

2 Peter 3:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. This verse addresses the delay in Christ's return that scoffers mockingly noted (3:4). "The Lord is not slack" (οὐ bradynei kyrios, οὐ βραδύνει κύριος) means He doesn't delay or procrastinate "concerning his promise" of return. What appears to be delay from human perspective is divine patience from God's perspective.

"But is longsuffering to us-ward" (alla makrothymei eis hymas, ἀλλὰ μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ὑμᾶς)—God extends patient forbearance. The reason: "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (μὴ boulomenos tinas apostolai alla pantas eis metanoian chōrēsai). This raises important theological questions about divine will and election.

"Not willing" (μὴ boulomenos, μὴ βουλόμενος) uses boulomai, often denoting deliberate intention or desire. "Any" (tinas) and "all" (pantas) require interpretation: Does this mean every individual human without exception, or all types/classes of people? Reformed theology typically understands "us-ward" and context to indicate God's patience toward the elect, not willing that any of His chosen people should perish before being brought to repentance. Arminian theology sees universal scope—God desires all individuals to be saved but respects

human free will. Both agree God's patience provides opportunity for repentance before final judgment.

Historical Context

God's patience before judgment is a recurring biblical theme (Gen 15:16; Rom 2:4; 9:22; 1 Pet 3:20). The delay between promise and fulfillment tested faith throughout redemptive history—patriarchs waiting for promises, Israel awaiting deliverance, prophets expecting Messiah. Early Christians expected imminent return of Christ, creating tension when it delayed. Peter addresses this, reframing delay as divine mercy providing opportunity for repentance.

The theological tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, between God's electing will and universal gospel offer, has occupied Christian theology throughout church history. Peter's statement contributes to this discussion without resolving all questions. What's clear: God's patience is purposeful (providing opportunity for repentance), temporary (judgment will come), and merciful (extending grace rather than immediate judgment).

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does understanding God's delay as patience rather than slackness change your perspective on unanswered prayer or unfulfilled promises?
2. What specific individuals might be experiencing God's patient provision of opportunity for repentance through your witness?
3. How can churches maintain both confidence in God's sovereign purposes and urgency in evangelistic mission?

Interlinear Text

οὐ βραδύνει ὁ κύριος τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ὡς τινας
not is G3588 The Lord G3588 concerning his promise as some men
G3756 G1019 G2962 G1860 G5613 G5100

βραδύτητα ἡγοῦνται ἀλλὰ μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ἡμᾶς, μὴ
slackness count but is longsuffering to us-ward not
G1022 G2233 G235 G3114 G1519 G2248 G3361

βουλόμενός τινας ἀπολέσθαι ἀλλὰ πάντας εἰς
willing some men should perish but that all to
G1014 G5100 G622 G235 G3956 G1519

μετάνοιαν χωρῆσαι
repentance should come
G3341 G5562

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 2:4 (Parallel theme): Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Romans 2:4 (Repentance): Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

Habakkuk 2:3 (Parallel theme): For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

Psalms 86:15 (References Lord): But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

Isaiah 30:18 (References Lord): 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.

Revelation 2:21 (Repentance): And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

2 Peter 3:15 (References Lord): And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

1 Timothy 1:16 (Parallel theme): Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Exodus 34:6 (References Lord): And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

Hebrews 10:37 (Parallel theme): For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

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