

Does God Always Get What He Wants?

Scripture: 2 Peter 3

Code: BQ022613

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (3:9)

Peter's support for the second coming culminated in an appeal to the character of God. The thrust of his argument is this: The reason Christ's return is not immediate is because God is patient with sinners. Any waiting is attributable only to God's gracious longsuffering. It is not that He is indifferent, powerless, or distracted. Instead, it is just the opposite. Because He is merciful and forbearing, He delays so that elect sinners might come to repentance (1 Peter 3:20; cf. Matt. 4:17; 9:13; Mark 6:12; Luke 15:10; Rom. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25; Rev. 2:5).

Despite the ridicule of the scoffers, **the Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness.** **Slow** (*braduno*) means "delayed," or "late," implying the idea of "loitering." None of that applies to God; His seeming slowness is not due to lack of ability, forgetfulness, or apathy. In fulfilling **His promise**, God is working everything precisely according to His perfect plan and schedule (cf. 2 Sam. 22:31; Ps. 111:5, 7–8; Isa. 25:1; Jer. 33:14; 2 Cor. 1:20). That same principle applied to Christ's first coming: "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law" (Gal. 4:4).

Patient translates a form of the verb *makrothumeo*. It is a compound word combining "large" with "great anger." Peter used it here to show that God has a vast capacity for storing up anger and wrath before it spills over in judgment (cf. Ex. 34:6; Joel 2:13; Matt. 18:23–27; Rom. 2:4; 9:22). While that judgment is inescapable and deadly, God's merciful patience beforehand gives the chosen the opportunity for reconciliation and salvation (see 3:15). His wrath toward the individual sinner is immediately appeased whenever that person repents and believes the gospel (cf. Luke 15:7, 10; Acts 13:47–48).

You refers both to Peter's immediate readers and any who will ever come to faith in Jesus Christ (cf. John 10:16). Some have argued that you implies the salvation of all people. But the immediate context and comments about "the destruction of ungodly men" (v. 7) clearly limits the you to believers. The letter is addressed to "those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the

righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ... He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature” (1:1b, 4a; emphasis added). From then on, the use of you is directed at believers (2:1–3; 3:2). The you of 3:1 are “beloved.” The words of verse 8, “do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved” (emphasis added), again link the you to the beloved. The you with whom the Lord is patient are therefore the same beloved ones He waits to bring to repentance.

Those who **perish**—“utterly destroyed” in eternal hell—suffer damnation because they are dead in their sins and refuse God’s offer of salvation in Christ. At the same time, it is clear from Scripture that the Father takes no delight in the death of the lost: “ ‘For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,’ declares the Lord God. ‘Therefore, repent and live’ ” (Ezek. 18:32; cf. Jer. 13:17; Matt. 23:37). In fact, God actually offers salvation to all (cf. Isa. 45:21–22; 55:1; Matt. 11:28; John 3:16; Acts 17:30; 1 Tim. 2:3–4; Rev. 22:17).

Scripture clearly states that God thoroughly hates sin (Deut. 25:16; 1 Kings 14:22; Pss. 5:4–6; 45:7; Prov. 6:16–19; 15:9; Hab. 1:13) and therefore its potential consequences for every person, including eternal punishment in hell. Yet, in order to display His own glory in wrath, God chose to save some and not to save others. As the apostle Paul explained:

So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.” So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. (Rom. 9:16–18; cf. Josh. 11:20; John 1:13; 6:37, 44; Rom. 11:7)

The context indicates that any and all are limited to the elect—namely **all** those whom the Lord has chosen and will call to **Himself**. Put another way, Christ will not come back until every person whom God has chosen is saved. By using the term **you** (a reference to Peter’s believing readers), the apostle limits **any** and **all** to the realm of elect human beings.

Of course, once all of the elect are accounted for, God’s patience will run out. Having given the world as much time as He has sovereignly determined, God will pour out His wrath upon the earth. While His patience currently holds back His judgment, the time of grace that mankind now enjoys, however long it seems by human standards, will not last forever (cf. Gen. 6:3).

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