

The God Who Is And The God Who Gives

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Three times in Romans 15 the Apostle Paul draws our attention to the character and attributes of our glorious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ with descriptive titles to comfort and encourage the church. Our Great Redeemer is called 'the God of patience and consolation', 'the God of hope' and 'the God of peace' (vv. 5, 13, 33). How blessed we are that God the Holy Spirit should leave us these wonderful descriptions of the Godhead as reminders and tokens of God's love and grace for His people. Our blessed Saviour is both the source of these graces and the dispenser. Our Great Provider is Himself patient and teaches patience to His people. He is trustworthy and faithful and teaches His people to hope and trust in Him. He is eternally at peace with Himself; self-contained, self-sufficient, self-contented and secures peace for His people by reconciling us to Himself and speaking peace to all His seed.

The God of Patience

How patiently our Saviour endured the contradiction of sinners. How we tested and taunted Almighty God with our wickedness in the days of our opposition; shaking our fists in His face. How adamantly we withstood His whispers of love, despised His gentle pleadings, mocking His forbearance as weakness. "Despising the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God was all the time leading us to repentance."

Each one of us deserves to be punished as rebels, and damned to eternal separation. Yet, thank God, our Beloved is the God of patience, waiting to be merciful in conversion and ever longsuffering towards us His people despite our failings, weaknesses and faults.

What an example He provides for us to follow. As we wait patiently upon Him whom we recognise now as our Great God and Saviour, He becomes to us the source of all good, the fountainhead of every perfect gift. As He suffered patiently and endured for us the full weight of God's wrath against our sin, might we not follow our Master when called to endure the opposition of men against us? Is the servant greater than his master? The church learns patience by looking to the God of patience.

The God of Consolation

Yet here, too, is a blessed promise, for our God is also the God of consolation. Our Saviour comforts His people in their trials, consoling our troubled hearts. He draws near to us in our loneliness, uplifts us when we are downcast, nourishes our soul when we hunger after righteousness, and

refreshes us when weary. He bears our griefs and carries our sorrows. He is our Jacob's Ladder by whom ministering angels supply all our needs, granting gracious promises, bestowing gospel blessings.

Like their Saviour, the Lord's people in this world sow in tears. Jesus wept in sympathy, by which He taught us to love one another, and in bitterest anguish and pain indicating that no trial in this world is unknown to His people. I am convinced there will be no one in the day of judgment who will be able to say with any legitimacy that the elect people of God had an easier passage in this life. But through the tribulation comes endurance, from trial comes patience, from suffering a dependence and reliance upon our God.

The God of Hope

The Lord Jesus Christ is the God of hope to the church, in whom our trust is placed and upon whom our faith is fixed. On the cross we see our redemption won. In the empty tomb victory is declared, and the ascended Christ is the pledge of eternal life. In the gospel we hear His plan of salvation expounded and the good hope of the believer is assured in trusting a good and loving Saviour.

Upon who else can we trust, upon what else place our hope? Recently, I buried a close relative. It is many years since she last had any thought for the so-called riches or pleasures of this world. In life there is no lasting hope, in death no other hope. The Lord Jesus Christ is the God of hope, and a more suitable Saviour, a more able Deliverer, we could not wish or find.

The God of Peace

The King of Peace has won the peace that passes understanding. That peace with God is possible is wonderful for sinners to know, but oh, what manner of peace it is in its nature, depth and endurance. Its blessedness is beyond our ability to describe and transcends our finite minds. It shall be known only by experience. How troubled this world appears to the child of God, but what eternal contentment, joy and union stretches out before us in glory.

The peace is beyond the understanding of natural man in his spiritual ignorance. It is beyond the understanding of angels who stand in awe as the plan of redemption unfolds and reconciliation in time and eternity between God and man is revealed in every convert of sovereign irresistible grace. It is beyond the understanding of devils for whom no peace ever will be found. And though it is beyond the understanding of the guilty sinner with his felt need of pardon and grace, it is embraced, believed and rested upon to his soul's everlasting relief.

The Lord Jesus Christ has made peace through the blood of His cross. How wonderful the plan of redemption appears to those whose sins are washed away, who are made ready by grace for the presence of God. What a story of love and mercy is salvation by grace. God Himself has stooped to die and pay the price of His bride's deliverance from sin.

Patience, consolation, hope and peace are blessed gifts of heavenly love from the God of all patience, consolation, hope and peace. May God grant us to know these truths in our hearts and to experience their power in our soul as He comes and ministers these attributes of His character and nature to us.

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