

Longsuffering

Ponder: Is that quick temper pleasing to God?

Scripture: “But the fruit of the Spirit is . . . longsuffering . . .” (Gal. 5:22, NKJV).

I’ve known people who prided themselves on their hot temper. Some others shrug and say, “That’s just the way I am.” In fact, however, a short fuse is dangerous in both dynamite and people.

You’re made in God’s image. Does God ever become angry? Assuredly so! But one characteristic of God’s nature is to be longsuffering. He expects that of you as well.

W. E. Vine provides this superb definition of longsuffering: “that 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” (Expository Dictionary, p. 12).

In Exod. 34:6, God expressed His nature to Moses: “the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth.” But centuries before Moses, “the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared” (1 Pet. 3:20). Though people had thoroughly corrupted themselves, God warned and waited over a century before finally bringing the flood to destroy them.

God didn’t obliterate Saul of Tarsus as he wreaked havoc on the church, but patiently brought him to repentance and salvation. “However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life” (1 Tim. 1:16). To this day, every minute that the Father waits before sending Jesus to judge the world is another day for sinners to repent and obey the gospel. As Peter wrote, “the longsuffering of our God is salvation” (2 Pet. 3:15).

It’s too easy just to “blow your stack” at people when they irk you. But Paul listed “outbursts of wrath” among the works of the flesh, not the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:20). Part of walking worthily of our calling is to behave “with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love” (Eph. 4:2).

Watch that temper! Be like God – be longsuffering!

Song: “O To Be Like Thee”

Prayer: Merciful God, we thank You for Your longsuffering toward us. Please forgive us for being quick-tempered, and help us to be more like Jesus. In His name, Amen.