

GOD'S FORBEARANCE, OUR STEADFASTNESS 2 Peter 3:15-18

Intro: In the closing verses of this great book of the Bible, we see a forbearing Sovereign (vs. 15) and a need for steadfastness on the part of His subjects (vs. 17).

Christians are to be grounded in the Word of God. They are to be stable in their in their faith and endure in the truths that are found in the Bible. 1 Corinthians 15:59 says: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. For your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

We need to pray that God would grant to us strength for the journey of life, and that we would be rooted and grounded in love (Ephesians 3:16-19).

I. Vss. 15-16, GOD'S FORBEARANCE

A. Vs. 15, God is longsuffering to the usward (vs. 9), revealing His patient desire to give to us all the opportunity of repentance and the receiving of Christ Jesus as Savior. The Lord's patience, in a real sense, means salvation. If God had not been longsuffering with us, there would have been not salvation. "We could never please Him with our miserable works, and our sins would only qualify us to be grease spots in the road. 'the longsuffering of the Lord is our salvation'"(Martin).

1. This fits in with the preaching of Peter concerning the *parousia*, the coming of the Lord. Bill Monroe used to sing a Bluegrass song called: "Wait a Little Longer Sweet Jesus." The chorus says:

"But wait a little longer sweet Jesus,
there's still so many wanderin' out in sin.
Just a little longer sweet Jesus,
Just a few more days to get our loved ones in."

a. The patience of God gives us the opportunity to reach out with the Gospel before the great and terrible day of the Lord. It gives us time to do as Jesus said: "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come" (Luke 14:23).

b. Each time we share the Gospel with a precious soul, we bring the coming of the Lord a little closer than it was.

2. Paul wrote of the longsuffering of God on many occasions. Peter agrees with Paul that: "the fact that God withholds his hand is to be regarded not as indifference on God's part but as an opportunity to repent and to accept Jesus Christ." (Barclay 348)

a. The Apostle Paul reminds those that despise the

riches of God's goodness and longsuffering, that this patience and goodness is meant to lead a man to repentance (Romans 2:4).

b. Romans 2:4 is not the only place where Paul spoke of the forbearance of God (Romans 3:25; 9:22).

3. The withholding of the hand of our Sovereign God is never to be seen as an excuse to sin, but should always be seen as opportunity to repent. Christians are to pray that God will grant repentance to those who are lost (2 Timothy 2:25-26).

B. Vs. 16, It is to be admitted that there are some things in Paul's writing that are hard to understand. These hard sayings are, as well as some that are as plain as the nose on your face, twisted both deliberately and intentionally by the unlearned and unstable. The Greek word for *wrest* is *strebloo* meaning: "to torture, to put on the rack, to pervert, to distort." Heresies are a perversion of the truth. Truth out of balance leads to heresy. Matthew Henry in his commentary said: "And here the unlearned and unstable do their work; for they wrest and torture the scriptures, to make them speak what the Holy Ghost did not intend." (vol. 6, pg. 1058)

1. Those that pervert the Word often do so by taking scriptures out of context or by twisting them to say something that they do not say. Satan is the master of this, for this is exactly what he did in the Garden of Eden.

a. He questioned the word of God by saying to Eve: "Yea hath God said?"

b. Then he lied to Eve saying: "Ye shall not surely die," when God plainly said that they would. Many College Professors do this day in and day out in the classroom, and we wonder why so many are forsaking the inspired Word of God.

2. When the Bible makes sense, we are to seek no other sense. What it plainly says we are to believe. Believe what it says about heaven (John 14:1-3), about salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5), about baptism (Acts 2:41; 8:36-37), about hell (Luke 16:23), etc.

3. Baptists believe the Bible and follow its teachings. We do not adhere to tradition for our doctrinal or practical positions. As Baptists, we believe what in *Sola Scriptura* which means that the only and all-sufficient rule of both faith and practice is scripture alone.

a. The great English Baptist pastor Charles Haddon Spurgeon said: "I became a Baptist by reading the New

Testament...especially in the Greek...If I thought it wrong to be a Baptist, I should become what I believed to be right. The particular doctrine adhered to by Baptists is that they acknowledge no authority unless it comes from the Word of God.” (Autobiography 148, 152)

b. In Matthew 4:4, Jesus answered Satan’s temptation by saying: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” We should also note 2 Timothy 2:16). May never a Baptist utter the words: “I don’t care what the Bible says!”

c. Those who care about what is right receive the Word with readiness of mind (Acts 17:10-11).

d. The Roman Catholic Church web-site Scripture Catholic says, and this is the position of the Catholic Church: “Gen.-Rev.- Scripture never says that Scripture is the sole infallible authority for God’s Word. Scripture also mandates the use of tradition. This fact disproves *sola Scriptura*.” If you read 1 Peter 1:18, you will see that “ye were not redeemed with corruptible things...received by tradition from your fathers.”

II. Vss. 17-18, OUR STADFASTNESS AS CHRISTIANS

A. Vs. 17, The pastor’s heart of Peter is seen here as he lovingly encourages the children of God to beware of false teachers. Thus they were forewarned, and so are we. William Barkley says that the Christian “cannot plead ignorance. He knows the right way and its rewards: he knows the wrong way and its disasters. He has no right to expect an easy way, for he has been told that Christianity means a cross, and he has been warned that there will always be those who are ready to attack and to pervert the faith.” (350)

1. “Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked...” Not only are there those who deny *sola scriptura*, they also deny the all sufficiency of Christ as Savior. Christ bore our sins on the cross, and there God treated Him as though He had actually committed those sins (2 Corinthians 5:21).

a. “Beware” means “to be on guard or to keep watch.” We are to be watchful “lest we be led astray with the error of the wicked.”

b. This is a warning to stay away from teachers that

cannot get under the authority of the scriptures.

c. Paul in Colossians 2:16 says: "Let no man beguile you of your reward..." The Greek *katabrabeuo*, translated "beguile" in context means to "defraud or beguile you of the prize of victory." There are those who want you to be defeated as a Christian. Guard yourself from them.

d. The devil wants to cut you out of your blessing and he will use the wicked to rob you of it.

2. Peter had fallen from his steadfastness; he had backslidden, and knew the feeling of defeat that comes with it. Believers are not in danger of losing their salvation, but they are in danger of losing their steadfastness. To be steadfast means to be firm in condition, mind, and conviction (Eph. 6:12-18).

B. Vs. 17, "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ..." We are saved by grace and need to grow in grace. The Greek word for grace is *charis* meaning "unmerited favor." Grace is that which affords to the believer joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, grace of speech.

1. We are to grow in the grace of God. Whatever is not moving is getting stagnant. Stagnation breeds disease. Spiritual mosquitoes are hatched in spiritually stagnant minds.

2. "And in the knowledge." Read the Bible and study it. Listen to spiritual music and read good literature.

3. Spiritual growth results in our glorifying God. The first question in the Baptist Catechism says: "What is the chief end of man? Answer: Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

- a. We are to glorify God by living separated lives.
- b. We are to glorify God by staying away from error.
- c. We are to glorify God by spiritual growth.

Conclusion: In view of the coming again of the Lord, let us believe the Bible and follow its teaching as our only rule of faith and practice. This will lead to separated, holy Christians.

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