments revealed in the Bible, then they need to carefully read about what God was enduring:
 - a. Gen. 6:5 "**And GOD saw that the wickedness of man [was] great in the earth, and [that] every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [was] only evil continually.**"

b. Gen. 19:4 "But before they lay down, the men of the city, [even] the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter:"

D. No man or woman can complain, "God is forcing me to do this or that".

1. If anything, God has allowed people to do their own thing.
2. God created the universe, God gave His only Son for the forgiveness of man's rebellious acts, and still the vast majority of people continue to ignore Him, while ungratefully and selfishly soaking up His physical blessings.
3. And yet, God continues to allow such blessings to come upon them.
4. Sounds like God is bending over backwards and is going the second-mile for some very ungrateful people (Luke 6:35; Matthew 5:45).
5. No man or woman can complain that God has been "too pushy", "has driven me or her away", "has been too harsh", or "has come on too strong".
6. Listen to these verses,
 - a. Acts 14:16-17 (NKJV) "who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."
 - b. Acts 17:30-31 "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by [that] man whom he hath ordained; [whereof] he hath given assurance unto all [men], in that he hath raised him from the dead." God is Patient...

II. GOD IS PATIENT IN FULFILLING HIS PROMISES

A. Gen. 3 - God made a promise

1. Gen. 3:15 "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."
 - a. This prophecy was fulfilled when Christ died on the cross.
 - b. Satan bruised Jesus on the heel, in having him crucified.
 - c. But Jesus crushed the head of Satan when He died on the cross and was resurrected.
2. How long did the patience of God last until the promise was fulfilled?
 - a. We don't know the exact number of years but it is estimated anywhere between 4,000 to 10,000 years.
 - b. The patience of God waited between 4,000 to 10,000 years for the promise to be fulfilled!

B. Another example of the patience of God has to do with why God required the Israelites to stay in the land of Egypt for 400 years

1. Why didn't God just send them on into the land of Canaan?
2. The answer is in Gen. 15:13-16 "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land [that is] not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites [is] not yet full."

3. "For the iniquity of the Amorites [is] not yet full." NKJV says "complete."
 - a. God was being patient with the Amorites.
 - b. He was giving them opportunity to repent.
 - c. They were the ones living in the land of Canaan. Therefore, rather than just send the Israelites on to Canaan, God was being patient with them.
 - d. He had hopes that they would change their ways.
 - e. Therefore, He was patient with them for 400 years.
 4. Could we be patient 400 years?
 - a. That is almost twice as long as the entire history of the United States of America.
 - b. There is no question about it. God was very, very patient, hoping, giving them time to change.
 5. And yet after 400 years, His patience came to an end.
 - a. Men, women, and children were killed in the land of Canaan.
 - b. Someone might say, "Well, that is awfully brutal!" And yet, God was patient and gave that tribe time to change.
 - c. But they refused to change.
 6. Modern day archeologists have found the remains of the Amorite civilization.
 - a. They have described very brutal and very violent rituals that the Amorites went through, even torturing their own children.
 - b. And they did not repent, even though they were given 400 years to do so.
- C. God is patient. But eventually, His patience runs out and the promise is fulfilled !

III. GOD HAS BEEN PATIENT WITH US ABOUT SALVATION

- A. Jn. 3:16-17 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."
1. God is patient. He doesn't want people to be lost !
 2. He gives us the opportunity to obey the Gospel.
- B. Example in Revelation 2 - church at Thyatira:
1. They had a woman in the church who was a false teacher.
 - a. She was actually more than that, she was a fornicator.
 - b. She was committing fornication with some of the members of the Church there.
 - c. Just an incredibly terrible situation.
 2. Nevertheless, that is what was going on at the Church at Thyatira.
 3. Notice what Jesus wrote in His letter to the Church at Thyatira. Rev. 2:20-21:

"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. 21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not."
 4. Think about the wickedness of this woman. As bad as she was, God gave her enough time so that she could repent if she had wanted to.
 5. She chose not to, and therefore, the punishment of God was brought down upon her.

- C. As we think about situations today in our society, I'm glad that we don't have the power of God to destroy people. Because I'm afraid that I don't have the kind of patience that God has in dealing with people.
1. And there's some things I can think about where it'd be very tempting if I were God to call down lightning and just burn that person to a crisp.
 2. There was a play on Broadway called "Corpus Christi, the Body of Christ." It is by Terrence McNally, who has won other awards as a playwright.
 - a. It is about Jesus Christ the homosexual and says that he was having a homosexual relationship with Judas and the various other apostles.
 - b. In the words of the playwright, these are not my words, but in the play Christ is called the King of the queers.
 3. I'm telling you, it would be tempting if I had the power to strike that man dead. It would be very, very tempting to bring down fire out of Heaven and destroy anybody who would call Jesus by that title.
 4. We might say, "Well, why God, haven't you destroyed the guy that wrote that play? Why haven't you opened the Earth up the way you did with Korah and let the guy fall in and close the Earth up on him?" I think God's reply would be because He is going to give him some time.
 5. There maybe hope that he might repent, you never know. He might repent!
- D. Why did God destroy Korah back there in Numbers 16?
1. Because apparently he had had time to change and God could see no more hope that he would change.
 2. Therefore, the Earth opened up and swallowed Korah.

- E. Why were Ananias and Sapphira stricken dead in Acts 5 for lying to the Holy Spirit?
1. We would have to assume from studying these Scriptures that they had time to repent but they chose not to.
 2. And, therefore, we say today, "God, why aren't you doing more to stop immorality?" And I think the Scriptural answer would be because God would say that there would be a glimmer of hope.
 3. There is something there that might possibly cause that person to change at a later date.
 4. God is patient. Far, far more patient than we would be today.

IV. GOD IS PATIENT ABOUT THE SECOND COMING

- A. In the first century there were people saying, "Well, where is Christ? He hasn't come back and it's been 40 years since he promised to return.
- B. 2 Peter 3:1-9
1. Where is Jesus Christ today? Why hasn't he returned?
 2. Peter tells us: Because God is patient
 - a. There are still those living on the earth today that have the potential for obeying the Gospel.
 - b. There is the possibility that they might repent.
 - c. God does not want to destroy their souls in hell.
 - d. God would rather put off the Second Coming, so that these might come to an awareness of their sins, obey the Gospel and be saved.

C. Let us all thank God for His Patience

1. If God had brought the earth to a close 20 years ago, there are many of you in this audience who would have been lost.
2. If God had brought the world to an end just 5 years ago there are some of you who would have been lost.
3. It was through the patience of God that the earth has stood and we have had the opportunity to obey the gospel and have our sins forgiven.

D. Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

1. Lk. 13:7-9 "Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? 8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung [it]: 9 And if it bear fruit, [well]: and if not, [then] after that thou shalt cut it down."
2. This is the attitude of God. Others are saying go ahead and destroy all these evil people.
3. But God says I am going to give them a little more time.
4. There is the possibility that they may repent. Give them a little more time.
5. The parable illustrates the patience of God.

Conclusion

1. The patience of God is all that keeps this world from coming to an end this very moment. God is waiting for someone to obey the gospel. But eventually the patience of God runs out.
2. There are some of you who have not obeyed the gospel - Don't abuse God's patience by saying: "I have plenty of Time" He hasn't returned yet!
3. Our attitude ought to be: We are ready now to obey the gospel.
4. Sometimes people say: How can a loving God send anyone to hell? The answer is: "How could God be so patient that He would give us an opportunity to obey the gospel?"
5. The day is coming when the patience of God will end.
 - a. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works". Matt. 16:27
 - b. Christ will return The dead in Christ shall rise first and be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Matt. 24:31 Matt. 25:31 2 Thes. 1:7-8 1 Thes.4:16-17
 - c. Those Christians who are living will then be caught up to be with the Lord.
 - d. And the lost will realize that God's patience has run out. We hope you are not in that final group of people.
6. If you have not obeyed the gospel, then today is the day for you to take advantage of the patience of God.