

## **Glorifying the Patience of God** **1 Peter 3:18-20, 2 Peter 3:9**

- I. Throughout the first Epistle of Peter, the actions of Christ are held up as both the example for his Disciples, as well as the justification that a certain type of behavior is expected: *For Example:*
- A. We are to be living stones in a spiritual house as Christ himself is the cornerstone on which our hope is built: *1 Peter 2:4-8*
  - B. We are to honor authority and be submissive as Christ himself submitted to unjust authorities, trusting in Him who judges righteously: *1 Peter 2:13-25*
  - C. His discourse that has been divided off into the fourth chapter both begins and ends with the exhortation to be ready to suffer in the flesh in the same manner as the Lord, and to do it with the same attitude that He displayed.
  - D. Throughout the different themes of the letter these two messages can be found at the core:
    - 1. Look to Christ for our **example** of how to conduct ourselves in this life
    - 2. The fact that Jesus did these, gives by itself, reasonable **expectation** that we both ought to live this way, and are capable of living this way:
- II. With that in mind I want to look at one passage that we haven't mentioned yet: *1 Peter 3:18-20:*
- A. In the context of this portion of chapter 3, Peter has just undertaken a brief summary of the way a Disciple of Christ will live their life: **3:8-9**
  - B. What follows in verses 3:13-17 is the admonition to stay strong if and when that lifestyle brings persecution from the wicked who wish to revile "your good behavior in Christ"
  - C. The **example** and **expectation** is what follows in **3:18-20**
- III. Peter's overall argument is as follows:
- A. There is a reasonable expectation for you to suffer at the hands of the unjust for behaving righteously, because Christ, the definition of Just, came and died for the unjust: **v 18**

B. A visible example of God working this way is that of the days of Noah: During which time, God saved 8 men and women who were righteous, he also gave the opportunity for the *unjust to accept salvation*. **v 19-20**

C. And while Peter goes on to draw the parallel that God now makes that same opportunity available through Baptism; focus on one particular phrase in v 20:

1. *“when the Patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah...”*

a) In the middle of describing the great efforts God has gone to to save the unjust, Peter makes a powerful statement about God’s patience, and he does it with very few words:

b) There is something that he wants his readers to infer about God’s patience by calling to mind “the days of Noah”-- and he feels confident that just by mentioning it as an aside that we will be sufficiently impressed:

IV. Recall in brief what connotations “the days of Noah” should bring to mind:

A. In **Genesis 6:5**, we are told that *“every intent and thoughts of man’s heart was only evil continually.”* Because of this God determined to destroy civilization

B. Again in **6:11-12**, we are told that the *“earth was corrupt”* *“all flesh had corrupted their way”*

C. And yet there was one man in **6:8** who had found favor in God’s eyes, and the Lord was determined to save his family

D. With mankind having grown so corrupt, and so wicked: one might reasonably expect that God would carry out His plan immediately: And yet Peter describes the Patience of God, saying that it “kept waiting”:

1. Conservative estimates give a period of 55-75 years as the time that it took for Noah to complete the construction of the Ark:<sup>1</sup>

2. When Peter again calls to mind this event in **2 Peter 2:5**, we are told that Noah was “a preacher of righteousness”, and that through his building of the Ark, **Hebrews 11:7** states that he “condemned the world”

3. All of these verses add up to this picture:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2010/06/01/long-to-build-the-ark>

- a) In the midst of a wicked and corrupt creation, God deemed it necessary to bring about widespread punishment: And yet that punishment was not immediate: For a period of close to 100 years, God had a messenger who preached righteousness in the middle of wickedness: He had that messenger build a visible testimony to both God's judgment, and His willingness to save.

V. The logical question to raise is *why!* Why would God possibly be so patient for so long for a people so far gone?

A. The answer is found in *2 Peter 3:9*: Peter is once again exhorting Christians to stay strong: this time to stay strong in the midst of those who would mock that God's promises of judgment and Christ's return are true:

- i. It is in *this context* that Peter states **3:9**

VI. I believe that this is exactly the powerful point that Peter expects us understand about God's patience:

A. That we serve a God who in spite of our often sinful ways, our often willful neglect and pursuit of our own path, waits continually with a patience that we do not deserve, wishing that we might come to repentance.

- i. Should that realization affect the way that we live our lives? Certainly, and beyond any doubt! It should radically alter us as people!

- a) Having been shown patience like this there is no excuse for me to extend so little over so many trivial matters:

(i) Perhaps this is the first and most obvious thought that comes to mind!

VII. But in the time we have left in our study together I want us to leave these passages with a couple of broader applications:

**i. This Should Affect the Way that I View God:**

- a. Have you been told, or asked a question that leads to the sentiment that God is mean? Or maybe that God is petty, and gets some sort of sick enjoyment out of punishing people?
- b. What about the view that God is hovering above creation, waiting with hand raised, looking for an excuse to squish someone like an ant as soon as they step out of line?

- i. These are fairly common criticisms that those who seek to undermine or mock the Bible will level at those who call themselves believers:
  - ii. And yet these are not real criticisms of God, because whether they realize it or not, they are not discussing the God of the Bible: They are throwing arguments at a straw man: A made up figure that they have conjured for the single purpose of knocking it down:
  - iii. To view God in this light requires taking His actions out of context and ignoring every aspect of who He is:
- c. God does not take any delight in the punishment of His creation: He gains absolutely nothing, in fact-- He loses a child, someone that He was willing to adopt into His family:
- i. God's punishment is given because His justice requires it: As a just God, He cannot allow sin to go unpunished, anymore than an honest judge can allow a criminal to go free when they have broken the law:
  - ii. And yet **Romans 5:6-10** tells us that God's sense of Justice could be satisfied through the death of His Son-- a fact that was at the heart of Peter's admonishment to those Christians he wrote to in chapter 3:
- d. Looking at God as He reveals Himself in His Word, I cannot walk away with the idea that He is callous and hateful: I can only see a God who loves His creation so much, that He continuously waits for it to take advantage of the salvation He offers:
- i. And while we must warn, that just as God's patience with man in Noah's day came to an end, so will His patience with men today:
  - ii. And yet this fact does nothing to undermine God's patience: all it does is make it more impressive. Because it gives us the realization that each day the world is spared, God's patience continues to wait:

## **2. This Should Affect My Attitude Towards God:**

- a. I must make personal application of this to God's patience towards me:
  - i. **First**, I should have an attitude of *astonishment*:

1. I should be able to look back at my life before becoming His child and be amazed at the patience God had with me as he waited for me to dedicate my life in service to Him
2. That attitude should continue on in life as a Christian: Often times, we are not even aware of the patience God is showing us!
  - a. We need to be very careful about assuming that we have “arrived” as a Christian—that we have attained a level of spirituality that sin is something we rarely grapple with: (**1 Cor. 10:12, Phil. 3:12, 1 Cor. 9:27**)
  - b. Often times it takes us a while to come to the realization that we have been falling short in some aspect of our service to God:
    - i. And in those times, every prayer of repentance should carry with it the deep sense of amazement and thankfulness that God showed us patience while we worked our way back to the path:

**ii. Second,** I should have an attitude of indebtedness:

1. Often times we rightly make the point that what God has done for us, should cause us to feel a sense of Debt towards others;
  - a. Paul described the debt he felt to others **Romans 1:14**
  - b. He describes our debt to God as the basis for forgiving others: **Eph. 4:32**
2. But what about our debt towards God?
  - a. When God has shown and continues to show us a patience as great as this: is there anything that He owes us?
  - b. Is there anything that we do not owe him?

**iii. Third,** I should have an attitude of Humility:

1. What else can such a feeling of astonishment and gratefulness produce?
2. “Speak Lord, they servant Heareth”