

# The Strange and Wonderful Attributes of God

## Lesson #23 – God’s Patience <sup>2323</sup>

God’s patience is a great expression of His grace, an undeserved withholding of His just wrath towards those who are disobedient. This patience is an essential part of His mercy if we are to be saved from His righteous, just, and holy wrath.

### I. Definition of God’s Patience

God’s patience is an expression of God’s goodness where He withholds judgement for a time being, is slow to anger regarding sin. God’s patience is a specific expression of goodness, mercy, and grace towards those who deserve immediate wrath and judgment, but God withholds His judgment because He remembers that we are but dust and He has a plan to redeem His people whom He has chosen for His own purpose and for His own glory.

A classic expression of His patience is found in Exodus 34:6.

**Ex 34:1-8** *Now the Lord said to Moses, "Cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered. <sup>2</sup>So be ready by morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain. <sup>3</sup>No man is to come up with you, nor let any man be seen anywhere on the mountain; even the flocks and the herds may not graze in front of that mountain." <sup>4</sup>So he cut out two stone tablets like the former ones, and Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and he took two stone tablets in his hand. <sup>5</sup>The Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the Lord. <sup>6</sup>Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, **slow to anger**, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; <sup>7</sup>who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."*

### Categorical Discussions:

**Is this an Existential or a Relational Category?** God’s patience is a **relational** category. It can only be expressed towards others of His creatures.

**Is this an Incommunicable or a Communicable Category?** God’s patience is a **communicable** attributes that we are required to incorporate into our own lives. God is patient with us and we must be patient with others regarding sin.

**James 1:19-20** *This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; <sup>20</sup>for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.*

**Eph 4:1-3** *Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>**with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love**, <sup>3</sup>being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

**Problem Statement:** If we truly understand God’s absolute and perfect righteousness, His complete holiness, and His righteous justice, then we would see with absolute clarity that in our daily lives, we must live in gratitude for His mercy toward us and understand with great clarity that we are His beloved in Christ.

We are entirely ungrateful if we ignore His great mercy in exercising His patience toward our sin and disobedience. We dare not have an attitude of self-righteousness that denies His patience.

- We need to know what we are in our flesh and repent in agreement with God.
- We need to be grateful towards His willingness to be patient with us in our sin and weakness.

The patience of God towards we saints is a great and loving mercy that our churches dare not fail to clearly teach. God is patient with us every day. When we don’t know of this daily patience, it is inevitable that we become careless, callous, presumptuous, ignorant of, and indifferent to our own sin.

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What a sad picture many modern day professing saints display when they refuse to acknowledge, by their behavior, the great grace that God has poured out on His own people!

**James 5:7-9** *Therefore **be patient**, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, **being patient** about it, until it gets the early and late rains. <sup>8</sup>**You too be patient**; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. <sup>9</sup>Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.*

### II. Logic and Importance of God's Patience

- We are to love because we are loved by God.
- We are to forgive others because God has forgiven us.
- We are to be gracious because grace has been bestowed on us by God.
- We are to be kind because kindness has been given to us by God.
- We are to be caring towards others because God has been caring to us.
- Likewise, we are to be patient with the sins of others because God is always patient with our own sin.

### Consequences of God's Patience

Because God is patient with us, He is slow to chastise us. We are secure in Christ, but we dare not be presumptuous about our own sinful weaknesses. We who are in Christ all struggle with the same sins. We are to love one another, to pray for one another, to encourage one another, to **in every way be patient with one another**. God will complete His work in us. Be patient with your brothers and sisters in Christ!

### Historicity of God's Patience

The concept of God's "patience" was written in the Pentateuch, the earliest written Scriptures. This concept was understood, that God graciously withholds immediate judgment of sin because He is "slow to anger".

### III. Scriptural Basis of God's Patience

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptures are quoted from the New American Standard Updated version (NASU)  
Some verses pertinent to this goal of knowing of God's Patience:

**Num 14:13-19** *But Moses said to the Lord, "Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for by Your strength You brought up this people from their midst, <sup>14</sup>and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, O Lord, are in the midst of this people, for You, O Lord, are seen eye to eye, while Your cloud stands over them; and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. <sup>15</sup>"Now if You slay this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of Your fame will say, <sup>16</sup>'Because the Lord could not bring this people into the land which He promised them by oath, therefore He slaughtered them in the wilderness.' <sup>17</sup>"But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared, <sup>18</sup>'**The Lord is slow to anger** and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.' <sup>19</sup>"Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."*

**Neh 9:16-19** *"But they, our fathers, acted arrogantly; they became stubborn and would not listen to Your commandments. <sup>17</sup>They refused to listen, and did not remember Your wondrous deeds which You had performed among them; so they became stubborn and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But **You are a God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness; and You did not forsake them.** <sup>18</sup>"Even when they made for themselves a calf of molten metal and said, 'This is your God who brought you up from Egypt,' and committed great blasphemies, <sup>19</sup>**You, in Your great compassion, did not forsake them in the wilderness; the pillar of cloud did not leave them by day, to guide them on their way, nor the pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way in which they were to go.***

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**Isa 7:10-16** Then the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, <sup>11</sup>"Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven." <sup>12</sup>But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!" <sup>13</sup>Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, **that you will try the patience of my God as well?** <sup>14</sup>Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. <sup>15</sup>He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. <sup>16</sup>For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken."

**Rom 2:1-11** Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. <sup>2</sup>And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. <sup>3</sup>But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? <sup>4</sup>**Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience,** not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? <sup>5</sup>But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, <sup>6</sup>who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: <sup>7</sup>to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; <sup>8</sup>but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. <sup>9</sup>There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, <sup>10</sup>**but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.** <sup>11</sup>For there is no partiality with God.

**Rom 9:10-24** And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; <sup>11</sup>for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, <sup>12</sup>it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." <sup>13</sup>Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."

<sup>14</sup>What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! <sup>15</sup>For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." <sup>16</sup>So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. <sup>17</sup>For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." <sup>18</sup>So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

<sup>19</sup>You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" <sup>20</sup>On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? <sup>21</sup>Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? <sup>22</sup>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?** <sup>23</sup>And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, <sup>24</sup>even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

### IV. Important Points About God's Patience

#### 1<sup>st</sup> How God's Patience Relates to Other Attributes

God's patience is related to His mercy, His grace, and His goodness. God's patience is an integral part of God's immutable decrees and of His faithfulness in accomplishing His own purpose for the love and care that He demonstrates towards His elect.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Why God's Patience is Important to Our Faith

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God is certainly slow to act towards our sin. If He were not, there would be none of us still living. **God withholds His wrath and just punishment because He is good, but also because He is working out His plans for redeeming a people for Himself. God is accomplishing a greater work than we can even imagine.**

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Confessions or Creeds that Address God's Patience

Chapter 5 of Divine Providence of the 1689 London Baptist Confession, Article 1:

God the good Creator of all things, in His infinite power and wisdom doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will; **to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.** ( [Hebrews 1:3](#); [Job 38:11](#); [Isaiah 46:10, 11](#); [Psalms 135:6](#); [Matthew 10:29-31](#); [Ephesians 1:11](#) )

### 4<sup>th</sup> Errors/Heresies that Deny God's Patience

Many heretical and erroneous religions believe in God's patience, but extend it to an extreme sense, such that God will not carry out His righteous and perfect justice because He is entirely and forever patient of the sins of men.

## Important Quotes About God's Patience

God wants to reveal the richness of His mercy "to the praise of His glory" (Eph 1:6). This is precisely the reasoning of Romans 9:22-23. "What if God, choosing to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the objects of His wrath - prepared for destruction?" What if He did this to make the riches of His glory known to the objects of His mercy, whom He prepared in advance for glory? In His final judgment God will display the power of His wrath. But God could not demonstrate His capacity for mercy apart from ordaining a world of sin and a way for redemption. He endures with great patience the impenitent, so that He can magnify His all-glorious mercy in the eyes of those who put their hope in Him!

**John Ensor**

In the early days of Christianity, multitudes of Christians were tormented to death because of their faith in Jesus. There was no excuse for it, for they had done no harm to the State. Christianity does not come into a nation to break up its arrangements, or to break down its fabric. All that is good in human society it preserves and establishes. It snaps no ties of the family; it dislocates no bonds of the body politic. There are theories of socialism and the like which lead to anarchy and riot; but it is not so with the mild and gentle teaching of Jesus Christ, whose every word is love and patience. **Charles Spurgeon**