

THE GLORY OF GOD SERIES

After Moses asked, "Lord, show me Your glory," the Lord appeared to him in Exodus 34: 6 *And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth."* We are considering all the components of the glory of God. See Moses asked Lord God show him His glory. God did show him His glory and God described the five parts of His glory, - mercy, gracious, longsuffering, abounding in goodness and truth. We have seen three of them - mercy, graciousness and goodness. Today we look at the fourth, which is the word *longsuffering*.

The word *longsuffering* is from a Hebrew word *erakhap*, which is a combination of two words, the word *slow* and the word *anger*. So, what God is saying about His *longsuffering* is that He is slow to anger. He is slow to exercise His wrath. So *longsuffering* brings to mind tolerance. Long suffering speaks about tolerance. The bible says that part of the glory of God is His tolerance. His tolerance to our imperfection, His tolerance to our sins, His tolerance to our failings, His tolerance to all the disobedience present in the world. God has tremendous tolerance. We realize that God's patience outlasts us. God's ability to put up with us outlasts our ability to put up with others. So *longsuffering* is the ability to tolerate, to remain the same in spite and despite of all that may come. It is a tremendous ability because the opposite of *longsuffering* in the dictionary would be possibly *impatience*. If we go by the Hebrew word *erakhap*, slow to anger then the opposite of *longsuffering* is quick to anger. That's the actual Hebrew word – it is slow to anger. The opposite of that will be very quick to anger and quick to react. *Longsuffering* is in the whole of the bible. It starts from the time sin came into the world. *Longsuffering* in the New Testament points to the sufferings of Christ and points to sufferings that He prophesied that the righteous will go through.

We need to understand the concept of suffering. We are not talking about suffering from sickness, diseases, consequences of sins etc. We need to understand the suffering of Christ and the sufferings of a Christian believer in Christ. There is such a thing as Christian suffering. We believe in the Word of Faith message. We believe in God's ability and willingness to prosper His people. We believe in God's divine ability to heal His people and keep them in health. At the same time, we realize that there is a Christian aspect of what we call Christian suffering. As long as we are born again, we need to understand the truth involved in *longsuffering* because it has relevance to increasing the glory of God in our life. The amount of glory that you taste is proportional to the amount of suffering you have endured. It is important for us to understand that there is a relationship between the glory of God and *longsuffering*. This kind of *longsuffering* does not include suffering from the consequences of sin, sicknesses etc. Some Christians think that suffering for the Lord means having sicknesses and diseases. There is no need to suffer from sin and sicknesses since Jesus has redeemed us from them.

It is a different aspect altogether. In order to understand Christian suffering and *longsuffering*, let us see what God is tolerating here. What does God tolerate? The Bible does record God's amazing grace, *longsuffering* and great patience but there

were a few times when God's wrath was also shown. We want to understand what provoked God so that we can flow with God. If we want to understand God we need to understand His mercy, His goodness, His graciousness, but we have to understand the other part of God - His wrath. Jonathan Edwards in his early days of revival preached a sermon called "Sinners In The Hands Of An Angry God." If God is angry, you got no covering. He preached under such an anointing on God's anger and wrath that many who heard the sermon literally clutched the pew for fear that they will fall into hell somewhere between the beginning and the end of the sermon. To preach that kind of message, you need an anointing. We need to understand what makes God angry. We want to please God. In order to please God, we want to know what makes His glad and what makes His sad and what makes Him angry.

There are several Hebrew words for sin. The Greek has a word for sin called *hamartia*. *Hamartia* literally means to fall short and it is an all inclusive term and word. It includes all the various forms that are described in the Hebrew. *Hamartia* means sin. The word *hamartia* is not a common word used in the Roman times where they missed something. Just like we use the English word *missed the mark*, it literally means to miss the mark. So, when the Roman archers are practicing shooting at the target and the arrow missed the bull eye, the Roman soldier will say, "*Hamartia*." You missed it. That means to miss the mark; to miss the standard that is what the Greek word says which is all-inclusive.

Now the Hebrew has several words for sin. You may have notice on the positive side there are also many words for God's commandments. The bible uses the word *commandment*, *statutes*, *ordinances*, and *precepts*. These are special words for the different aspects of God's commandments. All these things say something. Commandment has to do with His moral code. Statutes and ordinances come from the same Hebrew word, which speaks about religious ceremonies that He has ordained. Precepts talk about examples or principles that may vary in its application from one situation to the other.

If you want to see the fullness of how God's Word is described, read Ps. 119. The whole Psalm is about the Word. The psalmist uses so many descriptions about the Word. He calls the Word statute. He calls the Word precepts. So, when the bible uses positive Hebrew words for God's commandments, it tells us something. Like for example, a moral code like the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament is still applicable to the New Testament. And at the same time, we have new ordinances like the ordinance of the Holy Communion. That is a Christian ordinance. It would be a statute. Or the ordinance of water baptism. Or the ordinance that is prescribed in James 5, "If anyone is sick let the elders anoint him or her with oil" that is an ordinance. An ordinance is a method that God has prescribed. A commandment speaks about obedience to God's prescribed code of conduct. That is on the positive side.

On the negative side, the bible uses different words for sin in the Old Testament. There is a word *transgression* and there is a word *iniquity*. All these are special words that God uses. So why does the bible use all these aspects and how do we relate to God's tolerance in our life? That is where we look at Scriptures and lets start first in the Old Testament passage when God spoke to Abraham. Gen. 15:13 *Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."* When God was speaking to Abraham, the Amorites

were in existence. God was saying He could tolerate them for another four hundred over years. That is longsuffering. God say says, "I can tolerate them for another four hundred odd years until they really turn bad. That is when I am going to send you all to judge them." The Israelites came out of the land of Egypt and into the Promised Land. On the way, they were God's instruments to bring judgment on the Amorites. God knew there were iniquities but God said the measure of their iniquities was not complete yet. It has not reached the stage where He would call down His wrath. God is displeased but is not provoked to wrath yet. That shows His longsuffering towards the Amorites.

Then in Gen. 18 God said something about Sodom and Gomorrah. Verse 20 *And the Lord said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave. Notice that God did not just step into Sodom and Gomorrah and immediately punish them for sin. He punished them only when their sin reached grave proportions. Did God compromised on the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah? No. It is God's tolerance and longsuffering towards imperfection. We need to learn from God about His tolerance and longsuffering. We need to learn the longsuffering of God. God is not easily provoked. He is slow to anger. He has a great tolerance level. What is your tolerance level? Our longsuffering has something to do with the glory of God.*

Lets look over to the book of Exodus at some of the examples of the anger or rather the wrath of God. Exodus 32 that was before God showed His glory to Moses. In verse 1 *Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us, for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." So the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving too, and made a molded calf. Meanwhile Moses was talking to God up in the mountain. In verse 7 while God was giving him all the patterns and all these things. And the Lord said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought your out of the land of Egypt!" And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."*

This event provoked God greatly. The Israelites have seen God's mighty judgments on the Egyptians for one year. They have seen the workings of God more that the average person. They saw the ten plagues in Egypt. They saw the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night visible everyday. They saw the Red Sea parted. They saw the supernatural provision of water. They saw the Lord's grace in supplying manna everyday. They saw the manifest glory of God on the mountain. And after all those things they said, "Let us make our own gods. So there was a background before God got angry. See they were supposed to know better than that. But the most important point is that God said they have gone against His commandments. They have already been given the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. This event of making molten calves came after the giving of the Ten Commandments. God is giving further revelations to Moses. They have already transgressed to a certain extend. You notice that in Exodus 20 God has already spoken to a certain extent to Moses. And there was a certain revelation given onto the people. They should be aware of it. But the point is the word used here is the word *commandment*. Now there are degrees of God's reaction to different types of

disobedience. The fastest way to provoke God is to break His commandments. God's commandments are the highest commandments followed by the others like statutes, ordinances and precepts. The commandments are the supreme and highest law. The easiest way to provoke God is to break His commandments. Especially the commandment that says, "Thou shall have no other god before Me." This is replacing God Himself.

So we realize that God is slow to anger. But His reaction to different types of transgressions is different. Compare this to the four hundred years of the Amorites' transgression. God used a different word - their iniquity is not yet complete. In our Christian experience with sin, we realize there are different types of sin. Sometimes there is a sin of commission. Sometimes there is a sin of omission. And sometimes there is a sin of ignorance. There are many types of sins. The beautiful thing is that the Hebrew language has specific words for each type of sin. God weighs different types of sin in different context differently. We realize that sin is sin. But there is a different degree of the sin of commission as it is of omission as it is in ignorance. Now of all types of sin, the sin of ignorance is the easiest to be excused and you got a longer grace period for repentance. But sins of commission are only committed after you have knowledge. See after you have knowledge on what is right and wrong, you have shifted from ignorance to the possibility of committing the sin of commission. The sin of omission may to a certain extend be due to ignorance. However, the other part of the sin of omission is that despite knowing what is right or wrong, you were just plain lazy to do what you ought to do. In the sin of ignorance, you completely did not know the matter of the transgression. In the sin of omission, you may know it but you did not try to avoid committing this sin. Or you did not do it zealously. But the worse is the sin of commission.

Just want to look at some New Testament passages to show the reaction of God in the different areas so that we can understand our Papa God. In the book of Acts as Paul was preaching at the Areopagus in chapter 17. Paul made this interesting statement. Remember he is talking about the unknown god. This is the statement in verse 26 onwards. *And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being as also some of your own poets have said, "For we are also His offspring." "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked.*

In other words, God saw all those terrible things they were doing and God just overlooked their ignorance. That is amazing; how can Paul say this? What is Paul trying to convey? See Paul is trying to show that there are different degrees of sin. God considers their sin in their context and level. Here it says God overlooked their ignorance. Then Paul says, *"but now commands all men everywhere to repent. Because He has appointed a day that he would judge the world in righteousness."* Now that the light of the gospel has come to them, God will deal with them differently. Now the gospel is going forth and the time of the overlooking is ending.

The principle we want to bring forth is God's tolerance. Now there is a side principle to this. God will judge each one according to the light they received. So in that measure God expects a response. If a person's response to the greater light he received is too slow or none, his punishment would be greater than another person who received very little light and his response is also slow in coming. To him that is given much, much is expected. Man may say that is unfair. But God's principles are

very, very fair. That is how He runs the universe.

Having seen that lets look at one more scripture in the book of I John to show that there are degrees of sin. 1 John 5:16, *If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.* Now John tells you the two categories of sin. There is a sin not to death and a sin unto death. A person who has committed a sin to death has no more chance. But a person committing a sin not onto death would still have a chance to experience God's mercy and forgiveness.

See the judgment is according to the light we received. We have shown from the Word that this is the system of God and God has His tolerance level. His tolerance level is determined by the gravity of the situation and the responsibility and the capability of that person. In other words, when God judge, He does not judge on some broad general principles. His principles have been personalized and categorized into our lives. He is a great personal God with great ability. Like those of you who have many children in your family and you are bringing them up. You realize that there are some principles that you do not compromise. There are some principles that are standard procedures for family life. There are some rules and regulations that you apply to all your children, whether they are 16 years old, 5 years old, or 2 years old. There are some principles that you apply commonly to all, like the Bible principle of honoring father and mother. You would not let your children do something wrong. So there are some principles that are equally applied to all. We are in a sense God's children so there are some principles that are applied to all equally and these are His commandments. When God classifies some rules as commandments, they are applied equally to all Christians, regardless of their Christian growth.

Now there are some principles again using the illustration of our family. You have different children aged 5, 16 or maybe 2. Do you realize that some rules apply to the bigger ones that do not apply to the smaller ones? Why, because the smaller ones do not understand. So to a certain extend there are some firm rules for the older ones and some flexible rules for the younger ones. You allow more room for a 2 year old or a 3 year old to make a mistake than you do for one who is bigger. Why, because you are evaluating them based on their capability. So there are other rules that are categorized. Don't just focus on the negative aspects of rules where the threat of punishment looms greatly in the child's mind. The child should also look forward to obeying rules by giving them appropriate rewards. The reward for obedience should also be bigger for the older child than for the younger child. Now with bigger responsibilities come bigger privileges. God is proportional, if He proportioned out an opportunity for us to be rewarded there is an opportunity to be punished greatly. In a spiritual sense, it's the same. The more we receive the more responsible we are to be.

Let me give an illustration. God seems to overlook a lot of mistakes in the Israelites' time. But Moses made one mistake. The Israelites have been asking for water so many times. Here they were again thirsty and they said to Moses to give them water. Moses was stirred up. He had his stick with him. He had used that stick previously to strike the rock and the water came out. That was the first time. Now here they are thirsty again and they wanted water. Moses looked at them and this time his anger was stirred. Remember he was the meekest man on the earth until that time. He said, "Do you think I can bring water out of this rock? He struck the rock and the water came out. He did not expect the water to come out because God

spoke to him to speak to the rock not hit. And Moses just turned around and hit the rock. He disobeyed the instruction. God said to speak to the rock and not hit the rock. Just because he missed God in that area, God said to Moses that he was not allowed to go into the Promised Land. Moses kept asking God to let him in until God had to tell him not to talk to Him about it. In the end God said, "Alright, I will let you have a look at the Promised Land but after that it is your funeral." So, He took Moses up to Mount Nebo and Moses had a good look; that was all. But the fact is as you evaluate Moses' mistake, it is not as great as Aaron's sin. Aaron's sin is worse compared to Moses' sin. In fact, the bible says God would have killed Aaron if Moses had not interceded. Aaron was the one responsible for making the calf. Moses made this small mistake but in the sight of God, it was big. So we realize that God's evaluation system and tolerance level is in proportion to the light He has given out. We need to understand how God reacts to different areas of shortcomings so that we in turn will develop an ability to be like God and to learn His tolerance level.

Lets look at Isa. 53:4 *Surely He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted but He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.*

Now in these two verses, so many words are brought forth in the Hebrew. You notice here what Jesus did for us. It says He has borne our grief. He carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed Him smitten of God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquity. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. Now lets focus on these 4 words. *Grief, sorrows, transgression and iniquities.*

Transgression refers to a commandment and implies a commandment. Transgression is quite similar to trespassing. You would not know where you trespass if I did not give a signboard that says, "No trespassing allowed." But the moment I draw the limit of the line and put a "No Trespassing" signboard and then you still cross that boundary, that's when you commit a transgression. So, a transgression refers to a breaking of a revelation of His commandment and instruction. It includes also ordinances and statues. When God has told you how to do it and what not to do and what to do and you do not follow His instructions, that's a transgression. That is one of the things that really provokes God.

Now when Moses hit that rock it was considered a transgression. Why, because God told him what to do. He told Moses to speak to the rock and not hit the rock. But he hit the rock, so it was a transgression. No instruction no transgression. You cannot commit a transgression if you didn't have knowledge. So there is transgression that Jesus took for us. He was wounded for our transgression.

The other three words are *grief, sorrows* and *iniquities*. Iniquities point to all transgression, all sins that are committed before you had knowledge. They are included in what Paul mentioned in Acts 17 those things that God overlooked. He overlooked their transgression not because they were not wrong but because these people had not received the light yet. When Jonah preached repentance to the people of Nineveh, and they repented in ashes and sackcloth, God pardoned them. One reason why Jonah ran away from God was not because he did not believe God.

Some people do not obey God because they do not believe; they have unbelief in their hearts. Remember unbelief is not non-belief. Unbelief is only possible after you were given the opportunity and the revelation and you choose not to believe. Unbelief is a choice. Ignorance is the result of condition. When Jonah did not obey God and tried to run away from God, it was not because of unbelief. And many people try to use the story of Jonah to apply to themselves. God tells them to do something and they give the excuse that they do not have the faith level. They do not fully believe in God and say, "I am like Jonah." God is not going to send a whale because you are different from Jonah.

The reason why Jonah did not obey was because of his personal grudge against the Ninevites. God told him, "I am going to destroy the Ninevites in forty days." Jonah said, "Good," and he ran off. That was how he responded. Why? It is because the Ninevites were cruel. They were the torturers and oppressors of Israel. It was like telling a Jew to go and warn Adolph Hitler that in forty days he is going to die. The Jew would have preferred to say, "Good for him," and run away too. That's the amount of hatred that Jonah had for the Ninevites. The Ninevites were very cruel people. When they conquer a place, they would torture the people. So Jonah heard from God that He is going to punish the Ninevites in forty days, inside him he says, "Very good. Lord I would rather You punish them in one day." So because of his personal grudge against the Ninevites, he ran the other way. It was not because he did not believe God could bring the judgment to pass. It is more a personal reason.

How do we know that? In the book of Jonah, when God brought Jonah to Nineveh and he preached, they all repented and the city was not destroyed. Jonah was not happy. He came to God and said, "Lord, I know You will do this. I know You, You are longsuffering. I know this will happen which I do not want it to happen. I want them destroyed. I know You, You are longsuffering. If I did not give them Your warning, they would be gone today. God I know this will happen." He was angry because God pardoned the Ninevites.

God has to teach him a lesson using the big plant as a shade. I want you to listen to what God said in chapter 4:9 *Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant? And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!" But the Lord said, "You have pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left – and much livestock?"* Notice this – God spared the Ninevites because they cannot see right from wrong. They had a lack of knowledge. They were a people without revelation. They had no Word of God to guide them. They never had any prophet or man of God to show them God's ways.

They were in iniquity. Iniquity can be equal to transgression. But the application is slightly different. Transgression is knowing the instructions and violating them. Iniquity is when you do not know the rules and you violated them. Iniquity is also wrong and you will reap what you sow. Now when we say that this iniquity committed in ignorance does not provoke the wrath of God as much as willful transgression, it does not mean that you will not suffer the consequences of your wrongdoings, even if done in ignorance. You reap what you sow. You reap what you sow whether you believe in it or not; whether you are ignorant of it or not. You could walk right up to a thirty-five storey building and say, "I am ignorant of gravity," and just walk out of the window. You may be ignorant of gravity but you will still face the effect of gravity. Ignorance is no plea to be protected from the

effects of our wrong action.

We are talking in terms of God stepping in, intervening or judging. That is the perspective. Notice what Jonah said in chapter 4:1-2 *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. So he prayed to the Lord, and said, "Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country?"*

Do you notice he talked to God before that? He said, "Lord, I know you are going to pardon them if they repent so I am not going. I told you this would happen. You are full of longsuffering." In other words, Jonah was recognizing the fact that God's tolerance and longsuffering was greater than his.

Therefore I fled to Tarshish; for I know that You are (notice that all these words coming up that we have covered.) gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.

Jonah had the first hand perception of the grace, the mercy, the goodness, the longsuffering of God. God's longsuffering made him angry. And God has to gently teach Jonah why He is longsuffering through the plant. See Jonah is not a creator. He did not made the people. God loves every human being whether they know Him or not. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever should believe in Him shall not perish but shall have everlasting life. Jesus said what shall it profit a man if he were to gain the whole world and loses his own soul. See the souls of men are precious to God. We cannot cover all the scriptures but a lot of New Testament scriptures indicate that the reason Jesus' coming is not yet is because of the longsuffering of God. He is not willing that any should perish. Longsuffering again is the word that comes forth.

So lets turn back to Isa. 53. We mentioned that iniquity is in a sense of those who whatever area in their live do not know their right hand from their left. That is the way God expresses it. So in our present life as it is. As believers, because you are not perfected yet we do not know some things yet. So those things that we do not know when we commit an error in that area is considered iniquity, But those things that we know that we commit an error it becomes a transgression. So these two classes of shortcoming of sin are classified. He was wounded for our transgression. He was bruised for our iniquity. Jesus has come to cover us with His blood in these two areas. Is it not wonderful to know that the blood of Jesus can cleanse us from the sin of commission and the sin of omission and the sin of ignorance?

Two other Hebrew words Isa. 53:4 *Surely He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows.* The words *grief* and *sorrows* are from special Hebrew words that were translated as *infirmities* and *sicknesses* in Greek in Matt. 8:17 *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses."* There you have it *infirmities* and *sicknesses*, which in the Old Testament were put as *grief* and *sorrows*.

But the actual Hebrew word for the word *grief* speaks about weaknesses and flaws. Now you see that conveys a totally different perspective altogether from the word *grief*. You see weaknesses and flaws speak about things that are not so much as an act but a state of being. For example, a sin of commission is a wrong action. A sin of omission is a lack of action. James mentioned, "What thou should have done thou

doeth not." But a weakness, which is a special Greek word, does not refer to sickness. A few times, it was used to refer to physical sickness but most of the time the Greek word has been specially used to refer to flaws, whether they are flaws in your soul character, flaws in your physical being, or flaws in your nature. The Lord Jesus also takes these flaws upon Himself.

David said in the book of Psalms, "I was conceived in iniquity." He is talking about the nature of sin. See the word sin means to fall short of a standard. For example, in the natural, car factories produce cars. They will have a section for quality control. What does the quality control section do? The quality control section will remove products that are not up to the standard and that have flaws. Or maybe certain parts are not functioning, as they should. See in the world of man's creation, man cannot really produce products that are exactly the same although generally speaking, a particular brand or a particular model should have a certain standard. But let me tell you every one is different. Every car is different although there is a general standard. See every guitar is actually different. You could buy a guitar of the same brand, the same make and the same model but professionals will tell you that each guitar is unique. Even though generally speaking there could be similarity among those of the same model and same brand but each is unique. You can take two guitars of the same brand, same model but when you play each of them they will sound different. So there can be differences in products of the same brand and model. There can also be flaws when the products come out in an assembly line.

When Adam and Eve fell and their spirit man was cut off from God, there came the opportunity for flaws to come into the soul of man. Even scientists who research into chromosome and genes of man will tell you that there is a flaw in the genetic makeup of everyone. The flaws in our genes may give rise to some physical problem. The sin nature is the flaw of imperfection in man and gives rise to general weaknesses in us. Rom. 8:3 mentioned something in that area. *For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.*

A flawed nature, a flawed mind and a flawed soul. Now the flaws in our life will result in flaws in our actions logically speaking. So there is an area of sin, which is identified as sin within our very makeup and our very being. It is called Original Sin and sin nature within us. To a certain extent there is another area that God is tolerant to. God is tolerant towards this sin nature in us and He supplies the grace to overcome sin where we are not able. When the flaw will affect your ability and where you have a disability whether of body or soul, God supplies the grace. So that Paul using the same Greek word in II Cor. 12 says *when I am weak then am I strong*. So, a general flaw that is there and here is where God's patience is great. See, in transgression and iniquity there is a grace period for us to change before God starts dealing with us.

But flaws take time and grace. You not only have to deal with it, you have to put something in. It is not just the non-action. There has to be a very change and an impartation of a new nature and life. Potentially, we have that change and new nature in Christ but subjectively we are still growing into that. In Christ, you are perfect. But on this earth, you are still not perfect. You are still growing onto perfection. On one hand, Paul said in Colossians 1: 21-22 that Jesus *has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight*. But in the end of the book of Colossians 4: 12, Paul says that *Epaphras ... is always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*. You are made holy, blameless and above reproach in Christ

then but now he says that Epaphras has to pray to make you perfect and complete. That is a part where God is also tolerant. And of all areas this is the area where God's longsuffering is very great.

Remember in our last message on the goodness of God, we discussed how Abraham, a prophet missed God when he denied that Sarah was his wife and Abimelech took her into his harem (Genesis 20). He had a character flaw but because of his goodness of heart, God was able to deliver Abraham and his wife from Abimelech. *The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations* (2 Peter 2: 9). Ironically, Isaac also had the same flaw when he denied that Rebekah was his wife and that she was her sister (Genesis 26). We are not sure why "like father, like son," that Isaac repeated the same lie as did his father Abraham. It may have been in his upbringing or something acceptable given the social circumstances that he was in. That is the area where God has the greatest longsuffering and compassion.

Then of course the other area is sicknesses, which talks about physical disability. We realize that our spirit is willing but our flesh is weak. In other words, we could actually do more things if we do not have a limitation of the body. It would be wonderful if we do not have a body to limit us. I would like to do thousands of things in the kingdom of God but our body limits us. You do not push yourself too far until you pass out unconscious. You know you can only push your body so far and then you need to give your body a good rest. Otherwise, your body will start protesting. There is a limitation to our physical body and unless God speaks to us, we cannot bypass the natural law. They will still operate and we are still bound by physical laws. If we transgress the physical laws, we pay a price for it by suffering all manner of ill health.

That is an area of a different type of transgression or a different type of shortcoming, which is classified under the second word there, *sorrows*. Breaking physical laws is in a sense a transgression too. If you break the natural law, you will have to pay the price. That is where the Hebrew *sorrows* is translated as *sicknesses* in the Greek or what you call physical disability in the physical realm.

Having seen the four areas of *transgressions, iniquity, flaws* and *sorrows*, and God's relationship to us we must understand that God's longsuffering is categorized. See when the Israelites disobeyed the commandments He told Moses, "GET OUT. LEAVE ME ALONE." You see the anger of God. Do not ever touch God's commandments by disobeying them. I mean when God's commandments are given as supreme, disobedience to them would be the first thing that really makes Him angry. If you do not want to be in the hand of an angry God, be obedient to His commandments.

The other category is the area of iniquity. You commit iniquity when you are ignorant or are in the dark. Then you got to pray a different prayer for God to give you light. You have a greater degree of tolerance given because you do not have the light. Like Paul says in Acts 17 God overlooked the Greeks for

ignorantly worshipping foreign gods. It does not mean He is not working in your life. He is still working in your life. But His tolerance is greater.

Then the third area that elicits greater tolerance from God, even greater than the second area of ignorant iniquity, is our flaws. This is where God's greatest compassion rises up because He knows our shortcomings and flaws. Flaws do not go away easily. It demands the greatest compassion.

And of course, the fourth realm is our sicknesses and sorrows when we have transgressed physical law and suffering the consequences or when we have inherited flawed genes that give rise to sicknesses and diseases. In this physical realm, God grants the ministry of healing, miracles and deliverance.

But they are all in different degrees. As we apply God's longsuffering to our personal lives, we realize this. When you find it hard to tolerate another person, is it because of a person's flaw; is it because of a person's action; or is it because of a person's disability?

We realize that many of our ways are different from God's ways. When God gets angry, His principles do not go out of the window. But when man gets angry there is no more principle. See God's anger is based on principle that is why Moses can intercede and say, "God, remember the covenant." And God relented of His anger. See God's anger is still qualified by His principles.

If the glory of God includes the quality of being slow to anger, we also must be longsuffering before the glory of God comes. I tell you Jesus was very tolerant when He was on this earth. He was amazingly tolerant. And we need to learn the example of Jesus. And if anyone who wants to be in the ministry, whether full time or part time, one of the requirements is tolerance. Why, because in the ministry and in the kingdom of God you do not deal with a lifeless commodity. It is far easier to work in the secular job than in the ministry. It is far easier to be in the secular realm and be an expert in one field. But dealing with human lives demands a great level of tolerance. If you are an accountant, you must balance the debit side with the credit side. If both sides do not balance, then something is wrong and we

could look into that but human lives are different.

So when we want to be like God in longsuffering so that the glory of God can come on our life we must realize that the next time you are irritated or angry don't let your principles go out of the window. Your actions have to be governed by principles.

Then we need to understand these four aspects. If you cannot tolerate another person because of an action he has done, your tolerance level is low. You are not longsuffering. You are "shortsuffering." You have a short fuse. Remember some actions are the results of flaw. You could tell whether a transgression is a deliberate act of choice, a violation done out of ignorance or a result of a character flaw.

Let me share my heart with you. The majority if not 99.9 percent of the shortcomings in the body of Christ is more in the third area of character flaws than in the first area of willful transgression or in the second area of ignorant iniquity. There is a greater measure in the second than in the first. But the greatest part is in the third. That is why we need to have a great level of tolerance and patience. It takes time for a person to grow and mature spiritually, emotionally and mentally. You do not expect a 2 year old to behave like an 18 year old. For growth to take place, time is a factor. Time is of the essence. So, we have to consider what it really means to be longsuffering. And if we are to be like God, we have to have such a tolerance level that we could easily fulfill what Paul says to bear the weaknesses of one another. Not only put up with it but to live with it. Not only live with it Paul went one more step he enjoy it. We need to reach that area of maturity and the moment you do, that is when the Spirit of glory will be great on your life.