
THE HARMONY OF THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD IN SALVATION AND THE JUSTICE OF GOD

The Character of God in Salvation

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ABSTRACT

The Character of God shapes our understanding of the redemptive story. When we see who God is, we come to take hold of why we need salvation through Christ our Lord. In this study we are going to look at what the Bible teaches us about the Character of God in salvation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction	1
II. What is forbearance?	1
III. Short History of the forbearance of God 1	
A. Adam and Eve and the Promise of the Messiah.....	1
B. Noah and the flood.....	2
C. Abraham and the promise of the Messiah.....	2
IV. Summary on the forbearance of God and the justice of God	3

THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD IN SALVATION AND THE JUSTICE OF GOD

“Because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished”- Romans 3:25

I. INTRODUCTION

What is forbearance? What is the purpose of God forbearing with mankind? How can we reconcile God’s forbearance and His justice? How does the promise of the Messiah of upholding the glory of God to the fullest: that is all His attributes and His divine perfections? These questions are important to consider in our study.

¹ Abbott-Smith, G. (1922). *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (p. 40). New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.

II. What is forbearance?

What is forbearance? The Greek word for forbearance is “ἀνοχή (anochee[added]) 1. in classics., a holding back, delaying (MM, VGT, s.v.). 2. forbearance, delay of punishment: Ro 2:4; 3:26.”¹

In light of our discussion of God’s justice in salvation, we are looking at the delay of punishment by God as expressed in Romans 2:4; 3:26. Because we learn that this forbearance is in order to provide man with an opportunity to repent and turn to God in faith for salvation in Christ our Lord. So let us look at the short history of the forbearance of God toward mankind for the purpose of man’s salvation in the promised Messiah, who is Christ.



Figure 1 Short history of the forbearance of God to the time of Christ

III. SHORT HISTORY OF THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD

The reason for this short history of God’s forbearance is to show that “God is the only reasonable explanation we have for the existence of mankind.”²

A. Adam and Eve and the Promise of the Messiah

When Adam and Eve sinned against God, they defiled the command of God, which is not just a command but the expression of His sovereignty on His creation as God. It is clear in the moral commands of God that He has exalted His

“God is the only reasonable explanation we have for the existence of mankind.”

² Lyengamuwa W (2021). *The necessity of the death of Christ for the forgiveness of sin.* Ambassador International University

worthiness as God in them. We learn that disobedience toward God's commands is immoral and it is an action worth punishment as God said: "*for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*" (Genesis 2:17, KJV). Now, we would expect the instant death of man both physical and spiritual after disobeying God, but we see something unexpected and that is the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden and the giving of the promise of the Messiah. They are now separated from God in their banishment from the Garden, which carries the implication of facing the consequences of disobedience—which is their immediate spiritual death and later their physical death. Now, it took 930 years for Adam to die physically in fulfilling what was said, "*for dust you are and to dust you will return*" (Genesis 3:19, NIV).

B. Noah and the flood

Even though Adam died as God said he would together with Eve, they left children behind them, which is an indication of God's grace and mercy in allowing the existence of man to continue for the purpose of the salvation promised in the coming of the seed of the woman. The question remains, what is God going to do with the sins of men as they multiply if He is to uphold His justice in all generations? We learn that as the generations of Adam increased wickedness also increased, "*The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time*" (Genesis 6:5, NIV).

Judgement fell on that first world for God destroyed it with water except the household of Noah which found favor with God because Noah was found righteous for, he believed in God.

So, we learn that, even though God forbear with man for the purpose of man's salvation it does not mean that God will not pass judgment when man continues in sinning. In every generation of man, God has been consistent in revealing His holiness and righteousness. Noah was a preacher of righteousness in that generation, which indicate God's *forbearance* toward that generation before its destruction. Even though the Messiah did not come in that first world, salvation was still by faith in the promised Messiah.

The world filled by the children of Noah.

Through the children of Noah, the world was

filled again with mankind.

Just as

the first

world increased in wickedness so is the world that was filled by the children of Noah. The Bible says, "*The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: 'Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done'*" (Genesis 8:21, NIV). The condition of this world also teaches us that as we continue, fulfilling the command God gave to Noah and his children that is be fruitful and multiply, **God in his kindness has chosen to forbears with man.**

C. Abraham and the promise of the Messiah

The promise about the Seed is revealed to the man called Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). God chose a line through which the Messiah should come. This line was to be the light to all the people of the earth as

"As we continue fulfilling the command God gave to Noah and his children that is to be fruitful and multiply, God in his kindness has chosen to forbears with man"

they proclaim the Messiah through whom the nations would be blessed.

D. Christ

When Christ came, it is clearer to us that God indeed has been faithful in forbearing with us. And that if it was not for His forbearance we would not be here. The forbearance of God in Christ helps us know that it is in both the accomplishment of His work of salvation in Christ and in the application of that work toward us by faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

IV. SUMMARY ON THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD AND THE JUSTICE OF GOD

What we are talking about is that there is a need for God to uphold His glory to the fullest in order to save us. Just as we see how His forbearance leads to repentance so it is necessary for God to uphold His justice fully if He were to save mankind from death. If God was to satisfy His justice without the promise, Adam and Eve would have been the end of the human race.

However, because of the promise, God's justice is fully upheld in His Son.

Therefore, we can see that from the time of Adam till

“If God was to satisfy his justice without the promise, Adam and Eve would have been the end of the human race and God would still be right in passing that judgement on man”

Christ came God never punished sin as it deserves to be punished. Because of that, families of the earth were able to multiply so that all may hope in the promised messiah for their salvation. When we speak this way—that is when we say “till Christ,” we simply mean that it is only in Christ that God has punished sin as supposed to be punished. Therefore, we can still apply the forbearance of God to each one of us today because God is still

acting that way toward man for his salvation through Jesus Christ His Son.

ANSWERING THE BIG QUESTION

Question: Why is man still here even though condemned?

Answer: God's plan of redemption is the reason for the continuation of the existence of man. We are told in Genesis 3:15 that God said, *“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”* Because of this promise the Bible teaches us something about the justice of God in His forbearance with man. Paul says, *“Because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished”* (Romans 3:25). Showing us that there is a delay in passing on of judgment in God's forbearance which is done for the purpose of allowing man to repent and receive life from God through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord upon whom the justice of God was satisfied for our salvation.

Key Doctrine taught

- The harmony of the Character of God in salvation

Key verses

- Romans 3:25
- Genesis 3:15
- Genesis 12:1-3
- Genesis 6:5