

“Now We That Are Strong ...”

“... ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves. Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying” (Rom. 15:1f).

These two verses continue the theme the apostle began in the previous chapter: *“Him that is weak in faith receive ye, ye not for doubtful disputations”* (14:1). The writer regards that the weak conscience of those who had doubts was an “infirmity” that the strong should, and ought, to bear. Upon urging the strong to be patient and understanding with the weak, Paul gave Christ as an example of what the strong should do: *“For Christ also pleased not himself, but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon me”* (Rom. 15:3; Ps. 19:9). The meaning is clear. *“While we were weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly”* (Rom. 5:6). The burden of sin he gladly bore. He did for us that which we could not do. The principle is the same, whether it is one who is strong in faith bearing the brother with weak faith or Christ bearing the sins of us who are too weak to make atonement for them.

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and comfort of the scriptures, we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). Since the word “for” in this text means “because” and points backward to something earlier written, it is to be concluded that specific reference of *“things written aforetime”* was the passage regarding Christ *“the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.”* This passage tells us that the behavior of Jesus teaches the strong to bear the infirmity of the weak. Still, that is not the only thing to be drawn from the passage for Paul asserts, *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime”* tells us that we must include *“whatsoever things”*! A whole battery of lessons is taught by Old Testament scriptures, lessons innumerable. In 1 Corinthians 10:12 we are told, *“Now these things happened unto them by way of example and were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come.”*

Things written aforetime were written for us so that through patience and comfort of the scriptures, we might have hope. The patience mentioned is ours; the comfort is that which the scriptures supply. *“Patience”* in the passage is steadfastness, as is its meaning in so many other places (Heb. 12:1; 2 Pet. 1:6). The Hebrew writer said, *“For ye have need of patience that having done the will of God, ye might obtain the promise”* (Heb. 10:36). The word *“comfort”* translated in the text can mean, as in other texts, edification and exhortation, as well as comfort or encouragement. The text allows both thoughts.

"Now the God of patience and of comfort grant unto you to be of the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus" (15:5). God is steadfast, patient, unchanging. He is a refuge and high tower to those who lean on Him and "none who trust in him shall be desolate" (Ps. 34:22). May through Him it be granted to us that we have the same spirit toward each other, the same spirit Jesus had toward us "that we with one accord ... may with one mouth (because we are in agreement, jm) glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:6). "Wherefore receive ye one another, even as Christ also received you to the glory of God" (15:7). Paul has now made a full circle from the first verse to this one; returning to the same appeal which he made there. The spirit which we are commanded to have would do so much to promote peace and harmony in Christ's body if all we, who are His disciples, would indeed follow His words. May we do so! "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

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