



## The Epistle to the Romans

### Lesson Number 45



**TRANSLATION LEGEND:** ASV=American Standard Version, BBE=Bible in Basic English, DRA=Douay-Rheims KJV=King James Version, NKJV=New King James Version; NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible, NAU=New American Standard Bible 1995, NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version, NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version, RSV=Revised Standard Version, YLT=Young's Literal Translation.

----- *Bible Translation Codes with Identification* -----

# BEARING ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

<sup>15:1</sup> We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. <sup>3</sup> For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. <sup>4</sup> For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. <sup>5</sup> Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>NKJV</sup> (Romans 15:1-6)

## INTRODUCTION

There are some acclaimed scholars who question that the last two chapters of Romans are actually a legitimate part of the book. Arguing from the absence of these chapters from certain manuscripts, they conclude it is an addition to the Apostle's writing. While the arguments, unworthy of mention here, may appear to be weighty, there really is no need to consider them. There is nothing in chapters fifteen and sixteen that conflict with the teaching of the first fourteen chapters, or detract from their power and usefulness. In fact, as I will show, they are a very reasonable extension of the teaching. Because I find it exceedingly difficult to believe such profitability can be mere coincidence, I will proceed with

the firm conviction that these are nothing less than the words of the Holy Spirit. There is no need to prove that this is the case, if the purpose of the Spirit is obviously served.

How does a perceptive person address the church – the people of God? What should they be doing? What type of encouragement is given to them in order to facilitate the doing of these things? It should not surprise you that inspired words written to the churches are consistent in their thrust. There is no deviation from Apostolic emphasis. The alarming thing is that it does not accord with the messages to which countless thousands of believers are regularly

subjected. For some, evangelism is the primary theme. For others, the family is the center of attention. Still others hear regularly about the church itself, a supposed pattern that is seen of it in Scripture, and who has the authority within its ranks. Some just go through the Bible in an academic manner with no real emphasis at all. What approach does the Holy Spirit take?

There are, of course, sundry instructions, rebukes, and corrections in the Epistles. There is, however, a general direction in which all words to believers are pointed.

### CONSISTENT DOCTRINE

## OUTLINE

- < A WORK FOR THE STRONG (15:1)
- < PLEASING AND EDIFICATION (15:2)
- < CHRIST DID NOT PLEASE HIMSELF (15:3)
- < THINGS WRITTEN BEFOREHAND (15:4)
- < GRANTED TO BE LIKE-MINDED (15:5)
- < ONE MIND AND ONE MOUTH (15:6)

The following is not intended to be an exhaustive listing, but only a representation of the nature of Apostolic writings – how they were directed to speak to those who are in Christ Jesus. These statements represent the thrust of their teaching. **At no point are these subjects approached as theological novelties, areas where there is room for opinion, or matters that are optional.**

**Christ's role in salvation.** The appointed means through which men are reconciled to God, sustained in their quest for glory, and directed in involvement with God, is clearly declared to be Jesus Christ (Rom 3:22-24; 8:31-34; 1 Cor 5:7; 15:3; Gal 1:4; Eph 1:7; 2:13-15; Col 1:14; 1 Thess 1:10; Tit 2:14; Heb 2:10-18; 1 Pet 1:2,18-19; 1 John 1:7; 2:2; 3:16).

**The Lord's return.** Preparation for the return of the Lord is fundamental to sound teaching. The proclamation of Christ's second appearing, together with a strong summons to be ready for it, are found throughout writings to the churches (1 Cor 1:7-8; Phil 3:20-21; Col 3:4; 1 Thess 1:10; 4:15-17; 5:23; 2 Thess 1:7-10; 1 Tim 6:14; Tit 2:13; James 5:7-9; 1 Pet 5:4; 2 Pet 3:3-10; 1 John 2:28; 3:1-3).

**Living by faith.** Life itself is to be lived by faith. Faith must be strong, fought for, and nourished by the good Word of the Lord (Rom 1:17; 3:22; 5:1; 2 Cor 1:24; 5:7; Gal 3:11,22; Eph 3:17; Phil 3:9; Heb 10:38-39).

**Our adversary.** From the standpoint of our adversary, we are urged to arm ourselves, be vigilant, and put on the whole armor of God.

There is a constant note of warning

about Satan, as well as the surety he can be resisted in faith (1 Cor 16:13; 2 Cor 2:11; 6:14-18; Eph 6:10-18; 1 Thess 3:5; 1 Pet 4:1; 5:8-9; James 4:7).

**The day of judgment.** The appointment and surety of the day of judgment is consistently held before the saints. They are strongly urged to live in view of that day, zealously preparing for it (Rom 2:5-12; 1 Cor 3:13; ; 4:5; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Thess 1:7-8; 2 Tim 4:1,8; Heb 9:27; 1 Pet 4:5-7; 2 Pet 2:9; 1 Pet 4:17; Jude 24).

### STRENGTHENING THE CHURCH

Although it is commonly taught that the primary purpose of the church is to reach the lost, this is nowhere stated or suggested in the *"Apostles' doctrine."* This traditional emphasis is so strong, that it is considered heresy to emphasize anything else. It is not unusual to find churches judged to be successful or unsuccessful purely upon the basis of the number of converts they garner.

Let it be clear, I am speaking here of an emphasis, not of the work of preaching the Gospel to every creature. Jesus came to *"seek and save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10), thereby sanctifying that activity. However, the burden of His ministry, and the great teaching He gave, was not in the market place or the houses of publicans and harlots. His teachings were primarily directed toward His disciples and those who went to the synagogues (Matt 4:23; 5:1; 9:35; 13:10ff; Mark 1:39; 9:31; Luke 4:15). Although He taught the people and

believer or believers were encountered, our Lord always focused upon them. The only preference He had over them was fellowship with the Father Himself. I know of no exceptions to this rule.

This inclination is confirmed by what He did following His ascension to, and enthronement in, heaven. Scripture says is this way. *"Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men . . . And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers"* (Eph 4:8-11). And what was the purpose of these marvelous and indispensable *"gifts"*? The answer provides the focus of Divine power, and the emphasis behind Divine workings. *"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"* (Eph 4:12).

Confirming this accentuation, the Father Himself is said to pay special attention to the righteous. *"The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry"* (Psa 34:15; 1 Pet 3:12). Additionally, Jesus *"ever lives to make intercession"* exclusively for those who are coming to the father through Him (Heb 7:25). The Holy Spirit is given to them in order to assist and empower their service in the Kingdom, and preparation for the world to come (Ron 8:13-14,26; Gal 4:6). Additionally, the vast multitude of holy angels are charged with ministering to those who are the heirs of salvation (Heb 1:13-14). *"All Scripture"* has been inspired of God in order that

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the multitudes, He declared those who did the will of His Father were his *"brother, and sister, and mother"* (Matt 12:49-50). His focus was on believers. Whenever a

*"the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work"* (2 Tim 3:16-17). There can, then, be no deficiency in Scripture.

These people – the saints of God – are the only people on the face of the earth who have an inheritance in heaven (1 Pet 1:4). They alone have access to God through faith (Eph 2:18), are upheld by His grace (1 Cor 15:10; Rom 5:2), and are privileged to be called “*the sons of God*” (1 John 3:1). They stand unique among all peoples, being “*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation,*” and a “*peculiar people*” (1 Pet 2:9).

**THE RELEVANCE OF THESE THINGS**

These observations are highly

relevant to our text. They lay a firm foundation for the necessity of edifying the people of God. The fourteenth chapter urged a godly consideration of one another. War must be made upon dissension, argumentation, and discussions that are disputational in nature. Despising, or looking down upon the people of God is strictly forbidden. This is more than a mere law, to be fulfilled begrudgingly.

We will find that the purpose is to edify one another, and disputation and

despising conflict with that purpose. Both tend to tear down rather than build up, and are thus strictly forbidden. Believers are brought into the very work of God and Christ – nourishing and caring for the church (Eph 5:29).

As we will see from our text, the edification of one another is not simply a noble option. It is an absolute requirement. The nature of our salvation demands it. Our presence in a world dominated by the devil necessitates it, as your walk of faith will confirm.

**A WORK FOR THE STRONG**

**“<sup>15:1</sup> We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”**  
This is the only reasonable conclusion to what has been said in the fourteenth

(14:4b).  
Each believer is to be “*fully persuaded*” of the propriety of what they do (14:5).  
None of us live or die in isolation of

**Everything that is supplied to us makes for the development of a strong faith. Weakness is consistently associated with beginnings and spiritual juvenility. At the very best, it is related to being young in Christ, and under no conditions is that circumstance to remain.**

chapter. A brief synopsis of that chapter follows. It will serve to set the stage for the considerations of this chapter.

- Those whose faith is yet infantile, or “*weak*,” are to be received, but not in the climate of disputation (14:1).
- The “*strong*” are not to despise those whose faith does not allow them to do what God really allows (14:2).
- The person who adheres to strict, yet unrequired, laws, is not to judge those who do not subscribe to those laws (14:3).
- We are not allowed to judge those whose faith moves them to conscientiously serve God (14:4a).
- God is able to make the believer stand

- others (14:7).
- We are the Lord’s in both life and death (14:8).
- Christ died, arose, and lives again in order to be over both the living and the dead (14:9).
- We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (14:10).
- We will all bow the knee to Christ and confess to God (14:11).
- We will all give an account of ourselves to God (14:12).
- In view of this, judging one another is strictly forbidden (14:13a).
- Care must be taken not to make it more difficult for those who are living by faith (14:13b).
- The acceptability of certain things which are allowed, but not required,

- by God, is determined by the perception of the individual (14:14).
- If what we do, although right of itself, hurts our brother, we have ceased to walk according to love (14:15).
- The Kingdom of God does not consist of foods and procedures, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (14:17).
- Those who serve Christ with righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit are received by God and approved of men (14:18).
- We are to aggressively seek to give our brethren the advantage in life by engaging in things that contribute to a peaceful environment and building up the saints (14:19).
- It is good not to do anything that causes our brethren to stumble, or live in contradiction of their conscience (14:20).
- Faith is to be held personally, and often privately. There is no need to bind personal perceptions on others who cannot comprehend the sense of them (14:21-22).
- God will only receive from us what proceeds from our faith (14:23).

**WE THEN THAT ARE STRONG**

“*We then that are strong . . .*”  
This is strength in faith, not mere moral strength, or those with firm persuasions. There is something important to be seen in this expression. The norm for the Kingdom is “*strong*” faith, not “*weak*” faith. By saying “*WE that are strong,*” Paul shows that the aim is to be strong,

not weak. Such words are not to be taken as representative of only a few superior brethren, but as the Kingdom standard. Here is an expression of life that is lived in *“righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”*

The notion that those who are *“strong”* are unusual and few in number ought not to be entertained. Our father Abraham, the standard for believers, is said to have been *“strong in faith, giving glory to God”* (4:20). Those who are not strong are to make it their business to become strong in the faith, that they too may give appropriate glory to God. Who is willing to contend that anything about salvation contributes to weakness in the faith? Everything that is supplied to us makes for the development of a strong faith. Weakness is consistently associated with beginnings and spiritual juvenility. At the very best, it is related to being young in Christ, and under no conditions is that circumstance to remain.

Being *“strong”* is, in fact, knowing the mind of the Lord. It is having a Divine perspective of things, or being able to see things as they really are. It is the peculiar prerogative of faith to clarify spiritual issues that are otherwise mysterious and unknowable. Hence, those who are *“strong”* are those who see more clearly and know more thoroughly. That this is not unusual is seen in the fact that such clarity and knowledge is available to all who are in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:15-10; Col 1:9-11; 2 Tim 2:7).

### BEARING THE INFIRMITIES OF THE WEAK

*“ . . . ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.”* Other versions read, *“ought to bear with the scruples of the weak,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“ought to bear with the failings of the weak.”*<sup>NIV</sup> Notice how a deficiency in spiritual understanding is described: *“infirmity,” “scruples,” “weakness,”* and *“failing.”*

It is not unusual to find professed believers considering weakness in the faith, or the inability to take hold of the things of God, as inconsequential. It will prove challenging, indeed, to find a *“church”* where those who cannot grasp the things of God are considered *“weak.”*

In fact, much of the *Christianity* of our day actually fosters spiritual weakness. That is why it is so common. But this does not represent the *“mind of the Spirit”* (Rom 8:27)! Nor, indeed, is it the trait of *“the mind controlled by the Spirit”*<sup>NIV</sup> (Rom 8:6).

**Here is a condition that requires special instruction for the whole church.** Being *“weak in faith”* necessitated exhortations to both the weak and the strong. How can such a condition, therefore, be viewed as picayune, or unworthy of extensive teaching and exhortation? What person with *“spiritual understanding”* Col 1:9) would allow for the presence of such a state to go unchallenged? Being *“weak in the faith”* is a circumstance that must be addressed. Special care must be taken to bring those in such a condition to stronger

The stronger are not merely to tolerate those with the infirmity or weakness of immature faith. Nor, indeed, are they to ignore it as though it did not exist. **It is a serious condition because of where it leads.** While it is true that a fervent desire to serve and please the Lord can often be accompanied by infirm understanding, that condition is not intended to be a permanent one. There is not one particle of virtue in it.

Here, bearing the infirmities of the weak means to *“bear with,”* or be patient and *“forbearing one another with love”* (Eph 4:2). In this way, the burden of spiritual ignorance upon the weak will be greatly alleviated. In this instruction, we see that *“weak faith”* constitutes a burden for the one in that condition. **It is more difficult to live for the Lord, resist the devil, and grow in grace and**

**You will find that anything that is temporary, whether the things of this world, or a state of spiritual immaturity, consistently introduces danger and jeopardy.**

faith. Additionally, those who are strong must be reminded to give special attention to such people. Anything requiring such extensive care is not normal, and must not be treated as though it was.

Now, a special word is addressed to the strong concerning the matter. Their lives are impacted by the weakness of other brethren. They cannot simply ignore it, but must adjust their lives to patiently await the further development of their weaker brethren, and that without despising or looking down upon them. They are to *“bear the infirmities of the weak.”* **Remember, “the weak” refers to those who are wholeheartedly serving the Lord, but are doing so with infirm understanding.** This is not a summons for those who see clearly to be tolerant of carnal-mindedness and indulgence in iniquity. God does not tolerate carnal mindedness, and neither can we.

**truth in such a circumstance.** Spiritual life cannot easily be sustained in a state of juvenility and a lack of *“spiritual understanding.”* Such a condition, while initially common to those coming into Christ, is not intended to be a permanent one.

You will find that **anything that is temporary, whether the things of this world, or a state of spiritual immaturity, consistently introduces danger and jeopardy.** One way to offset that danger and encourage spiritual growth, is to be considerate of such brethren, not imposing upon them unreasonable demands, or viewing them as being inferior. *“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.”*

**Another thing to see here is that a profound love for and consideration of the brethren actually promotes growth in Christ.**

Such mindfulness produces an environment in which greater understanding can be developed. It also makes spiritual immaturity more perceptible to those possessing it.

This form of reasoning contradicts the reasoning of the flesh. Flesh reasons that those with rudimentary understanding must be straightened out. It does not consider that a person can live "unto the Lord," even though their view of Him and His great salvation is elementary. Let it clear, a juvenile state is not an enviable one. Yet, the secret to advancing beyond it is not found in harsh and hasty demands. Nor, indeed, will spiritual progress be made if the weaker brethren are despised and ignored.

Bearing the infirmities of the "weak" is something that faith is

calculated to accomplish. It is, furthermore, well suited for such an assignment. Faith both equips and strengthens the believer to do God's will. **By bearing with the weak, the strong will not become weaker, but the weak will become stronger.**

**NOT PLEASING OURSELVES**  
 "... and not to please ourselves." Here, to "please ourselves" means to cater to our own views, without any regard to how they are viewed by others. It means to be determined to take delight in our own preferences, even if it causes our brethren to be offended or made weak.

In Christ, a selfish or self-centered life is strictly forbidden. **Christ has delivered us from a world that is bounded by its own preferences and**

**perceptions.** Faith does not live purely for self, but for the Lord, and with a mind to bringing advantages, not disadvantages, to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

In this particular text, pleasing self would involve refusing to forgo the freedom to eat meat, even though it meant pressuring a weaker brother to eat meat in violation of his own conscience. The standard of our conduct is not our own happiness, however desirous that may be. It is more noble to seek the welfare and advantage of others. As it is written, love "seeketh not her own" (1 Cor 13:5). And again, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil 2:4). While it may appear on the surface that this will bring great disadvantages and frustration to us, we will find this is not at all the case. We are always the better for doing this.

## PLEASING AND EDIFICATION

"**2 Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.**" There is a common objective in salvation – one that applies to the entire body of Christ. The perception of this objective provides the proper incentive to effectively address special areas of concern – like the one presently being considered: i.e., the reaction of the strong to those who are weak in the faith. It is a Kingdom principle that details are best handled within the greater framework of Divine purpose. **It is imperative to see that we are not simply to fulfill special rules for special occasions. Rather, instruction concerning particular details are always given in view of spiritual principles that apply to all situations.** We have an excellent example of this in the verse before us.

### EVERY ONE OF US

"Let every one of us . . ." There is a danger in directing teaching to only a segment of the body of Christ. It certainly is not unlawful to do so, for this is often found in Scripture. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this point.

"Let **him that stole** steal no more"

(Eph 4:28).

"**Husbands, love your wives**" (Eph 5:25).

"**Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands**" (Eph 5:22).

**women marry**" (1 Tim 5:14).

"**The elders which are among you I exhort**" (1 Pet 5:1).

Teaching regarding these special

**The point is that teaching addressed to special individuals, or to special occasions, obtains power only within the framework of universal responsibilities.**

"**Children, obey your parents in the Lord**" (Eph 6:1).

"**Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal**" (Col 4:1).

"**Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh**" (Eph 6:5).

"**I say therefore to the unmarried and widows**" (1 Cor 7:8).

"**Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded**" (Tit 2:6).

"**I will therefore that the younger**

groups is certainly to be heeded, and never to be despised. However, it is never the central theme of Scripture, nor is such teaching extensive. Those who are familiar with Scripture know that **words addressed to special people are always couched within the setting of such things as redemption, the judgment, the coming of the Lord, etc. They are never an end of themselves.** There is such a remarkable consistency in this that it will become apparent to those who are pure in heart.

This principle contributes to the profitability of all Scripture. There is no book of the Bible written, for example, to husbands, wives, children, elders, or widows. If it is countered that First and Second Timothy and Titus were written to young men, it must also be remembered that they were written in such a manner as to edify the entire body. What older person, young woman, or husband has not profited exceedingly from these books?

**The point is that teaching addressed to special individuals, or to special occasions, obtains power only within the framework of universal responsibilities.** This is exemplified in this text.

With great care, the Spirit shows us that Divine direction is not merely for a part of the body of Christ. In salvation, no place has been made for spectators. It is never in order for members of Christ's body to listen as though they were

**whatsoever to do with special people or circumstances.**

**PLEASE HIS NEIGHBOR**

“... please his neighbor...” All major versions use the word “please.” This word means to accommodate ourselves to the interests and welfare of others. It is the positive way of not placing a stumbling block before our brethren, or causing them to be offended. This is involved in being “approved of men” (14:18). It means that our conduct is perceived by the people of God as proper, and not in contradiction of His will.

This is not being a pleaser of men. As Paul wrote, “for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal 1:10). We are emphatically exhorted to avoid being “men pleasers” (Eph 6:6; Col 3:22). The difference in pleasing our neighbor and not being a pleaser of men is found in the objective.

**Men pleasers** have no other

opportunity, let us do good unto all men, **especially unto them who are of the household of faith**” (Gal 6:10). Because “we are members one of another” (Eph 4:25), we have obligations to one another. Our text is urging us to live in view of those responsibilities.

I cannot leave this section without once again drawing your attention to the blight of religious institutionalism and sectarianism. In the wake of an emphasis upon the institution, the personal desire to edify one another is lost. **In such a setting you will rarely find one person seeking to build up the faith of another, or bring eternal advantages to them.** Men have led us to believe the preservation of the organization is the main thing. Our text informs us that the building up of one another is fundamental. This represents a significant departure from the thrust of contemporary *Christianity*. I am not intending to be a mere reactionary in making these remarks. The fruit produced by institutionalism confirms the truth of what I say.

**GOOD TO EDIFICATION**

“... for his good to edification.”

Other versions read, “for his good, leading to edification,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “for his good, to build him up,”<sup>NIV</sup> “for the good purpose of building up the neighbor,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “for his good, to make him strong.”<sup>BBE</sup> “with a view to what is good, to edification.”<sup>DARBY</sup>

The ultimate “good” that can be brought to brothers and sisters is to assist them to be strong in the Lord. There will come times when we must minister to their temporal needs, and other practical helps. However, even in those things, the primary purpose is to build them up in the most holy faith. Our aim is to contribute to their spiritual maturity and readiness to stand before the Lord. Anything that does not build up the believer, making him stronger and more stable, is not “good” in the sense of this text. Something that complicates spiritual growth, or makes it unlikely, is evil, and is to be avoided.

Ordinarily, edification does not take place unintentionally. I understand that there are times when words and actions especially minister to people to whom they

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excluded from the instruction. Here, after addressing the “strong” and those “weak in the faith,” the Spirit turns to the whole household of faith and says, “Let every one of us!” What He will now declare reveals that the instruction given to the strong and the weak is their way of fulfilling the lofty principle to be put before us. That principle is something to be fulfilled by “every one of us.”

This principle had eluded “the strong,” who tended to despise the weak. It had also escaped those whose conscience was “weak,” who sought to impose their unenlightened opinions upon others. **What is being said to them is in the interest of fulfilling this greater principle, which has nothing**

purpose that to lessen opposition against themselves. They seek comfort for the flesh, and are not thinking of serving God. Such are self-centered with considerations that extend no further than their personal and temporal interests.

**Those who please their neighbor** have the purpose of God in mind, and seek to avoid causing His people to stumble. Their aim is to help their neighbor, not enhance their own reputation and circumstance.

In this text, our “neighbor” refers to other members of the body of Christ. They are not our only neighbors, but our most immediate and relevant ones. As it is written, “As we have therefore

were not specifically directed. Yet, even then, the purpose of such words and deeds was to bring honor to the Lord. **However, we are not to rely on our brethren being helped by unintentional activities. We must make it our aim, or objective, to**

**build up the people of God.** Our attention is to be shifted from self to those for whom Christ died, and for whom He presently intercedes (Heb 7:25). We are to join the holy angels in ministering to those who are the heirs of salvation (Heb 1:13-14). We are to participate with the

Holy Spirit in changing the saved *“from glory unto glory”* (2 Cor 3:18). **If Jesus, the holy angels, and the Holy Spirit are engaged in benefitting God’s people, what possible reason can be adduced for us failing to do so?** Let your words and deeds lead to edification.

## CHRIST DID NOT PLEASE HIMSELF

**“For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on Me.”** All *“sound doctrine”* finds its ultimate demonstration in the Lord Jesus Christ. You might say doctrine is enfleshed in Christ: i.e., *“the Word became flesh”* (John 1:14). As *“the Truth,”* Jesus lived out what the Apostles and Prophets taught. We have a most excellent example of this in this text.

### EVEN CHRIST PLEASSED NOT HIMSELF

*“For even Christ pleased not Himself . . .”* Other translations read, *“For Christ did not give pleasure to Himself,”*<sup>BBE</sup> and *“Christ did not indulge His own feelings, either.”*<sup>NJB</sup> One of the hallmarks of our salvation is that it required Jesus to *“empty Himself,”* or make Himself *“of no reputation”* (Phil 2:7). When found in the crucible of unspeakable suffering, He cried out, *“not My will, but Thine, be done”* (Lk 22:42). As He ministered among men He confessed, *“I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me”* (John 5:30). And again, *“And I seek not Mine own glory”* (John 8:50). With great power He said, *“My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work”* (John 4:34). Again He said, *“For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me”* (John 6:38).

Jesus did not seek His own ease, but the will of God, which was to *“save the world”* (John 12:47). He did not seek His own comfort, but chose a path wherein He had no place to *“lay His head,”* in order that He might accomplish the will of God (Matt 8:20). He was the ultimate *“Servant,”* and a servant does not seek His own will, but the will of His master.

From an earthly point of view, if anyone had a right to live for Himself, it was the Lord Jesus Christ. He *“did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth”* (1 Pet 2:22). While among men, He was, in fact, *“above all”* (John 3:31). Yet Jesus did not live for Himself. It must be noted that **the life of Jesus cannot be lived with purely selfish interests** – and this is the life that we have received and is

*wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.*” He who knew God the most suffered the most!

Jesus Himself revealed the relevance of this to His disciples. *“It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call*

**Self pleasing deadens the soul, so it cannot feel the words spoken against the Lord. The one who lives for self is blissfully unaware of the blasphemies and offences that are all about them.**

*“made manifest in”* our *“body”* (2 Cor 4:10-11)! **Therefore, a lack of consideration for those who are in Christ Jesus reveals a lack of Jesus Himself.**

### AS IT IS WRITTEN

*“ . . . but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me.”* Other versions read, *“The insults of those who insult You have fallen on Me,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“the bitter words of those who were angry with You came on Me.”*<sup>BBE</sup> This is a quotation of Psalm 69:9. It is also referenced in Psalm 89:50-51, where the impact of bearing such reproach is mentioned. **“Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants; how I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people; wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD;**

*them of His household?”* (Matt 10:25).

There is a twofold sense in which the reproaches of those who reproached God fell upon Christ. First, the people actually spoke against the Lord Jesus Himself, and that because of His identity with the Father. Second, Jesus was so united with the Father, that He took personally words that were spoken against the Lord. He felt the weight of the words spoken against the Father. Such a thing would not have been possible if Jesus lived to *“please Himself.”* **Self pleasing deadens the soul, so it cannot feel the words spoken against the Lord.** The one who lives for self is blissfully unaware of the blasphemies and offences that are all about them. They are only interested in how men speak of them, having no regard for those opposing God.

**The reasoning here is this: those who are in Christ Jesus should not balk when they are asked to follow the footsteps of their Lord.** If Jesus was willing to forfeit His own interests in order to bear the vicious scoffing of men, cannot we forfeit our interests in order to strengthen our brethren? Indeed, ours is the lesser work, into which we ought to joyfully enter!

It should be apparent that people

teachers ought to use many illustrations. I have often heard such men upbraid young preachers because they did not lace their lessons with illustrations from contemporary life and humorous anecdotes. Their suggestions must be put aside in favor of the Word of God, which sets the Divinely sanctioned manner of teaching before us. They are the mere prattling of novices and the uninformed.

As in this text, the loftiest example

**If you cannot find a proper illustration in Jesus, what you are teaching cannot be fundamental. At the very best, you are dealing with things tangential. You should make it your business not to spent long in such teaching, even if it is legitimate.**

who court the favor of those who speak against the Lord are most unchristlike. Jesus said, *“Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!”* (Lk 6:26). How serious a transgression it is, therefore, to shape our lives so as to gain favor from them. To do such is to *“please ourselves.”*

#### **A PRINCIPLE OF TEACHING**

There is a principle of teaching here that is worthy of notation. Contemporary teachers of homiletics, or the art of preaching, are fond of saying

and illustration is the Lord Jesus Himself. The truth of God has been lived out in Him, and He provides the best and most pungent illustration of that truth. When, therefore, you want to show people how the truth is to be applied, point to Jesus. All valid doctrine will find expression in Him. **If you cannot find a proper illustration in Jesus, what you are teaching cannot be fundamental.** At the very best, you are dealing with things tangential. You should make it your business not to spent long in such teaching, even if it is legitimate.

Secondly, illustrations can be found among the great persons of Scripture. From Moses and the Prophets: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, etc. From the Apostle’s doctrine: the woman at the well, Nicodemus, Stephen, Philip, Paul, Peter, Timothy, Titus, and others. In these people the effects of the truth are appropriately displayed.

Thirdly, the great events of Scripture provide an example of Divine workings and purpose. From Moses and the Prophets: the fall of man, the flood, the tower of Babel, the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the taking of Canaan, the Babylonian captivity, Nebuchadnezzar, etc. From the Apostles doctrine: the day of Pentecost, the conversions in the book of Acts, the persecution of the early church, the situations in various churches that required correction, etc.

There is a wealth of Divinely orchestrated illustrations in the Scriptures, and they are to be used. The proper use of these people and occasions will provide an accurate portrayal of the outworking of truth. It will also produce a working acquaintance with the Word of God that is indispensable to living soberly and godly in this present world.

The relevance of these observations will be confirmed in the following verse. The Scriptures have been deliberately written in order to give the people of God the advantage in life. Nothing has been left to happenstance, or in the total power of men.

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## **THINGS WRITTEN BEFOREHAND**

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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.”***

Paul is showing us the relevance of citing a verse from Psalms to confirm we are not to please ourselves. Contextual advocates do not know how to use the Scriptures in this fashion. They are fond of speaking of “the author’s intended

meaning,” historical backgrounds, and cultural nuances that, they say, shape the meaning of Scripture. What will such teachers do with Paul, who reaches back nearly eight hundred years, extracts an expression from the Psalmist, applies it to Jesus, and thereby justifies the teaching that we are not to please ourselves. I do not mean to ride this subject like a hobby-horse, but such approaches to Scripture have greatly harmed the body of Christ. They simply do not edify.

This is one of the great defining verses of Scripture, and therefore is of unusual importance. The perception of the truth it reveals will shed light on many things. It nails into our conscience a sense of what Scripture is all about. It also explodes the myths created by men concerning the integrity of Scripture.

#### **Creating Doubt Concerning Scripture**

Those who throw the shroud of doubt upon Scripture by speaking of various

original texts, more reliable texts, and even textual corruption, are a great hindrance to the body of Christ. They would have us believe that only those who know “the original language” can understand the Word of God – which saying is a totally false. Jesus did not speak in this manner of Moses and the Prophets, writings that had been translated and copied numerous times. You will never find Jesus causing people to doubt Scripture, or question its integrity. Nor, indeed, did any of the Apostles contribute to such a conclusion.

Textual criticism, misnamed *higher criticism*, is only another name for unbelief. The church must be purged from such men, for they are prevailing upon the masses to close their Bibles and rely upon self-professed experts to tell them its meaning. Whatever reasons are brought forward to justify a critical view of Scripture, they must be “cast down” with spiritual weaponry (2 Cor 10:4-5). **You cannot have the Living God calling upon us to trust in and learn from the Scriptures, while men attempt to persuade us they may not be valid.** If the same One who inspired Scripture cannot maintain its integrity, how will we be able to believe He can “keep us from falling” (Jude 24-25)? If His power cannot keep His Word, how can it keep us (1 Pet 1:5)?

Self-professed scholars may think all of this to be a mere tirade against scholarship. However, whatever calls the Word of God into question, or discourages any child of God from believing he can possess its true meaning, is not of God. Such views contradict Divine affirmation. If what these men say is true, the text before us is robbed of all power.

#### THINGS WRITTEN AFORE TIME

“For whatsoever things were written afore time . . .” Other versions read, “For whatever was written in earlier times,” NASB “For everything that was written in the past,” NIV “For whatever was written in former days,” NRSV “Now those things which were put down in writing before our time,” BBE “Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago,” NLT and “And all these things which were written so long ago,” NJB Be clear, this is not speaking of mere history.

Although numerous writings existed at the time, the Spirit refers exclusively to Scripture, which was given “by inspiration of God” (2 Tim 3:16-17). He does not refer to Plato, Socrates, or even Josephus. He will show us that while these things were written “in the past,” they are not confined to the past. The writings of reference are not relics, but something needed for the sustaining of spiritual life.

#### A Perspective of Teaching

A perspective of preaching and teaching is developed here that is worthy

the preeminent one.

#### The Impact of Questioning the Bible

If this is true, and it surely is, think of the impact of the view that Scripture has been greatly corrupted. **If men have, in fact, caused Scripture to become distorted, the purpose of God has been frustrated.** It is not possible to prove such a postulate, for it runs counter to everything God has revealed about Himself. **If God could, at the very threshold of humanity, reveal His intention to the arch foe Satan, with no possibility of it being**

**You cannot have the Living God calling upon us to trust in and learn from the Scriptures, while men attempt to persuade us they may not be valid. If the same One who inspired Scripture cannot maintain its integrity, how will we be able to believe He can “keep us from falling**

of a brief comment. Although this verse appears to be unrelated to the subject at hand, Paul does not fear briefly commenting upon it. Obviously, he does not see this as a distraction, or moving to another subject. **There is an interrelationship in all Scripture that allows for such manners.** This represents the proper handling of the Scriptures (2 Tim 2:15), when men can bring them to bear upon any subject or strain of teaching. It is good to seek such versatility in our teaching.

#### WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING

“ . . . were written for our learning . . . ” Other versions read, “was written for our instruction,” NASB “was written for our instruction,” NIV and “was written to teach us.” NIB It is not that Moses and the Prophets purposed to write for our benefit, although it was revealed to the Prophets that this was the case (1 Pet 1:12). The writing was under Divine supervision, and with a Divinely established purpose – “our learning.” **This was not the only purpose for which those things were written, although it can be argued that it was**

**overtaken (Gen 3:15), how could mere men neutralize His word? He is a fool who supposes such a thing is possible** Suffice it to say, there would be no point to this verse if there was any question at all about the total accuracy of Scripture.

#### A Consistent Teaching

Earlier in this book, we are reminded that the record of Abraham being made righteous was written “for our sake” (4:23-24). We are also reminded that what was experienced by Israel “happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor 10:11). History, then, has been orchestrated, and Scripture written, in order for our learning and admonition. What, then, can justify the remarkable ignorance of Scriptures extant today.

It is no wonder that Jesus spoke of the Scriptures as testifying of Him (John 5:39). Early believers were considered “more noble” because they “searched the Scriptures daily” (Acts 17:11). The Scriptures are for the advancement of the

believer, for promoting spiritual learning, the knowledge of God, or familiarity with the ways of the Lord.

### Scripture Is Not A Charm

**Whether intentional or not, the Scriptures are often treated like a magical charm.** People imagine that there is safety or virtue in having a Bible in their home or possession, while they remain fundamentally ignorant of what it contains. Untold multitudes delight in confessing they believe every word in the Bible, even though they have scarcely read anything in it. Perhaps they would not speak in this manner if they were better acquainted with what the Scripture says.

### Moses and the Prophets

The *"things written afore time"*

thought of God in the world that did not have its genesis in Scripture. Apart from Scripture, we do not have the faintest idea about salvation, grace, Divine love, an eternal inheritance, or the end of the world. We are wholly reliant upon Scripture for an understanding of the day of judgment, the necessity of atonement, and the availability of remission. Truly, they were written for *"our learning."*

Let it be clear, there is nothing pointless in Scripture, and thus no part of it is to be neglected. The more we are subjected to them, the more we learn, for they are written for our learning. No part of the Bible is *"nothing but leaves"* (Mark 11:13). To put it another way, there is precious fruit in every Scriptural text to be eaten and digested. No part of the Bible

teaches us (Eph 4:20-21), will teach us in direct proportion to our knowledge of Scripture.

### PATIENCE AND COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES

*"... that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures . . ."* Other versions read, *"that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"so that through endurance and the encouragement of the,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures,"* <sup>NRSV</sup> *"so that through quiet waiting and through the comfort of the holy Writings,"* <sup>BBE</sup> and *"They give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises."* <sup>NLT</sup>

Here personality is assigned to the Scriptures. They become the source from which needful graces are obtained. This ministry of Scripture unveils something of the meaning of Christ's words: *"the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63b). God declared His Word works, accomplishing what He has determined. *"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but **it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it"*** (Isa 55:10-11).

This condition is what accounts for the Word of God growing (Acts 12:24a), increasing (Acts 6:7), being multiplied (Acts 12:24b), and prevailing (Acts 19:20). In all of those cases, it was both spoken and received. What marvelous things are realized *"through the Scriptures!"*

### Patience

*"Patience"* is required because of the adversities and trials we face in this world. This quality refers to endurance, perseverance, and continuance. The word includes the idea of constancy, or steadfastness, as well as that of endurance and survival. **The person with "patience" does not live by fits and starts, fighting the good fight of**

**Nothing in Scripture is dispensable. Nothing is optional, to be placed on the shelf of neglect. The Holy Spirit did not move men to write things we do not need to know. Further, if the Scriptures were written for our learning, we should be about the business of learning from them.**

refers to the writings of Moses and the Prophets, which men call the "Old Testament." There is no section of Scripture so little known among professing Christians as this. Some have even created theologies that teach men they have no further need for this part of the Bible. It was only for the Jews, they say. But our text says it was written *"for our learning."*

### Unlearned and Disadvantaged

**If the Scriptures have been written for our "learning," then those who do not know them are "unlearned."** The deplorable level of ignorance concerning Scripture that exists in the church is a transgression of the greatest sort. **If God had the Scriptures written to give us an advantage, we are never more disadvantaged than when we are ignorant of them.** There is not a valid

is mere history. No inspired writing is the privately conceived opinion of its writer. Nothing in Scripture is dispensable. Nothing is optional, to be placed on the shelf of neglect. The Holy Spirit did not move men to write things we do not need to know. Further, if the Scriptures were written for our learning, we should be about the business of learning from them.

**It is not possible for spiritual advancement in any sense to be realized independently of the Scriptures.** Even your fellowship with the Lord depends upon your relationship to His Word, by which you live (Matt 4:4). **If you come away from the Scriptures to have fellowship with God, you leap into the dark, and will be controlled by imaginations.** Those who treat the Scriptures with neglect, or even disrespect, have thereby revealed their distance from the God who gave them. The Lord Jesus, who personally

**faith only occasionally, while having long periods of spiritual inactivity.**

“Patience” carries the idea of being dependable, and able to endure lengthy periods of hardship and challenge. There is determination in “patience,” and a constant vision of the goal as well. The person with “patience” can determinedly go into a den of lions or a furnace of fire. The threats of the enemy do not push such a person off of the narrow way. Hardship does not remove him from the highway of holiness.

Our text says that such “patience” comes through the Scriptures. By this, the Spirit means that the Scriptures fuel patience. They contain words that strengthen an enduring spirit like food nourishes the body. The Lord has placed accounts in Scripture that help to produce endurance in His people. There are teachings and exhortations in Scripture that reveal the sense, or rationality, of “patient continuance” (Rom 2:7). They also confirm the utter insanity of dropping out of the race, or thinking it can be won without running at all.

If it is true that such “patience” is the result of exposure to the Scriptures, then perseverance is impossible for those who are fundamentally ignorant of them. The possibility of finishing the race that is set before us is directly proportionate to our familiarity with the good word of God.

**Comfort**

Endurance is not the only thing required to complete our race. We also need comfort, consolation, and encouragement. This is encouragement through counsel, exhortation, or entreaty. The human spirit must be lifted up, encouraged, and helped to see the truth of God, if we are to persevere.

It is not coincidence that the Holy Spirit is called “the Comforter” (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7). Some versions translate “Comforter” as “Helper,”<sup>NKJV,NASB</sup> “Counselor,”<sup>NIV</sup> or “Advocate.”<sup>NRSV</sup> Because the Scriptures were written under His direction (2 Pet 1:21), the nature of the Spirit Himself is found in them. **What He is said to do, is also affirmed of the Scriptures.** The two cannot be separated.

The Scriptures comfort or encourage us because of the many promises affirmed therein. They do so through the various accounts of triumphant faith. They confirm to us that the mighty God of heaven undergirds those who embrace His purpose, and are willing to do His will. Who can describe the impact that accounts like David and Goliath, Daniel and the lion’s den, and the three Hebrew children and the fiery furnace, have had upon the faithful? What of the conquering of Jericho, the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah, or the slaying

written, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (1 John 3:2-3). The purity God requires is not possible without the “hope” to which He has begotten us. Uncertain disciples cannot become or keep pure. Life is too challenging for those who are unsure of their eternal destiny.

This hope does not come through prayer, but “by the patience and comfort

**To be encouraged and consoled is good, but that is not enough either. We do not live by patience, nor are we saved by comfort. They are both blessed and obligatory, but they are streams that empty themselves into a vastly larger depository. That depository is hope, by which “we are saved”**

of the hosts of threatening Sennacherib! What determinations to be faithful to God have been aided by Ezekiel’s valley of dry bones, and Daniel’s stone hewn out of a mountain without hands! And, what of the unlikely exaltation of Moses, Joseph, and Daniel! Indeed, we do receive comfort “of the Scriptures.”

**MIGHT HAVE HOPE**

Patience and comfort are not ends of themselves. There is a purpose for them both – an objective that is higher than patience and hope themselves. It is not enough to merely plod along in the life of faith every day. To be encouraged and consoled is good, but that is not enough either. **We do not live by patience, nor are we saved by comfort.** They are both blessed and obligatory, but they are streams that empty themselves into a vastly larger depository. That depository is hope, by which “we are saved” (Rom 8:24-25).

God has begotten us again to a “living hope,” or one that dominates and is triumphant. That hope is the engine that promotes personal purity. As it is

of the Scriptures.” If the Scriptures are strange to me, hope will not be within me. If the Word of God makes no sense to me, I will not be persuaded “He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Tim 1:12).

**The postulate of this text is that if we have hope, we will triumphantly cross the finish line!**

This “hope” is described as “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil” (Heb 6:19). It keeps the soul from drifting aimlessly upon the sea of life. It sustains the soul in times of trial and discouragement. Hope is like a bright star that cannot be hidden by the dark clouds of difficulty. It penetrates through the darkness, convincing the soul of a “better country” (Heb 11:16), and a morning that will dawn with full and undiminished joy for the believer (Psa 30:5).

Because hope is anchored in heaven, the “powers of the world to come” are brought to us through it (Heb 6:5). The effectiveness of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, David, and the holy

Prophets is traceable to more than their accounts in Scripture. The Word of God has made us aware of these holy men, and has acquainted us with both their manners and triumphs. But these men are still alive, for God is still their God. God *"is not the God of the dead, but of the living"* (Matt 22:32). They are now among the *"great cloud of witnesses"* that surrounds us (Heb 12:1). In ways

transcendent to our intellect, we are helped by these noble souls whose records are in the Bible. We have been called into their fellowship (Heb 12:23), and their effectiveness to us now is owing to their persons, not merely a historical record of them.

This is another reason why the Scriptures bring us patience and comfort,

thereby causing hope to flourish within us. All of this helps us to be gracious and forbearing of the household of faith, assisting us in the sacred work of bearing with their infirmities, and not allowing them to be an occasion for the flesh. There is no way to fully measure the impact of a thriving hope upon the soul. It tends to lift the spirit, giving a reason keep the faith and finish the race.

## GRANTED TO BE LIKE-MINDED

***"<sup>5</sup> Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be***

as it really was all along. When once it dawns upon the human spirit that the

I am always edified by the consideration of God's extensive involvement in our salvation. It is a circumstance that my former theology did not easily allow. I was led to believe that the preeminent role in salvation was that of man himself

***LIKE-MINDED one toward another according to Christ Jesus.*** I am always edified by the consideration of God's extensive involvement in our salvation. It is a circumstance that my former theology did not easily allow. I was led to believe that the preeminent role in salvation was that of man himself – that he largely determined the strength with which he addressed matters of salvation as well his eternal destiny. It was not a very comforting view, for my own weaknesses constantly confronted me. It was not a moral weakness, pulling me into immorality, but a lively awareness that God required more of me than I seemed able to give. Of course, my theology comforted me with thoughts like, "We are all sinners. The only difference is that we are forgiven." Or, "After all, we are only human." Or, "If we do our best, that will be enough." Or, "God understands, and really does not mean we have to do everything He requires." . . . etc.

All of that is as foolish to me now

demands of God are very real, and that we do not have the option of ignoring or mitigating them, the involvement of God in our salvation becomes a most comforting thought. Before dealing with this verse, allow me to confirm to you that what it declares is in strict accord with the rest of Scripture. God is consistently declared to interface with His people.

### Commitments to Israel

*" . . . I will **cause thee** to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it"* (Isa 58:14).

*" . . . and I will **cause you** to dwell in this place"* (Jer 7:3).

*" . . . I will this once **cause them** to know, I will **cause them** to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is The LORD"* (Jer 16:21).

*"A new heart also will I **give you**, and a new spirit **will I put** within you: and*

***I will take away*** the stony heart out of your flesh, and ***I will give*** you an heart of flesh. And ***I will put*** my spirit within you, and ***cause you*** to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them" (Ezek 36:26).

### Commitments to Those in Christ

*"That He would **grant you**, according to the riches of His glory, **to be strengthened** with might by His Spirit in the inner man . . ." (Eph 3:17).*

*"Now the Lord of peace Himself **give you** peace always by all means . . ." (2 Thess 3:16).*

*"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are **taught of God** to love one another"* (1 Thess 4:9).

*"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, **may give unto you** the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him"* (Eph 1:17).

*"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, **from God the Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Eph 6:23).

*"And the Lord **make you to increase** and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you"* (1 Thess 3:12).

*"And the Lord **direct your hearts** into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ"* (2 Thess 3:5).

*"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, **make you perfect** in every good work to do His will, **working in***

*you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen*" (Heb 13:20-21).

*"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, **make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you**"* (1 Pet 5:10).

These are only a very small sampling of the texts that affirm the participation of God in our personal lives. These things are not intended to suggest we have no involvement ourselves. They ARE intended to confirm we cannot fulfill our responsibilities without the Lord. There is no point in salvation where we grow beyond the need for God to *"work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure"* (Phil 2:13). Blessed, indeed, is the person who knows this and relies upon it. Such will be given great advantages.

### THE GOD OF PATIENCE AND CONSOLATION

*"Now the God of patience and consolation . . ."* Other versions read, *"Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement . . ."*<sup>NASB</sup>

*"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement . . ."*<sup>NIV</sup> and *"May the God of steadfastness and encouragement . . ."*

<sup>NRSV</sup> This is staple fare for the righteous – hearing who God is. Later in this book, the Spirit will refer to God as *"the God of hope"* (15:13) and *"the God of peace"* (15:33; 16:20). Elsewhere He is referred to as *"the God of all comfort"* (2 Cor 1:3), *"the God of love and peace"* (2 Cor 13:11), and *"the God of all grace"* (1 Pet 5:10).

This language holds forth God as the Source of what we need. James reminds us that *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"* (James 1:17). How precious it is to consider these things.

**God is the God of patience because He gives patience, and the God of comfort because He gives comfort.**

Notice, the very things said to come to us through the Scriptures, are

now traced back to God Himself: *"patience and comfort"* (15:4). **It is the relation of Deity with the Scriptures that gives them power.** That is why we can *"live by every word of God"* (Lk 4:4). It is what makes them *"profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Now the Apostle prays a blessing

Yet, this is accord is consistently set before the people of God as something to be attained. *"That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God . . . be of one mind . . . with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel . . . having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind . . . be ye all of one mind . . . Be of the same mind one toward another . . . be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."* (Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 1:27; 2:2; 1 Pet 3:8; Rom 12:16; 1 Cor 1:10).

**There is no point in salvation where we grow beyond the need for God to *"work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure"* (Phil 2:13). Blessed, indeed, is the person who knows this and relies upon it. Such will be given great advantages.**

upon the brethren. He calls upon the *"God of patience and consolation"* to do something special among the saints. It is a work worthy of God, for it can be done by no one else.

### GRANT YOU TO BE LIKE-MINDED

*" . . . grant you to be LIKE-MINDED one toward another . . ."* Other versions read, *"grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,"*<sup>NASB</sup> *"give you a spirit of unity among yourselves,"*<sup>NIV</sup> *"grant you to live in harmony with one another,"*<sup>NRSV</sup> *"make you of the same mind with one another,"*<sup>BBE</sup> *"grant you to think in harmony with one another,"*<sup>NAB</sup> *"help you live in complete harmony with each other,"*<sup>NLT</sup> and *"give you all the same purpose."*<sup>NJB</sup>

Who is able to measure the Divine impact that would be brought to bear upon the church if this prayer was being raised up to God? The lack of like-mindedness among professed believers is staggering. It is the cause of all sectarianism, factionism, and division. It is the source of endless debates and theological confusion.

Is there any question about the priority of this matter? And yet one can scarcely find a single congregation that enjoys any measurable degree of spiritual oneness. It is no wonder that the church is virtually powerless, for *"every city or house divided against itself shall not stand"* (Matt 12:25).

However, our text brings this down to the personal level – that of one believer with another. Some brethren cannot to be received, while others are despised. We are not to be peaceable with some of God's children, and judgmental toward others. Emphatically, believers are exhorted, *"be at peace among yourselves"* (1 Thess 5:13). That involves seeking to edify one another. It means self interests are to be forfeited when Christ's brethren can be advantaged by that forfeiture.

Such a work is too challenging for *"the natural man."* In fact, it is utterly hopeless. Some measure of like-mindedness may be achieved for a fleeting moment, but our text is not speaking of that type of unanimity. This is precisely why *"the God of patience and consolation"* is called into the picture. We need His help!

**The Role of Patience and Consolation**

Patience, or endurance, and consolation, or comfort, are to like-mindedness what the showers are to parched ground. They promote being of the same mind, for those who are "enduring all things" tend to think alike. Their focus tends to be the same. Those who are walking in "the comfort of the Holy Spirit" are being led toward the same values and objectives.

All of God's gifts are designed to orient us for glory, and insulate us against the eroding effects of this present evil world. That very circumstance causes the recipients of patience and consolation to be drawn together. Apart from the experience of those Divinely originated

*attitude of Christ Jesus,*<sup>NLT</sup> and "following the example of Christ Jesus."<sup>NJB</sup>

The idea here is that it is a unity with Christ that produces a unity with one another. Christ is "one" with His people, for they have been made "one spirit" with Him (1 Cor 6:17). They are "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph 5:30). Any disunity among the members is clearly not of Christ, for He dwells in their hearts by faith (Eph 3:17), and manifests Himself to them (John 14:23).

There is nothing about Christ or His salvation that will drive a wedge between those who are joined to Him. He who loves us (Gal 2:20), cannot move us to

The holy angels are also joined to the purpose He is fulfilling, and enter heartily into their work. Wherever there is an individual who has His commandments, keeps them, and loves Him, Jesus says, "I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21). Of such a person, Jesus also says, "My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23). The measure of the individual's faith is not the determining factor for Divine fellowship. Whether or not everything is seen clearly does not determine if the Father and Son take up their abode with us. Rather, it is the person's sensitivity to, and love for, the Savior that is the qualification for the blessing.

**We cannot expect more for fellowship with us than Jesus requires for fellowship with Himself**

Such an attitude is not according to Christ. It contradicts His spirit as well as His word. But when we are LIKE-MINDED, looking in the same direction, desiring the same habitation, and sustained by the same God, we are living "according to Christ." It is a blessed privilege, indeed, to be in such accord with the Savior.

**Jesus Did Come to Bring Division**

It is quite true that Jesus did not come to bring peace, but a sword, setting one person against another (Matt 10:34-36). However, that division was not among believers, but involved a division between believers and unbelievers, wheat and tares, the righteous and the unrighteous.

When division is found among the people of God, it has not been caused by Jesus. Someone has made a place for the devil, for "God is not the author of confusion" 1 Cor 14:33).

**There is nothing about Christ or His salvation that will drive a wedge between those who are joined to Him. He who loves us (Gal 2:20), cannot move us to despise one another. He who did not come to judge the world, but to save it (John 12:47), will not move us to judge one another. He who prayed that we might be "one" with Himself and the Father will not promote division among us.**

mercies, however, like-mindedness will remain a mere idea with no hope of ever being fulfilled.

**ACCORDING TO CHRIST JESUS**

*" . . . according to Christ Jesus."*

Other versions read, "as you follow Christ Jesus,"<sup>NIV</sup> "in accordance with Christ Jesus,"<sup>NRSV</sup> "as you follow Christ Jesus,"<sup>NIB</sup> "in harmony with Christ Jesus,"<sup>BBE</sup> "in keeping with Christ Jesus,"<sup>NAB</sup> "with the

despise one another. He who did not come to judge the world, but to save it (John 12:47), will not move us to judge one another. He who prayed that we might be "one" with Himself and the Father will not promote division among us. Such things are "not according to Christ"<sup>NKJV</sup> (Col 2:8).

**Jesus Is the Measure**

Jesus is the measure of all valid Kingdom activity. He works in perfect concert with the Father and the Spirit.

**ONE MIND AND ONE MOUTH**

***"6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."***

There is a purpose for God ministering patience and consolation. There is a high and lofty reason for refraining from

efforts to please ourselves, and seeking to please our brethren "unto edification." Being "LIKE-MINDED one toward another" is not an end of itself, and ought not to be so considered. While some make unity their primary objective, our text

reveals it is really secondary.

**GLORIFYING GOD WITH ONE MIND AND ONE MOUTH**

*"That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God."* Other versions

read, *“that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“so that together you may with one voice glorify the God,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> and *“Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God.”* <sup>NLT</sup>

This is not speaking about, what men are now calling, a praise and worship service, although prayer and praise are surely involved. This involves more than perfunctory actions. The mind is included as well as the mouth.

If Christ has *“received us to the glory of God”* (Rom 15:7), then God is also glorified by our reception of one another. In that reception, we acknowledge the saints are God’s workmanship and Christ’s brethren.

The thought occurs to me that God cannot be glorified by a church that does not receive one another. Neither, indeed, can He be honored by those who are in fundamental disagreement with one another. As soon as contention, the despising of brethren, and judgmental attitudes surface, God ceases to be glorified in the sense of our text. I say “in the sense of our text,” because God will eventually be justified in all of His sayings. He will disown those who have disowned or despised His people, for they have exhibited a spirit that has its genesis with Satan, and is *“not according to Christ.”* If we knew nothing more than this, we would vigorously shun any attitude that moved us to look down upon, or judge, those who are living with a good conscience before the Lord. If they have a weak and immature faith, we will not despise them. If they are freed by their conscience to do things our conscience does not allow, we will not judge them. In this manner, an environment is produced in which God can be glorified. The absence of these qualities produces a arena in which God is not glorified.

### God Glorified

What does it mean to glorify God? Is this a synonym for praise? It is true that we are *“a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”* (1 Pet 2:9). However, praise and glory are

not the same thing. Praise has to do with singing or articulating honor to God – thankfully acknowledging what He has done. Various instruments can be used to praise the Lord, such as the trumpet, psaltry, and harp (Psa 150:3-4).

Glorifying God goes even deeper than praise. It is more than acknowledgment of His greatness and virtues. Glorifying God has to do with bringing Him honor. It involves magnifying the Lord, so that His Person overshadows everything else. His prominence is more clearly seen when He is glorified.

In the unity of God’s people, the power of the Gospel and the effectiveness of the grace it announces is seen, thereby bringing glory, or honor, to God. This is the kind of glory or honor mentioned in First Corinthians. If, in the course of their

admonition to all believers is, *“be of one mind”* (2 Cor 13:11). As we strive, or work, together, it is to be *“with one mind”* (Phil 1:27). This is *being “of one accord, of one mind”* (Phil 2:2).

Being of *“one mind”* is not seeing everything the same way – although that is certainly the ideal. Our text has already acknowledged that some do not see eating meat the same way. Others do not consider days in the same manner. To be of one mind is not to see to it that there is perfect accord in our views of meats and days. Those areas are not high enough for the challenge of *“one mind.”*

Our minds are to be gathered together around Christ Jesus. *“One mind”* speaks of perceiving Him as the Son of God, and Him in whom we are made complete. *“One mind”* focuses on standing before Him faultless, and labors to that

**God will eventually be justified in all of His sayings. He will disown those who have disowned or despised His people, for they have exhibited a spirit that has its genesis with Satan, and is *“not according to Christ.”***

gathering, a wave of insightful speaking took place, and a stranger, unlearned in the ways of God, came in, upon hearing it *“he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth”* (1 Cor 14:24-25). Through their unified speaking, God was glorified, and honor was brought to Him.

In this sense, glory is not the praise itself, but results from the praise or prophecy.

### One Mind

Before there can truly be *“one mouth,”* there must be *“one mind.”* This is a single mind-set that reflects *“the mind of Christ”* (1 Cor 2:16). This is the standard for those in Christ. The

end. The brother who feels he cannot eat meat, and the one who knows he can eat meat, can be perfectly joined together *“in the same mind.”* They can live for the same purpose and the same Person. They can maintain a pure conscience, and wait for the coming of the Lord. They can be determined to suffer for Christ, stand against the wiles of the devil, and obtain the prize. That is the *“one mind”* that brings glory to God.

And how is this *“one mind”* realized? It is the product of God’s own working. It is God Himself who grants us to be *“LIKE-MINDED one toward another”* (verse 5). There is no question about us entering into the process. After all, we are the ones who are admonished to not please ourselves, but please our neighbor to his edification (verses 1-2). But it is God who causes us to be LIKE-

MINDED.

### A Principle to be Seen

There is a Kingdom principle to be seen here – a way in which the benefits of God are realized. It is AS we are engaged in pleasing the Lord that grace is given to us. When we extend ourselves to do what God has said, we will experience the power of God, thereby causing our efforts to be effectual.

It is much like the palsied man who was let down through the roof to the feet of Jesus. Although he had never walked, Jesus said, “*Arise, take up thy bed, and walk*” (Mark 2:9). Jesus said the same thing to a man by the pool of Bethesda. He had not walked for thirty eight years, yet Jesus said, “*Rise, take up thy bed and walk*” (John 5:8). In both cases, human effort was met by Divine

### One Mouth

When God grants His people to be “*LIKE-MINDED toward one another,*” it affects their mouths as well as their minds. In fact, the mind and the mouth become coordinated when Divine power is realized. It is not possible to “*speak the same thing*” unless we have “*one mind.*”

### An Example of “One Mouth”

An example of “*one mouth*” is seen in one of the prayers of the early church. At one point, “*the rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.*” They called Peter and John to task for preaching the Gospel, and “*commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus*” (Acts 4:5-18). Because they could find no cause to

oppositions of kings and princes were vain, and that they were but vassals of God, fulfilling His desire, while He overturned their’s. They articulated how Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel had conspired against Jesus, only to “*to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.*” Their faith rose to the occasion, as with “*one mouth*” they called upon the name of the Lord. “*Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus*” (Acts 4:29-30). The fact that God was glorified is confirmed by what followed their prayer. “*And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness*” (verse 31). A marvelous and unparalleled unity swept through that holy band of people, as they cut loose from the world in a remarkable way. With great power the Apostles gave witness to the resurrection of Christ, and “*great grace was upon them all*” (verses 32-33). God was glorified

**If we desire to glorify God with “one mind,” we must first extend ourselves to receive one another without disputations, and cease from judging one another. It is essential that we seek to edify one another. Where that effort is missing, the pursuit of unity and “one mind” are vain pursuits.**

Prior to that event, there was an intense interest among the disciples in edifying one another. After Jesus had ascended into heaven, “*all continued in prayer with one accord*” (Acts 1:14). Without so much as a note of disagreement among them, they depended upon the Lord to guide their choice of Judas’ replacement (1:15-26). When the day of Pentecost was “*fully come,*” they were “*all with one accord in one place*” (Acts 2:1). Even after 3,000 souls were added to the church (2:41), they all continued “*daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people*” (2:46).

power, thereby producing the desired effect. If either man would have remained on their bed, making no effort to rise and walk, both would have remained there. Their faith brought them into the process in which God empowered them to do what nature was impotent to accomplish.

So it is with our text. If we desire to glorify God with “*one mind,*” we must first extend ourselves to receive one another without disputations, and cease from judging one another. It is essential that we seek to edify one another. Where that effort is missing, the pursuit of unity and “*one mind*” are vain pursuits. God will not empower those who are not engaged in the work of edifying one another. However, where people are serious about that activity, God will grant them to be “*LIKE-MINDED,*” and they, in return, will glorify Him.

punish them, however, they “*threatened them,*” and “*let them go*” (Acts 4:21). What they then did is noteworthy.

Upon being let go, Peter and John immediately went to “*their own companions,*” reporting the things that had been done. Upon hearing of the threats of the very people who killed Jesus, the magnificent unity of the believers surfaced. It is written, “*And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said . . .*”

Their prayer evidenced strong faith and insight, as they recalled pertinent Scriptures, and confessed they knew their God was able to deliver them. With “*one mouth*” they glorified God. They confessed He was the God who made heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them. They acknowledged that the

When Peter and John were released from prison, their “*companions*” were still together in both mind and body. There were no divisions among them, and they were seeking to “*please*” their “*neighbor.*” In that state, God granted them to be “*LIKE-MINDED,*” and they followed through by glorifying Him with “*one mind*”

and one mouth.”

Our text, then, is not mere theory. It has been lived out by others before us, and we do well to follow in their steps.

### THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

God is “our Father” who is in heaven, and we rejoice in that circumstance. **However His primary relationship is to Christ Jesus, not to us!** The Holy Spirit makes a frequent point of this, hereby confirming its importance: “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 1:3; Eph 3:14; Col 1:3). He is also called “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 11:31; Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3). Additionally, we read of Him as “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:17).

Let it be clear, **the working of God does not center in us, or even in the church. The locus of the Kingdom is Jesus Himself.** Everything God gives comes through His Son. Everything He receives comes through Him as well. God receives no glory that

does not come through and because of Jesus. He gives no graces and no benefits that are not administered by the Lord Jesus Christ! We do well, therefore, to

Himself for me” <sup>NKJV</sup> (Gal 2:20). And again, “For to me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21). When that kind of spirit pervades the church, the blessing of God is on the

**When that kind of spirit pervades the church, the blessing of God is on the way. He will grant it to be “LIKE-MINDED,” that with “one mind and one mouth” they may glorify Him. A commonality will thus be found in our focus, as well as our thinking and speaking.**

consider Jesus the center of our lives.

Allow me to state this in the words of Scripture. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave

way. He will grant it to be “LIKE-MINDED,” that with “one mind and one mouth” they may glorify Him. A commonality will thus be found in our focus, as well as our thinking and speaking. How blessed it is to be involved in such a marvelous working – and it is all according to Divine purpose.

## CONCLUSION

There is a certain refreshment that comes from seeing and participating in these things. Test and see if this is not the truth. When the saints are seeking to edify one another, the blessing of God is upon them. There is a greater degree of spiritual understanding, and less of a

brought to our Lord.

Conversely, where edification is not the focus, all manner of fleshly expressions begun to erupt. When edification has no place in the church, the flesh comes off of the cross on which God

**All of this occurs because God does not dwell where there is no interest in strengthening and encouraging His people.**

However, where self interests are forfeited in order to give advantages to those who are living by faith, “great grace” will surely be experienced.

**Conversely, where edification is not the focus, all manner of fleshly expressions begun to erupt. When edification has no place in the church, the flesh comes off of the cross on which God placed it. Leaders tend to be more corrupt, and people tend to be more foolish. The Word of God loses its place of prominence, and opinions are given too much weight.**

I cannot close this lesson without again emphasizing the active role God Himself plays in our salvation. His is not a mere historical role, but a contemporary one. He is in the business of giving grants – granting, for example, that we be “LIKE-MINDED.” He can give us patience, and desires to do so, for He is the “God of patience.” He can give us comfort, seeing to it that we are encouraged and strengthened on our way to glory, for He is “the God of comfort.”

proneness to despising and judging one another. In an environment of edification, we progress toward having one mind and one mouth. Consequently, more glory is

placed it. Leaders tend to be more corrupt, and people tend to be more foolish. The Word of God loses its place of prominence, and opinions are given too much weight.

You cannot give God too much credit in our salvation, even though some

theology leaves people thinking that is possible. God is glorified when we see and confess His prominence and incessant activity in salvation. No person should draw back from honoring Him by confessing His indispensable involvement.

Also, in order to ensure that we do not come short of the goal, or that we are

not found without the required resources, everything comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. The excellence of this arrangement is seen in the fact that He is able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. This is because He was tempted in all points like as we are, although He was without sin. God honors Jesus for the great work He has done in

our behalf. When we will serve Jesus by living for Him, or "according to Christ," God will also honor us. Jesus said, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor" (John 12:26). Now, that is the kind of blessing you want to obtain, and in Jesus, you surely can!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 10/19/2001. Continuing in our overview of the book of Romans, we will be covering verses 7-13 of the fifteenth chapter. The theme will be, "**GLORIFY GOD TOGETHER.**" The salvation of God is conducive to joy – abundant joy. As the saints are edified, they will joyfully glorify God together. The salvation of God is calculated to produce these effects. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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**COMMENTARY on Romans: <http://wotruth.com/Romans.htm>**