2 Peter 3:8-9, not wishing that any should perish

Published: Tuesday 11th of February 2014 13:56 by Simon Wartanian
URL: https://www.thecalvinist.net/post/2-Peter-3:8-9-Not-Wishing-That-Any-Should-Perish



But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing that any should perish**, but that all should reach repentance. 2 Peter 3:8-9 (ESV)

(For a better and more recent defense see here.)

This is one of what is called the "Arminian Big Three." And it is huge when you don't consider the context. All you see is that God doesn't want anyone to go to hell, yet somehow being the Almighty, He is not able/willing to save them, but instead sends so many to hell, because they sin against Him. What people mostly miss is that this passage (v 9) actually is not referring to non-believers or the entire human race, but to God's elect and we will see why. (Please understand that I am not saying that God loves sending people to hell, no, I totally believe Ezek 18:23, 32. But what I believe is that God is glorified in the damnation of the reprobate indeed, Prov 16:4; Rom 9:22).

The first thing we need to examine is to whom all these words refer to (you, any, all). It is clear from the greeting of Peter's second letter to whom this letter is directed, "...To those who have **obtained a faith of equal standing with ours** by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (1:1), thus believers, God's elect. 2 Pet 3:1 says that those recipients have had received another letter from Peter, that is 1 Peter and we directly see in v 1, "...To those who are **elect exiles**..." We see again at the beginning of 2 Pet 3:8 that Peter is talking to the "**beloved,**" a term used referring to Jesus or the believers. Thus we have established that the context and the audience to whom these passages are directed are fellow believers of Peter. In chapter 3 Peter warns his fellow believers about those who will come scoffing about the Second Coming, that it has not yet happened yet Jesus said that He will come soon. He tells them that this present Universe is stored up for wrath (v 7); time is nothing with God (v 8); God is patient toward His sheep, waiting for the ones who yet have to be born and/or be saved, so the Lord is patient toward His own and He's not willing that any of them perish, but all of them come to Him (v 9).

In 2 Peter 3, the Christians – all God's elect are represented by Peter's audience as His beloved, even when they were dead in trespasses God loved them (Eph 2:1-10) and in love predestined them (Eph 1:3-6). It is for their sake that God is delaying the Parousia of our blessed Savior. God is waiting until the number of His elect is complete then He will send the Savior to judge the world in righteousness.

Commentaries

John MacArthur says the following in the **ESV MacArthur Study Bible**: [1]

2 Pet. 3:9 not slow. That is, not loitering or late (cf. Gal. 4:4; Titus 2:13; Heb. 6:18; 10:23, 37; Rev. 19:11). **patient toward you**. "You" is the saved, the people of God. He waits for them to be saved. God has an immense capacity for patience before he breaks forth in judgment (cf. 2 Pet. 3:15; Joel 2:13; Luke 15:20; Rom. 9:22; 1 Pet. 3:15). God endures endless blasphemies against his name, along with rebellion, murders, and the ongoing breaking of his law,

waiting patiently while he is calling and redeeming his own. It is not impotence or slackness that delays final judgment; it is patience. **not wishing that any should perish**. The “any” must refer to those whom the Lord has chosen and will call to complete the redeemed, i.e., the “you.” Since the whole passage is about God’s destroying the wicked, his patience is not so he can save all of them, but so that he can receive all his own. He can’t be waiting for everyone to be saved, since the emphasis is that he will destroy the world and the ungodly. Those who do perish and go to hell, go because they are depraved and worthy only of hell and have rejected the only remedy, Jesus Christ, not because they were created for hell and predetermined to go there. The path to damnation is the path of a non-repentant heart; it is the path of one who rejects the person and provision of Jesus Christ and holds on to sin (cf. Isa. 55:1; Jer. 13:17; Ezek. 18:32; Matt. 11:28; 23:37; Luke 13:3; John 3:16; 8:21, 24; 1 Tim. 2:3–4; Rev. 22:17). **all should reach repentance**. “All” (cf. “you,” “any”) must refer to all who are God’s people who will come to Christ to make up the full number of the people of God. The reason for the delay in Christ’s coming and the attendant judgments is not because he is slow to keep his promise, or because he wants to judge more of the wicked, or because he is impotent in the face of wickedness. He delays his coming because he is patient and desires the time for his people to repent.

The **ESV Reformation Study Bible** explains: [2]

3:9 as some count slowness. See v. 4.

patient . . . all should reach repentance. Peter’s Christian readers must realize that the apparent delay of divine judgment is a sign of God’s forbearance and mercy toward them, particularly toward the believers in their midst who have been confused and misled by the false teachers. The repentance in view, for the sake of which God delays judgment, is that of God’s people rather than the world at large. God is not willing that any of His elect should perish (John 6:39).

The **HCSB Study Bible** explains: [3]

3:9 The Lord has not yet returned, says Peter, because He **is patient with you, not wanting any to perish.** "You" is variously interpreted as a reference to the letter's Christian recipients (identified in 1:1) or else more broadly as all people. In chapter 1 "you" and "your" both refer back to the recipients identified in 1:1 (see 1:2,4,5,8,10,11,12,13,15,16,19,20). Peter's later use of "dear friends," (3:1,8,14,17) seems also to point back to those identified in 1:1.

What **Matthew Henry** said about 2 Peter 3:9: [4]

That what men count slackness is truly long-suffering, and that to us-ward; it is giving more time to his own people, whom he has chosen before the foundation of the world, many of whom are not as yet converted; and those who are in a state of grace and favour with God are to advance in knowledge and holiness, and in the exercise of faith and patience, to abound in good works, doing and suffering what they are called to, that they may bring glory to God, and improve in a meetness for heaven; for God is not willing that any of these should perish, but that all of them should come to repentance. Here observe, 1. Repentance is absolutely necessary in order to salvation. Except we repent, we shall perish, Luke 13:3; Luke 13:5. 2. God has no delight in the death of sinners: as the punishment of sinners is a torment to his creatures, a merciful God does not take pleasure in it; and though the principal design of God in his long-suffering is the blessedness of those whom he has chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth, yet his goodness and forbearance do in their own nature invite and call to repentance all those to whom they are exercised; and, if men continue impenitent when God gives them space to repent, he will deal more severely with them, though the great reason why he did not hasten his coming was because he had not accomplished the number of his elect. "Abuse not therefore the patience and long-suffering of God, by abandoning yourselves to a course of ungodliness; presume not to go on boldly in the way of sinners, nor to sit down securely in an unconverted impenitent state, as he who said (Matt. xxiv. 48), My Lord delayeth his coming, lest he come and surprise you;"

Here is what **John Gill** said: [5]

but is longsuffering to us-ward: not to all the individuals of human nature, for the persons intended by us are manifestly distinguished from "some men" in the text, and from scoffers, mocking at the promise of Christ's coming, in the context, 2Pe 3:3; and are expressly called beloved, 2Pe 3:1; and God's longsuffering towards them is their salvation, 2Pe 3:15, nor is it true of all men, that God is not willing that any of them should perish, and that everyone of them should come to repentance, since many of them do perish in their sins, and do not come to repentance, which

would not be the case, if his determining will was otherwise; besides, a society or company of men are designed, to which the apostle himself belonged, and of which he was a part; and who are described, in his epistles, as the elect of God, called out of darkness, into marvellous light, and having obtained like precious faith with the apostles; and must be understood either of God's elect among the Jews, for Peter was a Jew, and they were Jews he wrote to; and then the sense is, that the delay of Christ's coming is not owing to any slackness in him, but to his longsuffering to his elect among the Jews, being unwilling that any of that number among them should perish, but that all of them repent of their sins, and believe in him; and therefore he waits till their conversion is over, when a nation shall be born at once, and they that have pierced him look on him and mourn, and so all Israel shall be saved; or rather of the elect in general, whether among Jews or Gentiles, upon whom the Lord waits to be gracious, and whose longsuffering issues in their conversion and salvation. And upon account of these the Lord stays his coming till their number is complete in the effectual calling; and for their sakes he is longsuffering to others, and bears with a wicked world, with the idolatry, superstition, heresy, profaneness, and impiety, with which it abounds; but when the last man that belongs to that number is called, he will quickly descend in flames of fire, and burn the world, and the wicked in it, and take his chosen ones to himself. The Alexandrian copy reads, "for you", or your sakes; and so the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions. A passage somewhat like to this is met with in a book of the Jews {f}, esteemed by them very ancient.

"God prolongs or defers his anger with men; and one day, which is a thousand years, is fixed, besides the seventy years he delivered to David the king.--And he does not judge man by his evil works which he continually does, for if so, the world would not stand; but the holy blessed God defers his anger with the righteous, and the wicked, that they may return, by perfect repentance, and be established in this world, and in the world to come.''

And it is an observation of theirs {g}, that when God is said to be "longsuffering", it is not written , but , intimating, that he is longsuffering both to the righteous and the wicked; but then he bears with the latter, for the sake of the former: compare with this passage Re 6:9;

not willing that any should perish; not any of the us, whom he has loved with an everlasting love, whom he has chosen in his Son, and given to him, and for whom he has died, and who are brought to believe in him. These, though they were lost in Adam, did not perish; and though in their own apprehensions, when awakened and convinced, are ready to perish; and though their peace, joy, and comfort, may perish for a while, and they may fear a final and total perishing; yet they shall never perish as others do, or be punished with everlasting destruction: and that this is the will of God, appears by his choice of them to salvation; by the provisions of grace for them in an everlasting covenant; by the security of their persons in the hands of Christ; by sending his Son to obtain salvation for them, and his Spirit to apply it to them; and by his keeping them by his power, through faith, unto salvation.

But that all should come to repentance; not legal, but evangelical, without which all must perish; and which all God's elect stand in need of, as well as others, being equally sinners; and which they cannot come to of themselves, and therefore he not only calls them to it, in his word, and by his spirit and grace, but bestows it upon them; he has exalted Christ at his own right hand, to give it to them; and repentance is a grant from him, a free gift of his grace; and the Spirit is sent down into their hearts to work it in them, to take away the stony heart, and give an heart of flesh; without which, whatever time and space may be given, or means afforded, even the most awful judgments, the greatest mercies, and the most powerful ministry, will be of no avail.

{f} Zohar in Gen. fol. 83. 3. {g} T. Hieros, Taanioth, fol. 65. 2. T. Bab. Bava Kama, fol. 50. 2.

This content is taken from this document

[1]ESV Study Bible, 2008 (Crossway). Taken from the Online Version at www.esvbible.org

[2] R.C. Sproul, The Reformation Study Bible ESV 2005, Ligonier Ministries. Taken from the free online version at BibleGateway

[3] HCSB (Holman Christian Standard Bible®) Study Bible 2010, Holman Bible Publishers. Taken from the online version at www.mystudybible.com

[4] Matthew Henry, Whole Bible Commentary on John 1:29-36. Taken from the Bible software The Word. See "Resources."

[5] John Gill, Exposition of the Entire Bible. Taken from the Bible software The Word. See "Resources."