

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 2 – “Of God and the Holy Trinity”,**  
**Message # 36 – “Examples of God’s Patience”, Presented in the Adult**  
**Sunday School Class, by Pastor Paul Rendall**  
**on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 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 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8: 4 and 6; Deuteronomy 6: 4; b Jeremiah 10: 10; Isa 48: 12; c Exodus 3: 14; d John 4: 24; e 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1: 17; Deut. 4: 15-16; f Malachi 3:6; g 1<sup>st</sup> 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

**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.”

**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.”

**1. God is Longsuffering with the wicked is in order that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, those whom He has chosen to become His saints.**

**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?”

In the doctrine of election, God’s choosing a person is entirely a matter of His showing mercy. His choice is not based upon any goodness in the sinner, or because the sinner wills that God would choose him. God, based upon His predestinating purpose and foreknowledge of that purpose simply chooses to show compassion to an underserving, unworthy sinner. In the case of wicked leaders, we see that God raises them to their positions of power, but does not in any way force them to behave in the bad way that they do. They are acting according to their own will and pleasure, Pharaoh being an instance of this; and so we see that God’s power was shown in him, and that His(God’s) name might be declared in all the earth.”

God's power was shown in Pharaoh in that He was greater than all that Pharaoh did to oppress and enslaved God's people. And He was greater than Pharaoh in patiently restraining His wrath against him for the things that Pharaoh was doing to provoke His wrath to totally break out against him. He would destroy him at the Red Sea, along with his army, but His power and patience must first be demonstrated, and that in relation to the deliverance of Israel; their salvation as a nation, from Egyptian bondage. He endured with much longsuffering Pharaoh as a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction. Pharaoh fitted himself for his own destruction by hardening his own heart through his pride and unbelief. And God hardened Pharaoh's heart by leaving him to the hardness of his own heart by denying him the grace which would soften his heart; God not being obliged to give it, and therefore He did Pharaoh no injustice in withholding it from him.

There was much patience shown to Pharaoh numerous times in the suspension of the many earthly judgments which God brought upon him and the nation of Egypt, to see if he would cry out for God's help, which he never did. This was God's hardening Pharaoh's heart, leaving him to himself and the stubborn sinfulness of his own heart, and then judged him accordingly for what he truly deserved. But who can resist Him, and why does He still find fault? We are instructed to leave the matter there, and not to reply against God, or to question His sovereignty, His purposes, or His righteousness, as though He was doing something wrong. God is perfect in justice and judgment. Men are deserving of His wrath. God is the One who has created all men for His good pleasure and purpose, and even though He does not create men to destroy them, He is their just judge and His righteousness and justice will be demonstrated and vindicated in the damnation of all unrepentant wicked people, for the sins which they committed against Him. God as a potter has power over the clay, from the same lump of sinful humanity, to make one vessel a vessel for honor and another for dishonor. But it is not God who creates the dishonor; it is the sinful man who is justly left to act out his own sin against God and fit or prepared himself for destruction.

## **2. God is longsuffering toward the wicked committing sins against Him and against His people, for a certain specific amount of time.**

That amount of time is until the measure of their sins is filled up, or completed by them. God very exactly determines just how much patience He will show to the wicked, and when that measure is filled up, He most certainly brings them to judgment.

**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.”

And so we see the patience of God once again, in His patiently waiting until the iniquity of the Amorites was full. There is such a thing as men ripening for judgment. And this is a good example of God’s patience, His waiting to judge, until these people’s continued sins made them ripe for judgment; until they had filled up the measure of their sins, which every wicked person eventually does. In the case of a righteous person, God’s patience is seen in not judging them with any eternal judgment based upon His choice of them in Christ. He will therefore exercise patience with them before their conversion in not taking their life; in enduring with much patience their sinning against them; their acting as the children of wrath that they would be, had He not determined to show them mercy. After their conversion, He shows them patience in the way that He teaches them His good and righteous ways, and transforms them from sinners into those who can, because of His merciful, patience, and kind work, be called saints.

### **3. The Example of the Lord’s patience in His showing the Ninevites mercy and also His patience in teaching the Prophet Jonah right attitudes and actions –**

**Jonah had a Problem and it was a sinful problem of not wanting God to show mercy or to be patient to the enemies of Israel.**

**Jonah 1: 1-4** – “Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.”

So the Lord had commanded Jonah specifically to go to Nineveh and cry out against it for their wickedness had come up to Him. God saw their wickedness and He was going to let them know of the consequences of judgment which would come upon Nineveh if they did not repent. He did this because He was, in this case, intending to show the whole city mercy, and bring the inhabitants of the city to righteousness. But Jonah did not want mercy to be shown to them. We must ask why not? After the Ninevites repented, in chapter 4, we find the probable cause of Jonah’s fleeing from the presence of the Lord. Verse 1 – “But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.” Jonah is actually angry that God had been gracious and merciful, slow to anger (that is patient) and abundant in kindness to these unworthy, unrighteous Gentiles who had been the enemies of Israel in times past.

And 2<sup>nd</sup> reason – When the Ninevites repented then Jonah himself would look like a false prophet because he had told them that Nineveh would be destroyed and it was not destroyed. But I favor the 1<sup>st</sup> reason. Jonah did not want God to show mercy to his own, and Israel’s enemies. He believed that God should have kept His word of His first declared intention, which was, to destroy the city. Keil and Delitsch on verse 3 – “This vexation was not occasioned, however, by offended dignity, or by anxiety or fear lest men should regard him as a liar or babblers (ψευδοεπής τε και βωμολόχος, Cyr. Al.; ψεύστης, Theodoret; vanus et mendax, Calvin and others); nor was he angry, as Calvin supposes, because he associated his office with the honour of God, and was unwilling that the name of God should be exposed to the scoffing of the heathen, quasi de nihilo terreret, or “because he saw that it would furnish material for impious blasphemies if God changed His purpose, or if He did not abide by His word;” but, as Luther observes (in his remarks on Jonah’s flight), “he was hostile to the city of Nineveh, and still held a Jewish and carnal view of God” (for the further development of this view, see the remarks above, at p. 265). That this was really Jonah’s view, is proved by Luther from the fact that God reproves his displeasure and anger in these words, “Should I not spare Nineveh?” etc. (Jon\_4:11). “He hereby implies that Jonah was displeased at the fact that God had spared the city, and was angry because He had not destroyed it as he

had preached, and would gladly have seen.” Offended vanity or unintelligent zeal for the honour of God would have been reproved by God in different terms from those in which Jonah was actually reproved, according to the next verse (Jon\_4:4), where Jehovah asks the prophet, “Is thine anger justly kindled?” אַחַז is adverbial, as in Deu\_9:21; Deu\_13:15, etc., bene, probe, recte, δικάϊως (Symm.).

It is good for us to list all the ways that God showed patience to Jonah during the time of this whole episode.

1<sup>st</sup> – In forbearing to correct him as His sin deserved. God could have punished him much more severely than He did. He was acting the part of a disobedient servant and a hypocrite. If he knew that God was gracious, merciful, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, then why could he not put away his anger over what Nineveh did to Israel in the past. God’s being gracious to sinners of the worst die should bring us grief, but rather cause us to rejoice, and be ever ready to proclaim it from the house-tops.

2<sup>nd</sup> – As it was, God was patient with Jonah in His pursuit of Him, in order that He could teach him this all important lesson for his sanctification. He showed him mercy and patience in sending the storm.

3<sup>rd</sup> – He showed him patience in His having the distressed sailors take a greater interest in this storm than Jonah did. He wanted simply to flee from the presence of the Lord. God in His patience and faithfulness to Jonah, would not let that happen.

4<sup>th</sup> – He showed patience to Jonah in not letting the sailors bring the ship to land. They were finally forced to throw Jonah overboard, which was the very thing that God wanted them to do, so that He might show how patiently He would teach him great and wonderful lessons about himself (Jonah), and great and mighty lessons about Himself. (that is – God)

5<sup>th</sup> – He showed mercy and patience to Jonah in not letting him drown in the troubled sea, but He appointed a great fish to swallow him alive, and in the belly of that fish he was preserved alive for 3 days and 3 nights.

6<sup>th</sup> – He showed mercy and patience in bringing him up from this potential grave; having the fish vomit him up on dry land, and then recommissioning him to preach to Nineveh.

7 – He showed patience in granting the Ninevites to believe Jonah’s message, and repenting of their sins, so that God would not then destroy the city.

8<sup>th</sup> – He showed patience when Jonah was angry and did not want to live any longer, if he could not see his own desired result; that of the Ninevites being destroyed.

9<sup>th</sup> – He showed patience in preparing a plant for Jonah to sit under so that the sun would not beat down on him while he was outside of the city waiting to see whether God would destroy it or not.

10<sup>th</sup> – He showed patience to Jonah in offering to him reasonable questions, asked in all gentleness, rather than speaking to Him in angry rebukes; which in this case would have been justified, but God would teach Jonah this important lesson of what it really means to be slow to anger, merciful and One who relents from doing harm.

11<sup>th</sup> – He patiently answered all of Jonah’s questions and so worked that we would hope that Jonah would have received His words, believed them, and repented of His own sins of misunderstanding and misrepresenting God’s mercy and patience by his own angry and impatient attitude and behavior.