

The Longsuffering of God

Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. – 1 Peter 3:20

Longsuffering is an aspect of patience that connotes forbearance in response toward injury from another party. God is longsuffering. By what is He panged? Sin. It is a lesioning offense to His transcendent nature. He is of holier eyes than to look upon, much less suffer, evil. Yet He withholds immediate wrath upon His creation due to His desire to redeem every child of Adam, even to the point of showering man with blessings he does not deserve (Acts 17:25, 30). He “suffers long” with man’s ignorance or rebellion so that He might extend the priceless offer of His gracious redemption yet another day. He will not keep His anger forever. There is a day He has appointed in the which He will judge the world, as He did in the days of Noah (though this time on a much grander and irreversible scale). But the fact that we saw the sun rise this morning and draw breath into our lungs at this moment are attestations to the magnificent longsuffering of our God...

Longsuffering is something that both begets and is begotten of another marvelous attribute of our God – His kindness. How kind of God to deal so mercifully with humanity! When we consider our own pre-redeemed history, it is easy to appreciate the kindness and longsuffering of our Creator. Consider the filth in which He could have left us wallowing! But instead, after forbearing our self-destructive and sinful ways for what by all other measures could be considered far too long, He so kindly received our desperate cry for deliverance, raising us from the dust and the dunghill and setting us among the princes of His people. How grateful we can be that God was longsuffering with us!

But His longsuffering did not cease with our redemption. For each of us individually, He continues to display His kindness and longsuffering in dealing with our fleshly nature. He has exposed even more of Himself to human offense by sending His Spirit to dwell within us. How can it be that He puts Himself in such proximity to our corrupt and fleshly nature? But this He does so kindly for our benefit, that we might have the opportunity to walk in the Spirit and live a life that is unoffensive to His holy nature. When we stumble, He suffers long, and is kind. He reminds us we belong to Him. He urges us to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Oh, the goodness of our God!

And His longsuffering is outstretched still. Unredeemed mankind is corporately blaspheming His Spirit in these latter days. How much longer until He rises to shake terribly the earth is unknown to both men and angels. But while it is still called today, He is willing to save to the uttermost any who call upon His name. They are all around us, unwittingly enjoying the benefits of His patient nature. It is our privilege and responsibility as His children to see to it that His longsuffering is not a fruitless exercise. May He grant us opportunity to share the good news of His redemptive offer with someone before the sun sets. -- D. Murcek