

Longsuffering

1 Pet. 3:20

Introduction:

- A. The longsuffering of God should be appreciated by us all (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9)
- B. The lack of longsuffering is a fault common to most of us.
 - 1. “The American Prayer”
 - 2. Apostles affected by it (Lk. 9:51-56).
- C. The subject of longsuffering needs a complete investigation – often misunderstood.
- D. Let us notice the meaning, practice, need and limits of longsuffering as taught in the Bible:

Discussion:

I. The Meaning of Longsuffering.

- A. From “Makro” (long) and “thumia” (temper); Suffer (tolerate, allow).
- B. “That quality of self-restraint ... does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish” (Vine)
- C. Delayed punishment (or sanctions) due to mercy – not indifference, fear or weakness.

II. The Practice of Longsuffering.

- A. By the Lord.
 - 1. Toward the world of Noah’s day (1 Pet. 3:20, 21)
 - 2. Toward this present world (Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 2 Pet. 3:9, 15)
- B. By Christians
 - 1. Paul was longsuffering (2 Cor. 6:6; 2 Tim 3:10)
 - 2. Elders not to be quick-tempered (Tit. 1:7)
 - 3. All to be longsuffering (Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Tim. 4:2)

III. The Need of Longsuffering.

- A. Needed to give man opportunity to change - repent.
- B. Needed because of man’s sinfulness and slowness to change.
- C. Needed because brethren need time to learn and grow (2 Tim. 4:2)
- D. Needed because of our need of it from others (Rom. 2:4; cf. Gal. 1:6)
- E. Needed to keep unity and peace (Eph. 4:1-3).

IV. The Limits of Longsuffering.

- A. We must not confuse long-suffering with ever-suffering.
- B. There is a limit to God’s longsuffering.
 - 1. In Noah’s day (1 Pet. 3:20, 21).
 - 2. Sodom and Gomorrah
 - 3. Final judgement (2 Pet. 3:9-10).
- C. There were limits to longsuffering among early Christians.
 - 1. After other correction failed, took punitive action (2 Cor. 2:6; Matt 18:15-18; cf. Rev. 2:21-23)
 - 2. When peace of the church is threatened by heresy (Tit. 3:10; Rom. 16:17; 2 Tim. 6:3-5)
 - 3. When purity of the church is threatened by:
 - a. Immoral influence (1 Cor. 5:6-7).
 - b. False teaching (Gal. 2:4-5; 11-21)

Conclusion:

- A. Let us recognize the need for longsuffering.
- B. Let us practice longsuffering toward all (cf. 1 Thess. 5:14)
- C. Let us honor the limitations of longsuffering.