

**Gratitude: Lovingkindness & Longsuffering Defined; Deuteronomy 34:6-7; Romans 2:4****L. Lovingkindness & Longsuffering Defined**

In order for the righteousness of God to permit justice not to immediately remove the imperfect sinner from history then disobedience must be dealt with in a fashion which does not compromise divine integrity.

**Dr. Merrill F. Unger's Bible Dictionary** defines longsuffering as “*that disposition of God in accordance with which he delays the punishments of men.*”

There are several passages which demonstrate God’s benevolent policies towards believers.

**Deuteronomy 34:6** - Then the Lord passed by in front of Moses and proclaimed, “The Lord, YHWH Elohim, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth,

**Deuteronomy 34:7** - Who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, Who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”

We have recently noted that these expressions of leniency display a combination of characteristics from divine essence which function under divine policy. Lovingkindness expresses the combination of unconditional love with grace and associates them with forgiveness and mercy.

God's unconditional love is virtuous and thus based on His own integrity which consists of perfect righteousness and justice. His integrity must not be compromised. However, He may be gracious towards man.

Grace means unmerited favor. His favor to us finds its merit in the sacrificial spiritual death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Because, according to Revelation 13:8, the “*Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world,*” then God may apply Christ’s payment for sin to the sinful believer.

Lovingkindness is the translation of the Hebrew word *hesed* and refers to one’s loyalty to established standards. These established standards are found in perfect righteousness but delay and forgiveness are allowed because of the sacrifice of the Messiah.

Longsuffering is from two Hebrew words: *arek* + ‘*appayim*, meaning “*slow to anger.*”

Since God cannot be associated with sin then this must be classified as an anthropopathism—language of accommodation used by the Holy Spirit to describe to the finite mind of man divine policies in terms of human frame of reference. However, this is not “*slowness to anger,*” but as Dr. Unger points out, “*delay of punishments.*”

So, longsuffering also involves righteousness and justice but adds the principles of unconditional love and logistical grace. Punishment is deserved but it is delayed. Forgiveness is available through confession. Confession appropriates the work of Christ on the cross which justice applies to the sins confessed.

Lovingkindness grants forgiveness and delays punishment under mercy. Longsuffering indicates that this on-again, off-again procedure is allowed to continue so that the believer can recover, learn doctrine, focus on his mission, and execute the plan. Longsuffering takes into view the end result and thus through logistical grace support keeps the believer alive in order that he may recover and advance.

Paul reminds the Romans of God's longsuffering and lovingkindness as he admonishes them to take advantage of these benevolent gestures in:

**Romans 2:4** - Do you disparage the riches of His gracious generosity, clemency, and patience, not knowing that the graciousness of God brings you to repentance?

The Greek words used in this verse amplify our point:

1. *chrestos* - "gracious generosity;" involves goodness, kindness, and gentleness. This very definitely is the expression of unconditional love.
2. *anochē* - "clemency"; lit: "to hold back." Indicates a delay in punishment or a suspense of wrath which must eventually be exercised unless the sinner accepts God's conditions, i.e., rebound.
3. *makrothumia* - "patience"; Refers to our Hebrew words for 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.

From all of this restraint we can discern the divine purpose for it all: although divine righteousness has every right to order justice to execute immediate punishment, unconditional love associated with grace delays punishment and in mercy sustains the believer with logistical support with the intent to influence him to confess his sins.

All of these characteristics and policies of divine essence may be wrapped into the nutshells of lovingkindness and longsuffering. However, when a believer enters into a permanent state of carnality, justice must eventually become involved in the execution of punishment.

Under Operation Longsuffering, the justice of God operates under two laws which are administered in two stages. Stage 1 is the Law of Volitional Responsibility, while stage 2 is the Law of Divine Punitive Action. that happiness was more powerful as a problem-solving device than the imputation of our sins was as an adversity.

It was because of perfect happiness in His soul that Jesus Christ was able to endure the cross. Total happiness is an indicator that the Lord completely understood the implications of His work on the cross—He was assigned the duty of being our substitute before the judgment bar of God.

Jesus Christ understood the mission He had in the salvation plan of God. As with any operation, the mission is more important than the individuals involved.

Perfect happiness constitutes the individual's total orientation and adjustment to the mission and steadfastness of purpose all the way to its successful conclusion. No matter what the personal cost, you remain loyal to the mission because your reputation is never more important than the mission's success. Regardless of the insults, regardless of the emotions, the pain, the suffering, the indignities, the shame, Christ endured the cross because of inner happiness.

Principle: Never let the body dictate policy to the soul. The soul must always be in authority over the desires of the body.

And the body includes the brain including its limbic system in the paleocortex where resides the sinful nature's SWAT team of emotions.

Jesus Christ had every opportunity to rightfully claim unfair treatment, unjust jurisprudence, and undeserved suffering. He did not. It is this demonstration of perfect happiness under maximum pressure that reveals to us the ultimate problem-solving device for the Christian marriage.

**Ephesians 5:25** - Husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up as a substitute for her.

Jesus Christ endured the cross so that our sin problem might be solved. He did this voluntarily and as a substitute for us “*while we were yet sinners.*” Using the same motivation, believers are to unconditionally love their wives as Christ loved the church by enduring any pressure, absorbing any insult, disregarding any indignity, real or imagined, as a sacrifice on her behalf.

It is this same attitude which must be transferred to friendships, family members, fellow believers, fellow citizens, and eventually to your enemies. For one of the proclamations our Lord issued from the cross was:

**Luke 23:34** - Father, forgive them [**His enemies**]; for they do not know what they are doing.

The gratitude which is deployed under +H enters one into Occupation with Christ. By contrast, a zero reading on the Gratitude Gauge creates a vacuum into which bitterness and irrationality invades the soul.

Recovery begins with the first problem-solving device of Rebound. As inculcation of Biblical truth develops, the believer facilitates the spiritual life in his soul and brain.

However, negative happiness results in self-pity and a facilitation of human good and evil as problem-solving devices. Self-pity is a part of living under the three arrogant skills beginning with self-justification—whatever has you in self-pity is not your fault. This process of cosmic orientation and adjustment leads to a buildup of venom in the soul.

As God sent the cobra and the viper to balance the venom in the souls of the first-generation Jews, likewise He will send some appropriate venom-balancing exigency into our lives. This puts the believer on the Road of the Loser Believer. We must learn to evaluate the circumstances of our lives so as not to take this tragic cosmic detour.

If your Gratitude Gauge is on the advance, then you will become skillful in the practice of placing unfair, unjust, and undeserved circumstances into the hands of the Supreme Court of Heaven. We may be confident that Jesus Christ who is the Chief Justice, will execute justice:

**Romans 12:19** - for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.