

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Theology Proper, Session 17, Communicable Attributes, Part 4, God is Good, and Patient or Longsuffering

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Theology Proper or God. This is session 17, Communicable Attributes, Part 4, God is Good and Patient or Longsuffering.

We return to our study of Theology Proper or the Doctrine of God.

Let us pray. Gracious Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we exalt you as the true and living God. We thank you for your word, for your spirit, for your people, for fellowship.

Lead us in your truth. Encourage our hearts. Stretch our minds according to your word, we pray.

Work in us according to your good pleasure, we ask through Jesus Christ, the mediator. Amen. We've been studying God's attributes or qualities.

Those that have been called incommunicable historically, that is unique attributes. God is living, one, spirit, infinite, present, all-powerful, all-knowing, eternal, unchanging and great. We're trying to now finish up his shared or communicable attributes.

Those that have some semblance in his human creatures. God is personal, sovereign, wise, truthful, faithful, holy, righteous, loving, gracious and merciful. We have these three remaining.

God is good, by which we don't mean the opposite of bad, but we mean generous. God is patient or long-suffering, and God is glorious, a very appropriate attribute with which to conclude. God is good or generous.

By good or generous we mean God cares about and cultivates the well-being of all his creatures. You heard me right. Not only believers and unbelievers, but God is good to all his creatures.

Goodness is used of God's name, his whole character. This time man beat fly, but man also made mess. Pardonnez-moi.

But usually the ideas of goodness speak of God's attribute of dealing benevolently and liberally with his creatures. Indeed, quote, every good and every perfect gift is from above. James 1:17, coming down from the father of lights.

James 1:17. He is good to both believers and unbelievers. Matthew 5:45 from Jesus Sermon on the Mount, "for he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

Matthew 5:45. That is, not only do Christian farmers get sun and rain to cause their crops to grow and flourish, but unsaved farmers do as well. God gives them sun and rain as well.

He's good to both believers and unbelievers. Images of God that pertain to his being generous or good include parent and shepherd. Parent.

Psalms 145:19. I thought we did it before, but I love this verse. Psalm 145 is packed with attributes of God.

The eyes of all, 145:15, look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. That's just so beautiful.

The Lord is near to all who call on him, 18 to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desire of those who fear him. He also hears their cry and saves them.

He is a good God, a good father. In Matthew 6, Jesus is speaking against worry in the sermon on the mount and says believers can trust God to give them to meet their needs. Your heavenly father feeds the birds, Matthew 6:26, and they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns.

Are you not of much more value than birds? If God closed the grass, verse 30, of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? For the Gentiles seek after all these things, verse 32, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Psalm 145 9, simply put, the Lord is good to everyone.

He has compassion. His compassion rests on all he has made. Psalm 145 9. Besides, God's goodness is not confined to human beings.

He also cares for and provides for the animals. David even sings of God's goodness in feeding them. Psalm 145:15 and 16.

All eyes look to you. You give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing, which we now have read the second time.

God's goodness leads his people to the promised land, where he shows special care for the poor. Psalm 68:10. You provided for the poor by your goodness.

Psalm 68 10. God's goodness, which lasts forever, contrasts with that of humankind. For, quote, all humanity is grass, and all its goodness is like the flower of the field.

Close quote. In its brevity, Isaiah 46 and 7. Creation and redemption reveal God's goodness. After creating, God saw all that he had made and it was very good.

Not just good, but very good. Genesis 1:31. Nehemiah attests to God's goodness when the Lord leads Israel to the promised land.

Nehemiah 9:25. They ate, were filled, became prosperous, and delighted in God's great goodness. Paul is offended when the people of Lystra mistake Barnabas and him for gods.

Genesis points them to the good creator. When Paul went to seminary in Tarsus, to Tarsus seminary, of course he had courses in missiology. But he never had one in which you were invited to the worship service, and you were the deity.

Yikes! They mistook Barnabas, who was older than Paul. I picture him with a big manly white beard and Paul, the speaker, God, speaker. They mistook them for the head of the gods and then for the speaker God at Mercury as well.

And Paul and Barnabas spoke Koine Greek, as did the Lystrans, but they didn't understand Lyconian dialect, but they understood the body language of the priest of Zeus, who was ready to offer sacrifice, to sacrifice an animal for them, a bull. And they ripped their clothes and said, what are you doing? We're just men like you. Paul offended when the people of Lystra mistake Barnabas and him for gods.

Points them to the good creator, "he did what is good by giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons and filling you with food and filling your hearts with joy," Acts 14:17. As we'll see when we study God's, in another course, when we study God's revelation, there's both general revelation and special revelation. General revelation, as its name implies, goes to all people, everywhere, always.

Special revelation goes only to some people and it includes saving revelation. The general revelation is not saving. General Revelation has three subdivisions.

God reveals himself in his world, world, in his creation. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky, the firmament, and the expanse show his handiwork. Psalm 19:1. God reveals himself on the effects of the law written on the heart and the conscience, which is a kind of measuring stick that goes with the law written on the heart.

Romans 2:14 and 15. That is, human beings are moral creatures. Since the fall, immoral creatures needing the gospel.

But in any case, revelation in creation, revelation in conscience, and then revelation in providence or history. And that is what is spoken of there in Acts 14. Don't worship us.

We're just fellow human beings. Worship God, not human, not these mythological idols of Rome or Greece, because God is the one who gives you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, fruits and vegetables for you to enjoy, and even the joy you share in table fellowship, meeting around the table as family and friends, sharing each other's lives. All that is part of the goodness or generosity of God, and it serves as another way of God revealing himself in general that is non-salvific revelation.

God's great goodness gleams in redemption. It is evident in creation. It just shines forth like a beacon in redemption.

It pleases his Old Testament people, as he declares. Jeremiah 31:14. My people will be satisfied with my goodness.

Jeremiah 31:14. God invites his people to taste and see that the Lord is good. Psalm 34:8, which Peter repeats in 1 Peter chapter 2. In other words, experience God by faith, and you will see he is a loving and generous or good God.

Believers cry out to him. Psalm 25:7. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my acts of rebellion in keeping with your faithful love. Remember me because of your goodness, Lord.

Psalm 25:7. Walking with God, each one trusts that only goodness and faithful love will pursue him all the days of his life. Psalm 23:6. Let's look at that because it's so familiar to us. Perhaps we don't feel its force.

Although some, including people with shepherding experience, try to sustain the shepherd imagery throughout the psalm, that is incorrect. The shepherd imagery goes through the first four verses. The Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

For you are with me, your rod, and your staff. They comfort me. I shall not want is the key.

We will not want for spiritual refreshment, for physical nourishment, for divine guidance, for protection, even in death, for God's comfort. Verse 5 is not talking about shepherd imagery anymore. Already, Charles Spurgeon saw this, but rather, it shifts to a house.

I'll dwell in the house of the Lord forever and a host who prepares a table, a table with food on it before me. It's a metonymy for what is placed on the table, food and drink. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil, a common cultural greeting in the Old Testament. Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee complains, I came in, you didn't anoint me with oil, you didn't give me a kiss of greeting, but this woman has not stopped kissing my feet and anointing them with oil and using her hair to clean my feet. Her glory, her hair.

You prepare a table before me. You, God is the host. He's the shepherd who cares for his people so they don't lack what they need.

He is the host, and we are his honored guests. God stoops. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

This is post-fall pre-consummation. It's in a tough world. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows.

Different image, but once again, God here, this time as the host, is meeting his people's needs abundantly. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. Surely goodness, there is our concept, and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

1 Timothy 1 says that Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. It doesn't mean they didn't exist before. They were more in the dark in the Old Testament and now they're brightly illuminated and to be in the house forever seems like a general understanding of living after death and enjoying God's fellowship forever, as the word says.

Goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and after death, presumably, I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever, in life and afterlife, in the afterlife, if you will. Though not as pronounced as its New Testament counterpart, God's future goodness is something that Old Testament saints trust in. Psalm 31 19.

How great is your goodness that you have steward up for those who fear you. Psalm 31:19. The flower of God's goodness comes to full bloom in the New Testament, of course.

God has given us, uniquely among the holy books of the world, a historical book. It's his story and there is progress of revelation as we move from the Old Testament to the New because the Christ comes and that changes everything and he sends the spirit at Pentecost and that changes everything. Peter chastens hypocrites.

Romans 2 4. Do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? Romans 2 4. Believers are ecstatic. Titus 3:4 and 5. When the kindness of God, our savior, and his love for mankind appeared, he saved us. Titus 3:4 and 5. As we anticipate future and final redemption, we have confidence because God, quote, has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of him, who called us by his own glory and goodness.

2 Peter 1:3. How shall we respond to God's goodness? With praise, of course. 2 Chronicles 7:3. We praise him for he is good, for his faithful love endures forever. 2 Chronicles 7:3. We suffer, if need be, in hope for, "we know that all things work together for the good of those who love God."

Romans 8:28. I once taught a very bright student who was already a Ph.D. in mathematics from Cornell.

And it was pursuing an M.A. degree at a little school in Hatfield, Pennsylvania called Biblical Theological Seminary, where I was a, at first, young professor. Gary was a really straightforward guy; what you saw was what you got. And so, one summer, he told me he was doing this independent study on Romans 8:28.

And he said I said, well, how did it go? He says it was a waste of time. He's a good fellow, but he's just like that. He's blunt.

It was a waste of time. I said, what do you mean? He says, well, I spent, I forget what it was, 50 hours studying the Greek and the commentaries and the flow of thought and the theology. What do you, what do you mean? He says, he says, it turns out it means exactly what we thought it meant.

What is that? In this context, it means even in spite of present sufferings, God is good. God takes care of his people. He causes all things to work together for the good of those who love him, of those he saved for thee by his grace.

I said, Gary, you didn't waste time. You saved me 50 hours. Remember, context is king.

As a former colleague taught me to say, we know all things work together for good. We can't always see it, but we believe it. God ultimately works all things for the good of those who love him.

They love him because he foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified them. Romans 8:30--29 and 30.

As we remember God's care for the birds and the wildflowers, we trust his goodness to provide the necessities of life. Matthew 6:25 through 34. I want to read the whole passage.

It is just so beautiful. And I did a little piecemeal thing, but to get the whole effect. It is good to read the whole.

The Sermon on the Mount is justly famous. One of the, is it five major sermons of Jesus that are included in the first gospel. Matthew 6:25.

Therefore, I tell you, Jesus says, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not of much of more value than they? And which of you, by being anxious, can add a single hour to his span of life? No one, as a matter of fact, you might shorten your life.

And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field and how they grow; they neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow was thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles, in this context, it means those who are outside the covenant, the unsaved people; the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly father knows you need them all.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Well, what comforting words. God is good. He will provide for his people.

And that has been the testimony of God's people throughout history. We reflect God's goodness furthermore in the difficult task of loving and praying for enemies. Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 44 and 43.

You have heard it was said: you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. An early edition of a very popular and good translation, which shall remain nameless and used to put Old Testament quotations in caps, put this whole thing in caps. You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

Only the first part should be in caps. The second part was not a quotation from the Old Testament. The editors were fooled.

They corrected it. Give them credit. And as I said, if you know what this translation is, it's fine.

It's very careful and so forth. You have heard, and done by a godly and scholarly committee, you have heard it was said, you should love your neighbor, which indeed it was said, and hate your enemy. It was not said.

That was the Pharisaic interpretation of the first idea. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven. Then follow the words about his son and his reign going to all.

God is good to all. His people should do the same, even by his grace, seeking to love their enemies and certainly praying for them. And we walk in the spirit and yield the fruit of the spirit, which includes goodness.

Matthew chapter, Galatians, excuse me, chapter five. My own understanding of this passage is that it is a big chiasm, the center of which is the deeds of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit. The works of the flesh are evident, Galatians 5:19. First of all, sexual sin, sexual immorality, impurity, and sensuality.

Then, pardon the oxymoron, religious sins, idolatry, sorcery. But most of all, interpersonal sins reflect the needs of the southern Galatian churches. Enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

I warn you, as I warned you before, those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Those whose lifestyles are characterized by the deeds of the flesh. It's a very bad sign, is how I would say it from a pastoral perspective.

We're not quick to judge, but that is a very bad sign indeed. In contrast, the fruit of the spirit. Now, believers are obviously expected to be involved.

First, Galatians 5:16, walk by the spirit and you'll not gratify the desires of the flesh. So, this is actually on the, well, toward the outside of my chiasm. I don't have time to do the whole thing.

5:25, if we live by the spirit, let us also keep in step with the spirit. So, on both sides of the deeds of the flesh, fruit of the spirit, walk by the spirit, 5:16, keep in step with the spirit, 5:25. Believers are commanded, exhorted, and commanded to go step in step, step by step, depending on the Holy Spirit to produce this fruit. They're responsible, but ultimately it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

And that is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things, there's no law. You say, you know, I've actually, but I haven't read this passage about union with Christ yet.

Here it is. It's all over the place. And those who belong to Christ, Jesus, have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Belonging to Christ involves co-crucifixion because we died with him. In any case, the point is, God is good and his people, by his saving grace and enabling grace, reflect his goodness as they pursue the spirit and as the spirit produces goodness as part of his fruit in their lives. Not only so, God is good or generous, he also is patient or long-suffering.

By patient or long-suffering, we mean God is slow to get angry and does not always immediately punish sin. This neglected quality of God, at least today, is also called forbearance. Forbearance, long-suffering, patience.

The problem with patience is it seems too weak to us as we use it of human beings. The others sound more strenuous and that's good. Long-suffering or forbearance, although those words are not exactly current in our language.

So, I use all three. God is patient, God is long-suffering, God is forbearing. When God reveals his identity, his name to Moses in the great exposition of his character in Exodus 34, he includes patience, proclaiming of himself, quote, Exodus 34 6, the Lord, the Lord is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth.

Exodus 34 6, see also Psalm 103:8 and 145:8. Psalm 103 is another gem. Don't forget, in other words, remember the benefits of the Lord, which include forgiveness and love especially. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, Psalm 103 8, and abounding in steadfast love.

He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us as according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as the highest

heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him.

And as far as he is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As the Father shows compassion on his children, so the Lord shows compassion on those who fear him. For he knows our frame, he sure does, he made us, he remembers that we are dust.

We won't turn to Psalm 145, verse 8. I do believe we read it previously. Under attack from ruthless men who hate him, David prays, Psalm 86 15 and 16. But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth.

Turn to me and be gracious to me, Psalm 86:15 and 16. An image of God that reflects his patience is that of a shepherd who patiently searches for one lost sheep. I'm referring to Jesus' parable of the 99 sheep and the one who strays, Matthew 18:10 through 14.

As we've tried to do consistently through the attributes of God, we try to mention one or two biblical theological pictures that may or may not be worth a thousand words, but they're biblical, and they're good, and they're helpful that go along with his prose that sets forth his attributes. God's patience is evident in Old Testament history. Genesis recounts that when God sees the widespread corruption of humanity, he prepares to judge it in the form of a flood to drown humankind and the world over which it is to rule.

Genesis 6 5 through 13. Peter recalls the Noahic flood but notes God's patience. 1 Peter 3 20.

God patiently waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared. 1 Peter 3 20. In another event, when God is so angry with his rebellious people that he wants to destroy them, Moses pleads with God not to do so for the sake of his reputation.

Get out of the way, Moses. I'm going to blast these stubborn and stiff people, and they will no longer be the Israelites. They'll be the Mosesites.

Moses was not after that glory. Rather, he cared for his people. He and Paul was willing to go to hell for his people.

Romans 10:1. Wow. I better make sure I'm not teaching false, giving bad references. It's either 9. Yeah, it is.

I am wrong. It's 9:1. 9:3 of Romans. I'm glad I checked that one.

Retract the statement about 10:1. He's praying for his people there, but he's in 9:3. He's willing to go to hell to be separated from Christ for them. Yikes. Oh, the Lord.

Moses calls upon the Lord in his own character. "The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in faithful love, forgiving iniquity and rebellion." Numbers 14:18.

Moses pleads with God not to destroy his people who deserve destruction for the sake of God's reputation, his being forbearing. Slow to anger just keeps coming up again. Exodus 34 leaves its mark where God reveals his name to Moses, leaves its mark on the Old Testament.

It is all over the place alluded to and sometimes even quoted. Isaiah warns the people against trying the patience of God. Isaiah 7:13.

Levites survey Israel's history, leading to captivity, and pray to God. Numbers not Nehemiah, excuse me, 9:30. Lord, you were patient with them for many years and your spirit warned them through your prophets, but they would not listen.

Therefore, you handed them over to the surrounding peoples, though not cited as often as God's love and grace. His patience also relates to salvation. Paul slams abusers of God's patience.

"Do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?" Romans 2:4 again, because it mentions multiple attributes of God. Christ's cross is a propitiation that satisfies God's righteousness because Jesus needed to make full atonement for human sin. In the Old Testament, he made atonement through animal sacrifice, but not the full atonement that made the animal sacrifices.

That is, in God's restraint, he passed over the sins previously committed. Romans 3:25. Paul tells why God withholds judgment for those who rebel against him.

He "endured with much patience, objects of wrath prepared for destruction. And what if he did this to make known the riches of his glory on objects of mercy that he prepared beforehand for glory." Romans 9:22-23. God puts up with the wicked all day long and doesn't hasten judgment but delays it, so to speak, giving more time for people to hear the gospel, repent, and turn to the Lord.

As with many of God's attributes, no surprise, Christ's scripture ascribes divine patience to Christ as well. Paul thanks Jesus for putting him quote, Formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man into the ministry. 1 Timothy 1:13.

Paul rejoices in God's Christ's patience "I receive mercy for this reason." 1 Peter 1:16. So that in me, the worst of them sinners, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his

extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life.

1 Timothy 1:16. Patience comes readily to the apostles' minds as they await Christ's return. Peter teaches Christians to quote, Regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Just as our dear brother Paul has written to you, according to the wisdom given to him. 2 Peter 3:15. See also verse 9. James urges in chapter 5. Therefore, brothers and sisters, be patient until the Lord's coming.

James is neglected. My friend Christopher Morgan wrote a book on the theology of James for PNR publishing. And it is indeed a neglected theology.

Is it as important as Paul? No. Or as Romans? No. Is it part of scripture? Yes.

We should attend to all parts of scripture, especially all parts of the New Testament that are built upon the old. Be patient, therefore, brothers. James 5:7. Until the coming of the Lord.

See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth. Being patient about it until it receives he reflects Palestinian agricultural meteorology, being patient about it until it receives the early and late rains. You also be patient.

Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged. Behold, the judge is standing at the door.

As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. James 5, verse 11. Behold, we consider those blessed to remain steadfast.

You have heard of the steadfastness of Job and you've seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. God wants his patience to be seen in the lives of his people. Patience is therefore a fruit of the Spirit.

Love, joy, peace, patience. And Paul first describes both Christian love and hope as patient. 1 Corinthians 13:4. See also Romans 8:25.

Like God, we too are to be slow to anger. James 1:19. We will conclude this lecture with this verse in its context.

James 1:19. Know this, my beloved brothers. Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.

They are related. If I'm focusing on hearing, which is hard for me, frankly, then I'm not yakking so much. And if I'm doing those two things, I get angry less, at least less quickly, because I'm hearing others and I'm not saying things that could get me in trouble.

Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

A remarkable statement about the Word of God: God is good or generous, patient or long-suffering. In our next lecture, we'll conclude the communicable attributes of God appropriately by saying our God is glorious.

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