

FORBEARANCE & PUNISHMENT DELAYED

Isaiah 48:9

**For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain
for thee, that I cut thee not off.**

Compiled by Dr. Harold Bollinger

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Forward

2 Chron. 7:14

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Today, many people see the world in turmoil, and feel that we are living in the time of the end.

The “last days”, could be considered to be any time from the time Jesus was taken into heaven until he returns. But more accurately we could say, we are living in the last of the last days.

To determine a specific time that Jesus will return is not a forecast that can be made with precision.

In 2 Chronicles 7:14, God is saying if the believers will humble themselves and pray, and seek the face of God for forgiveness that God will heal their land. I see that happening now.

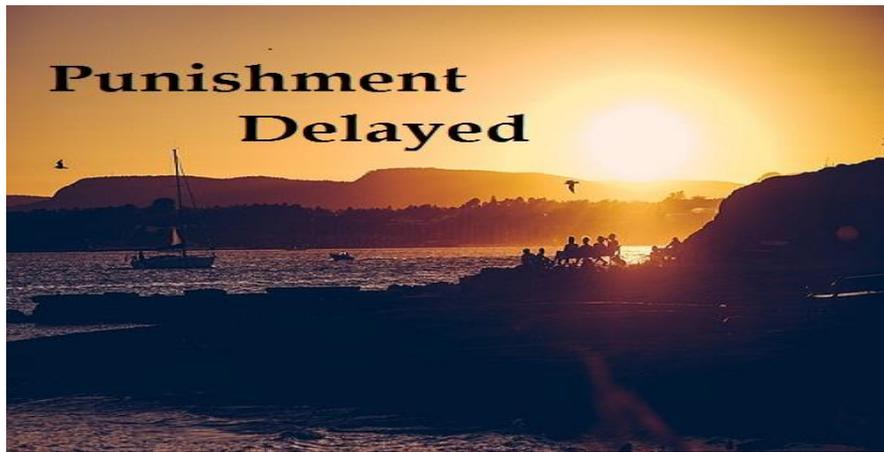
I recently asked the Lord why things were not happening like some had predicted.

My answer was: “God has extended his Mercy”. God did not send the flood until Noah had finished building the ark.

How are we treating this extended mercy?

Isaiah 48:9 For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Thank you Lord for your extended mercy.

Chapter 1



Punishment Delayed

1 Kings 21:29

"Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has done this, I will not do what I promised during his lifetime. It will happen to his sons; I will destroy all his descendants."

Ahab was more wicked than any other king of Israel (1 Kings 16:30; 1 Kings 21:25), but when he repented in deep humility, God took notice and reduced his punishment. The same Lord who was merciful to Ahab wants to be merciful to you.

No matter how evil you have been, it is never too late to humble yourself, turn to God, and ask for forgiveness.

God waited patiently

1 Peter 3:20

Those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood.

The meaning of preaching “to the spirits in prison” is not completely clear, and commentators have explained it in different ways. The traditional interpretation is that Christ, between his death and resurrection, announced salvation to God’s faithful followers who had been waiting for their salvation during the whole Old Testament era.

Matthew records that when Jesus died, “the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus’ resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people” (Matthew 27:52-53).

In any case, the passage shows that Christ’s Good News of salvation and victory is not limited. It has been preached in the past as well as in the present; it has gone to the dead as well as to the living.

God has given everyone the opportunity to come to him, but this does not imply a second chance for those who reject Christ in this life.

Jesus took the punishment for our sins.

Romans 3:25

For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us. God was being entirely fair and just when he did not punish those who sinned in former times.

Christ is our sacrifice of atonement. In other words, he died in our place, for our sins. God is justifiably angry with sinners. They have rebelled against him and cut themselves off from his life-giving power. But God declares Christ's death to be the appropriate, designated sacrifice for our sin.

Christ then stands in our place, having paid the penalty of death for our sin, and he completely satisfies God's demands. His sacrifice brings pardon, deliverance, and freedom.

What happened to people who lived before Christ came and died for sin? If God condemned them, was he being unfair?

If he saved them, was Christ's sacrifice unnecessary? Paul shows that God forgave all human sin at the cross of Jesus.

Old Testament believers looked forward in faith to Christ's coming and were saved, even though they did not know Jesus' name or the details of his earthly life. Unlike the Old Testament believers, you know about the God who loved the world so much that he gave his own Son (John 3:16). Have you put your trust in him?

The Lord is patient for your sake

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent.

God may have seemed slow to these believers as they faced persecution every day and longed to be delivered. But God is not slow; he just is not on *our* timetable (Psalm 90:4). Jesus is waiting so that more sinners will repent and turn to him.

We must not sit and wait for Christ to return, but we should live with the realization that time is short and that we have important work to do. Be ready to meet Christ any time, even today; yet plan your course of service as though he may not return for many years.

Man's life with be shortened

Genesis 6:3

Then the Lord said, "My Spirit will not put up with humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, they will live no more than 120 years."

"His days will be a hundred and twenty years" means that God was allowing the people of Noah's day 120 years to change their sinful ways. God shows his great patience with us as well. He is giving us time to quit living our way and begin living his way, the way he shows us in his Word.

While 120 years seems like a long time, eventually the time ran out and the floodwaters swept across the earth. Your time also may be running out. Turn to God to forgive your sins. You can't see the stopwatch of God's patience, and there is no bargaining for additional time.

Chapter 2



Forbearance of God

Genesis 15:16

After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, when the sin of the Amorites has run its course."

The Amorites were one of the nations living in Canaan, the land God promised Abram. God knew the people would grow more wicked and would someday need to be punished. Part of that punishment would involve taking away their land and giving it to Abram's descendants.

God in his mercy was giving the Amorites plenty of time to repent, but he already knew they would not. At the right time, they would have to

be punished. Everything God does is true to his character. He is merciful, knows all, and acts justly—and his timing is perfect.

God is kind and patient

Romans 2:4

Don't you realize how kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Or don't you care? Can't you see how kind he has been in giving you time to turn from your sin?

In his kindness, God holds back his judgment, giving people time to repent. It is easy to mistake God's patience for approval of the wrong way we are living. Self-evaluation is difficult, and it is even more difficult to expose our conduct to God and let him tell us where we need to change.

But as Christians we must pray constantly that God will point out our sins, so that he can heal them. Unfortunately, we are more likely to be amazed at God's patience with others than humbled at his patience with us.

Will God destroy both innocent and guilty?

Genesis 18:23-32

Abraham approached him and said, "Will you destroy both innocent and guilty alike?"

Suppose you find fifty innocent people there within the city—will you still destroy it, and not spare it for their sakes?

Surely you wouldn't do such a thing, destroying the innocent with the guilty. Why, you would be treating the innocent and the guilty exactly the same! Surely you wouldn't do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?"

And the Lord replied, "If I find fifty innocent people in Sodom, I will spare the entire city for their sake."

Then Abraham spoke again. "Since I have begun, let me go on and speak further to my Lord, even though I am but dust and ashes.

Suppose there are only forty-five? Will you destroy the city for lack of five?"

And the Lord said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five."

Then Abraham pressed his request further. "Suppose there are only forty?"

And the Lord replied, "I will not destroy it if there are forty."

"Please don't be angry, my Lord," Abraham pleaded. "Let me speak—suppose only thirty are found?"

And the Lord replied, "I will not destroy it if there are thirty."

Then Abraham said, "Since I have dared to speak to the Lord, let me continue—suppose there are only twenty?"

And the Lord said, "Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty."

Finally, Abraham said, "Lord, please do not get angry; I will speak but once more! Suppose only ten are found there?"

And the Lord said, "Then, for the sake of the ten, I will not destroy it."

Why did God let Abraham question his justice and intercede for a wicked city? Abraham knew that God must punish sin, but he also knew from experience that God is merciful to sinners.

God knew there were not ten righteous people in the city, but he was merciful enough to allow Abraham to intercede. He was also merciful enough to help Lot, Abraham's nephew, get out of Sodom before it was destroyed. God does not take pleasure in destroying the wicked, but he must punish sin.

He is both just and merciful. We should be thankful that God's mercy extends to us.

God gave the men of Sodom a fair test. He was not ignorant of the city's wicked practices, but in his fairness and patience he gave the people of Sodom one last chance to repent.

God is still waiting, giving people the opportunity to turn to him (2 Peter 3:9). Those who are wise will turn to him before his patience wears out.

Was God being unfair to the people of Sodom? Did he really plan to destroy the righteous with the wicked?

On the contrary, God's fairness stood out.

(1) He agreed to spare the entire city if only ten righteous people lived there.

- (2) He showed great mercy toward Lot, apparently the only man in the city who had any kind of relationship with him (and even that was questionable).
- (3) He showed great patience toward Lot, almost forcing him to leave Sodom before it was destroyed. Remember God's patience when you are tempted to think he is unfair. Even the godliest people deserve his justice. We should be glad God doesn't direct his justice toward us as he did toward Sodom.

God was patient when they would not listen

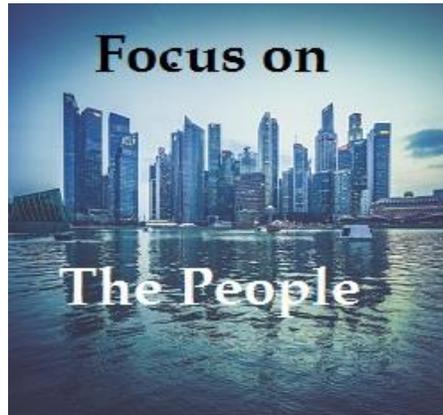
Nehemiah 9:30

In your love, you were patient with them for many years. You sent your Spirit, who, through the prophets, warned them about their sins. But still they wouldn't listen! So once again you allowed the pagan inhabitants of the land to conquer them.

Israel was devastated by times of intense rebellion and sin. Yet when the people repented and returned to God, he delivered them. God puts no limit on the number of times we can come to him to obtain mercy, but we must *come* in order to obtain it, recognizing our need and asking him for help.

This miracle of grace should inspire us to say, "You are a gracious and merciful God!" If there is a recurring problem or difficulty in your life, continue to ask God for help, and be willing and ready to make changes in your attitude and behavior that will correct that situation.

Chapter 3



Focus on the people

Jonah 4:10

Then the Lord said, "You feel sorry about the plant, though you did nothing to put it there. And a plant is only, at best, short lived.

Sometimes people wish that judgment and destruction would come upon sinful people whose wickedness seems to demand immediate punishment. But God is more merciful than we can imagine.

God feels compassion for the sinners we want judged, and he devises plans to bring them to himself. What is your attitude toward those who are especially wicked? Do you want them destroyed? Or do you wish that they could experience God's mercy and forgiveness?

Jesus came to satisfy God's anger against us.

Romans 3:25

For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us.

We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us. God was being entirely fair and just when he did not punish those who sinned in former times.

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Christ then stands in our place, having paid the penalty of death for our sin, and he completely satisfies God's demands. His sacrifice brings pardon, deliverance, and freedom.

What happened to people who lived before Christ came and died for sin? If God condemned them, was he being unfair? If he saved them, was Christ's sacrifice unnecessary?

Paul shows that God forgave all human sin at the cross of Jesus. Old Testament believers looked forward in faith to Christ's coming and were

saved, even though they did not know Jesus' name or the details of his earthly life.

Unlike the Old Testament believers, you know about the God who loved the world so much that he gave his own Son (John 3:16). Have you put your trust in him?

God gives time to turn from sin.

Romans 2:4

Don't you realize how kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Or don't you care? Can't you see how kind he has been in giving you time to turn from your sin?

In his kindness, God holds back his judgment, giving people time to repent. It is easy to mistake God's patience for approval of the wrong way we are living.

Self-evaluation is difficult, and it is even more difficult to expose our conduct to God and let him tell us where we need to change. But as Christians we must pray constantly that God will point out our sins, so that he can heal them.

Unfortunately, we are more likely to be amazed at God's patience with others than humbled at his patience with us.

God is patient in Christ's return

2 Peter 3:8-10

But you must not forget, dear friends, that a day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day.

The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent.

But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and everything in them will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be exposed to judgment.

God may have seemed slow to these believers as they faced persecution every day and longed to be delivered. But God is not slow; he just is not on *our* timetable (Psalm 90:4). Jesus is waiting so that more sinners will repent and turn to him. We must not sit and wait for Christ to return, but we should live with the realization that time is short and that we have important work to do. Be ready to meet Christ any time, even today; yet plan your course of service as though he may not return for many years.

Judgment on the earth is used in reference to Christ's return.

Christ's second coming will be sudden and terrible for those who do not believe in him. But if we are morally clean and spiritually alert, it won't come as a surprise

Realizing that the earth is going to be burned up, we should put our confidence in what is lasting and eternal and not be bound to earth and

its treasures or pursuits. Do you spend more of your time piling up possessions, or striving to develop Christ like character?

A messenger will prepare the way

Malachi 3:1-6

"Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple.

The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming," says the Lord Almighty.

"But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal or like a strong soap that whitens clothes.

He will sit and judge like a refiner of silver, watching closely as the dross is burned away. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold or silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the Lord.

Then once more the Lord will accept the offerings brought to him by the people of Judah and Jerusalem, as he did in former times.

At that time I will put you on trial. I will be a ready witness against all sorcerers and adulterers and liars. I will speak against those who cheat employees of their wages, who oppress widows and orphans, or who deprive the foreigners living among you of justice, for these people do not fear me," says the Lord Almighty.

"I am the Lord, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already completely destroyed.

In the process of refining metals, the raw metal is heated with fire until it melts. The impurities separate from it and rise to the surface. They are skimmed off, leaving the pure metal. Without this heating and melting, there could be no purifying.

the impurities are skimmed off the top, the reflection of the worker appears in the smooth, pure surface. As God purifies us, his reflection in our lives will become more and more clear to those around us. God says that leaders (here the Levites) should be especially open to his purification process in their lives. Launderer's soap was alkali used to whiten cloth. It is also used here as a symbol of the purifying process.

Jesus, like a lamb, was lead the slaughter

Isaiah 53:7

He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the sharers, he did not open his mouth.

In the Old Testament, people offered animals as sacrifices for their sins. Here, the sinless servant of the Lord offers himself for our sins. He is the Lamb (Isaiah 53:7) offered for the sins of all people (John 1:29; Rev. 5:6-14). The Messiah suffered for our sakes, bearing our sins to make us acceptable to God. What can we say to such love? How will we respond to him?

He did not retaliate when he was insulted.

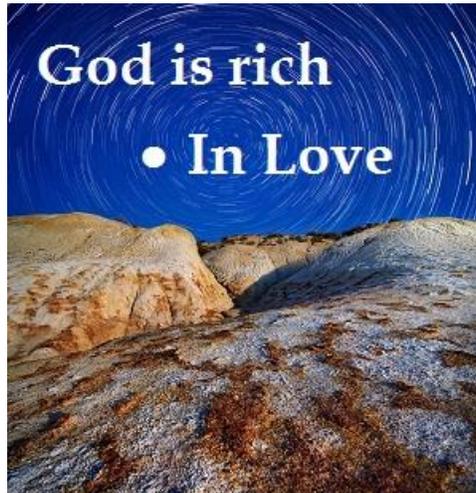
1 Peter 2:23

He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.

Peter had learned about suffering from Jesus. He knew that Jesus' suffering was part of God's plan (Matthew 16:21-23; Luke 24:25-27, 44-47) and was intended to save us (Matthew 20:28; Matthew 26:28).

He also knew that all who follow Jesus must be prepared to suffer (Mark 8:34-35). Peter learned these truths from Jesus and passed them on to us.

Chapter 4



God is rich in unfailing love.

Exodus 34:6

He passed in front of Moses and said, "I am the Lord, I am the Lord, the merciful and gracious God. I am slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness.

Moses asked to see God's glory (Exodus 33:18), and this was God's response. What is God's glory? It is his character, his nature, his way of relating to his creatures.

Notice that God did not give Moses a vision of his power and majesty, but rather of his love. God's glory is revealed in his mercy, grace, compassion, faithfulness, forgiveness, and justice. God's love and mercy are truly wonderful, and we benefit from them.

We can respond and give glory to God when our characters resemble his.

The Lord forgives all kinds of sin.

Numbers 14:18

'The Lord is slow to anger and rich in unfailing love, forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. Even so he does not leave sin unpunished, but he punishes the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations.'

Moses pleaded with God, asking him to forgive his people. His plea reveals several characteristics of God:

- (1) God is immensely patient;
- (2) God's love is one promise we can always count on;
- (3) God forgives again and again; and
- (4) God is merciful, listening to and answering our requests. God has not changed since Moses' day. Like Moses, we can rely on God's love, patience, forgiveness, and mercy.

The Lord is full of unfailing love.

Psalm 86:15

But you, O Lord, are a merciful and gracious God, slow to get angry, full of unfailing love and truth.

It is right to pray for a sign of God's goodness. As David found, it may be just what we need. But let us not overlook the signs he has already given: the support of family and friends, the fellowship of other Christians, the light of each new day.

And we can be confident that he knows our situation no matter how desperate it becomes, and he cares.

People will have time to be saved,

2 Peter 3:15

And remember, the Lord is waiting so that people have time to be saved. This is just as our beloved brother Paul wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him.

By the time of Peter's writing, Paul's letters already had a widespread reputation. Notice that Peter spoke of Paul's letters as if they were on a level with "the other Scriptures." Already the early church was thinking of Paul's letters as inspired by God.

Paul emphasized salvation by grace, not law, while Peter preferred to talk about Christian life and service. The two men did not contradict each other, however, and they always held each other in high esteem.

Give time to produce

Luke 13:8

"The gardener answered, 'Give it one more chance. Leave it another year, and I'll give it special attention and plenty of fertilizer.

In the Old Testament, a fruitful tree was often used as a symbol of godly living (see, for example, Psalm 1:3 and Jeremiah 17:7-8). Jesus pointed out what would happen to the other kind of tree—the kind that took valuable time and space and still produced nothing for the patient gardener.

This was one way Jesus warned his listeners that God would not tolerate forever their lack of productivity. (Luke 3:9 records John the Baptist's version of the same message.)

Have you been enjoying God's special treatment without giving anything in return? If so, respond to the Gardener's patient care, and begin to bear the fruit God has created you to produce.

Time to repent

Romans 2:4

Don't you realize how kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Or don't you care? Can't you see how kind he has been in giving you time to turn from your sin?

In his kindness, God holds back his judgment, giving people time to repent. It is easy to mistake God's patience for approval of the wrong way we are living. Self-evaluation is difficult, and it is even more difficult to expose our conduct to God and let him tell us where we need to change.

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Be ready to meet Christ any time, even today; yet plan your course of service as though he may not return for many years.

Tear your hearts, not your garments.

Joel 2:13

Don't tear your clothing in your grief; instead, tear your hearts." Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you.

God told the people to turn to him while there was still time. Destruction would soon be upon them. Time is also running out for us. Because we don't know when our lives will end, we should trust and obey God now, while we can. Don't let anything hold you back from turning to him.

Deep remorse was often shown by tearing (rending) one's clothes. But God didn't want an outward display of penitence without true inward repentance (1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 23:1-36).

Be sure your attitude toward God is correct, not just your outward actions.

Jesus shed his blood for our sins

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Unlike the Old Testament believers, you know about the God who loved the world so much that he gave his own Son (John 3:16). Have you put your trust in him?

Blessed are those who wait for the Lord

Isaiah 30:18

But the Lord still waits for you to come to him so he can show you his love and compassion. For the Lord is a faithful God. Blessed are those who wait for him to help them.

God warned Judah that turning to Egypt and other nations for military might could not save them. Only God could do that. They must wait for him in “quietness and trust.”

No amount of fast talking or hasty activity could speed up God’s grand design. We have nothing to say to God but thank you. Salvation comes from God alone.

Because he has saved us, we can trust him and be peacefully confident that he will give us strength to face our difficulties. We should lay aside our busy care and endless effort and allow him to act.

Pity averted destruction

Ezekiel 20:17

Nevertheless, I pitied them and held back from destroying them in the wilderness.

At the very beginning of Israel’s history, God clearly warned the people about the consequences of disobedience (Deut. 28:15ff). When the people disobeyed, God let them experience those devastating consequences to remind them of the seriousness of their sins.

If you choose to live for yourself, apart from God, you may experience similar destructive consequences. However, even through such consequences, God may be drawing you to himself. Let your misfortunes bring you to your senses and to the merciful God before it is too late.

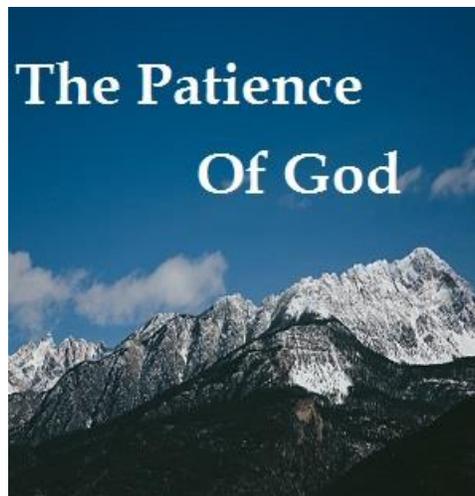
God has the right to be patient

Romans 9:22

God has every right to exercise his judgment and his power, but he also has the right to be very patient with those who are the objects of his judgment and are fit only for destruction.

About seven hundred years before Jesus' birth, Hosea told of God's intention to restore his people. Paul applies Hosea's message to God's intention to bring Gentiles into his family after the Jews rejected his plan. Romans 9:25 is a quotation from Hosea 2:23 and Romans 9:26 is from Hosea 1:10.

Chapter 5



The Patience of God

Numbers 14:18

'The Lord is slow to anger and rich in unfailing love, forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion.

Even so he does not leave sin unpunished, but he punishes the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations.'

The people of Israel had a clearer view of God than any people before them, for they had both his laws and his physical presence. Their refusal to follow God after witnessing his miraculous deeds and listening to his words made the judgment against them more severe.

Increased opportunity brings increased responsibility. As Jesus said: "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded" (Luke 12:48). How much greater is our responsibility to obey and serve God—we have the whole Bible, and we know God's Son, Jesus Christ.

Ancestors refused to obey God's command

Nehemiah 9:16-17

But our ancestors were a proud and stubborn lot, and they refused to obey your commands.

"They refused to listen and did not remember the miracles you had done for them. Instead, they rebelled and appointed a leader to take them back to their slavery in Egypt!

But you are a God of forgiveness, gracious and merciful, slow to become angry, and full of unfailing love and mercy. You did not abandon them,

Many prayers and speeches in the Bible include a long summary of Israel's history because individuals did not have their own copies of the

Bible as we do today. This summary of God's past works reminded the people of their great heritage and God's promises.

We should also remember our history to avoid repeating our mistakes so that we can serve God better. Reviewing our past helps us understand how to improve our behavior. It shows us the pattern to our spiritual growth. Learn from your past so that you will become the kind of person God wants you to be.

God is full of unfailing love

Psalm 103:8

The Lord is merciful and gracious; he is slow to get angry and full of unfailing love.

God's law was given first to Moses and the people of Israel. God's law presents a clear picture of God's nature and will.

It was God's training manual to prepare his people to serve him and to follow his ways. Review the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and the history of how they were given, asking God to show you his will and his ways through them.

God is full of kindness

Joel 2:13

Don't tear your clothing in your grief; instead, tear your hearts." Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you.

God told the people to turn to him while there was still time. Destruction would soon be upon them. Time is also running out for us. Because we don't know when our lives will end, we should trust and obey God now, while we can. Don't let anything hold you back from turning to him.

God failed to destroy the people

Jonah 4:2

So he complained to the Lord about it: "Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, Lord?"

That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you were a gracious and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.

I knew how easily you could cancel your plans for destroying these people.

Jonah had run away from God, but was given a second chance to participate in God's work. You may feel as though you are disqualified from serving God because of past mistakes. But serving God is not an earned position—no one qualifies for God's service. But God still asks us to carry out his work. You may yet have another chance.

Jonah was to preach only what God told him—a message of doom to one of the most powerful cities in the world.

This was not the most desirable assignment, but those who bring God's word to others should not let social pressures or fear of people dictate their words. They are called to preach God's message and his truth, no matter how unpopular it may be.

God's power is great.

Nahum 1:3

The Lord is slow to get angry, but his power is great, and he never lets the guilty go unpunished. He displays his power in the whirlwind and the storm. The billowing clouds are the dust beneath his feet.

God is slow to get angry, but when he is ready to punish, even the earth trembles. Often people avoid God because they see evildoers in the world and hypocrites in the church. They don't realize that because God is slow to anger, he gives his true followers time to share his love and truth with evildoers.

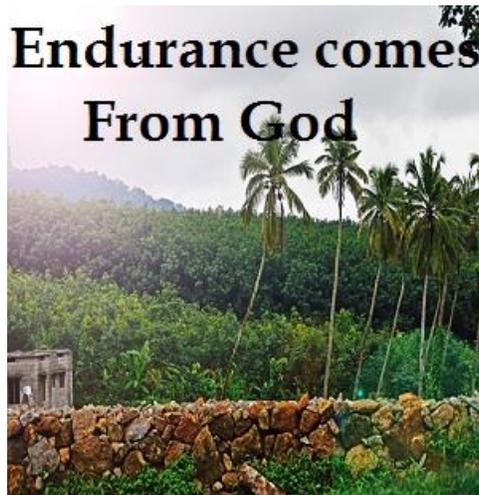
But judgment *will* come; God will not allow sin to go unchecked forever. When people wonder why God doesn't punish evil immediately, help them remember that if he did, none of us would be here. We can all be thankful that God gives people time to turn to him.

God will help you live in harmony

Romans 15:5

May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other—each with the attitude of Christ Jesus toward the other.

Chapter 6



Endurance comes from God

2 Thessalonians 3:5

May the Lord bring you into an ever-deeper understanding of the love of God and the endurance that comes from Christ.

God put up with those in the wilderness.

Acts 13:18

He put up with them through forty years of wandering around in the wilderness.

A time to prove your character

Deuteronomy 8:2

Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would really obey his commands.

God was patient for many years.

Nehemiah 9:30

In your love, you were patient with them for many years. You sent your Spirit, who, through the prophets, warned them about their sins. But still they wouldn't listen! So once again you allowed the pagan inhabitants of the land to conquer them.

Many times God held back his anger

Psalm 78:38

Yet he was merciful and forgave their sins and didn't destroy them all.
Many a time he held back his anger and did not unleash his fury!

God will give vent to his fury.

Isaiah 42:14

He will say, "I have long been silent; yes, I have restrained myself.
But now I will give full vent to my fury; I will gasp and pant like a
woman giving birth.

God sent his prophets to warn them

Nehemiah 9:30-31

In your love, you were patient with them for many years. You sent your
Spirit, who, through the prophets, warned them about their sins. But still
they wouldn't listen! So once again you allowed the pagan inhabitants of
the land to conquer them.

But in your great mercy, you did not destroy them completely or
abandon them forever. What a gracious and merciful God you are!

Chapter 7



God cares and will list all charges

Psalm 50:20-21

You sit around and slander a brother—your own mother's son.
While you did all this, I remained silent, and you thought I didn't care.

But now I will rebuke you, listing all my charges against you.

At times God seems silent. By his silence he is not condoning sin, nor is he indifferent to it. Instead, he is withholding deserved punishment, giving time for people to repent (2 Peter 3:9).

God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked and wants them to turn from evil (Ezekiel 33:11). But his silence does not last forever—a time of punishment will surely come.

To honor his name, God has held back

Isaiah 48:9

Yet for my own sake and for the honor of my name, I will hold back my anger and not wipe you out.

There was nothing in Israel's actions, attitudes, or accomplishments to compel God to love and to save them. But for his own sake, to show who he is and what he can do, he saved them.

God does not save us because we are good but because he loves us and because of his forgiving nature.

God's judgment will not be delayed.

Habakkuk 2:3

But these things I plan won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed.

Evil and injustice seem to have the upper hand in the world. Like Habakkuk, Christians often feel angry and discouraged as they see what goes on. Habakkuk complained vigorously to God about the situation.

God's answer to Habakkuk is the same answer he would give us, "Be patient! I will work out my plans in my perfect timing." It isn't easy to be patient, but it helps to remember that God hates sin even more than we do.

Punishment of sin will certainly come. As God told Habakkuk, "Wait for it." To trust God fully means to trust him even when we don't understand why events occur as they do.

You have wearied the Lord

Malachi 2:17

You have wearied the Lord with your words. "Wearied him?" you ask. "How have we wearied him?"

You have wearied him by suggesting that the Lord favors evildoers since he does not punish them. You have wearied him by asking, "Where is the God of justice?"

God was tired of the way the people had cynically twisted his truths. He would punish those who insisted that because God was silent, he approved of their actions or at least would never punish them. God would also punish those who professed a counterfeit faith while acting sinfully (see Malachi 3:5).

Chapter 8



God hears everything we are saying

Numbers 14:27

“How long will this wicked nation complain about me? I have heard everything the Israelites have been saying.

They tested God’s patience

Psalm 78:41

Again and again they tested God's patience and frustrated the Holy One of Israel.

God hates man festivals and sacrifices

Isaiah 1:14

I hate all your festivals and sacrifices. I cannot stand the sight of them!

God was unhappy with their sacrifices, but he was not revoking the system of sacrifices he had initiated with Moses. Instead, God was calling for sincere faith and devotion.

The leaders were carefully making the traditional sacrifices and offerings at holy celebrations, but they were still unfaithful to God in their hearts. Sacrifices were to be an outward sign of their inward faith in God, but the outward signs became empty because no inward faith existed. Why, then, did they continue to offer sacrifices?

Like many people today, they had come to place more faith in the rituals of their religion than in the God they worshiped. Examine your own religious practices: do they spring from your faith in the living God? God does not take pleasure in our outward expressions if our inward faith is missing (see Deut. 10:12-16; 1 Samuel 15:22-23; Psalm 51:16-19; Hosea 6:6)

They exhausted the patience of God.

Isaiah 7:13

Then Isaiah said, "Listen well, you royal family of David! You aren't satisfied to exhaust my patience. You exhaust the patience of God as well!

Isaiah predicted the breakup of Israel's alliance with Aram (Isaiah 7:4-9). Because of this alliance, Israel would be destroyed; Assyria would be the instrument God would use to destroy them (Isaiah 7:8-25) and to punish Judah.

But God would not let Assyria destroy Judah (Isaiah 8:1-15). They would be spared because God's gracious plans cannot be thwarted.

God shows great patience

Genesis 18:32

Finally, Abraham said, "Lord, please do not get angry; I will speak but once more! Suppose only ten are found there?"

And the Lord said, "Then, for the sake of the ten, I will not destroy it."

God showed Abraham that asking for anything is allowed, with the understanding that God's answers come from God's perspective. They are not always in harmony with our expectations, for only he knows the whole story.

Are you missing God's answers to a prayer because you haven't considered any possible answers other than the one you expect?

God calls a child who listens

1 Samuel 3:10

And the Lord came and called as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel replied, "Yes, your servant is listening."

One would naturally expect an audible message from God to be given to the priest Eli and not to the child Samuel. Eli was older and more experienced, and he held the proper position. But God's chain of command is based on faith, not on age or position. In finding faithful followers, God may use unexpected channels. Be prepared for the Lord to work at any place, at any time, and through anyone he chooses.

God shows compassion

Micah 7:19

Once again you will have compassion on us. You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean!

God delights to show mercy! He does not forgive grudgingly, but is glad when we repent and offers forgiveness to all who come back to him.

Today you can confess your sins and receive his loving forgiveness. Don't be too proud to accept God's free offer.

God sometimes speaks a second time.

Jonah 3:1

Then the Lord spoke to Jonah a second time:

Nineveh was a powerful and wicked city. Jonah had grown up hating the Assyrians and fearing their atrocities.

His hatred was so strong that he didn't want them to receive God's mercy. Jonah was actually afraid the people would repent (Jonah 4:2-3).

Jonah's attitude is representative of Israel's reluctance to share God's love and mercy with others, even though this was their God-given mission (Genesis 12:3). They, like Jonah, did not want non-Jews (Gentiles) to obtain God's favor.

Jonah knew that God had a specific job for him, but he didn't want to do it. Tarshish could be one of any number of Phoenicia's western ports.

Nineveh was toward the east. Jonah decided to go as far west as he could. When God gives us directions through his Word, sometimes we run in fear or in stubbornness, claiming that God is asking too much.

It may have been fear, or anger at the wideness of God's mercy, that made Jonah run. But running got him into worse trouble.

In the end, Jonah understood that it is best to do what God asks in the first place. But by then he had paid a costly price for running. It is far better to obey from the start.

God is tolerant.

Romans 2:4

Don't you realize how kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Or don't you care? Can't you see how kind he has been in giving you time to turn from your sin?

In his kindness, God holds back his judgment, giving people time to repent. It is easy to mistake God's patience for approval of the wrong way we are living.

Self-evaluation is difficult, and it is even more difficult to expose our conduct to God and let him tell us where we need to change.

But as Christians we must pray constantly that God will point out our sins, so that he can heal them. Unfortunately, we are more likely to be amazed at God's patience with others than humbled at his patience with us.

God is patient in Christ's return

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent.

God may have seemed slow to these believers as they faced persecution every day and longed to be delivered. But God is not slow; he just is not on *our* timetable (Psalm 90:4). Jesus is waiting so that more sinners will repent and turn to him. We must not sit and wait for Christ to return, but we should live with the realization that time is short and that we have important work to do. Be ready to meet Christ any time, even today; yet plan your course of service as though he may not return for many years.

God has every right to exercise judgment.

Romans 9:22-24

God has every right to exercise his judgment and his power, but he also has the right to be very patient with those who are the objects of his judgment and are fit only for destruction.

He also has the right to pour out the riches of his glory upon those he prepared to be the objects of his mercy—even upon us, whom he selected, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles.

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**Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois:
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