

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PATIENCE, COMFORT, AND HOPE FROM THE
SCRIPTURES.

A Sermon

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“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”—Romans xv. 4.

THE apostle Paul was an inspired man when he wrote this Epistle, so there was no necessity, on the part of the Holy Spirit, when guiding his mind and pen, to employ words which had been used before in the Scriptures, for his language is unlimited. Yet Paul, inspired as he was, frequently quoted from the Old Testament, and in the verse preceding our text he quotes from the Psalms: “As it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.” One special reason for quoting from the Old Testament was, doubtless, to put honour upon it, for the Holy Spirit foresaw that there would be some, in these later days, who would speak of it disparagingly. Not so did our Lord Jesus Christ; not so did his apostles; not so did any by whom the Holy Ghost spake. The Old Testament is not to be regarded with one jot less of reverence and love than is the New Testament; they must remain bound together, for they are the one revelation of the mind and will of God; and woe be to the man who shall attempt to rend asunder that seamless garment of Holy Scripture.

There are some who speak of the Old Testament as if it were worn out; but, indeed, it has about it all the freshness, and the force, and the dew of its youth; and, in the additional light that the New Testament throws upon its histories, its prophecies, and its promises, it has gathered force rather than lost any, so that we, probably, can appreciate the Old Testament Scripture far more highly now than we have the New Testament also than we could have done if we had not received both the early and the later revelations.

Some have supposed that the light of the New Testament is so bright that it quite eclipses the light of the Old Testament, as the
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rising of the sun makes us forget the moon; but it is not so. The Old Testament now shines with a brighter light than ever to those whose faith is fixed on Jesus Christ, and whose eyes behold him in the pages of the New Testament. I confess that, sometimes, a type or an emblem, which would have been dark or obscure but for the light that has been shed upon it by the New Testament, has seemed to me, if possible, to be clearer even than the New Testament itself. I have seemed to see the brightness of the glory of the revelation concentrated and focussed about some of the darker passages of the Old Testament so manifestly that, instead of the Old seeming to be outdone by the New, I have almost thought it to be the other way, if such a thought might be tolerated for a moment. There is no need, however, to compare them, for they are both a part of that all Scripture which is God-breathed.

Nor has the authority of the Old Testament ceased. Of course, the legal ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation are done away with, for we are not under the law, but under grace; yet, even in their passing away, they answer an important purpose. They often afford us instruction where they are not needed for direction. Still it is true, my brethren, concerning the entire Book, that it was "written for our learning;" and he is a learned man who knows much of Scripture, but he is unlearned, and unstable in the things of God, who knows a thousand other things, but does not know what "things were written aforetime," and who does not bend his soul, his heart, his intellect, to the believing and the understanding of that which God has spoken of old time by his prophets and apostles.

Believing this most truly, as I am sure we do, let us think, for a little while, about Holy Scripture and that which grows out of it. The text says, "that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

I shall take the liberty of reading the text, not exactly as it is in our version, but putting in the articles which our translators have left out; I never like to leave out the article where it is inserted by the original writer. So the passage runs thus, "That we through *the* patience and *the* comfort of the Scriptures might have *the* hope." That rendering conveys to us another shade of meaning, and I am convinced that it is the true one. Grammatical construction requires that the meaning should be thus brought out by the use of the articles.

So, first, we will consider *the patience of the Scriptures*; secondly, *the comfort of the Scriptures*; and then, thirdly; though that may not be precisely according to the letter of the text, yet, I think, perfectly consistent with truth,—*the hope of the Scriptures*.

I. First, then, let us think of THE PATIENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

You, know, beloved, that we are saved by faith, and that, by faith, we find complete and immediate salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ. But you must never forget that, as soon as we are saved, we come under the discipline of Christ, and a part of that discipline lies in the exercise of patience,—patience in many senses,—“the patience of the Scriptures.”

First, there is *the patience inculcated in the Scriptures*, of which I

should say, first, that it signifies resignation to the divine will. In the olden times, the Scriptures enjoined submission to the will of the Most High, whatever that submission might involve. Solomon wrote, "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." The Lord himself said, by the mouth of his servant, the psalmist, "Be still, and know that I am God." And the Holy Spirit said, through the lips of the weeping prophet, Jeremiah, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" The Old Testament, like the New, bids us be patient under the hand of God. So we must be, my brethren. Submit yourselves unto God, for this is an essential part of the life of faith. The man who will not yield himself up to the divine will, and meekly bear it, whatever it may be, is evidently rebellious against his God. How, then, can he be said to be trusting in the Lord? He has at least some unbelief still clinging to him; for, were he fully a believer, he would resign himself to the Lord's will, and humble himself under the mighty hand of God that he might exalt him in due time.

This patience also includes a continuance in the good work and walk, though we may have to face human or even Satanic opposition. The patience inculcated in the Scriptures is a patient perseverance in well doing; it is the walking in the path of the just, which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" it is the constant abiding in the fear of the Lord. Nowhere does either the Old or the New Testament speak of our being saved by a kind of temporary faith or a spasm of love; but herein is seen the patience of the saints,—that, although they are opposed by the seed of the serpent, and by the old serpent himself, they still hold on their way, despite all opposition and persecution, even to the end, and so they are saved.

This patience of the saints includes also the bearing of our brother's burdens. It is in that connection that our text appears: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves;" and this is part of the patience inculcated in the Scriptures. The old law taught men to love their neighbours as themselves. Now, we quickly make excuses for our own infirmities, and it therefore behoves us to endure the infirmities of others,—to put a kind construction on what might have been harshly condemned,—to bear with the misconceptions of our conduct made by others in their mistake, or even misrepresentations made in their anger,—to be gentle and tender as a nurse is with a child,—never to be hard, and harsh, and severe, for this is contrary to the second table of the law which can be summed up in the brief expression, love to men. Oh, I would to God that we had more of this spirit in all our churches! Our Saviour said to his disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." But how often is that new commandment forgotten in the impatient way in which we show our petulance towards weak and perhaps provoking saints! God grant that, in the future, we may have more patience in this respect!

Patience, in the Old Testament, is often set forth in waiting for the fulfilment of the promises and the prophecies. The patriarchs had to wait; Israel had to wait; we also are exhorted to wait on the Lord, and to be of good courage, for he shall strengthen our heart. "Though the vision tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." So you see that the patience of the Scriptures, that is to say, the patience which the Scriptures inculcate, is that which we all need to exercise.

But it is also *the patience which the Scriptures exhibit*; for, when you turn to the grand old Book, you find that it gives us, in actual life, the exemplification of the precepts which were written upon the tables of stone, or upon the ancient rolls of Scripture. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job," says the apostle James. Ye may not have to sit among the ashes as he did, or to endure such trials as fell upon him; but, between here and heaven, you may expect to have losses, and crosses, and bereavements, and harsh words from those who ought to be your comforters. O beloved, may you have, at such times, the patience of the Scriptures, and be able to say, with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Job is one of the earthly patterns of patience, though he was not perfect in it. May our patience at least come up to his standard!

We need, too, the patience of David. He held on his way, though opposed by wicked men, and especially by Saul, who hunted him like a partridge upon the mountains. Yet David behaved himself with discretion, and would not lift up his hand to smite the Lord's anointed, even though the crown of Israel seemed again and again to be within his reach. You know how patiently he persevered, notwithstanding all the opposition which came to thrust him out of his course.

Then, with regard to bearing the infirmities of our brethren, you know the patience of the Scriptures as set forth in the case of Joseph. How tender and kind he was to his brethren even when he seemed to be most severe to them! With what a generous heart did he forgive their cruelty to him! You remember how he framed excuses for them as he said, "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God;" though he knew right well that, in their jealousy and malice, they had sold him for a slave.

If I speak of the patience that waits for the fulfilment of promises, I may remind you that the Old Testament sets before you notable examples of this kind of waiting in Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. They waited long in the land of which they owned not so much as a single foot, except the field that contained Abraham's place of burial in the cave of Machpelah; dwelling in tents, they waited, sojourners with God, and strangers in the land, until the time when the promise should be fulfilled. This is just how you also have to live, beloved. This world is not a place of rest for you, for it is polluted; so you are to live the separated life of a pilgrim and a stranger until the Lord shall bring you into the Heavenly Canaan, and give you the "inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," which is "reserved in heaven for you."

This patience is, however, most clearly set forth in the Scriptures in the life of our dear Lord and Master. You will find in him patience in its highest perfection. He is the model of patient perseverance in the work his Father gave him to do; the pattern of patient silence under the reproaches and sarcasms of wicked men, the image of patient suffering as he bowed his head unto death, even the death of the cross. He it is, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." This is part of the patience of the Scriptures, and such patience as this we have, each one of us, to seek.

But, in addition to its being the patience inculcated, and the patience exhibited, it is *the patience produced by the Scriptures*. Beloved, if you read the Scriptures diligently, and meditate much upon them;—if you drink in of their spirit, it will be with you as it is with certain insects which, when they feed upon a peculiar kind of flower, their silk is coloured like that upon which they feed. You shall find that, feeding upon the patience of the Scriptures, in meditation and prayer, you yourself will find reproduced in you the patience of the Scriptures. If you want to kill impatience, turn to the Word of God, look out an appropriate text, ask to have it applied to your heart by the Holy Spirit, and see whether the grace of patience is not thus implanted within you. Have you become weary in well-doing? Then, stay yourselves upon a precious promise, and your weariness will speedily depart. Do you seem as if you could not bear the continued opposition of ungodly men? Turn you to the promises of your gracious Lord and Master, and you shall learn to rejoice, and be exceeding glad, even when they persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for his name's sake. The saints of God have long proved that the Scriptures produce patience. There is no literature in the world that is comparable to the many Books that are here put into one library called the Bible. There are no philosophical maxims, under heaven, that can produce such patience as the Word of God produces when the Spirit of God comes riding in his own chariot of the Word into the soul of man. It is not the patience of a brute beast that cannot complain, or the patience of the stoic who refuses to feel. It is the patience of a child who believes in his father's love, the patience of a soldier who does not expect to conquer the enemy without stern fighting, the patience of a pilgrim who pushes on because he believes in the inheritance which he will ultimately reach. This is the patience of the Scriptures; may God, of his great mercy, work it in each one of us!

II. Then, in addition to the patience of the Scriptures, we are exhorted to seek to possess **THE COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES**.

It is not right for us to be patient, yet miserable. I think I have seen some, who professed to be Christians, give themselves up to a mode of life which was not at all what it should be. They did not actually complain, but one could see that they were not happy. This is not the point to which the Spirit of God would bring us; he would have us get the comfort of the Scriptures. Well, now, what is the comfort of the Scriptures?

To go over the same heads again, I should say that it is, first, *the comfort which the Scriptures inculcate*. You know how the Word of God abounds in injunctions and promises concerning comfort and consolation. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem." There are many passages, in the Old Testament, in which we are plainly exhorted to be glad; and when you come to the New Testament, you have such messages as this, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me;" or this, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." The Scripture bids us not merely to submit to tribulation, but to rejoice in it;—not simply to be patient, but to glory in infirmities, to glory in trials, to glory in tribulations, because then the grace of God rests upon us all the more manifestly.

Then, brethren, we should have *the comfort which the Scriptures exhibit*. What a charming picture of a comfortable, happy frame of mind is that of Enoch, who walked with God for centuries together! "Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years." How beautifully do we see the spirit of consolation exhibited in the character of Abraham, who, with all his troubles, as a stranger in a strange land, walks among men as a king! Have you never envied that quiet dignity with which, believing in God, he seemed also to master all around him without any sign of agitation of mind? Oh, that you had such comfort as he had when he took his son, his only son, whom he loved, to offer him up for a sacrifice! You never have had such a trial as that; and, probably, you never will; but in all that time of testing, what solid comfort he had! There were no written Scriptures then, yet how grand is the consolation which the Scripture describes him as having! "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Therefore, he staggered not at the promise through unbelief. Admire, too, the comfort that you often see in the case of David. His was a troubled life, but he stayed himself upon his God. As one remarkable instance of this, think of the time when he came back from the Philistines, and found Ziklag burned, all who were left in it carried away captive, and "the people"—his own followers—"spake of stoning him;" "but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." All through the Psalms, you get beautiful pictures of the comfort that David enjoyed even in his times of trouble. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Thus he talked to himself, and admonished himself; and even when he sank in deep waters, he still cried unto the Lord, and still hoped in his mercy. What a sweet song of hope he sings in the 23rd Psalm! "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

So, be patient, brethren, but be comfortable, too. Submit to the

will of God, but do not do it like slaves who submit because they must, but like children who learn to rejoice in their father's will, and who, though they cannot understand it, yet believe it to be good and right. If you want to exhibit the comfort of the Scriptures, do as Hezekiah did when Rab-shakeh came with Sennacherib's letter full of filthiness and blasphemy: "Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord." This is the comfort of the Scriptures, that we may go to the Lord in the worst time of trouble, and spread the whole case before the eye of infinite love, expecting and being sure that God will, in some way, work deliverance for us.

And, as I said about the patience of the Scriptures, so is it with the comfort. I have spoken of the comfort which the Scriptures inculcate and exhibit; now I want to speak of *the comfort which the Scriptures produce*. Oh, how sweetly do the Scriptures console and cheer the heart! I am only saying what many of you, dear brothers and sisters, know as well as I do, and I know it in my very heart. There have been times, in my life, when all the words of men, however kindly they may have been spoken, have altogether failed to comfort me; but a promise—ay, I was about to say, half a promise—from God has lifted my soul out of the depths of despair, and made it rise like a lark, singing as it soared in the clear sunlight of Jehovah's countenance. When the Spirit of God applies even the briefest portion of Scripture to our spirit, it is a balm for every care, and the end of every difficulty. We are glad, then, in the worst of weathers, to take up our cross, and go on our way rejoicing, when the consolations of the Holy Scriptures are applied to us by the Holy Ghost. For, brethren, the Scriptures always exactly fit our case, whatever it may be. Was there ever a book that was so much written for you as this Book is? I claim that it was written for me, yet I grant that it was also written for you;—I mean, not merely for you all, as a whole congregation, but for each child of God. There are passages in the Bible which sometimes come to my heart with such force that it seems as if the Holy Spirit must have written them the very day I read them. He must have known all about my case, for he has put a little word into that verse which just exactly suits me. I know that it was written thousands of years ago, but what a marvellous prescience must have been there to foresee the peculiarity and speciality of my trial! Have not you found it so, beloved? Has not the comfort of the Scriptures been so suitable, so tender, so condescending, that you have enjoyed it, and been made glad by it?

There is also this further comfort, that the Scriptures are so certain. When we have trusted in a promise of God, we have not relied upon a cunningly-devised fable. When we rely upon a covenant declaration, it is not a bruised reed which will break beneath our weight, but it is a strong, substantial column which will bear all the load that we can possibly put upon it, so that we may have fullest consolation and good hope through grace by this comfort of the Scriptures.

Let us just think of a few Old Testament passages, and see if they

do not give us great comfort. "I know their sorrows." That is a very old statement of God concerning the children of Israel in Egypt; but it is just as true concerning all our sorrows, they are all known to God. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." That is part of the last message of Moses to the children of Israel; does not that comfort of the Scriptures cheer you? Here is another precious passage: "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Do you want me to keep on quoting such precious promises as these? I might do so all night long, for these charming notes of the comfort of the Scriptures are practically without end. Oh, may the Divine Spirit lay some of them home to your troubled hearts, so that, beloved brethren and sisters, you may not only have patience and comfort, but that you may have *the* patience and *the* comfort of the Scriptures!

III. Now I have to speak briefly on the last part of our subject; that is, THE HOPE OF THE SCRIPTURES: "that we through the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures might have the hope."

You have noticed, I daresay, that the matters which concern our salvation are always spoken of as the objects of faith. A man does not obtain the pardon of his sins by hoping for it; he is not regenerated because he hopes to be born again; justification is not given to him because he hopes for it; all these things are matters of faith, not of hope. We are justified by faith; it is by faith that we receive the forgiveness of our sins. Faith has to do with the past,—with what Christ has accomplished; but hope looks forward to the future. Hope is for those who are saved, and hope comes to us, and is strengthened in us, by the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures.

Well now, brethren, what is the hope which we get, as God enables us to have the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures? Well,—to go over the same three points again,—*it is such a hope as the Scriptures hold forth*. For instance, they hold forth this hope: "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." So, if you have the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures, you will be sure about that great and glorious doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Your hope will be very bright about that matter, because you will feel sure that we

shall be preserved, upheld, comforted, and rendered triumphant even over the last enemy, which is death, for that he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." That is one hope which the Scripture sets forth to us. Then there is the hope that, after death, will come the resurrection, and eternal life and glory, for that also is part of the hope set forth in the Scriptures, as Job said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." And David said, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." And Isaiah said, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise." Albeit that the Old Testament in itself has not the brightness of hope that there is in the New Testament, yet is there enough even there to make us very hopeful for the future; and if you read the whole of the Scriptures through, you will see that the man who, by the patience of the Scriptures is holding on his way, and by the comfort of the Scriptures is cheered in so doing, may have the good hope of final perseverance and of eternal glory.

Then, also, this hope is *such as the Scriptures exhibit*. We have a very beautiful picture of hope in the 11th of the Hebrews, where the apostle describes all those heroes of the faith, and then says, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." They all died looking for what they had not seen, but of which they were so sure that they already embraced it. Over their mausoleum we may inscribe the words, "the children of the morning." They had not seen the full light of the day, but they were persuaded of its coming; they watched for it, and spoke of it, and lived and died in expectation of it. You are to have the same kind of hope that Abraham had, of whom our Lord said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." You are to have the same sort of hope that all the patriarchs had when they remained far off from the country from which they had gone out, because, like Abraham, they "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." You are to have a hope like that of Joseph, who died in Egypt, yet gave commandment concerning his bones, that they were not to be left there; for he still claimed his portion, not with Pharaoh, but with his forefathers in the land of promise. I have not time to go through the list of the hopeful spirits of the Old Testament; but I would just remind you that they never hoped to have the inheritance without patiently waiting God's time for them to receive it, and they only hoped to have it through the comfort of the Scriptures which had promised it to them. It must be the same with us; through believing in Christ Jesus our Lord, and relying upon the promises of our faithful, covenant-keeping God, we also, through the patience of the Scriptures, and the comfort of the Scriptures, shall inherit the hope which is set forth and exhibited in the Scriptures.

Lastly, this is *a hope such as the Scriptures always produce in*

those who believe them, obey them, and follow them. O brethren, if you are patiently fighting the battles of the Lord, determined that nothing shall turn you aside from following the great Captain of your salvation,—if you are resting in the precious blood of Jesus, and the Holy Ghost has wrought in you this determination that, come what may, you will never turn aside from the King's highway of holiness, then I know that you will delight in and seek after all the comforts that are stored up for you in the inspired Word of God. You will prize your Lord's promises, you will observe your Lord's ordinances; above all, you will esteem and love your blessed Lord himself, who is "the Consolation of Israel." You will honour the Divine Spirit, who is *the Comforter*, who brings the comfort of which our text speaks; and when you have thus realized the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures, oh, what a hope you will have! You will share the hopes of all the saints, the hopes which stirred their spirits when they died, some of them in anguish at the stake or on the rack, or dragged at the heels of wild horses, or stoned, or sawn asunder, or slain with the sword. You will have the hope with which your godly mother died, the hope with which all those who were in Christ have died. You will have the hope that, when the Master comes, he will find you ready to welcome him;—the hope that, when his throne is set, and his courtiers are gathered around it in the great day of account, you will be there;—and the hope that, for ever, you will be with him where he is, to behold his glory, the glory which the Father has given him. I could not, if I had the tongues of men and of angels, explain and expound all that is included in the hope of patient souls that are comforted by the inspired Word of God. It is a hope full of immortality, and of it the apostle Paul says, when writing to the Hebrews, "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." This hope we would not part with for ten thousand worlds if we had them; do you not say so, beloved? Oh, let your eyes sparkle at the very thought of this hope: let your hearts dance even at the mere mention of it; let your whole soul be invigorated and kept in tune by this hope,—that, when Jesus comes in his glory, you shall be with him, and shall reign with him for ever and ever.

Now I must send you away with this mournful reflection,—that there are some of you who have no hope. Sometimes, we use the word "hope" very incorrectly. A man dies without any faith in Christ, and someone says, "Well, I hope it is all right with him." I dare not say that; I dare say, "I wish it had been all right with him, I desire that it might have been;" but hope needs solid ground to rest upon if it is to be a good hope. An idle, vain hope is for idle and vain men. A foolish hope is only fit for fools. Sirs, what right have some of you to hope that you will ever get to heaven? If, when you go out of this Tabernacle, you were to turn to the left, and go towards London Bridge, it would be very absurd for you to say that you hoped that, in that way, you would get to Clapham;

and when you turn your faces towards the world, towards self, towards sin, it is idle for you to say, "I hope we shall all meet in heaven." I am sure I wish, with all my heart, that we may; and that means that I hope the Lord will turn your faces heavenward. May the Holy Spirit bring you to repent of sin, to believe in Jesus, to cast yourselves wholly upon him;—may he, by his grace, cut the links which now bind you to the world, and enable you to give yourselves up wholly to Christ, that he may save you! May the Lord do this of his infinite mercy, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ROMANS XV. 1—16.

Verse 1. *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

When we are free from scruples upon any point, and feel that there are things that we may do because we are strong, yet let us not do them if thereby we should grieve others who are weak. Let us think of their infirmities; and whatever liberty we may feel entitled to claim for ourselves, let us look at the matter from the standpoint of other people as well as from our own, that we may bear the infirmities of the weak, and not seek to please ourselves.

2, 3. *Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ—*

Our Master, and Lord, and great Exemplar: "For even Christ"—

3. *Pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*

He took the most trying place in the whole field of battle; he stood where the fray was hottest. He did not seek to be among his disciples as a king is in the midst of his troops, guarded and protected in the time of strife; but he exposed himself to the fiercest part of all the conflict. What Jesus did, that should we who are his followers do, no one of us considering himself, and his own interests, but all of us considering our brethren and the cause of Christ in general.

4. *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning,—*

This is as if somebody had said, "Why, Paul, it was David who said what you just quoted." "Yes," he replies, "I know that I quoted David, but he spoke in his own person concerning his Lord, 'for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.'"

4, 5. *That we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation—*

"Comfort" is really the word he used, turning into prayer the thought which had been suggested by his use of the words "patience and comfort." "Now the God of patience and comfort"—

5. *Grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:*

"Make you to be unanimous, not concerning that which is evil, but that you may be of one mind in your likeness to Christ Jesus." What a blessed harmony it would be if, not only all in any one church, but all in the whole of the churches were likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus! It will be so when he gathers those who are now scattered; but may we never hope to have it so here on earth? I cannot tell; but, at any rate, let us all strive after it. Let us all endeavour to

pitch our tune according to Christ's keynote; and the nearer we get to that, the less discord there will be in the psalmody of the church. We shall be likeminded with one another when we become likeminded with Christ; but not till then.

6, 7. *That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*

Christ did not receive us because we were perfect, because he could see no fault in us, or because he hoped to gain somewhat at our hands. Ah, no! but, in loving condescension covering our faults, and seeking our good, he welcomed us to his heart; so, in the same way, and with the same purpose, let us receive one another.

8. *Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:*

It was to Abraham and his descendants that the promise was made that, in him, and in his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. So our Lord came, as a Jew, to be "a minister of the circumcision." Let us never forget that he came to those whom we are apt to forget; and, peradventure, even to despise, "to confirm the promises made unto the fathers."

9—12. *And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.*

There were plain indications, in the Old Testament, that the blessing was meant for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews; but, still, it was made known to the Jews first, and we must never forget that.

13. *Now the God of hope—*

Turn back to the fourth verse, and note the expression, "that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope;" then read in the fifth verse, "The God of patience and comfort;" and see how Paul here goes back to that last word in the fourth verse, "Now the God of hope"—

13—16. *Fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.*

Now would have been the time for Paul to say that he had been made a minister "to offer the unbloody sacrifice of the mass," if such a thing had been right;—to offer up the daily sacrifice, as the so-called "priests" aver that they now do; but he says nothing of the sort; and even when he represents the Gentiles as being offered up, he does not speak of any sacrifice going therewith, but says that it "might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost."