THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD

Sermon to the saints of God gathered at the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas on November 8, 2026

In the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is nominated by the Holy Spirit of God, "*the Church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the truth*" (**1 Timothy 3:15**), there are particular things that you ought to hear expounded from the pulpit every time there is a public service: the true nature and attributes of God. And for every sermon in this place you have, and you will, hear the expounding of the true nature and attributes of God. So, when I speak here the true nature and attributes of God will always be the subject. And what is the source of this information? The Bible. Today, the longsuffering of God.

The longsuffering of God, the same with his forbearance and patience, arises from his mercy. It is a display of mercy or is one way in which mercy shows itself. Wherever God is said to be longsuffering, he is represented as gracious and merciful, or as of great mercy and kindness. By this attribute, as by them and with them, he is pleased to describe and make known himself, for the encouragement of faith and hope in him. See **Exodus 34:6**: *"And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth[.]"* **Numbers 14:18: "***The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation*." **Psalm 86:15**: "*But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth*." The Hebrew word ארך אפים which signifies "long of both nostrils," is sometimes rendered "longsuffering," as in the places

referred to. Sometimes "slow to anger," **Nehemiah 9:17**: "*And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.*" **Psalm 103:8**: "*The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy*." To which the Greek words μακροθυμεω, and μακροθυμια, in the New Testament, answer. **Romans 2:4**: "*Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"* **2 Peter 3:9,15**: "*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*." "*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you[.]"* The allusion is to the nose, the seat of anger, which restrains or shows it, as it is long or contracted.

God is sometimes called, "*the God of patience*," **Romans 15:5-6**: "*Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*." Not only because he is the author and object of the grace of patience; but because he is patient, or long suffering in himself, and towards his creatures, and is a pattern of patience to them. For this is one of the attributes of God, in which he may in some measure be imitated. See **Ephesians 4:1-3**: "*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,*

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." **Colossians 3:12-13**: "*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye*." This is not to be considered as a quality, accident, passion, or affection in God, as in creatures; who bear with patience things grievous, distressing, and torturing to them, **Colossians 1:11**: "*Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness[.]"* But it is the very nature and essence of God, which is free from all passion and mental uneasiness, from all suffering, grief, and pain. Rather, it springs from his goodness and is as essential to him as that. **Romans 2:4**: "*Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"* It is no other than a moderation of his anger, a restraint of that, a deferring the effects of it, at least for a while, according to his sovereign will. It is an extension and prolongation of mercy for a season; for mercy is always in it and with it. And in this it differs from it, that the mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting. **Psalm 103:17**: "*But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children[.]"* But the longsuffering of God, as to the exercise of it, is only for a time, until some certain end is answered, and in which it issues; either in the damnation and destruction of the wicked, when they are fitted for it, (**Romans 9:22**: "*What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of*

wrath fitted to destruction") or in the salvation of God's elect (**2 Peter 3:15**: "*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you*"); for it is exercised towards both, till each take place.

The longsuffering of God is exercised towards his chosen people; they are the "us" towards whom he is said to be "longsuffering," **2 Peter 3:9**: "*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*." These chosen people are called beloved in **2 Peter 3:8** ("*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.")*. Not only beloved by the apostle, and by one another, but by the Lord. These are the elect according to the foreknowledge of God, **1 Peter 1:2**, for to the same persons are both epistles written. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." Therefore, being the beloved and chosen of God, it was his will that none of them should perish but come to repentance; even all of the same character, and of the same company and society, the whole "*election of grace*" (**Romans 11:5**); and until everyone of these are called and brought to repentance, God is, and will be, longsuffering towards them. And catch this, longsuffering to the world for their sakes. Wherefore Christ's not coming to judgment sooner than he will, is not owing to any negligence, tardiness, or slackness in God, concerning the promise of it, but to the longsuffering of God; which has been gloriously displayed with respect to the people of God.

This forbearance of God is shown in the saints of the Old Testament dispensation, which time is expressly called "*the forbearance of God,*" **Romans 3:25:** "*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God*." This the situation: Christ became the Surety for them in eternity, engaged to assume their nature, pay their debts, and make satisfaction for their sins: and notice of this was given immediately after the fall of Adam, **Genesis 3:15**: "*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*." But it was four thousand years from then to the time fixed in Daniel's prophecy, "*to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness*"; to the fulness of time when Christ should come to redeem all his people, and particularly, to obtain the redemption of transgressions that were under the first Testament. **Daniel 9:24**: "*Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy*." **Galatians 4:4-5**: "But *when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*." **Hebrews 9:15**: "*And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance*." Now all this time was a time of patience, forbearance, and longsuffering with God, in respect to his people

under this dispensation. He did not stir up his wrath and execute it on them; but reserved it for his Son, their Surety. He forbore to inflict the punishment on them that their sins deserved. He did not impute sin to them, place it to their account, charge it on them, and demand of them satisfaction for it; but placed it to his Son's account, and expected satisfaction from him. He accepted of the sacrifices of slain beasts, as vicarious ones in their stead, though they had no true value, nor real efficacy in them, to atone for sin. They were typical of Christ's sacrifice; and were to continue, and did, until that should be offered up. God waited till he should come and make his soul an offering for sin; and, upon his credit, bore with them, and bestowed the blessings of his grace on them. They were justified by him on the foundation of Christ's righteousness to be wrought out; and their sins pardoned. Through his atoning sacrifice to be offered up; they were saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus, even as we are, and we as they. They were carried to heaven, and glorified, before the payment of their debts were made by their Surety, before satisfaction for their sins was given to justice, and before the actual redemption of them was obtained. All which, as it shows the trust and confidence God put in his Son, so his forbearance and longsuffering towards Old Testament saints; which also has appeared and does appear.

In and towards every one of his people in their state of unregeneracy, in every age and period, or of whatsoever nation, or under whatsoever dispensation they be. The Lord bears with them, while in a state of nature, and waits patiently all that while, to be gracious to them, **Isaiah 30:18**: "*And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of*

judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him." There was much grace in his heart, in his Son, and in his covenant, laid up for them. This is abundantly displayed in conversion, when there is an abounding and a superabounding of it. But then the calling and conversion of them is according to purpose; and as there is a time for every purpose, for the execution of it, so for this; and till that time comes, the Lord waits, forbears, suffers much and long; he does not cut them off in their sins, as they deserve; but saves them, and sometimes from very imminent dangers, to be called, **2 Timothy 1:9**: "*Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*." With some he bears and waits a long time, who are called at the ninth and eleventh hours (**Matthew 20:1-17**), and, as the thief on the cross, at the last day and hour of his life (**Luke 23:39-43**); and he waits, as it were, in a longing manner; speaking after the manner of men, "*When will it once be?"* **Jeremiah 13:27**: ("*I have seen thine adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy whoredom, and thine abominations on the hills in the fields. Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?")*.

The apostle Paul is a remarkable instance of God's longsuffering; which was exercised towards him throughout all his blasphemy of Christ, his persecution of his people, and the injuries he did unto them. He waited, through all, to be gracious to him; his eye was upon him, and his heart was towards him; and hence such notice is taken of him in that state, before the account is given of his calling. See **Act 7:58**: "*And cast [Stephen] out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."* **Acts 8:1,3**: "*And Saul was consenting unto his*

death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. … As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison." **Acts 9:1**: "*And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest*." Paul himself says, "*For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting*." **1 Timothy 1:16**. Which meaning appears to relate to the people of the Jews, in the latter day. His sense seems to be this, that as Christ bore much, and exercised great longsuffering towards him, and at last showed him mercy, so he would bear with, and show much longsuffering to the people of the Jews, of which that towards him was a pattern, and which should issue in their salvation, as it had in his; when "*all Israel shall be saved*," **Romans 11:26**. God's longsuffering towards them is very great and very remarkable; as it was towards him; though they are under the marks of his displeasure, he has not stirred up all his wrath, so as to cut them off from being a people; but has reserved them for future times, and good things for them, and waits to be gracious to them.

The longsuffering of God is exercised towards the ungodly, even towards "*the vessels of wrath*" whom he "*endures with much longsuffering,"* till they are "*fitted to destruction*," **Roman 9:22.** This appears by his supporting them in their beings, notwithstanding their grievous provocations of him; which are such, that it is amazing he does not at once strike them, dead, as he did Ananias and Sapphira (**Acts 5:1-10**); or that the earth does not open and swallow them up,

as it did Dathan and Abiram (**Numbers 16:1-34**). This can be attributed to nothing else but, to his patience, forbearance, and longsuffering: and by the multitude of his mercies bestowed upon them, who have many of them, more than other men; and which are called "*the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering*" (**Romans 2:4**); see **Job 21:7-13 Psalm 73:4-7 Romans 2:4**. And by granting to many of them the outward means of grace, which are despised and rejected by them; and by deferring his judgments on them; which, because they are not speedily executed, their hearts are set in them to do evil; they are more and more hardened, and promise themselves impunity in sin. Now the ends of God's thus dealing with them, are partly for his own glory; "*to show his wrath, and make his power known";* to vindicate him from all cruelty and injustice, when he righteously executes his wrath, and exerts his power in their destruction: as in the instance of Pharaoh, **Romans 9:17,22**. And partly for the sake of his own people who dwell among them, that they may not suffer with them; thus he would have spared Sodom, had there been ten righteous men in it, for their sakes: and he forbears to take vengeance on those that have shed the blood of his saints, until the number of his elect, in like manner, is fulfilled. And he spares a wicked world from being burnt up and destroyed, until all his chosen ones are brought to repentance, **Genesis 18:23-32; Revelation 6:11; 2 Peter 3:9**. Another end is for their sakes, that they may be rendered inexcusable, and the execution of wrath on them at last, appear just and righteous, **Romans 2:1,4, and 5**.

There are many instances of the patience, forbearance, and longsuffering of God, with respect to the wicked; as in the men of the old world, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, **1 Peter 3:20. And, see**

Genesis 6:3. And in the inhabitants of Sodom, daring sinners, who had first hints of God's displeasure, yet had mercy shown them, a respite for a while, and then destroyed by fire from heaven, **Genesis 13:13, 14:11, and 21, 18:21, and 19:24**. In Pharaoh, refusing to let Israel go, whom God had spared some time, beginning with lighter judgments, then executed heavier ones; and at last drowned him, and his host, in the Red Sea, **Exodus 5:2,7 etc.,** and **Exodus 14:17,18, & 28**. In the people of Israel, in the wilderness, whose manners God suffered and bore with, and was grieved with them forty years, **Acts 13:18**. In the Amorites and Canaanites, until their sin was full, and till the land itself would bear them no longer; but spewed them out of it, **Genesis 15:16, and Leviticus 18:28**. In the Gentile world, during their times of ignorance, **Acts 17:30 (**JFB**: "'**winked at'— literally (and far better), 'overlooked,'"). In fruitless professors of religion, signified by the barren fig tree, **Luke 13:6-9**. And in antichrist, during the time of his reign, and no longer, **Revelation 2:21, 13:6, and 18:8.**