

Postponing Negative Reactions

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

God wants to raise a standard among His people today, and that standard is one based upon His grace and love. He longs to see grace and mercy applied in every situation we encounter on earth. Our God is a God of patience, and He readily applies it, waiting in grace, hoping to draw more and more people to Himself.

Vengeance belongs to God and God alone, but there are many people who take vengeance into their own hands. They are quick to judge and quick to react. In the end, they make more problems than they ever solve.

This booklet will show that it is always best to postpone negative reactions under the operation of grace. In doing this, we will see that it is by applying God's plan of redemption that we succeed and people are saved.

Chapter One

THE PENETRATION OF DIVINE GOODNESS

There are times when problems have to be solved, and times when accountability has to be expressed. But the Word of God has a specific standard to be expressed in those times. That standard is grace and love revealed through the Holy Spirit with the Word of God.

When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Lord raises up a standard against him through the Holy Spirit. We must allow the Holy Spirit to raise up a standard against our enemy in every case (Isaiah 59:19*b*). If God did not raise up a standard, none of us would make it.

Consider the first three chapters of Romans. Romans 1, 2, and 3 refer to the immoral man, the moral man, and the religious man. The moral man judges the immoral man; and the religious man judges both the moral man and the immoral man. All along, the immoral man just

rebels against God.

No One Has an Excuse

“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

“But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

“And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Romans 2:1-5).

Notice, Romans 2:1 says we are “inexcusable” because we do “the same things.” It doesn’t say “the same thing”; it says “the same *things*.” No one has an excuse before God, because all of us do the same things. How does God handle this? Romans 3:24-25 tells us how:

Discipline Delayed

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

“Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare this righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.”

The Greek word for “forbearance” is *anochē*. It speaks of a truce of arms under which God delays the expression of His anger. God sets His punishment aside because His Son paid for all the sins of the world. Therefore, God patiently waits and doesn’t deal with men the way we think He should. He passes over sins through forbearance.

Having the character of forbearance is a most amazing way for us to operate. It means that if someone attacks me, then I close my eyes and suffer the pain of his attack without reacting. Still, no one could do this except for the fact that the Holy Spirit has raised up a standard. This is the operation of eternal life. By it, we know the only true God in Jesus Christ, whom the Father sent, that we might know the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings as we are conformed unto His death.

Goodness Makes a Difference

Understood correctly, forbearance starts out with the riches of God's goodness. God gently penetrates people with His goodness, developing a capacity in them to know Him through His patience. His goodness is His mercy enduring forever, as He expresses 26 times in Psalm 136.

His goodness is expressed in Romans 5:20: that where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. As far as He goes, God won't let us take the past and have it relate to the present. Divine goodness always sees Christ's payment for our sins. Christ is now interceding for us in heaven. Divine goodness gently penetrates us with the perfect patience of His love, mercy, and grace through His longsuffering.

Chapter Two

THE STANDARD OF FORBEARANCE

“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness” (Colossians 3:13-14).

“With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:2-4).

“Forbearance” is one of the greatest words in the Bible. Martin Luther said that the mystery of God’s love is His patience toward us and toward people like us. Forbearance postpones dealing with wide-open sin, setting aside pun-

ishment and discipline for a long time. God withholds discipline because of His forbearance, and He wants to raise up that standard in us.

An old evangelist who had converted from Judaism told the story of a Jewish friend he kept visiting. Fifteen times the evangelist went to the man's door, pleading, "Would you just let me tell you that Jesus loves you?" The first few times, the man slammed the door. On the twelfth visit, the man spat in his face. He did the same thing on visits thirteen and fourteen. The fifteenth time, the man not only spat on him, he also slapped the evangelist.

"You can do that all you want," the evangelist said to the man. "But I am going to keep coming back. Hit me, spit on me, do anything you want—but I will be back."

One year later that man was led to Christ. Forbearance was at work in the evangelist. God's standard raised up postponed negative reactions, postponed anger, and postponed punishment.

"Just Pray for Them"

Billy Graham, the great evangelist of our days, has been attacked many times in print and in broadcasts by people who did not like the

way he promoted cooperation in evangelism. He did not do things their way. Jesus, of course, preached in the synagogues, and Billy Graham has always purposed to be all things to all people. He does it because he loves souls and wants to win them to Christ. George Beverly Shea, a singer and one of Dr. Graham's right-hand men for years, said that Billy Graham has never once spoken a negative word against those who have come against him, nationally and internationally.

"Don't bring that up," Billy Graham would say. "Just pray for them."

That is forbearance in action.

Years ago, after my dad died, my mom was raising our family on thirty dollars a week. One day a couple of men dressed in nice suits came and told my mom that they were going to stop giving her the thirty dollars. Why? Because she let a couple hungry boys come over for a dinner of beans and biscuits. The boys didn't have a mom and dad. And she didn't back down in the face of the threat made to her. She was such a woman of forbearance.

In all of his suffering, the apostle Paul understood forbearance. He said he would die for his Jewish brothers and sisters, just as Moses

would have died for Israel (see Romans 9:3; Exodus 32:32). God told Moses that He would blot out Israel from the Book of Life and raise up a nation from his family. Moses refused the offer. He didn't operate in an eye-for-an-eye mentality. He did not remember the things his people had done against him. He lived in forbearance (Exodus 32:9-14).

Chapter Three

LIFE, LOVE AND
LONGSUFFERING

When I see a young person who has failed, I try to love him through it. It doesn't matter to me what he might have done two weeks ago. I won't even bring that up. Why? Because I want to draw him with cords of love (Hosea 11:4). I want to get him to sense God's love for him and encourage him to be around the family of God until he becomes one of God's heavenly stars.

"For ye suffer [(put up with)] fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise.

"For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face" (2 Corinthians 11:19-20).

Do you think you could pass the test presented in this verse? If anyone puts us in bondage, we are to show forbearance. If anyone smites us in the face, we are to forbear. If anyone

exalts himself above us, we are to forbear. If anyone steals from us or tries to devour us, we are to forbear. That is five different attacks that a Spirit-filled believer will forbear, according to Matthew 6:14: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

When we are so filled with God, we walk in the Holy Spirit, thus we walk in the spirit of forbearance. There is not a problem in our hearts because we are filled with knowing Christ's nature, reflecting Christ's love, and going from strength to strength (Psalm 84:7). This is the supernatural way of life.

Patience in Practice

Another great word in the Bible is "longsuffering" or *makrothumia* in the Greek (Romans 2:4). This deals with having divine patience toward people. You wait for God to deal with the situation. Sure, there are times when we would like to heap coals of fire on someone's head (see Romans 12:19-21). But by being so filled with God's patience as an attitude of the heart, we don't revile back because we know the blessings we will inherit for not reacting.

This said, we are not to ignore such things as

open immorality or instances of abuse and violence. Those things must be dealt with in accordance with judicial and governmental laws. There are options we must pursue in those cases. Still, our attitude of heart must be one of longsuffering.

Goodness, forbearance, longsuffering—God says that these things lead people to repentance. By the riches of His grace, God will draw people, one by one, into changing their minds about His nature, as He gently brings about a response to His love.

“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God.

“Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth” (Jeremiah 31:18-19).

“Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

“Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

“Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy peo-

ple may rejoice in thee?

“Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation” (Psalm 85:4-7).

How great is His mercy. How marvelous is His salvation.

CONCLUSION

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

“Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-25).

Real Christianity lives in supernatural forgiveness, supernatural joy, supernatural peace, supernatural goodness, and supernatural longsuffering. Real Christianity is living in these ingredients of love.

As Christians, we have Someone who lives deeply within every part of our souls and unconscious minds. We have His power within us. For this reason, God can raise up a standard through the category of the power of grace and love. This doesn’t involve striving or trying any harder. This is simply letting God take us over

on the inside and transform us into His image. As God does this, we have a supernatural grace in the New Creation that enables us to forbear and postpone negative reactions in any situation.