

Title: **THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD**

Text: Isaiah 30:18

Subject: *God's Longsuffering*

Date: Sunday Morning — August 18, 2019

Readings: *2 Peter 3:1-18*

Introduction:

THE FLOOD — There was a day when the depravity of the human race had plunged to such depths of corruption that *“every imagination of the thoughts of (man’s) heart was only evil continually.”* So great was the wickedness of man that when God saw it, *“It repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth”* (Genesis 6:5-7). And, at the appointed time, the wrath of God swept across the earth in a great, universal flood, destroying every soul, except Noah and his family who were saved in the ark God had provided.

SODOM — Once there was a pair of twin cities, rich, heavily populated, and influential, perhaps the most wealthy and influential cities in the world. But the wickedness of those cities was great. Not only

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had the vile, disgusting practice of homosexuality become an acceptable lifestyle, it had become the predominate and preferred lifestyle! In those twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, homosexuals were no longer queer people. They were normal! Sexual perverts were in the majority.

- Sodomy is not natural behavior for anyone. It is perverse, demented behavior. God says it is contrary to nature.
- Religious Sodomites are not Christians who choose an alternative lifestyle. They are reprobate rebels, idolaters, who wear the clothes of religious profession to cover their malicious intent.
- Sodomites in any generation are the curse of God upon that generation, God's judgment upon a generation that has despised his Word, corrupted his gospel, and blasphemed his holy name.
- Sodomites, male and female, are always mean-spirited, cruel, and oppressive in demanding the acceptance and approval of their chosen path of godless self-destruction.

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LOT — It appears that there was only one man in Sodom who neither practiced nor condoned the wicked practice of homosexuality. Righteous Lot vexed his soul from day to day with the deeds of those godless people. And Lot's God was vexed too. One morning, as the inhabitants of the city awoke and began the day, God rained fire and brimstone out of heaven, scorching every man, woman, and child to death in his hot anger, except Lot and two of his daughters who were delivered by the hand of his grace.

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If God destroyed the world with a flood because of the wickedness of Noah's generation, and if God rained fire from heaven upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their crimes against nature, why has he not yet sent his Son in judgment to destroy this world? In Noah's generation, men and women were no different than they are now. And the moral debauchery of Sodom was nothing compared to the perversion of our society. At least in that day homosexuality was confined to two totally godless

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cities. Today the perversion is worldwide, openly promoted, even by men and women who claim to worship and serve God! Why then is the world still standing?

Has God changed? Has he altered his law? Has the Holy One become tolerant of man's sin? Will God no longer punish the wicked? Let none be so foolish as to imagine such things. God never changes! His law still stands! He must and shall punish sin!

Why, then, does God tolerate this world and the wickedness of men and women who openly defy his holiness and blaspheme his name? The answer to that question is found in 2nd Peter 3:9. — *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”*

Proposition: It is the longsuffering of God toward his elect that prevents him from destroying the world in his wrath at this hour.

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I have come here today to tell you about **THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD**. — That is my subject — **THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD**. — You will find my text in Isaiah 30:18.

Some of you are yet without Christ. I want you to hear what I have to say. **The only thing that keeps you out of hell at this moment is the longsuffering of almighty God.** If I had nothing else to say, that ought to cause you to fall down before him and sue for mercy through the Lord Jesus Christ. God waits to be gracious to sinners for Christ's sake. Today is the day of salvation. But there is a day coming when he will reserve mercy no longer. The day is coming when he will no longer restrain his wrath. He has said, "*My Spirit shall not always strive with man*" (Genesis 6:3). The days of God's patience with man are numbered. Then you will know the terror of his fierce anger and inflexible justice. What will become of your soul in that day no tongue can describe. God help you now to trust his Son!

Have you found my text — Isaiah 30:18?

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(Isaiah 30:18) “And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD *is* a God of judgment: blessed *are* all they that wait for him.”

I want us to look at these four statements, made by God’s prophet Isaiah one by one. May God the Holy Ghost be our Teacher, showing us the things of Christ here revealed.

GOD WAITING TO BE GRACIOUS

1st — “*Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you.*” — Here is the holy Lord God waiting to be gracious! What an astounding statement! — “*Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you.*” — What can that mean?

Regrettably, I have to say at the outset that this text does not mean what preachers and will-worsip religious people have tried to make it mean.

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- It does not mean that God’s omnipotent grace and saving power waits upon sinners to make the first move toward him!
- It does not mean that almighty God waits upon the free will of man before he can or will perform the operations of his grace. — That is sheer nonsense!

This 30th chapter of Isaiah is a prophecy of judgment, destruction, and desolation against the people of Judah. **But there was an elect remnant in Judah to whom God would be gracious. Therefore he waited until the set time, when he would arise and be gracious to them.**

Even so today, though the world is condemned, there is “*a remnant according to the election of grace*” scattered among the nations of the world, an elect remnant, to whom God is determined to be gracious. Therefore he waits for the appointed time, that he may be gracious to them.

There is a remnant, according to the election of grace, for whom God waits to be gracious

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(Jeremiah 30:10-11; 31:8-14; Ezekiel 11:13-20, Zechariah 10:8).

(Jeremiah 30:10-11) “Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make *him* afraid. (11) For I *am* with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.”

(Jeremiah 31:8-14) “Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, *and* with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. (9) They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters

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in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim *is* my firstborn. (10) Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare *it* in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd *doth* his flock. (11) For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of *him that was* stronger than he. (12) Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. (13) Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. (14) And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD.”

(Ezekiel 11:13-20) “And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah

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died. Then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel? (14) Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, (15) Son of man, thy brethren, *even* thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, *are* they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the LORD: unto us is this land given in possession. (16) Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. (17) Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. (18) And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. (19) And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart

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out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: (20) That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.”

(Zechariah 10:8) “I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased.”

The Lord God has a people in the world whom he has loved with an everlasting love, whom he has chosen in eternal election, whom he has redeemed by the price of his Son’s own, precious blood, a people whom he will call in due time. He chose to save them from eternity. He has thoughts of grace concerning them. He sent his Son to redeem them. And he has a fixed time when he will show them his love and grace. Until then, he waits to be gracious.

This word “wait” implies a longing and panting desire. — The Lord God longs and pants, as it were, to reveal his grace to the objects of his love. The picture is that of a father whose heart is bursting to show his wayward son his love.

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Illustration: *The Prodigal*

(Luke 15:20) “And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, **his father saw him**, and **had compassion**, and **ran**, and **fell on his neck**, and **kissed him**.”

The Lord God waits for the set time, which is the fit and proper time, the very best time, to be gracious and show mercy. — He waits to be gracious until things are brought to their worst. He waits until the moment of utmost extremity. He waits until his people are made to see their danger, sense their guilt and sin, and know their need of him. Then, when they must have him, he comes to them.

Though he waits until the time of love to reveal his grace, he was gracious toward us long before he called us. — **His election of us was an eternal election of grace** (Romans 11:5; Ephesians 1:3-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

(Ephesians 1:3-6) “Blessed *be* the God and

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Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

(2 Thessalonians 2:13-14) “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: (14) Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

His covenant made for and with us in Christ is a covenant of grace, ordered in all things and sure
(Hebrews 10:16-17).

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(Hebrews 10:16-17) “This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; (17) And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

His adoption of us was an adoption of grace (1 John 3:1-3; Galatians 4:4-7).

(1 John 3:1-3) “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. (2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (3) And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

(Galatians 4:4-7)” But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (5) To redeem them that were under the law, that we might

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receive the adoption of sons. (6) And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (7) Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

His redemption of us by Christ was a redemption of grace (Romans 3:24-26).

(Romans 3:24-26) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

His preservation of our souls in life was a preservation of grace (Hosea 2:8; Hebrews 1:14).

(Hosea 2:8) “For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her

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silver and gold, *which* they prepared for Baal.”

(Hebrews 1:13-14) But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? (14) Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

But at his own appointed time of love, in our regeneration, calling, and conversion by the Spirit of God, the Lord God brought his grace to us and brought us to himself by his grace (2 Timothy 1:9-10; Titus 2:11-14).

(2 Timothy 1:9-10) God “hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (10) But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

(Titus 2:11-14) “For the grace of God that

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bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, (12) Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; (13) Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; (14) Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

God, God of all grace openly reveals and exhibits his grace toward us working his salvation in us.

- In the Revelation of His Son
- In the Gift of Faith
- In the Pardon of Sin
- In Justifying Righteousness.
- In the Infusion of Grace — “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*”
- In His Love Visits to Us (Song of Solomon)
- In Opening up the Treasures of His Grace to Us

This is the long-suffering of God which is our salvation. God withholds his wrath from the world

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for the sake of his elect. But his long-suffering is toward and for his people (2 Peter 3:9, 15).

But why does the Lord wait to be gracious? If God pants and longs to be gracious, why does he wait? Why doesn't he just do it? There is a reason, there is a needs be for his waiting. **Notice the word “therefore” in our text.** What is it there for? It is there to tell us why the Lord waits to be gracious. **He waits to be gracious because...**

- **He will not be gracious until all carnal confidence has been destroyed.** — The strength of Pharaoh must be made a shame. Your trust in the shadow of Egypt must be made confusion to you. (vv. 2, 3, 16).
- **God will not be gracious until the rebel is exposed, the rebellion is broken, and his chosen one is made to know his need of grace** (v. 9). — You will not come to Christ until you come to yourself and are at our wits' end.

Illustration: *The Prodigal*

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Our all-wise, gracious God causes the sinner he loves to suffer the effects of his sin, that he might the more prize and value his grace.

Illustration: Luke 7:36-50

Judah leaned upon Egypt and for that she was overrun by Assyria, that she might look to God alone for help and properly value the help he gave. — So it is with God's chosen.

God waits to be gracious until his elect are made to cry for him (v. 19). The Lord God is listening for sinners to pray. As soon as he hears your heart's cry, he will answer you.

(Isaiah 30:19) “He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.”

The Lord God waits to be gracious. — Yet, all the while he is graciously working, that he may be gracious.

- He holds back the sword of justice.

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- He continues to grant you the privileges of gospel ministry, giving sinners space for repentance. — He hasn't yet removed his preachers, your teachers, from you (v. 20).
- He speaks and calls to you to return to him and rest. — *“Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left”* (v. 21).
- He passes by your repeated rejections of him. — *“Ye would not”* (vv. 15, 18).

The Lord God waits to be gracious, until he is exalted (v. 18). I will say more about this in a minute or two. But the Lord God waits to be gracious to sinners until he is exalted in their eyes. — He will not be gracious until in your desperate need he is exalted.

Illustrations: The Publican
A Prisoner's Deliverer is Exalted!
— Mocksville Jail.

God waits to be gracious. But I want you to understand this. — He never waits in vain. Those

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for whom he waits to be gracious shall be made recipients of his grace. — When God the Holy Ghost comes to you in grace, you will come to him in repentance, casting away your works righteousness “*as a menstruous cloth*” (v. 19-22).

Yes, God waits to be gracious. — **But he will not wait forever** (Genesis 6:3; Proverbs 1:22-33).

Note: As the Lord waits for the appointed time to save his elect, so he waits for the appointed time to deliver his people from their trials and temptations. But deliver you he will!

EXALTED TO SAVE

2nd — Now look at this second sentence — “*And therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you.*” — **Here is God exalted in order to save.** Our God is exalted upon the throne of grace, that he may give grace, and that we may find grace and mercy in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). But there is more. — **This is a prophecy of the exaltation of our**

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Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of his people.

The word “*exalted*” means “lifted up.”

- Christ was lifted up on the cross as the sinner’s Substitute, that his people might be drawn to him and saved by him (John 12:32).
- The Lord Jesus Christ has been lifted up, exalted, to the throne of God, to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance, pardon, and eternal life to God’s elect (Acts 5:31; John 17:2; Romans 14:9).
- Christ Jesus is lifted up, like the brazen serpent upon the pole, by the preaching of the gospel, so that whosoever believes on him might have everlasting life (John 3:13-14; Isaiah 45:22).

GOD OF JUDGMENT

3rd — To the person who does not know the gospel, this third sentence may appear to be out of place. But it is not. The text could not be complete without it. — “*For the LORD is a God of judgment.*” — That means two things.

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1. The Lord our God, the Triune Jehovah, is a God of justice. — He cannot be merciful toward us, he cannot be gracious to us, without the satisfaction of his justice for us. Christ was lifted up to die, so that he might have mercy upon us, because the Lord is a God of Justice (Proverbs 16:6). He is a “*Just God and a Savior*” (Isaiah 45:20).
2. The Lord is a God of discretion. — With great wisdom, knowledge, and skill he accomplishes his own will, even the salvation of his elect; so that at the appointed time of love he who waits that he may be gracious will be gracious (Ephesians 1:3-14).

(Ephesians 1:3-14) “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself,

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according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (7) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to **the riches of his grace**; (8) **Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence**; (9) Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: (10) That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: (11) **In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will**: (12) That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. (13) In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased

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possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

BLESSED WAITING

4th — “*Blessed are all they that wait for him.*” — I have been talking to you about a waiting God. **Here our text describes God’s people as a waiting people.** — “*Blessed are all they that wait for him!*” — (Psalm 27:14; 37:9, 34; 123:1-2; Proverbs 20:22; Isaiah 8:17; 40:31; 64:4; Lamentations 3:25).

(Lamentations 3:25) “The LORD *is* good unto them that wait for him, to the soul *that* seeketh him.”

(Isaiah 40:31) “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.”

As God waiting to be gracious, served the cause of his grace, so we waiting upon him serve his cause (Proverbs 27:18).

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To wait upon the Lord is to believe him, to expect good from him, to be quiet and to sit still (Isaiah 30:7, 15). — *“Blessed are they that wait for him.”* — *“Blessed are all they that wait for him.”* — Those who run here and there for help are in trouble. Those who are restless, impatient, and fretting cannot enjoy this blessedness. But, *“blessed are all they that wait for him.”*

- The Needy Sinner
- The Tried Believer

Blessed is the sinner who waits before Christ at the throne of grace and will not go away.

Illustration: *The Canaanite Woman* (Matthew 15)

Blessed is the believer who waits at the feet of Christ to hear his word and worship him.

- Mary — (Luke 10:42).
- The Woman (Luke 7).

Blessed is that man or woman who waits for the Lord.

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- For His Gracious Presence
- For Manifestations of His Love — “*Let him kiss me.*”
- For the Performance of His Promises
- For the Answer to their Prayers
- For Deliverance from Trouble
- For the Blessings of His Grace
- For Direction in His Will
- For Eternal Glory and Happiness

APPLICATION

(Isaiah 49:22-23) — “Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in *their* arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon *their* shoulders. (23) And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with *their* face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”

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To wait upon the Lord is to...

- Trust Him.
- Seek Him.
- Be Strong in Him.
- Bow to Him.
- Never be Ashamed.

When many troubles vex you —
When trials overwhelm you —
When enemies assail you —
When the way's dark before you —
When Satan would destroy you —
Then wait, the Lord is with you!
His grace will never fail you!
He waits with grace to bless you!
Sit still, be quiet and listen —
Wait on the Lord, His children,
No shame shall come upon you!
He will defend and keep you!

“Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you.” — That is the longsuffering of God. And *“the longsuffering of our Lord is*

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salvation!” — “Blessed are all they that wait for him!”

Amen.