

A Patient & Joyful Hope

Romans 15

If we are not finding peace and hope from the consolations of God then where does our peace and hope come from? Is our peace and hope lasting? Is it patient, is it joyful? As we read through Romans 15 each of us come away with our own personal thoughts and questions toward Paul's letter to the Romans and his missionary journey. Upon reading and then re-reading this chapter, several times, I decided to settle on three points of reflection that touches on the nature of God the Father as seen through Jesus Christ, the one in whom our patient and joyful hope is found.

1. I see the inclusiveness of Jesus Christ in the New Testament and I am stirred toward hope and the assurance of truth that God the Father is for us with all patience, comfort, truth, and mercy. To see this through here, I will start by noting that Romans 15 instructs us to receive one another, both strong and weak, Jew and Gentile, with mutual love¹. *"Therefore, receive one another, just as Christ also received us"* (Romans 15:5, 7). Though we as believers do not perform the exact work of Christ in reconciling people to God, we are still called to receive them in Christ-like manner. The receiving and reconciling work of Christ is a picture to us of God the Father's nature that we in turn imitate as seen in the Son of Man and Son of God, Jesus Christ. There are four attributes of God's nature mentioned in the first 13 verses of chapter 15, and they are attributes we see in Christ and His followers, the first two attributes being patience and comfort, *"Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus"* (Romans 15:5). The second two attributes mentioned are truth and mercy on behalf of all, the Jews and the Gentiles, see here: *"...Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises He made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy"* (Romans 15:8,9). Patience, comfort, truth, and mercy all point to a God who spreads hope. It is through Jesus we get to know and have hope in God the Father's inclusive nature.

2. Reading through the Bible, I have come to the conclusion that it pleases God when His Word comforts us. Together we have been given the consolation of God the Son in the Gospels and the Epistles. Together we have also been given the consolation of God the Father in the Scriptures, *"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope"* (Romans 15:4). To be more specific, God's Word exists that we might be led to have hope in the reconciliation offered to us through Jesus Christ. We read about reconciliation through Jesus Christ in 1 Corinthians 5, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of rec-*

¹ read Romans 15:1-9

onciliation” (1 Corinthians 5:17-19). In this manner of comfort, through reading our Bible, I see we have been given much reason to have a patient and joyful hope. God’s Word is available to us so that we do not despair. It is so we may find life, freedom and forgiveness - A turning away from all that is in opposition to a good and loving God who hems us in, calling us His own.

3. In my view, a patient and joyful hope can bring glory to God the Father because it unites us more deeply to Him in affection and purpose through the Holy Spirit. *“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”* (Romans 15:13). One marker of this Holy Spirit filled life may be what Paul mentions in the following verse, *“I am confident... that you are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, also able to admonish one another”* (Romans 15:14). In my personal experience, the unifying work of the Holy Spirit influences the spiritual climate in such a way where it becomes easier for people to be united in affection and purpose. I also see this being backed up by the Bible several times. Here is one example: *“Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded with one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 15:5,6). Not only are we comforted by God’s inclusiveness and the glory of His consoling Word, we are also comforted that the hope we have is an action word. “Hope” brings us closer to possessing a greater peace with God and with others. And through Him alone, we can become, “persons of peace”.

In my heart I have found this hope not something to be kept to ourselves for ourselves. The ramification of this hope is that we are at greater peace with God and therefore with the people who travel in our inner and outer circles whatever our baggage, whatever their baggage, whatever their affiliations, whatever our affiliations. We are united in a mutual love for one another that transcends religious and cultural boundaries². And together we share a patient and joyful hope in a God who embraces and draws near.

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² Paul is a great example of someone who crossed religious and cultural barriers, *“so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man’s foundation, but as it is written:*

“To whom He was not announced, they shall see;

And those who have not heard shall understand” (Romans 15:20-21).

(*The discussion on Paul’s trip from Jerusalem to Illyricum is a blog for another day.)