

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

and *Studies in the Nearer East*, and the second part of the first volume, containing the Hittite Inscriptions (Ithaca, New York, 1911), has now appeared, under the editorship of Messrs. Olmstead, Charles, and Wrench. With few exceptions the inscriptions are already known, and in some cases the photographs we already possess of them are better than those obtained by the Expedition. Every effort was made, however, to secure accuracy, hand-copies being taken while the squeeze was lying upon the stone, and a photograph made immediately afterwards, though it may be questioned whether a photograph from the stone itself would not have been better. 'When the inscription was of special difficulty, the squeeze was taken off a character at a time, so that the original rock and each side of the squeeze could be examined together.' We now, therefore, have the best reproductions that can be made of a considerable number of the Hittite inscriptions of Asia Minor. What is wanted is an expert, thoroughly acquainted with the forms and combinations of the Hittite script, who can examine and copy the originals themselves. Where the surface of the stone is worn, none but the experienced expert can copy them correctly. The photograph, for example, given in the present work of the Hittite inscription at Aleppo is as poor and misleading as the other photographs of it which I have seen, and the hand-copy of it is accordingly far from accurate; and yet the original is perfectly clear and legible to any one who has made a study of the Hittite characters, as I found to my surprise when I visited the monument last year.

The Expedition, however, has made two most welcome additions to our reading of the texts. The photograph of the longer Gurun inscription is, with the exception of a shadow over the left portion of the last line, a very good one, and at least enables us to read the text. But it is a pity that the hand-copy made from it was not revised by an expert, as there are a good many mistakes in it. Thus in the last line the characters *Guran-na-yas-s*, 'belonging to Gurun,' which are written *Guran-ya-s* in a Mer'ash inscription, appear under the most fantastic shapes. The two inscriptions of Gurun, by the way, were inscribed by a king of Carchemish, Khattu-kaniš, and show that the power of Carchemish once extended thus far to the north. The other welcome addition to our knowledge is furnished by the photographs of the Nishan Tash, or Beacon Stone, at Boghaz-Keui, which set at rest all question as to its having been once covered with Hittite hieroglyphs. Unfortunately, the stone is so weathered that little can be made out of them at present; whether an examination of the original by a 'Hittitological' expert would produce better results, I do not know. My visit to Boghaz-Keui the year before last was prevented by the snow. That the hieroglyphs were in use at the capital of the Hittite empire at the same time as the cuneiform characters, is proved by the fragment of a tablet which I hope to publish shortly: it contained an inventory in cuneiform of the furniture of the palace of Arnuandas, the last king of the empire, and has a docket attached to it in Hittite hieroglyphs.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ROMANS.

ROMANS XV. 13.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Ghost.

THIS ideal cannot have been an easy one for the Church at Rome to realize. In the public and private life of the city there was, it need not be said, nothing to purify heart and life, nothing to lift man up, nothing to bring him nearer to God. The first chapter in the letter gives a picture of

the state of society in the heathen world at large, and its lowest depth was touched in the imperial city. On the throne was a monster, whose name has been a synonym for brutal cruelty. The people had lost all the robustness of character and simplicity of life which once gave Rome character and strength. They refused to include God in their knowledge, and they were given up to a reprobate mind. The ghastly realism of this picture, which, even in its restraint, is sufficiently appalling, is corroborated in every particular by

the poets, satirists, and historians of the empire. It was a period of moral decadence, of unbridled luxury, unrestrained passion, and unabashed vice.

It was to a little remnant, dwelling in the midst of this corruption, breathing this fetid atmosphere, subject to the taint of this evil public opinion, that St. Paul was writing. It must not be forgotten, too, that they had not behind them a long period of Christian training and influence, nor were they sustained by the sympathy of a class which, while not prepared to identify itself with them by open profession, admired their ideal, and whose members half wished that they could be Christians themselves. They were a small company, and as obscure as they were feeble. Among them were a few even of Cæsar's household and the Prætorian guard, but the Church was chiefly composed of the humbler class. Society in Rome hardly knew that there were such people as Christians, or, if it thought of them at all, thought of them only as an extreme faction of the Jews, to be even more despised and detested than the majority of that hateful people.

Moreover, when St. Paul wrote these words, there were among the believers at Rome two parties—the Jewish party and the Gentile party, the former converted Jews, and the latter Gentiles brought in from among the heathen. Between these two parties there was much strife and discord. This, of course, made the Apostle very unhappy, and he sought, with all the power of his eloquence and of his influence, to bring about a change. So, in the last chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, we find an earnest appeal to mutual forbearance and charity, based upon the argument that all, Jews and Gentiles, are one and alike in the sight of God—that God has accepted all in Jesus Christ.

Now turn to the text itself. The verse contains a prayer. There is, first, the substance of the prayer—the Christian graces of Joy, Peace, and Hope, which the Apostle prays may be bestowed upon the converts at Rome. And, secondly, there is the benediction—the graces are gifts which come from God through the power of the Holy Spirit. We may conveniently study the subject under two aspects.

i. *The Gifts.*

ii. *How to retain the Gifts.*

I.

THE GIFTS.

There are three gifts spoken of in the text—joy, peace, and hope. The joy and peace which Christ imparts rest on faith (*ἐν τῷ πιστεύειν*). Hence they are the joy and peace especially flowing from justification and acceptance with God. St. Paul in this passage makes hope take the precedence of the other two gifts. The reason why he does this is apparently because joy and peace not only result from hope, but they also themselves give rise to a fuller hope. In proportion as joy and peace increase in the Christian believer, he approaches to the state of abounding in hope, to which the Apostle prays that he may attain. Hope, then, St. Paul regards both as the spring and the outcome of peace and joy.

i. *Joy and peace.*—These two Christian graces are closely allied in the experience of believers. Coming to Christ, there is 'rest for the weary and joy for the sad.' The joy of pardon is the companion of peace with God. And the joy of the Lord is possible even in self-denial. And if man can give pleasure by self-denial, may we not conclude that God is blessed in giving peace and joy to believers? He pours His sunshine and rain upon the evil and the good without respect of persons. But it is only those who have emptied Self out of the heart that He promises to fill, through His Spirit, with peace and joy.

Why is it, then, that so many people realize so little of this joy and peace in life? Why is it that they are always looking on the dark side of the picture?

(1) The first great reason of this want of joy and peace in life is that many leave religion out of their lives altogether, there is no such thing with them as really believing. They live without God in the world; there is no fear of Him in their hearts. Satan and his bondage is to them pleasant, a worldly life seems to them to be the real life, the best life.

They reject God because to religion, as well as to life, there is a dark side and a bright side, and they will look only on the dark side. And so it seems to them that religion will only make life worse than it is, that it will curtail their liberty, and if they become religious, they will have to give up much that pleases them, and get nothing in return. Religion looks all black to them,

'believing' can shed no ray of joy and peace upon their already dark and blighted lives.

(2) There are others who have very little joy and peace in their lives, because, though they believe, they never get further than the mere fact of believing, never advance further than the very beginning of a religious life. At first, when they began to believe, when the truth first flashed upon them, they seemed to have the very thing which they had so long desired. It all seemed so easy, all so simple. Christ had done all for them, and very little was required of them to do. But then, as they went on, and their enthusiasm cooled, and when they found that there was much that they must do, and a cross that they must bear, they had not the courage to go on. They were disappointed, religion was not what they had expected; it had not brought them any joy or peace in their lives. They were still troubled, discontented, and they blamed religion and not themselves, and while keeping up a show of it, never got any of the real good out of it.

(3) Then there are others, truly religious persons, who make use of all the means of grace, who do all they can to make their believing real, who long for the joy and peace which they know for certain that religion has for them, and who have not found it yet. It is their own infirmity. They are probably still young, they will find more of the joy and peace as they grow older; they have not yet overcome their natural infirmities; the besetting sin is yet strong, they must have patience and courage.

Going to a country appointment the other day, when nearing the village I saw one of the members coming towards me. He was totally blind, and had lost his right arm. He guided himself by tapping the hedge with his stick, and was humming a tune. 'Good afternoon,' I said; and having heard me preach two or three times, he said he easily recognized my voice. In a few words he told me of the terrible gunpowder explosion in a quarry which had blinded him and blown off his arm.

'Is it your belief now,' I said, 'that God compensates His children who meet with such calamities in life?' 'I am as sure of it as that I am living,' he replied. 'Why, I can read the Bible with my fingers; I can remember sermons so well I could preach them; and I can see spiritual things as never before.' We walked back together towards the village. Children coming from school spoke to him, and he answered, 'Hallo, love.' Not a collier met us but called him by his Christian name, and he replied with the cheerfulness of a lark.

'Ah,' he said, 'God had to blind me before I could see; and now I am full of His light. The other day I thought of the word Joy. First letter J stands for Jesus, which means

that He must have first place. Second letter O stands for Others, which means that other people take second place. Third letter Y stands for Yourself, which means that self must come last. Then you get *Joy*. Turn the letters round, as you are always tempted to do, and you get joy's opposite, which is sorrow. God keeps showing me things like these.¹

2. *Hope*.—Joy and peace are present gifts, and do not reach the future. Yet hope and joy are bound up the one with the other. However bright the present, it could never satisfy the soul, if it were to lead to nothing but a dark, dreary, hopeless end. But the man of God may rejoice in hope. Even though all were to fail him here, he has a home, and a certain one, awaiting him in heaven. We need not be afraid of death, for we know we shall rise again. We need not be heart-broken even in separation, for we know that Christ is coming, and that when He comes all His saints will be gathered into His presence.

(1) *Hope must have a foundation*.—God is the foundation of our hope. We are apt to think that hope is fixed beyond our choice, that some people are hopeful, others not. Some are hopeful because they have had no real experience; others because they cannot be taught; they have such liveliness that they go on hoping. That is not St. Paul's way of speaking. His hope is neither a youthfulness nor a weakness, nor a happy accident, but a gift of God meant for use, and not confined to those to whom it comes naturally. He begins by putting the highest honour on hope: the 'God of hope' he says. So also, at the opening of this chapter, after speaking of 'patience and comfort of the Scriptures,' he goes on to speak of the 'God of patience and consolation.' There he began by patience and comfort of the *Scriptures*. All things were written aforetime for that purpose. The experience of the past is to give courage and gladness for the future. Yet he showed that that virtue of the Scriptures came from God, and that He is the eternal Giver of patience and comfort, using the Scriptures to enlighten His ways. Just so here: he is speaking of 'the root of Jesse' that should 'rise to reign over the Gentiles': in Him should the Gentiles *trust* or *hope*. First there had been the word spoken aforetime, God's council long before, including all the earth. Now His providence has wrought what His counsel planned. The Gentiles had been brought to know Him, and so to hope in One who had made provision

¹ *Methodist Recorder*, September 19, 1912.

for them so long before. Hence, none were so outcast but that they might know Him, and know that He was caring for them. What He had done He would do again. And so He is Himself the God of Hope, in two senses: as One in whom we hope, and still more as the Giver of Hope, so that the more He is known and loved, the more hope is possible.

The God of hope. Thank God for that precious word of His Apostle. It is a common hope of which the Apostle speaks as well as a common joy and peace, which all should share, and in which all should increase under the energy of the common Spirit. It is the hope of the Church, the hope of the faith, the developed and continued hope of Israel, and of the Church of the old covenant that he desires for them. Christian hope should be the same in kind, but greater in degree, than the hope of the fathers. Greater in degree, richer in content, intenser in quality, and wider in area, because of Divine promises fulfilled, and Divine character revealed, and new Divine hopes opened out. The future is ours, for it is Christ's. To adapt the words of R. Browning—

One who never turned his back, but marched breast
forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would
triumph.
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.¹

(2) *Hope shall be overflowing.*—Observe the fulness of our hope. We are not to be satisfied with a few drops from the edge of a shower, but we are to look for that which may fill the soul. And when we reach our hope, and see, in faith, the coming Saviour, the fulness should overflow, the vessel should run over, and we should abound (or overflow) in hope, to the glory and praise of God.

To 'abound in hope' means, as I take it, to 'have the sanguine temperament.' It expresses, not so much the idea of intensity as the thought of pervasiveness—an atmosphere of hope. The startling thing is to hear a sanguine temperament spoken of as a gift of the Spirit. We are apt to look upon it with rather a patronizing eye. We think of it as the attribute of a child, of a boy, of a *little* nature. We can see how *faith* should be a gift of the Spirit; we can see how love should be a gift of the Spirit; but hope seems too lowly a flower for such a planting. And yet I think it requires a greater exercise of Divine power to inspire with habitual hope than to inspire either with habitual faith or with habitual love. Faith and love both get a training in this world. The child is taught to trust his parents; the man is bound to his brother by the ties of friendship. But hope gets no training in this world. There are no materials for its train-

ing. Its gleams are too few and fleeting to influence the eye; its effects are too transient to mould the heart. If there *is* to be a training for hope, it must come from another world—from God's world. There must be sights which eye hath not seen, sounds which ear hath not heard, thoughts which heart hath not conceived. We have all some object whom we can *trust* for ever; we have all some object whom we can love for ever; but we have no earthly object whom we can see for ever in the sunshine. The source of perpetual hope is God alone.²

At dawn she sent him a bird
Which lured from slope up to slope,
Such singing never was heard!
The bird was Hope—
Hope was the bird.

A star at twilight she sent,
Which shone, and filled from afar
His soul with peace and content.
Hope was the star—
The star was Hope.³

II.

HOW TO RETAIN THE GIFTS.

The gifts are ours. We have joy, peace, and hope; and see what a richness there is about it all. They are not given with a grudging hand. The prayer is, that we may be filled with all joy and peace. 'All,' that is, of every kind: joy in present blessings; joy in the coming hope; joy in what we see; joy in what we know without seeing; joy in the gifts which God bestows; and, above all, joy in the Lord Himself, the Giver of them all.

There are two ways mentioned in the text in which these gifts are to be retained and increased in us. The first refers to *the exercise of our faith*, 'in believing.' The second refers to our *absolute dependence on God*, 'in the power of the Holy Ghost.'

1. *The exercise of our faith.*—Note well the words '*in believing.*' The Lord will do His part, in His own way. Let us, in His grace, do our part, which is, to believe; that is to say, to take His word, and rest upon it, and live in the spirit of men assured. It is not our dream, but His Word. Ponder it, repose upon it, and then from it look upward, and look forward. What is hope, hope in the Scripture sense of the word, but faith looking forward, an expectation warranted by the trusted Promiser? Such be our happy hope, and, indeed, it will make life happy all over.

² George Matheson, *Rests by the River*, 38.

³ William Canton.

¹ J. F. Vallings, *The Holy Spirit of Promise*, 140.

Earth is brighten'd when that gleam
Falls on flower and rock and stream;
Life is brighten'd when that ray
Falls upon its darkest day.¹

2. *Our absolute dependence on God.*—(1) It is important that we should recognize our indebtedness for these gifts. It is the 'God of hope' who bestows them, it is 'in the power of the Holy Ghost' that we shall be made to 'abound' in them. You will find the sacred doctrine of the Trinity lying at the foundation of the whole.

First, we find that these gifts are given by God the Father. He is here described as the author, the source, or origin of the gift. Thus we constantly find everything traced to the purpose of God the Father, as the great originator. In His boundless love He gave the Son to die for us. Through the same love we are made heirs of an inheritance. And now, in the same love, He breathes forth joy, peace, and hope into the souls of His people.

But, while He is described in this passage as the author, God the Holy Ghost is represented as the applier. It is His loving work to apply to the individual the purpose of the Father. It is He that calls, that imparts the new birth, that quickens, that purifies, that leads, that comforts, that bears witness that we are the children of God. In other words, it is He that comes into personal contact with each heart, so that He was described at Pentecost as lighting on each of them; and the God of hope is described in this passage as bestowing hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.

And while God the Father is the author, God the Holy Ghost the applier, God the Son is the one object of the faith. We see, then, that in this text the great doctrine of the Trinity in Unity lies at the foundation of the joy and peace, and is the great secret of the abounding hope.

I have been told that the effort to send a wireless message across the Atlantic represents the exertion of 500 horse-power, but the amount of power requisite to receive that message is contained in such an accumulator as a motor car carries. The omnipotent God is the great transmitter of Hope, while our faith, although no larger than a grain of mustard seed, is yet sufficient to receive that hope which, proceeding from Him, is transmitted by the medium of His Spirit.²

¹ H. C. G. Moule.

² C. Copeland Smith.

(2) 'In the power of the Holy Spirit.'—The first and most needful step for us is to believe, but we cannot even *believe* without the help of the Holy Spirit. This is itself God's gift. Our inclination is to trust only to what we see, to think lightly of the help which is above, to live as if it were not there. We have to believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. But belief sometimes is full of darkness and terror. When we see Him through the mists of our evil hearts, a horror often comes over us; we see that He executes judgment, and we shrink away from it. If He has made us prize hope, then we see a brightness beyond the storm clouds. He puts joy and peace into our belief. He gives us power to rejoice even in the sufferings and trials that befall us and others, if they may lead to purification. He gives us power to have peace in ourselves, towards each other, towards Himself.

For us hope may not come at first, but, when we believe, and then rejoice and are at peace, hope comes at last, and in an overflowing tide. It does not come from brighter prospects without or from thoughtlessness within, but from trust in the God of Hope, and willingness to believe that He is working all things to glorious ends. The worst hopelessness is that about ourselves. It seems so useless to try to mend, we feel tied and bound. Yet He is not hopeless about us; His fatherly judgments teach us that by hoping in His judgments, and submitting to His Holy Spirit, we shall find the dull cloud upon us breaking, and His heavenly glory shining upon us.

Several years ago passengers on the ferry steamers that run from Liverpool to Birkenhead and back would see on a bright warm day a crippled boy. His body was grown almost to a man's size, but his limbs were withered and helpless, and not bigger than the limbs of a child. He used to wheel himself about in a small carriage, like those which boys use in their play. He had a little concertina, and on this he used to play some sweet simple tunes. 'How is it, Walter,' a gentleman asked one day, 'when you cannot walk, that your shoes get so worn?' A blush came over the boy's pale face, and, after hesitating a moment, he said 'My mother has younger children, sir; and while she is out washing I amuse them by creeping about on the floor and playing.' 'Poor boy!' said a lady standing near, not loud enough, as she thought, to be overheard, 'what a life to lead! what has he in the future to look forward to?' The tear started in his eye, and the bright smile that chased it away showed that he did hear. As she passed by him to step on shore, he said in a low voice, but with a smile, 'I am looking forward to having wings some day, lady.'