

The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 2 – “Of God and the Holy Trinity”,
Message # 35 – “God’s Patience Introduced”, Presented in the Adult
Sunday School Class, by Pastor Paul Rendall
on May 7th, 2017.

Chapter 2 – Of God and the Holy Trinity, Paragraph 1 –

The Lord our God is but (a)one only living and true God; whose (b)subsistence is in and of Himself, (c)infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; (d)a most pure spirit, (e) invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; who is (f)immutable, (g)immense, (h)eternal, incomprehensible, (i)almighty, every way infinite, (k)most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute; (l)working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, (m)for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; (n)the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and withal most just (o)and terrible in his judgments, (p)hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the (q)guilty.

a 1st Corinthians 8: 4 and 6; Deuteronomy 6: 4; b Jeremiah 10: 10; Isa 48: 12; c Exodus 3: 14; d John 4: 24; e 1st Timothy 1: 17; Deut. 4: 15-16; f Malachi 3:6; g 1st Kings 8: 27; Jeremiah 23: 23; h Psalm 90: 2; j Genesis 17: 1; k Isa 6: 3; l Psalm 115: 3; Isa 46: 10; m Pro 16: 4; Rom 11: 36; n Exodus 34: 6-7; Hebrews 11:6; o Nehemiah 9: 32-33; p Psalm 5: 5-6; q Exodus 34:7; Nahum 1: 2-3

Romans 15: 5 – “Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be likeminded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.”

The One who is infinitely perfect in patience is God. The word here in the Greek for patience is *υπομονες* (hupomones). Strong’s definition is cheerful (or hopeful endurance, constancy: - enduring, patience, patient continuance (waiting.) With God, we should understand Him to be intrinsically and perfectly patient. It is a communicable attribute in God, but it is something which He must grant to us by His grace for us to be likeminded toward one another; that with one mind and one mouth glorify God. Even as God has had patience with me, I should be able, by His grace, to be patient with others around me; to be able to receive others around me, just as Christ also has received me.

1st Timothy 1: 15 and 16 – “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” “However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show all long-suffering as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.”

In the salvation of the apostle Paul, we should understand that there was a perfect exercise of patience in God, concerning His allowing Paul to continue on in his sin, through all of the persecutions and blasphemies, and violent aggressions that Saul (his formerly used name) committed, waiting until just the right time to strike him down with the blinding light of His glory, and then conjointly working in his heart so that he was immediately converted. In God’s waiting all of those years, He was showing forth a pattern of long-suffering to those who are going to believe on Christ. He, the Lord of glory, the One who has been given all authority in heaven and earth, was patient with him.

Definitions of Patience –

Herman Bavinck defines it as – “The goodness of God which spares those who are deserving of punishment, is called forbearance or patience.”

2nd Peter 3: 8 and 9 – “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as

some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

The Puritan John Flavel says that patience is “an ability in God not only to delay the execution of wrath for a time towards some, but to delay it in order to the eternal salvation of others.”

1st Peter 3: 18-20 – “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.”

Stephen Charnock – I. The nature of this patience.

1. It is part of the divine goodness and mercy, yet differs from both. God being the greatest goodness, hath the greatest mildness ; mildness is always the companion of true goodness, and the greater the goodness, the greater the mildness. Who so holy as Christ, and who so meek ? God's slowness to anger is a branch or slip from his mercy : Ps. cxlv. 8, ' The Lord is full of compassion, slow to anger.' It differs from mercy in the formal consideration of the object ; mercy respects the creature as miserable, patience respects the creature as criminal ; mercy pities him in his misery, and patience bears with the sin which engendered that misery, and is giving birth to more. Again, mercy is one end of patience, his long-suffering is partly to glorify his grace ; so it was in Paul, 1 Tim. i. 16. As slowness to anger springs from goodness, so it makes mercy the butt and mark of its operations : Isaiah 30: 18, “He waits that He may be gracious.” Goodness sets God upon the exercise of patience, and patience sets many a sinner on running into the arms of mercy. That mercy which makes God ready to embrace returning sinners, makes him willing to bear with them in their sins, and wait their return. It differs also from goodness in regard of the object. The object of goodness is every creature, angels, men, all inferior creatures, to the lowest worm that crawls upon the ground. The object of patience is primarily man, and secondarily those creatures that respect men's support, conveniency, and delight ; but they are not the objects of patience as considered in themselves, but in relation to man, for whose use they were created, and therefore God's patience to them is properly his patience with man. The lower creatures do not injure God, and therefore are not the objects of his patience but as they are forfeited by man, and man deserves to be deprived of them. As man in this regard falls under the patience of God, so do those creatures which are designed for man's good. That patience which spares man, spares other creatures for him, which were all forfeited by man's sin, as well as his own life, and are rather the testimonies of God's patience than the proper objects of it. The object of God's goodness, then, is the whole creation; not a devil in hell but, as a creature, is a mark of His goodness, but not of His patience. “

Genesis 6: 1-3 – “Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.” “And the Lord said, ‘My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.’”

Verses 5-8 – “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” “And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.” “So the Lord said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thig and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.’” “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”

Now, we see here that God was displeased that these sons of God, those men who were descended from godly Seth, who was trusting in God and His promises, took for themselves wives who were descended from ungodly Cain and other ungodly men. And the first thing that is recorded for us here, that He said was – “My Spirit will not strive with man forever, for indeed he is flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred twenty years.” This one hundred and twenty year time period was the period in which God would show all the people on the face of the earth in that day, patience. He would patiently wait to see whether they would have any inclination, any desire to repent of their wickedness, their immorality, and their violence.

But what He found was the proof of total depravity; that every intent of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually. That is man left to himself; that is what always happens when common grace is withdrawn and special grace is not given and granted by God, to save the soul. Why didn't God just destroy them right there and then? Because He would patiently wait, and test them and prove this truth of the reality of their depravity and their being deserving of His judgment. He would show forth the glory of His patiently waiting and giving them space to repent, and He would show forth the glory of His justice in their destruction and their damnation, because they really did not want to be saved. You will say to me: Well, since man is totally depraved, then he will never want to be saved. Therefore why wait? Why be patient? Because patience is a perfection in God and a virtue in men, when God gives them grace. It is a glorious act of God to save any sinner from their sins. It is an act of pure mercy on His part, to extend special and saving grace to any person. And there is also a glory in His justice of righteously withholding special and saving grace from obstinate, perverse, sinners.

Romans 9: 14-24 – “What shall we say then?” “Is there unrighteousness with God?” “Certainly not!” “For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’” “So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.” “For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.’” “Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.” “You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault?’” “For who has resisted His will?” “But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God?” “Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’” “Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?” “What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

You see, this is the reason for His patience, that all whom He has purposed will come to repentance will really come to repentance. And the workings of God's grace and providence are such that we do not always understand these things unless they are specifically explained to us in the Scriptures.

Genesis 15: 13-16 – “Then He said to Abram: ‘Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.’” “And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.” “Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.” “But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

John Gill says: “And in the fourth generation they shall come hither again,.... The seed of Abram were in the land of Canaan before their descent into Egypt; and it is here predicted and promised, that they should come thither again, as they did, in the fourth generation of those that descended thither; for Moses and Aaron were the fourth from Levi, or Eleazar from Kohath, and Caleb from Judah; or rather this was in the fourth age or century from the birth of Isaac, when the four hundred were up before mentioned, men living at that time about an hundred years: Grotius interprets this of the fourth generation of the Amorites, because of what follows:

for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full; and therefore as yet would not be turned out of the land, and the seed of Abram could not till then inherit it: wicked people have a measure of iniquity to fill up, which is known of God; some are longer, some are quicker in filling it up, during which time God waits patiently and bears with them; but, when it is completed, he stays no longer, but takes vengeance on them, Matthew 23: 32.” “The Amorites were only one of the nations of the Canaanites, but were a very strong and powerful one, and are put for them all, and are the rather mentioned, because Abram at this time dwelt among them; and it seems as if there were some good men among them, such as the confederates of Abram might be, and they were not arrived to that depth of wickedness they afterwards would and did, and which brought on their ruin, and so made way for the posterity of Abram to inherit their land.”

