

LONGSUFFERING

Written by: Bill Richardson Edited by: Bill Kelly

I do not know if you have seen a “Study Writing” such as this one, prepared in the particular way in which this study is formatted. Have you ever been in an assembly where the minister/preacher offered the invitation before he preached his sermon? I have been challenged and challenged greatly, many times before the end of a sermon and certainly at the end of the sermon. I want to challenge all of us in this study lesson. The truth of my heart has given me desire to set-forth notice to you an invitation by way of a challenge. Moreover, I want you to consider this challenge during the time of study as we read and ponder this lesson. My hope is that it will be effective to the greatest degree for our learning and acceptance. That is an expectation of mine and will be a gratifying reward to my heart, and I give all praise and glory to God and many thanks to you.

All scriptures and yea even a particular word and any commentary used in defining or explaining in this study will be truth and hopefully acceptable to you and to all who study this lesson. My promise is that this study will be desirous to true and honest hearts. You will gain more Bible knowledge and that is a need for all of us. Also, what is presented in this study is needed, and that is true. Thus you have an obligation and a responsibility of acceptance and action on your part to God’s truth. Acceptance of responsibilities is proof of one’s faith and love for God and truth. It is a great benefit and a blessing to all who do God’s will in growing, gaining knowledge, and accepting His will responsibly. Please permit these requested action and thoughts be on your mind as we study this lesson together on LONGSUFFERING. Please accept the challenge at lessons end.

The word longsuffering as a noun is identified with by words, “forbearance” and “patience”, Vine’s p.377. As a verb, longsuffering is identified (by Vines p. 377) as akin to be “patient”, to “bear with”, and to be “long-tempted.” Vine continues with three akin words; “ENDURE, PATIENT, and SUFFER, and a note saying, ‘longsuffering is the quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish. It is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy and is used of God, (Exodus 34:6; Romans 2:4; 1 Peter 3:20)’. Vine’s notes continue and say, ‘Patience is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial; it is the opposite of despondency and is associated with hope (1 Thessalonians 1:3); it is not used of God’ “From notes on Thessalonians, by Hogg and Vine, pp. 183,184.

I have thought of it many times but have never put it into writing and the attributes that are identified to God by just “one-single-word” and yea the same list of single words that are used to identify the attributes of a child of God. However, when the ingredients (properly chosen and mixed words) are used and included in the definition of the attributes they are better explained, understood and become more attractive.

When writing or speaking to convey characteristics of any feature, such as, attributes, akin words, descriptive adjectives, and verbs are necessary to use in the mix in order to get the whole picture. Then, after getting it “down-pat” we must put it into our lives by living it in what we think, say and do. Is this taught in “Preacher” schools? I am sure you can recognize that I have to struggle to do what I am advocating. Really though, I do want

to get it right, get it “down-pat”, and most of all I want to say it so as to glorify God and with HIS help be instrumental in helping you, myself and all to whom I can grow in love and in the blessing of Christ-like attributes which we are to possess.

In defining longsuffering, my research started in the Bible. I realized that knowing where and for the purpose of “use” (doing) in one’s life is germane in knowing the blessings of attributes, be they God’s attributes, or attributes which man must manifest in life in his obedience to stewardship responsibility to God. Not only is it our duty to God, but also to our fellowman. Thus, we must “know” God, and we must accept our obligation to love and provide for the needs of others. To meet our obligations as a child of God is not optional. Anytime the New Testament speaks of the duty and obligations of man to God our Creator, it is referring to whatever action God specifies as necessary. There is no such thing as a legitimate, [true, permitted, right, due, legal] excuse for not doing that which is our duty, and doing it for the right purpose. We were blessed recently by a sermon on Excuses. I remember!

Note our obligation as spoken by Jesus in Matthew 5:14, 41). In v. 41 the word “compels” is used. The thought came to me as to how one who is compelled to do/react as related to longsuffering. We are to be longsuffering, yea even toward our enemies. We are to love and teach them. In the context of v. 41, Jesus was teaching how we must react to oppressors. In today’s world of thousands of different religions and millions of people being oppressed by so called, “religions rulers”, which are nothing but an advocate of the devil killing people under the guise of ethnic cleansing. They promote false gods which they worship; their false godless teachers, which rant and rave about them, show no God or Christ likeness toward anyone. Thus the question, “How does longsuffering (as we know it) come into light?”

Christians are to manifest longsuffering, in love because it is an attribute a part of our lives. Longsuffering is an attribute of the LORD, the LORD GOD and He told us that it was. Thus it is! It is referenced 17 times in the Bible. First, in the O.T. in Exodus 34:6, then in Numbers 14:18, Psalms 86:15, and Jeremiah 15:15. The word longsuffering is used in the N.T. in Romans 2:4; 9:22; 2 Corinthians 6:6; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 1:11; 3:12; I Timothy 1:16; 2 Timothy 3:10; 4:2; I Peter 3:20; and II Peter 3:9; 3:15.

Look with me at the revelation of God’s characteristics by God Himself as recorded in the scripture. The setting is when “The Law” was recorded to Moses the second time on two tablets of cut stone like the first (Exodus 20:1-17; 34: 1; 34:28). The blessedness of God was revealed as the *“LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him (Moses) and proclaimed the name of the LORD (Exodus 34:5). And the LORD passed before him (Moses) and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands...’”* (Exodus 34:6-7).

Suffice to say, this is God revealed characteristics of Himself. Although God has always been and will always be His character/attributes will never change. His longsuffering, back when He was showing His love, in giving and forgiving and keeping mercy for thousands is still available to His children today as it was then. Requirement then and now are obedience in love. It is possible to fall away, however, God through

Jesus Christ has provided for us to be renewed. *“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the power of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucified again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame”* (Hebrews 6:4-6).

We are weak, we do sin, and we sin again if we do not repent and ask for forgiveness, the blessing of renewal, (the act of faith). We read, study, and gain knowledge thereby. The teaching of the Bible is where we learn that by God’s longsuffering He does not affect action toward us of our sins immediately. He endures, and do you know it suffers Him? Have you ever pondered that? We should! ‘O what debt we owe God.

Let us look at a Biblical “What If”. There is one! *“What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted (prepared) to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He has prepared beforehand unto (for) glory...”* (Romans 9:22-24). God’s action on the vessels of wrath is not immediate destruction, rather, He endures them with much longsuffering.

“The LORD has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom” (Proverbs 16:4). Yes, it is God’s promise—everyone will eventually receive his or her just reward determined by God Himself. Note what is recorded in the Bible. *“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5:9). *Do you know how to obtain salvation? “God from the beginning choose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth to which He called you by the gospel”* (2 Thessalonians 2:13). More questions. Do you know what sanctification is? Do you believe in the truth? Do you know that you have been called? Do you know what the gospel is?

“God, from the beginning choose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth to which he called you by the gospel” (2 Thessalonians 2:13). We must study God’s word—the Bible. From it we gain knowledge and answers to the questions of life. Thereby we teach His truth and about His love and longsuffering toward us. From the study of His word we learn of His promise and the blessings thereof, and we are told that *“The LORD is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9).

There is so much to consider when we truly evaluate our own condition and relationship with God as to our obedience and dedication to stewardship responsibilities; not only to God, also to our fellowman. Not to do anything but encourage, I say that the duty hours are twenty-four seven—and my, ‘O my, what joy and rewards are the proceeds. Do the conditions as mentioned cause questions to come to mind? Through self-evaluation and taking into consideration the turmoil and sin which we see by observation openly as we live from day to day may cause some to ask the questions “Why has God waited so long to judge the world?” The cited scripture answers the question. God is not willing that any should perish—that is a desire which, through love, God wants.

God is gracious, and we know this. In long-suffering, He is waiting for all to come to repentance. You see God's blessings are on His terms and not man's terms. We must, well we just have to, be grateful for the knowledge of God's word. His word is the source! (Cf. Romans 15:5).

We need to look at some of the happenings that were talked about in 2 Peter Chapters 1 and 2 before we discuss the longsuffering delineated in 3:15. It is my hope that what is said will be refreshing and cause us to be aware of the fruit of longsuffering. Peter highlights the promise and practice of Holiness on our part when he says in 1:2-3, that we should grow, as Christians, in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. That is personal to each of us as individuals and knowledge involves us individually in our continual growth and relationship with our Lord.

We learn and thus gain knowledge which *"His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue"* (v.3). Peter continues and says for this very reason we are to give all diligence to add to faith virtue, which, he already named in v. 3. Then we build on that to add knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and the icing, which is love. All these in times passed, I have called them, "add on." They are that which we as diligent Christians "ought to", as our part, add on to our faith. You know what? When we do that it is like the words of the good oldie, "It Will Make You Love Everybody"—God, Jesus our Lord, our brothers & sisters, our neighbor, and yes, our enemy. I have never found a reason to **not** reference or talk about these add-ons in all my study writings. They are to me, refreshing thoughts each time I study.

The Need To Grow In Knowledge: Growing is adding on, is it not? I think so! Well, good old Peter ends 2 Peter 1 by explaining the voice from Heaven. Its purpose was to help us realize the need and benefit of "A Firm Foundation for Faith." Please read about it in 2 Peter 1:16-21. In 2 Peter Chapter 2, Peter describes false teachers and warns of their desires and nature and their capabilities, only if we let them, of leading Christians astray, (vv. 1-3; 11-22).

In the last chapter of 2 Peter, chapter 3, he said he wanted *"...to stir up your pure mind by way of reminder, of scoffers walking according to their own lusts"* and their actions of ungodliness and disbelief to which we can be assured that as promised, Christ will return. The greatest need we have is to be ready to give account and to beware lest we fail from our own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked. Then Peter "nails it" again when he said, *"...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18)

That is not all of what I want to think with you about in 2 Peter. Look back in vv 14, 15. Peter has reminded us of the great promise that Christ will return, and that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise—and do not forget it! Look forward to His coming quickly (cf. Revelation 22:20). Nevertheless in harmony with our lesson title note vv. 14-15 as they say, *"Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures"*.

Longsuffering as a Christian grace is produced by the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is named in Galatians 5:22-23. There are nine attributes listed. Love is listed first and longsuffering, is listed fourth. I cannot say that the order of their listing has total significance, but I am convinced that the first one is love and it is in proper order—#1. Yes, everything one does must be done for the right purpose and that purpose is love.

In study, we come to know God's word and His nature. We come to know that man's life is God given, and we have the choice of glorifying Him by living a life manifested in doing His will and showing *"the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises"* (Hebrews 6:11-12).

It is said when speaking of the promise, *"My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the LORD, as an example of suffering and patience"* (James 5:10). *"For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise"* (Hebrews 10:36).

The last two scriptures used two words which are good and strong word-ingredients of longsuffering. When used or manifested in life's responsibilities, actually grow and bond to one's attribute-characteristics. Again, will you agree with that? We must grow in all of life—for our good and for the glory of God, our creator. Amen!

Here I take the opportunity to suggest that you look at my study writing on my Website, "Growing Faith and Love"—Please! It is a good study, a good companion study to go along with this study on "Longsuffering."

Patience is used in the scriptures 34 times and, being a synonymous word to longsuffering, it should be of great interest to all of us. I found an interesting note in Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary, p. 377 and it said, "Longsuffering is the quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy, and is used of God, Exodus 34:6; Romans 2:4; 1 Peter 3:20." Vine's continues and said, "Patience is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial; it is opposite of despondency and is associated with hope, 1 Thessalonians 1:3; it is not used of God." *

* From notes on Thessalonians, by Hogg and Vine, pp 183, 184.

Dear One(s), there are so many strong characteristics or qualities which the true Christian possesses. Moreover, when manifested in one's life by acts of love in walking with God and pleasing Him bring forth rewards. It will make you happy and full of joy when going about giving the wonderful blessings away. If we give our God-blessed love to others it will return to us multiplied, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. It is the best investment known to faithful servant of God. Do you know and agree? "This is true, and Amen."

I want to finish this study by what the Apostle Paul, by inspiration, said to the faithful brethren in Christ who were in Colosse. Paul said, as result of their walk worthy of the Lord; *"For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the*

Father who qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light” (which is God’s truth, holiness, and love), (Colossians 1:9-12). “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:1-2). “...But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5). Amen!

Now let’s look at that word “ministry.” How do you define ministry? Are you a minister? Note “m” in minister is lower-case. Please study these two words and let it be a challenge to you to know what is involved in each.

Individual duty and responsibility must be known and affected in love by each of us. Age and physical condition only change methodology in execution of our effective actions and never negate the responsibility of our walk in life holding to God’s unchanging hand. Faith and love is the engine of delivery of our fruit.

Now, I am beseeching any and all of you saints at Hartselle Church of Christ to answer the two questions, in a short writing, on ministry and minister and permit me to use your writing so we together can do a study-writing with the title, “Ministry of the Saints”, but please do respond. On the other hand, if you will, please suggest a title for our co-written study. I really believe it would be a love-joy event or effort. Please do this for “Old Dubby-T”, but to the glory of God. The writing will go on the Internet via my Website, www.geocities.com/dubbyt, as is all my writings, plus other writings. You will have a great appreciation for the studies on my Website, as there are great writings on it from our Brother in the Lord, Mark N. Posey, other Ministers, Elders of different congregations, as well as other writers. Each writing is a complete study, and all are true example of “teaching/ministry” via the written lesson method.

The scriptures and commentary that have been set forth in this study have been of great benefit to me. These wonderful scriptures and principles have been motivating to my conscience, and it is my prayer that you who read and study will accept all truth herein and that it will be a conscience server to you also.

The well-trained conscience is equal to the knowledge, abiding faith, and love that we submit, expose, to our mind. With confidence, I say that you are studying this lesson with faith and love, and that it will be of great benefit to you. With confidence I also say, that you desire to be blessed, to gain more knowledge, (true abiding biblical knowledge), which is associated with responsibilities, which creates a desire to seek, to search diligently, to accept when found, to associate with, and be an active part of, and that you will abide faithfully in the Lord’s Church until death.

The church that I am speaking of cost the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is His Body, His Kingdom, which is His Church. Please be an obedient dedicated part of the church of the Bible, Christ’s church. The church we read about in the Bible. You cannot pass through Heaven’s gate if you are not in His Body, (His Church), and it is the church that we read about in the New Testament. That is the truth. That is what the Bible teaches.

I invite you to view my Website and often, www.geocities.com/dubbyt, and please note other consecrated writings. New study writings are added along as completed. There is a writing posted that I am sure you will want to view and copy. The writing title is, "The Church of the Bible, Christ's Church." It has a two-page enclosure, which has the title, "What Must I Do to Be Saved." Please study both Biblical-Truth writings with an honest and receptive heart for truth and obedience. You will be blessed! God bless you for studying with me on the subject. God loves you and I do too! Your servant in the Lord...

Bill Richardson
Member, Hartselle Church of Christ
Hartselle, AL

P.S. Remember! Help me to advertise the Websites listed below.

My Website, www.geocities.com/dubbyt is linked to: www.hartsellechurch.org, which is the Hartselle Church of Christ, Hartselle, AL, a link to, www.austinvillecoc.org which is the Website of Austinville Church of Christ, Decatur, AL, and a link to www.northcobbchurch.org, which is the Church of Christ at North Cobb, Kennesaw, GA. Please visit those Websites also; you will be blessed.

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“The LORD is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, \ but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).



Christ is the light of the world, a beacon of hope

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