



A Spiritual Encouragement Message
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Longsuffering, Patience, and Perseverance

by Andrew Lemus

Longsuffering, patience, and perseverance, three words that roll so easily off of our lips but intertwining them every day and every year into our lives is a great challenge. Turning the other cheek, patiently waiting for a friend, child, or loved one to come to repentance, persevering while everyone seems to be turning away from you, and the list goes on and on. Maintaining hope, faith, and optimism while dealing with the sins of our immediate family, church family, and neighbors can be a very daunting task.

It frustrates me when I hear that “the God of the Old Testament is not loving or merciful.” As I read through the inspired words in the Old Testament about the Patriarchs, the judges, the kings, Israel, and the world, the remarkable love that our God has for His creation is overwhelmingly evident.

As King Solomon finished the temple and brought in the Ark God said something to him that was said before Solomon and echoed after, that if you walk in the light you will be blessed but if you walk in darkness you would be walking away from God and His blessings, where destruction awaits (1Kings 9:1-9). Sadly, Solomon and the seven kings that followed him did exactly that, walked away from the Lord into the path of idolatry, rebellion, and sin.

For about one hundred and twenty years the kings of the northern kingdom and the citizens of Israel walked in darkness. Their hearts turned away from God towards the gods of foreigners (1 Kings 11:4-8, 12:25-33, 16:29-34). They began to pursue Ashtoreth, Milcom, Chemosh, Molech, and Baal. God’s people built high places, made golden calves, erected altars, and made wooden idols to honor and worship these false gods. God’s children deviated from God’s design and replaced it with their own altar, sacrifices, priesthood, feasts, and laws so that they could worship God the way they wanted to (1 Kings 13:32-33). As if all this wasn’t enough, they punished, persecuted, and killed those who held to God’s word and called for repentance (1 Kings 18:13-14).

God had Elijah stand in the midst of this rebellious, wicked, and sinful nation. Like Christ on Calvary, Elijah stood alone with His God trying to win the hearts of a people that had turned their back on God. Did you hear that? I mean did you really hear it? After everything those wicked Israelites did in the face of God (read what they did again!) He still loved them, cared for them, and wanted them as His own. He wanted them back and was willing to send in Elijah, perhaps even sacrifice him, in an effort

to win their hearts back to him. Just prior to the fire miraculously falling on the offering and consuming the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, the dust, and the water, Elijah spoke these beautiful words to God's rebellious people.

"O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back." 1 Kings 18:37

Our God is a God of longsuffering, patience, and perseverance. He is a God of Love. How comforting is it to witness the depth of God's love? Satan and those who serve him really want us to think that our sins are too much, our rebellious hearts are just too wicked, and that there is no hope for us who indulge in wicked ways. Don't be deceived, the love of God and His faith in you is far greater than Satan's condemnation. God's love saves us from condemnation, Praise Him!

Longsuffering, Patience, and Perseverance. When we put those words into the context of 1Kings 11-18 it takes on a whole new meaning for our own lives and how we treat others. Be patient while you are cheated on several times. Be longsuffering while someone you have abundantly served gives credit and glory to someone wicked. Be patient while your brother in Christ consistently deviates from the will of God and replaces it with his own version of godliness. Persevere while your neighbor punishes, persecutes, and attacks you for doing what is right. Pick up your cross and ascend onto your Mount Carmel daily with the hope that your obedience to God might cause a lost soul to repent.

Let us praise God for His longsuffering, patience, and perseverance while manifesting these attributes of love in our own lives.

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