

As-Sabur - the Patient

by Paul Bramsen

The sermon emphasizes God's patience and compassion, highlighting the importance of repentance and the comfort He provides in times of affliction.

Scripture: Psalm 34:17, Psalm 103:8, Isaiah 25:7, Isaiah 49:13, Lamentations 3:22, 2 Corinthians 7:10, 2 Peter 3:9

Topics: "Gods Patience", "Repentance Mercy"

Description

Paul Bramsen preaches on the attribute of patience in both Islamic and Christian beliefs, emphasizing God's patience in waiting for humanity to repent and His compassion that prevents immediate judgment. The sermon explores the concept of repentance as the basis for receiving mercy and salvation, using examples from the Bible and the Qur'an to illustrate God's willingness to forgive and save those who humble themselves. The story of Jonah highlights the importance of repentance and God's mercy even in the face of disobedience and sin, showing that God's patience extends to all who seek forgiveness.

Transcript

One of the attributes of God according to Islamic and Christian beliefs is patience. "God is patient with you" says the Bible, "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

Like the Bible, the Qur'an acknowledges that all men live in peril of losing their lives because of God's anger against sin. Surah 16:61 says, "If God were to punish men for their wrong doing, He would not leave, on the (earth), a single living creature: but He gives them respite for a stated Term". The word "respite" implies patience and self-restraint. In other words, God would be within His rights to execute the death sentence upon mankind but He is willing to wait for a period of time.

The question naturally arises as to why God waits. According to the Bible, the reason God waits is so that people will not perish and be ruined but come to repentance. The prophet Jeremiah makes a statement that is similar to surah 16:61, in which, he further explains why God restrains Himself from executing immediate judgment upon all men. He says, "Because of the Lord's great love [compassion]¹, we are not consumed." (Lamentations 3:22) Notice that the prophet includes himself with everyone else when he says WE are not destroyed. He knew that he too was a wrong doer and thus God could rightfully destroy every "single living creature" (Surah 16:61)

This is in keeping with the Hadith which says, "Every son of Adam is a sinner, and the best of sinners are those who repent constantly". - Ibn Majah, Tirmizi, Darimi (p. 760 Al Hadis, Vol. 3 Fazul Karim) In the light

of this sobering truth we can all be thankful that in His patience God is mercifully allowing us more time to repent. This Divine attribute of patience is described by the prophet David as "slow to anger" which is consistent with the Qur'anic idea of respite and restraint. We read, for example, in Psalm - Zabur 103:8 "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love ... He does not treat us as our sins deserve..."

Like David, the prophet Isaiah also speaks of God's compassion. "Shout for joy ... For the Lord comforts His people and will have compassion on His afflicted ones ... Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!" (Isaiah 49:13,15)

Notice how Isaiah's statement reveals God's compassion and comfort to those in affliction. Not only do suffering and affliction move God to show comfort but so also does death - that tragedy of all tragedies which causes the deepest kind of grief. We see this clearly in the prophecy of Isaiah 25:7-9 which says that the Lord Almighty "will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples ... He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces ... In that day they will say, 'Surely this is our God, we trusted in Him and He saved us ... Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.'" How wonderful it is that God comforts us when we face the most severe form of all suffering - death itself!

You will recall the earlier quote from the Bible highlighting God's patience and His desire, that all men should come to repentance. The importance of repentance cannot be overestimated, for repentance is the basis on which a sinful and doomed humanity can receive mercy and be saved. Pride and self righteousness are ruled out as totally unacceptable with God since we are all sinners and are guilty of breaking God's law.

Perhaps an illustration will help bring the full weight of this truth home to our hearts. The prophet Jonah (Yunus) was commanded by the Lord to go to the city of Nineveh and warn its wicked inhabitants of the impending disaster and judgment that God was about to bring on them (Surah 37:140-146).

But Jonah had a natural dislike for Ninevites because they were enemies of his people, so he fled in disobedience in the opposite direction to a place called Tarshish. God's anger burned against Jonah in a furious storm that was about to destroy the ship. However, the sailors were saved because of Jonah's humble repentance and his willingness to be thrown overboard.

God restrained Himself from destroying His disobedient servant. Instead of being drowned, Jonah was swallowed alive by a great fish. He spent three gloomy days inside the fish feeling the despair and doom of death hanging over him. While his life was hanging in the balance he had time to reflect on the total ruin and loss that his sin had caused.

The Bible records the prayer of Jonah: "From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. He said, '...From the depths of the grave I called for help ... I have been banished from Your sight ... I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But You brought me up from the pit, O Lord my God. When my life was ebbing away, I remembered You Lord. ... Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs ... But I, with a song of thanksgiving will sacrifice to You ... Salvation comes from the Lord.' And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land." Jonah 2:1,4,6,8-10)

When the story begins, the wicked Ninevites were about to be destroyed. But the story takes an unusual turn and the prophet himself ends up in a perilous situation under the wrath of God's judgment. Jonah

finds out that, like the Ninevites, he also needs God's mercy and salvation. The utter hopelessness of Jonah's predicament in the fish's belly is clear from the desperate words in his prayer. He spoke about being in "the depths of the grave". When he said that "the earth beneath barred me in forever" he knew that he was as good as dead.

It is precisely this kind of crushing and heart breaking experience that releases us from self righteousness and unlocks the door to God's mercy and forgiveness. We read of a similar experience in the life of David in which he said that "the Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." (Psalm - Zabur 34:17) The Bible speaks again about the blessing of this humbling experience where it says, " Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." (2 Corinthians 7:10)

TEXTUAL NOTE

1. The word "love" in this verse is a translation of the Hebrew word, *raham*, which is often rendered "compassion", as is the Arabic *rahim* (from which Muslims derive the name for God "Most Compassionate, Most Merciful").

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