

- I. Session 48: The Longsuffering of God
- a. Purpose: In this session we shall explore the attribute of the mercy of God.
 - b. What is the longsuffering of God?
 - i. The words in the Old Testament: *'erek 'ap*
 1. "The term *'erek* comes from the verb *'arak* ("to be long"). The form *'arek* ("long") appears only in the construct form *'erek*. It is used ten times in the OT with respect to God..."¹
 2. Literally "it reads 'God is long of nose.' When he is angry, his nose becomes red and burns...When he is compassionate his nose becomes lng, slong in fact that it would take forever to burn completely."²
 3. Often translated in English as "slow to anger."
 - ii. The words in the New Testament: *makrothumia*.
 1. "This family of terms is used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew *erek 'ap*."³
 2. Often translated in the English as patience.
 3. Frequently used in relations to God's delay of His wrath.⁴
 - iii. Summarizing definition:
 1. John Frame sees this as the patience of God.⁵
 2. This is the patience of God understood in light of God being slow in bringing about His wrath against sinners.
 - c. What does the Bible teaches about the longsuffering of God?
 - i. "*Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and [a]truth;" (Exodus 34:6)*
 - a. In context this is God re-giving the Ten commandments and earlier the people have sinned against God and Moses broke the two tablets.
 - b. Now Moses was going back up to Mount Sinai for the second issuing of the Decalogue.
 - c. Here in this context we see the mention of God's attributes including "*slow to anger*," which is longsuffering.
 - d. The whole event is an example of how God is longsuffering since He didn't destroy the Hebrews.
 - ii. "*The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children [a]to the third and the fourth generations."* (Numbers 14:18)

¹ John Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 362.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ John Frame, *Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 432.

- a. The people of God rebelled against God and grumbled against the Lord by believing the spies false report of the promise land and wanted Moses to bring the people back to Egypt.
 - b. Here in this verses Moses appealed to God's mercy by noting His attributes which among them include "*slow to anger*"
 - iii. "*But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and [a]truth.*" (Psalm 86:15)
 - iv. "*Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those [a]who would believe in Him for eternal life.*" (Romans 2:4)
 - 1. Here we see God's patience mentioned.
 - 2. Note it is described "*the riches of His...patience,*"
 - 3. Here in this context Paul is saying we must not think lightly of it!
 - 4. It's in the context of Paul's discussion of sin.
 - 5. Note: We can sin by thinking lightly of his patience/longsuffering.
 - v. "*Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those [a]who would believe in Him for eternal life.*" (1 Timothy 1:16)
 - 1. Again "patience" is mentioned.
 - 2. Notice Jesus' patience is described as "*perfect patience*"
 - 3. It is also an example towards those who believe.
- d. How does the mercy of God relate to other attributes of God?
 - i. The longsuffering of God is often described in proximity of other similar attributes of God.
 - 1. Recall Exodus 34:6: "*Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and [a]truth,"*"
 - 2. While other attributes are similar there are also shade of differences that makes it distinct.
 - ii. We must understand God's wrath in relations to God's patience/longsuffering.
 - 1. Similar to God's mercy, God's longsuffering does not make sense unless we understand that it presupposes God's wrath.
 - 2. God's longsuffering is shown towards believers in that we aren't judge right away and sent to hell when we sin but the elect He is patient that God will see to it that they are saved.
 - 3. God is longsuffering even upon those whom He eventually judges: "*What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?*" (Romans 9:22)

- iii. Salvation of sinners rest upon the basis of God's patience/longsuffering.
 - 1. *"and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you," (2 Peter 3:15)*
 - a. Note the *"patience of our Lord as salvation"*
 - b. Peter here affirms that this truth is also taught by Paul. What passage could be talking about? Romans?
- e. Implication
 - i. Does this truth cause you to worship God for being longsuffering?
 - ii. Do you sing to God about His patience and longsuffering? Remember the verse we seen earlier in the Psalms, and Psalms are originally songs of worship!
 - iii. If God is long suffering we must also be longsuffering!
 - 1. Note what's included in the fruit of the Spirit: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness," (Galatians 5:22)*
 - 2. *"with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love," (Ephesians 4:2)*
 - a. Note one way you show love towards others is by being patient with them!
 - b. Have you been longsuffering towards others? Or are you a short fuse?
 - iv. Let God's longsuffering be the motivation for why you are longsuffering: *"Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?" (Matthew 18:33)*
 - 1. This is a parable about forgiveness.
 - 2. Jesus makes the point we should show mercy towards others because of how much we have been shown mercy.
 - v. Let God's longsuffering be the motivation for why we repent from our sins: *"Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those [a]who would believe in Him for eternal life." (Romans 2:4)*