

"Our Response to God's Delay"

Holiness

2 Peter 3:8-10

Dr. Bruce Bickel

March 18, 2016

Bruce: Gracious Lord, we thank You that Your eye is on the sparrow. And if Your eye is on the sparrow, how much more is Your eye upon us as Your children! Father, we pray that You would cleanse us of all unrighteousness. Make us worthy to accept what You would teach us through the Holy Spirit, and may it be so for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Once again, let's turn in our Bibles to 2 Peter chapter 3, looking at verses 8-10, on our major theme of holiness. Peter writes these words as an admonition and a warning to us, which we've been examining over the last month or so.

One thing I want to ask you to do today, men, is to open up your Bibles. I'm going to give you some verses today that I want you to look up. Now I can look them up here, but I want you to be able to look them up so that you will know where to find where they are, because they're going to be critical verses for our study today. So be prepared to do some Bible flipping. Let's hear the word of the Lord.

"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. 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. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. And then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed." This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Last week we began to look at the theme of God's delay. What is the purpose of God's delay? Chapter 3, verses 8 and 9 talk about God's perspective on time. We need to understand God's perspective on time, which is different from our perspective on time. We expect things to happen immediately. We think in terms of ninety days or six months of activity. But we need to realize that one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like one day to the Lord. We need to understand His delay.

Last week we talked about the purpose of God's delay. Do you remember what that was? It's wrapped up in one word—mercy.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: He is merciful! He delays His impending wrath upon our sin and unrighteousness because of His patience and His mercy.

Now last week we examined this rather in depth. We said there were two elements in which God demonstrates His mercy, first of all to the elect. We discussed last week that God's elect will not perish until they are converted. God's elect will never perish until they are converted. One of the reasons that God holds back His indignation and wrath against sin and unrighteousness is because not all the elect have been converted yet.

"Our Response to God's Delay"

But we know this—that when the elect are all converted, Christ will return again in all of His glory.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: The second group is the church. Now we do realize that the church is made up of the elect. That's what the word means, the chosen ones. So the church is made up of the elect.

But within the local church there are three kinds of people—those people who know they're in Christ, some people who think they're in Christ, and some people who know they're not in Christ. And you've got that conglomeration of people. And God is merciful to that group because among this group you have the elect. And so there is a byproduct of mercy to those people who are not saved, because God has not yet called all the elect to Himself. And so the people in the church are also experiencing God's mercy. Everybody experiences God's mercy. It's just that they don't know that.

So the next response, the question we ought to ask ourselves if we understand the reason for God's delay in sending His wrath to deal with sin because of mercy, the next question is this. What is my response to God's delay? We understand that God's delay is because of mercy. All the elect will not die until they are converted. So what is our response to God's delay?

I want to be very honest with you, men. And today I want to give you two responses to God's delay. We need to understand this—that the Bible talks about two kinds of people, those who are saved and those who are unsaved. The Bible talks about those who believe and those who don't believe.

Now there may be other descriptions—the wheat and the tares, and some other descriptions. But those are the two major themes—the saved and the unsaved, and the believers and the unbelievers. There is an appropriate response for each one of those. I want to go through each one of those two groups and talk about the response to God's delay.

For the first group, for the unsaved, their only response is repentance. And for the saved, their only response is rejoicing. We want to take a look at those two elements today—to the unsaved, repentance, and to the saved, rejoicing.

Let's take a look at the first group. What do we mean when we talk about repentance? Literally, it means to turn about. It means to have a change of mind. In other words, you change your mind toward God.

And why is that necessary? Look at Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1.

Transcriber's Note: Ephesians 2:1. "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked."

Bruce: We are dead in our trespasses and sins. A dead person cannot do anything. He needs to turn from his sin and turn towards God in repentance.

The word sins literally means "missing the mark of God's righteousness." The word transgressions, which is oftentimes used in the Scripture, means going in the wrong direction. So what you have in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1, is that a dead person is doing all the wrong things and going in the wrong way. And the word repentance means to change the way you think and to change the direction in which you are going. God's

"Our Response to God's Delay"

mercy is extended to people who think wrongly about Him and who are going in the wrong direction. God has not called all of the elect yet to saving faith. You see, God gives people time to repent, and that's an act of His mercy.

Everybody experiences God's mercy. They just don't know that. And so for the unsaved, we need to turn our minds away from the things of this world and from the direction that we're going.

Thomas Fuller says this. "You cannot repent too soon, because you do not know how soon it may be too late." Let me give you some understanding of what it means to repent. Let's unpack that a little bit. Let me give you three insights, talking about the whole issue of repentance.

First of all, for your consideration, I would say this. First of all, a person must have a sensible understanding of sin and deserved wrath. Would somebody look at Matthew chapter 9, verse 13? Jesus says, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

There must be some sight of sin in their minds. In other words, a person is going to have to have some apprehension of his conduct, his sin and his offense to God, and understand that he is subjected to God's wrath before he comes to repentance.

Also, understanding God's wrath against their sin is important. Not only do they understand their sin, but they understand God's wrath against their sin. How about Matthew chapter 3, verse 9? John the Baptist asked the question, "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Who warned you to flee from impending wrath? A person needs to have some sensible understanding and an apprehension of his sin and a sensible understanding of God's impending wrath because of his sin. Repentance is a flight from wrath just as much as it is a turning from sin. It's a turning from an angry God and a turning to a God reconciled. That's repentance.

Let me give you an example from the Scripture. If you would look up Exodus 21, verse 13, the book of Numbers 35, verse 6, and Deuteronomy 19, you'll see instructions about the cities of refuge. These are cities of refuge. Now in the Old Testament, they were places where a person could flee to escape the wrath of an avenger, usually their nearest relative. There were six cities. If somebody knew he was being chased, he could go into one of these six cities and he was to be saved—saved not salvationally, but saved from that avenger.

So who would run into a city like that? Only the persons who knew they were being chased by an avenger, only the person who was aware of the fact that he had done something where the avenger was after him to take his life. That's our understanding of God's wrath. We've got to have an apprehension of our sin and our offense before God, but also His impending wrath. And we flee to Christ. That's what repentance is. You flee to Christ.

Notice Psalm 34, verse 8. "Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him." Repentance is taking refuge in Christ. I have an understanding of the apprehension of my sinfulness and my unrighteousness and my offense to God. I've committed cosmic treason against His word and His own holiness. I understand that. But I also understand His impending wrath which is due me because the wages of sin is death. "The soul that sins shall die." I

"Our Response to God's Delay"

understand that, and I flee to Christ, just like these people fled to these cities in the Old Testament to flee from the avenging nearest relative who was coming after them.

One who repents must have a sense of God's wrath, because you must recognize your present state—that you're an offense to God. Somehow the person has to have that apprehension, that sensible understanding of those two things—their offense to God because of their sin, and the impending wrath of God coming after them because of their sin, and what they justly deserve because of God's righteousness and God's holiness. That's the first thing we need to understand about repentance.

Participant: Hey, Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: How much should we push back against the evangelizing that doesn't point that out. I agree with you, but I don't believe that people who say that God loves you and has a purpose for your life really allows people to know their fallenness and the wrath that's going to come because of it. It doesn't lead them to repentance. It doesn't allow them to look in the mirror and see who they truly are.

Bruce: I think I might answer that as we go through this a little bit deeper. You can remind me of the question, but I think I'm going to touch upon that in a moment. That's principle #1—a sensible apprehension of their sin and God's impending wrath.

The second thing that the true repentant needs to understand is an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ. The other side of the coin is this. Yes, you need to have an understanding of your sin and God's impending wrath. But the other side of the coin is this. You've got to have a sensible apprehension of God's mercy in Christ. Those two things fit together. Seeing God's wrath and sensing His mercy is the greatest inducement to repentance. You see what you deserve. You see what you don't get. And you see the One who provided it for you in the Person and the work of Christ. Would somebody look up Joel 2:13? Would you read that for us when you find it? One side of repentance is the understanding of future wrath. The other side is the hope of future mercy in Christ. Would somebody read Joel 2:13? Do I need to look it up?

Participant: "Rend your hearts, not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and He relents over disaster."

Bruce: Thank you, Ted. That's the other sides of the coin. We preach that as much as we do anything else. We preach about their awareness of their sin and the impending wrath of God. But we also preach, at the same time, that God is merciful, that God is a God of love. And there is the balance that we have to have in our preaching.

Oftentimes, what we do in our modern evangelism is that we emphasize one side of the coin but not the other. You've got to have both sides of that—an apprehension of your sin and God's impending wrath, but at the same time an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ. Mercy in Christ. That's what you draw somebody to when you have that balance. That's Biblical balance in evangelism.

Unfortunately, we don't do that in our culture because we're so oriented in getting what? A response! We're after a response. The only way to evaluate any ministry, men, is this. Was truth proclaimed?

"Our Response to God's Delay"

That's the way you evaluate ministry. It's not the response of the people. Yes, you would like to have a response. But that's not the way you evaluate it. You evaluate it on this basis. Did the gospel I preached, when I had the opportunity to proclaim the things that are important, lead somebody to come to repentance? And that is an apprehension of their sin and an understanding of God's impending wrath because of their unrighteousness, but at the same time God's love and mercy through Christ—God's hope that they have for mercy in Christ?

You recognize your condition. You sense God's wrath. And then you hope for His mercy. That's the balance in repentance.

How about Acts chapter 3, verse 19? Should you read that, please?

Participant: "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out."

Bruce: Now I've got to add one other thing to that verse to help us understand the context. There is a continual repentance which follows our pardon. Repentance introduces us to God's pardon, but life becomes a life of repentance, continual repentance all the time. It doesn't stop at your conversion or at your regeneration.

Participant: Right.

Bruce: Let me give you an illustration of that. Go to Luke chapter 7, verse 47. A life of continued repentance is a melting of the heart that flows out of sensing God's mercy and His love for you. And that means that you're going to be constantly repenting of your sin because you recognize God's holiness. We get credit for Christ's sinless perfection and perfect obedience, but we're not perfect. And therefore we have a life of continual repentance. I'm trying to say this—that repentance doesn't stop at your pardon. It's a way of life. Would somebody read Luke 7:47?

Participant: "Therefore I tell you that her many sins have been forgiven, as her great love has shown." But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

Bruce: Whoever has been forgiven little loves little. So here's an illustration. Her many sins were forgiven, not just the pardon that brought her to saving faith, but her many sins have also been forgiven. We are in a constant state of repentance. Repentance does not stop with our pardon. It continues with our lifestyle.

So repentance not only includes an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ, and an apprehension of our sin and God's impending wrath. But thirdly, I would offer this for your consideration—a grieving for and a forsaking of sin.

Look at 2 Corinthians 7, verses 8-10. Guilt for sin will follow repentance. It's called godly sorrow. Would somebody read 2 Corinthians 7:8-10?

Participant: "Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it, I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while. Yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow has led to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended, and so were not harmed in any way by us."

Bruce: Now notice. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret. Now I can't even fathom that statement, men. Repentance without regret. Do you understand the mercy of that? You going to look back on your life and say, "Look at all the rotten things I've done!" And somehow, in God's grace, because He has brought you to repentance and saving faith, you're going to see what has happened in God's mercy

"Our Response to God's Delay"

and God's love, and there won't be any regret! There won't be regret! I can't even fathom that!

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: A repentance without regret? Wow! That's a verse I never want to have to preach on. I can't even probe the depths of that! To look back on my life and see all the rotten things I've done, and there's no regret because it brought me to saving faith through the grace of repentance? That's what he's saying. It brings you to saving faith through the grace of repentance. And you have no regret!

Now that's godly sorrow. Paul is talking to the church at Corinth and he says, "I'm sorry I made you sorrowful. But I'm glad you were sorry because your being sorry made you come to repentance. And you don't have any regret."

You see, that's the difference between feeling sorry, being sorry for your sin, and having godly sorrow. There's a difference. I'm sorry I did it because I got the consequences of my actions. Most people say "I'm sorry," because they're dealing with the consequences. Godly sorrow brings repentance and salvation without regret!

You look back on your life and you're seeing God's mercy. I don't regret it because it brought me to saving faith through the grace of repentance. So there is a grief for and a forsaking of our sin.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You see, the function of grace is this. Repentance is a grace we have received. It's not a goal to be achieved. It's a grace we have received. It's not a goal to be achieved.

But also there is a forsaking of sin. Not only do you grieve over your sin, but the second stage or part of the repentance is turning from it. You were going in the wrong direction. Now you're going to change. You go in the right direction.

Look at Proverbs 28, verse 13. "He that confesses and renounces his sin finds mercy."

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: "He that renounces and confesses his sin finds mercy." To forsake sin is to leave it without any thought reserved to returning to it again. Forsaking sin means this: to leave it without any thought of returning to do it again.

The magnificent thing about God's forgiveness is that when you and I confess our sins, *"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness."* The word *confess* means to agree with. It's the word *homologeo*. It means to agree with what somebody else has already said.

Now a lot of people say, "Well, I profess Christ." But the real issue is do you confess Christ? Professing Christ is just making a statement about Him. But when you confess Christ, you are agreeing on who the Person of Christ is based upon what somebody else has said, and those are the Scriptures. You see that He is the Son of God, that He is God Incarnate, that He is the incarnate holy Savior. Do we agree on who God is based upon the God of Biblical revelation, the Jesus of Biblical revelation and not the Jesus of our human imagination? Which one is it? *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness."*

And men, when you confess your sins, the chain of that sin is broken.

Participant: Yes.

"Our Response to God's Delay"

Bruce: It's broken. You don't have to do it anymore because the slate has been wiped clean. And the difficulty we have is wanting to resurrect that again by stimulating something within us, whatever that may be. We have a tendency to want to resurrect that. Part of true repentance is a genuine grief over our sin and a desire to forsake it, to have a desire not to go back to it again. Sometimes you have to say, "Lord, prevent me from doing that again." But you've got to realize this men, that when you ask for God's forgiveness and you've been forgiven because of the blood of Christ, that chain has been broken. And you don't have to go back and do it again. That becomes our responsibility not to choose to go back and do it again and resurrect it.. God is the One who does the resurrecting. We don't do that. We need not be in the resurrection business—resurrecting our old sins, because the chain has been broken.

When we understand God's mercy, we will have the motivation to forsake and not return. Would somebody read Romans chapter 2, verse 4?

Transcriber's Note: Romans 2:4. *"Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?"*

Bruce: The next question we need to ask is this. How is repentance brought about? First of all by preaching a Biblical gospel. The Biblical gospel contains these six elements—the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and work of Christ, and repentance and faith. Would somebody read Luke chapter 24, verse 47? Brian, this will help answer your question.

Participant: "And that repentance and forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem."

Bruce: There is the answer to your question. Read it again, please.

Participant: "And that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Bruce: Now that's the answer to your question, Brian, because the Biblical gospel is this: the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and work of Christ, and repentance and faith. And that's the message we preach. There has got to be balance. There has got to be this balance between the apprehension of our sin and the impending wrath of God because of unrighteousness. The other side of the coin is understanding His mercy. And the third thing is the grief over sin and the forsaking of it. When we preach that message, people come to repentance, because that's the Biblical methodology of it, as opposed to just giving people what they want to hear.

Now we have to be very, very sensitive in our preaching and our teaching. But remember this. The only way to evaluate any message of the gospel is was it true? It's not "did I get the right response?"

So men, I must ask you this question. Based on what we've just heard, the real issue in evaluating any Bible study is this. What am I going to do about what I have just learned? What are you going to do about what you've just learned? If you're not in Christ today, men, turn your eyes and your minds toward God. Turn away from the things of which you need to repent and flee God's wrath. And put your hope in the Person and mercy of Christ. If God is doing a work of grace through this message today, and you know that

"Our Response to God's Delay"

you do not have saving faith, plead your case with Christ in all of His mercy, and discover the One who loves you because of His mercy and His grace. Come to Christ. That's the response that we have to this message today. If you know that you're not in Christ, and God is doing a work of grace, don't say that it's too soon to repent, that it's not the right time and I'll do it later. God's today is not too soon for repentance because God's tomorrow may be too late for acceptance. Come to Christ. Put your faith in Him. He will forgive us of our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness. That's the response to God's delay for the unsaved.

Now let's take a look at the saved, those who do believe. Our response is one of rejoicing. For the person who is in Christ, one who does possess saving faith, a follower of Christ, when we consider God's forbearance and mercy as an act of His love for us, our rejoicing is increased when we consider the following things. Here is what we need to consider.

What have you done against God? We really never know how much we've offended Him. Look at Psalm 19, verse 12. "Who can discern His errors? Forgive my hidden faults."

You've got to take consideration of this, men. How do I offend God on a daily basis? Now I have saving faith. One of the things I want to do is not to return back to my former way of life. And I have to ask myself that question. What is it that I have done to offend God today? I pray that He would forgive me and expose my hidden faults.

How about Psalm 40, verse 12? Would somebody read that? Psalm 40, verse 12.

Participant: "For evils have encompassed me beyond number, and iniquities have overtaken me that I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me."

Bruce: How much do we offend God just in the naturalness of our lives? You see, if you do have saving faith, understanding God's mercy where He has positioned you now, causes us to take tremendous introspection of who we are and the sins that we commit against Him that we don't even know. The Scripture says that they are more numerous than the hairs on your head. And yet God is merciful in granting us saving faith through regeneration

Participant: Do the hairs become less and less? *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: No, they become more and more. *(Laughter.)* Because you understand them more. The more you are aware of God, the more aware of your offense against Him. That's the whole point of that first question. The more clearly I see Him, the more clearly I'll see my own sin. That's how I understand His mercy. There's a combination of my understanding God's mercy and understanding Him more clearly. And the more clearly I see God, I see myself in reality and more of the sin that I have. And that's an expression of His mercy.

Participant: Regardless of the hairs on your head. *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: That's correct. *(Laughter.)* So that being the truth, you have more than I do. *(Laughter.)*

Participant: I have more to be thankful for. *(Laughter.)*

"Our Response to God's Delay"

Bruce: Amen. Yes. More rejoicing. You see, God's people have as much reason to wonder at His patience and mercy as other people do, especially when we consider this.
#2. What does our sin deserve?

Participant: Death.

Bruce: Ezekiel 18:20. *"The soul that sins shall die."* Romans 6:23. *"The wages of sin is death."* Not only do I look at my life as a believer and say, "How have I offended you?" But "what is it that my sins deserve? Why is it that You keep me alive? It's because of Your mercy, because of Your love, because of Your grace."

"The soul that sins shall die." Have I ever sinned? Yes. Why doesn't He take my life? It's mercy! You see, that's what motivates us not to want to go back and participate in the things from our former way of life. That's why we're motivated by mercy.

#3. I would ask you to consider this. Why doesn't God make us a monument to His justice and honor? Sometimes God makes displays of His character for a careless world. He puts His power on display to a careless world. Would somebody read Romans 1:18? God sometimes just puts His character on display for a careless world. It's part of His patience and His mercy. 1:18 of Romans, please?

Participant: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

Bruce: Sometimes God just puts His character on display for a careless world to draw them to Himself. Yes?

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, Ted?

Ted: I didn't get this. Why doesn't God make us a—

Bruce: Monument to His justice and honor? Why doesn't He take our lives?

Ted: But someone could also say, "Why does He take our lives?"

Bruce: No. I'm saying, "Why doesn't He?" In other words, if the wages of sin is death, why doesn't He make us a monument and do it right away?

Ted: I see.

Bruce: Why doesn't He do that? I ask myself that frequently. Look at those thoughts I just had! Why doesn't He just make a monument of me and take my life?

Participant: He loves us.

Bruce: You see, that's mercy. That's what motivates us to continue to repent of our sin and to forsake it, and to move in a different direction.

#4. I would offer this for your consideration. How many mercies have we experienced in God's long-suffering patience? Now that's a personal question that only you can answer. It's a good one to ask. Do I understand God's providential care in my life? Look at His providence in my life! The mercies of daily providence is what we're talking about. Do you thank God for them? Do you recognize them? Or are you so busy doing all sorts of Christian activities and programmatic activities that you forget that?

You see, that's just calling us to take a close look at ourselves and say, "What are the daily providences which God has given me in my life? How many of those have I experienced? Am I grateful for that? Does that motivate me toward holiness and obedience?"

"Our Response to God's Delay"

Look at Psalm 68:19. *"who daily bears our burdens."* One of the original texts translates that as *"who daily loads us up with benefits."* What benefits do you experience from God? Are you aware of those? You see, as saved persons, you and I need to think that way. We need to think of His daily providences, the benefits that He gives us in Christ. We need to think that way, just as the unbeliever needs to think of his impending doom to flee from God's wrath and to be exposed to his sin. We need to look at the other side of the coin—how God has been so merciful to us. He loads us up with benefits. He delivers us out of imminent danger.

Look at that question. How many times have you recognized that God just delivered you from imminent danger? That's an act of what?

Participant: Mercy.

Bruce: Mercy. It's an act of mercy.

How about Amos chapter 4, verse 11? *"You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire."* How many times, men, have you realized that God had just protected you—driving your car, walking across the street, those of us who have been in combat, whatever it may be? How many times have you just stopped and said, "Lord, You just protected me in Your providential care?" Men, that's what motivates us as believers. We just say, "Thank You for Your providential care, because I'm under the wings of the Almighty."

Participant: Hey, Bruce, one thing off of that. Sometimes, when we get most angry with God when it seems that He doesn't allow things to go the way we want them.

Bruce: Correct.

Participant: That's a huge place of protection.

Bruce: Yes. Amen. He doesn't give us what we really want. That's correct. I've always felt this. God answers every prayer. It's by one of two ways. He provides the answer or He protects you from it.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: He provides what you ask for, or He protects you from it. Either one of those is an answer. Now most of the time I get the one that protects me from what I want.

(Laughter.) That's an act of what?

Participant: Mercy.

Bruce: Mercy. An act of mercy. We are preserved from general destruction because of God's grace.

How about Lamentations 3:22 *"Because of the LORD's great love, we are not consumed."*

Then this is the last question that I would think the saved person needs to consider, rejoicing in God's management of time. If you are alive and experience the grace of God unto salvation, how much more should you rejoice and bless God for His delay! How much more should we bless Him for His delay, because it was in His timing that we came to saving faith, because you know what would have happened if God had not delayed and you died in your sins. You know what would have happened. Do you ever think about that? "Thank You, Lord, for delaying my coming to faith. You just protected me."

"Our Response to God's Delay"

I had a friend who came to saving faith at about fifty years old. He was always complaining about why God didn't save him earlier. *(Laughter.)*

I said, "Either way, I had the privilege that, for reasons only known to God, He saved me as a teenager. He saved you as a fifty-year-old. Either way, God protected us. He saved me earlier because He protected me from the things I would do. He saved you at fifty because He protected you from the things you had done." Either way, it's a cause for what? Rejoicing. It's God's timing.

If God had not delayed, men, where would you be? God delays for His own sake because He wanted to have a relationship with you. God's elect will never perish until they are converted. How grateful we ought to be for God's delay that permitted us to come to saving faith through His grace. Either way, for the saved and the unsaved, repent and rejoice. That's the only response we should have to God's delay.

Let's pray. Father, our only response for those of us who are in Christ is to rejoice in Your delay. And the only response for those who are not in Christ is to repent because of God's merciful delay. Come to Christ. Put your hope in Him. Either way, Lord, let us put our hope in You and rest in Your arms of grace. And may it be so for Jesus' sake. And all the men said, "Amen."