**The Patience of God**, 2Peter 3:8-9

In 2Peter 3, there are several salient points which make up the context for the statements found in vv.8-9:

* He is writing (again) to *remind* them (cf. 1:1) of certain things, v.1;
* The *reminder* was previously given by *the prophets* (such as in Mal.4:5); *the Lord* (as in Matt.24:14); and *your apostles* (as in 2Thess.2:1-3), v.2;
* In the *“last days mockers”* will deny a day of judgment / destruction based on “Uniformitarianism,” vv.3-4;
* In such thinking, it *“escapes their notice”* (Grk. *lanthano-* to *not recall information* and thus to *lose sight of its significance;* Louw-Nida) that *“the world at that time”* God has previously *“destroyed, being flooded with water”,* vv.5-6;
* All of which is to the point of v.7: *“the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”*  This is one of the two promises of eternity: 1) the punishment of the wicked; and 2) the reward of the righteous.

These things “set the stage” for our consideration of vv.8-9, *“But do let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”* From these two verses, please consider a few points relative to “The Patience of God.”

**I. To properly understand God’s *patience* (in this case, the *delay* *of His judgment)* we must not let some things *“escape our notice”:***

**A. God’s “Time,” v.8b.**

Everything in “our world” is governed by time. From when we go to bed, work, lunch, home, dinner, worship, bed- it’s all governed by time. Why is this? Perhaps the reason is that, on earth, we have a limited but unspecified amount of it. We are born, and live perhaps 70 or 80 years, or more, or perhaps a lot less, and then we die, Heb.9:27. Our physical existence ends.

But *“God is spirit,”* John 4:24; and *spirits* are eternal- thus having no beginning and no end. So, in man’s *beginning*, and the *beginning of time* itself for the earth and all things thereon, God was already present, Gen.1:1. And He will, of course, continue after *“the earth and all its works will be burned up,”* v.10b.

Now think for a moment: if God was *eternally* present before the earth (and man) was created, and if He will be *eternally* present after the earth (and man) is destroyed, how would these things alter His estimation of “time,” which is an *earthly* concern?

Such does not mean that God is ignorant, or *unaware,* of time- for He often marked it for man (as in *seventy years of captivity* in Babylon), and made requirements of man based on it (as in *keeping the Sabbath*). No, God is fully aware of “time” and its passing, cf. Gal.4:4, *“the fullness of time”*; Titus 1:3, *“the proper time”*; Heb.9:26, *“at the consummation of the ages”.*

But the *eternal* existence of God compared to the *finite* existence of the earth (and man) does influence His perspective of time. Because He sees all things from *beginning* to *end* in one panoramic view, He is thus able to reveal to us both our *past* and our *future,* Isa.46:10; 44:6-8*.* He is not bound by the limitations of “time,” v.8b; cf. Ps.90:4! These matters directly affect the next consideration for our text.

**B. God’s “Desire,” v.9**

“How is God able to be so *patient* when I am so impatient?” Think about it this way. How much is “a day” worth to a youngster? To him, it’s just another something to have to wait until it passes. Why? Perspective is the answer. He has his whole life “ahead of him.” But what about the middle-aged person trying to put kids through college; what is a day worth to him? Or, what is one more day the elderly person who wants to hold on to see their grandkids graduate college?

And so it is with an *eternal* God. His perspective of “time” is inherently different than ours because of ***position***and ***possession***of it! Therefore,His **perspective of “time,” and His position relative to it, influences His patience**. It is not *“slowness”-* it’s patience!

But God’s patience is also driven by His *desire.* What does God desire? Look at the verse again (v.9), *“not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”*  See also 1Tim.2:4. God’s patience with man is ***influenced* by His perspective of time,** but **it is *driven* by His desire for all to be saved!**

Notice the *patience* of God is directed to *“you”* in v.9 of our text. Who is the “you” here? The letter was addressed to Christians- both Gentile and Jewish, cf. 1:1. So we can only assume that “you” in v.9 means “faithful Christians.” But why would God need to be patient with “faithful Christians”? Aren’t they already saved, and thus ready for the promised judgment? Yes, but that doesn’t seem to be the emphasis of the verse. God doesn’t want *anyone* to be lost. But He has entrusted the gospel, which is His power to save, to *“earthen vessels,”* 2Cor.4:7. While this passage seems to apply primarily to the apostles, we too are “carriers” of the power of God to save others by both example and proclamation. God is being patient with “us” to take the gospel to the lost around us!

He has been “patient” with me for many years now- how about you?

**C. God’s “Promise,” vv.9-10**

While God’s perspective of time and His desire for all to be saved have influenced His patience, these will not change His **promise** to bring about judgment and destruction to those who spurn His patience, Rom.2:4.

As sure as the destruction of the water came upon the earth in the past, cf. vv.4-5, the judgment of fire will also come upon the earth when God’s patience is exhausted, vv.10,12. Do not let this fact *escape* ***your*** *notice!*  Act accordingly, v.11. God does not, and cannot lie; therefore, what He promises always comes to pass!

**II. Conclusions**

**To understand the *patience* of God, we must also come to some cursory realization of:**

* **His view and position relative to *time;***
* **His *desire* for all to be saved;**
* **And the faithfulness of His *promise* to destroy the world.**
* **Since these things are true: 1) *“What sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?”* v.11; and, 2) Are you *“looking for and hastening the coming day of God,”* v.12? Don’t “test” the *patience* of God!**