

Not Willing That Any Should Perish
by WILLIAM GADSBY - Preached in Manchester, Feb. 9th 1840

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

To add to, or diminish from, the Word of God is a crime, though much employed in the frivolities of the world; and the office of a minister is a very responsible one. He is God's steward, and he must one day give up his stewardship; and if he seeks to please men, he is not a true servant of God; no, it is insulting God.

Some say God is not willing that any creature should perish, but everyone should come to repentance; but in our text we are told it is this "us-ward" for whom he is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. "Then," you say, "if it is only to this us-ward, why preach the gospel?" Because God has ordained the preaching of the gospel for the gathering in of his people. If it were to all men, would he not send his Word into all men? When God designs to save his people, he sends his gospel into them; as he did into the Philippian jailor. He sent ministers unto him in the prison. Zaccheus, who must climb a tree; and God brought him down and abode with him.

And where were some of you when God met with you? You had no inclination to hear his Word, but he brought you forth out of nature's darkness into his marvellous light. And what is the sense of the text? God's long-suffering with, and promise to, his people, the us-ward, not willing that any of his people should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

In the last days scoffers shall come, and shall say, "Where is the promise of Christ's coming, without sin in the world? One generation passes away, and another, and there is no appearance of his coming; how is it?" It is his long-suffering to us-ward; therefore, beloved, account his long-suffering salvation. When he shall fold up the skies as in a scroll, and wind up the business, all his people shall be brought in; and I would ask if God is not willing that any man should perish, is he not able to give him repentance? For repentance is the gift of God; and is he incapacitated to do what he wished? Or will his designs be frustrated by such frail creatures as you and I." He says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills the prophets and stones them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her chickens together, and you would not" (Matt. 23:37).

Here we find that Christ refers to the Scribes, and Pharisees, and heads of the people, the Sanhedrim. He worked many miracles before them, but they did not believe on him; he would have gathered thy children, "but you would not;" not "they would not." And again: "When the righteous turns from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, he shall die," "but if the wicked turns from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall live." (Ezek. 18:26,27) This is according to the Jewish nation; not the preaching of the gospel, but the law. For what saith the law? Do and live; leave undone and die. Therefore there is no salvation by the law, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." (Rom. 3:19) That it might be by grace, not of works, lest

any man should boast (Eph. 2:8,9). Salvation is entirely of free, unmerited, discriminating grace. But this it could not be if it depended on anything the creature does.

What is intended by the promise, "The Lord is not slack?" etc. And why this apparent delay and long-suffering? God declared in the beginning concerning the temple, that it should be destroyed, and that one stone should not be left upon another. But the Jews laughed it to scorn; they could not believe it; but it came to pass at last. His long-suffering bore with their manners until its accomplishment, and the execution thereof was awful in the extreme. Never was known such an appalling devastation. There was a great famine; and so great was their distress that men butchered each other for food to support their dying frames, and women tore their own children from their bosoms for the same purpose. Never was known in the history of time such a day of misery. And what made the scene more appalling, the destruction happened on a festival day, wherein all that were met together in the temple perished; but all the children of God escaped, out of the way; not one of them perished.

What an awful sight to them; that the departed spirits should in a moment's warning quit this world and enter hell, and then in agonizing torments behold the just God whom they had despised and mocked. May God enable you to confide in his promise, and trust him for his grace, that when the time comes for its accomplishment you may be found ready.

We have the promise of Christ's second coming. The apostle Paul had a blessed view of this, as recorded in Heb. 9:27,28: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die; but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin; and Heb. 7:26: "he will be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." At his first coming, his visage was marred, and there was neither form nor comeliness in him, that we should desire him; but he bore the sins of many; (Isa. 53:2,12) he hath appeared once to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Heb. 9:26). God hath laid upon him the iniquity of his 'us-ward'. If God had not done it, we never should; for our sins are so numerous we should have forgotten many; and there are many that we should not have thought were sins; they are so amiable and pleasant to our nature that we should not look upon them as sins; and from our first breath in infancy, to our last, though it be to old age, there is not a moment of our existence that we live without sin, except when we are bathing in the blood of the Lamb.

"Thy garden is the place,
Where pride cannot intrude;
For should it dare to enter there
'Twould soon be drown'd in blood."

Yes, Gethsemane is the place where our sins were put away; our sins of omission and sins of commission were all gathered together and put upon Christ. He bore them, and hath nailed them to his cross.

He finished the work which his Father gave him to do; (John 17:4) "he ascended to his God and our God;" "to his Father and our Father, (John 20:17) and ever lives to make intercession for us." (Heb. 7:25) He is not slack concerning his promise, but will come at

the appointed time. Before him shall be gathered all nations, and every man shall be judged according to the deeds done in the body. His apparent delays do not prove that he is slack concerning his promise, but rather his long-suffering; for if it were not for his long-suffering, would you not all be damned? For unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish; (Luke 13:3) and, therefore, is it not of his long-suffering that he brings us to repent, and cleanses us from dead works, by washing us in the washing of regeneration, that we may have pardon through his blood? Did not God promise Abraham that he should possess the land of Canaan, and that in his seed should all the nations be blessed? (Gen. 12:3) And was not the promise apparently delayed? But it was his long-suffering. And though Abraham and Sarah his wife became old, yet did not God perform his promise at the appointed time? And though Abraham took a bond-woman to his bosom, yet it did not in any wise further the execution of God's promise, but rather was the very means of causing discord in the family. And so with us; for anything that we may do will not hasten the promise of God. "And Abraham, by faith, sojourned in the land of promise, not knowing whither he went."

"But the Lord was not slack concerning his promise; but is long-suffering to us-ward." Did he not promise that Joseph should be above his brethren? And though he experienced many changes on his way for this purpose to bring him, yet all things work together for its accomplishment. The Lord was not slack concerning his promise; but his long suffering bore with their matters.

He bore with the manners of the children of Israel forty years; but at length brought them to the land of promise. All things shall work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to his eternal purpose. honours crown his brow! "He is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness," but will perform his promises in his own time and in his own way.

May the Lord bless you and me with patience to wait his time; for his mercy's sake. Amen.