



## Parenting & Persevering in Hope

### Gospel Culture – Part 15

Romans 15:1-7

David Sunday

May 13, 2018

---

Our Scripture today is Romans 15:1-7. We're coming to the end of our journey through Romans. Our last sermon in this series will be on June 3, and then we'll move to the book of Ecclesiastes this summer. Let's hear God's Word as it encourages and exhorts us:

*We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. <sup>3</sup> For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." <sup>4</sup> For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. <sup>5</sup> May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*

Thanks be to God for His living Word. Amen.

In the Rose Bowl on January 1, 1929, the University of California Berkeley Golden Bears were facing the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets. The game was neck and neck until the Tech's Stumpy Thomason fumbled the ball just 30 yards away from the Yellow Jackets' end zone. Amazingly, it landed in the hands of Roy Riegels, who was playing roving center on defense for the University of California. He pivoted to get away from a tackler, put his head down and started running. He kept running. It was clear for 69 yards—running in the wrong direction.

Finally, his teammate and quarterback Benny Lom caught up with him at California's three-yard line, screaming, "You're going the wrong way!" Roy tried to turn around but was immediately tackled by a wave of Georgia Tech players. His name has gone down in history as "Wrong-way Riegels." How would you like that nickname?

Paul has been writing to the church at Rome all about the doctrine of the gospel. In Romans 14, he starts telling them, “There’s something off. You’re going the wrong direction in your life together as believers.” There were people in the church at Rome who are trying to do everything right. They were concerned about diets and days and drink. But Paul reminds them that it’s possible to be doing all the right things but be moving in the wrong direction. That’s where we’ve been for the past couple weeks.

Paul makes it clear in verse four of our passage today what the right direction is: “*For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*” There it is. That’s the direction the Scriptures are moving us in—toward hope. If our study of the Bible and our learning of Christian doctrine and the gospel is not leading us to hope, then we’re moving in the wrong direction.

Paul wants to get us moving in the right direction today. More than anything, what you need to cope with the long-term pressures of life together in the body of Christ is hope. I want to apply this specifically to the pressures and responsibilities of parenting today—Mother’s Day. As John Piper puts it, “No hope, no cope.” If we don’t have hope as parents, we will not cope with the pressures we face as moms and dads. We need hope to cope.

The context of our passage is life together in the body and Paul wants to bring his argument in Romans 15 to a conclusion. Responding to all the squabbling and rivalry in the church, he gives them the bottom line in verse one: “*We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.*” This is the key attitude the gospel is calling us toward. A culture shaped by the gospel will look like verse two, where each of us is seeking to please his neighbor for his good, building up one another.

Then Paul brings in motivation in verses three and four, to apply all the truth we’ve been learning in Romans 14 and 15 about putting our own interest aside and living in harmony with one another. It’s not surprising, in verse three, that the chief place he turns to for motivation is the example of Jesus Christ Himself: “*For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.’*” He’s saying Jesus Christ is our self-sacrificing example of how to live in harmony with one another. Jesus was willing to bear reproach in order that we might be blessed. Let that attitude be in you as well.

It’s not surprising that he turns to Christ as an example. What is surprising is where he gets this example of our Lord Jesus Christ. He could have gone to the Gospels and given us a lot of stories about how Jesus put other people’s interests ahead of His own. But he doesn’t do that.

Look where he turns in the second part of verse three. Paul writes, “As it is written...” Then he quotes a verse. Where have you heard that verse?

It’s in a rather obscure psalm—Psalm 69—where it talks about someone who bore reproach for people who deserved it. He took their reproach so that they wouldn’t experience it. Psalm 69 is an example of Jesus, so Paul goes to the Old Testament to give us this example. He’s doing this intentionally—as he’ll tell us in verse four—because he wants us to know how to fight for hope in this world. He wants us to know where we need to go in order to get the hope we need to press on and endure through difficulties as Christians.

Where do we need to go? We need to go where Paul went in verse three. We need to go to the Bible. That’s where we find our hope. In verse four, Paul makes it clear that the Bible plays a vital role in the life of a believer. He’s saying, “Read your Bible—all of it—because it is written to awaken within you hope, as well as strengthen and sustain that hope.” If, in our Bible reading, it’s not leading us to hope—if, in our preaching, it’s not breeding hope and life into us—we’re moving in the wrong direction.

Today I want to hone in on this one verse—Romans 15:4. I want us to see how vital it is for us to saturate ourselves in the Scriptures if we are going to live in harmony and unity with one another in the body of Christ. I want to apply this lesson specifically to our community at home and our role as parents. So we’ll look at three points.

- 1) The purpose of all the Scriptures.
- 2) The practical intent of all the Scriptures.
- 3) The ultimate goal of all the Scriptures.

## **1. The purpose of all the Scriptures**

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “purpose” like this: “The reason for which something is done or created.” What was the reason God created His Word? What was the reason God gave us the Bible? Verse four says, “*Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction.*” There it is. All the Bible was written to instruct us. So before you can get the encouragement of the Scriptures, you have to be willing to receive the instruction of the Scriptures. You have to be given a steady diet of the Bible—not just crumbs here and there. You need prolonged feasting in God’s Word—not just fast-food snacks from God’s Word. And you need all of the Bible, not just your favorite parts. Paul says in verse four, “*Whatever was written in former days...*” and he’s referring specifically to the Old Testament here. It’s all written for our instruction. So that’s the purpose of the Scriptures: to instruct us.

## 2. The practical intent of all the Scriptures.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “intent” as, “An aim or a plan.” When I taught high school Bible classes, I had to have lesson plans. It wasn’t enough to say, “I’m here to instruct.” I had to know what my aim was in instructing—what was I trying to accomplish? Scripture knows what it’s trying to accomplish. It’s got a twofold aim or lesson plan in mind and we see it in verse four. It’s there to produce endurance and it’s there to bring encouragement. That’s the intent of the Bible: to produce endurance and to bring encouragement.

Endurance is stick-to-itiveness. It’s the ability to keep on keeping on in the face of resistance and opposition and hardship. When you get God’s perspective on the difficulty you’re going through, you get new wind in your sails. You can go and fight again. You can endure. If you do not know what God has to say about your struggle, if you do not know how God speaks into your sorrows, you lose hope and you cannot endure. Scripture gives you the perspective of God, so that you get the encouragement you need, so that you can endure in the battle you’re in.

Let me give you an example. It was January 1992, Kate and I had been married approximately one month, and for some reason that night I was feeling kind of down. I’m sure it wasn’t because of my wife—we had a wonderful first year of marriage. She made me very happy. Maybe it was because I was working in a construction site in Wheaton at the time and I really didn’t know what I was doing. Every day I was messing something up and getting yelled at. It wasn’t the right job for me.

So when I woke up the next morning, I found a note on our little green table that was given to us at our wedding by my Grandma and Grandpa. Kate had written out these words from Psalm 94:17-19:

*17 If the LORD had not been my help,  
my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence.  
18 When I thought, “My foot slips,”  
your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up.  
19 When the cares of my heart are many,  
your consolations cheer my soul.*

Wow! An excellent wife—who can find? I found her, okay? She gave me encouragement through the Scriptures. I can’t tell you how many times Psalm 94:17-19 has encouraged me. It has literally been hundreds of times since that day in January. Whenever I feel anxious thoughts starting to swarm around in my mind, this is one of the passages I go to. “Lord, when anxious

thoughts multiply within me, Your consolations cheer my soul. So I need You right now, Lord, to console me, give me some hope and help me to endure.” And God does that. Those are verses I’ve shared with literally hundreds of people, because the encouragement of Scripture gives us strength to endure. That’s the intent.

### **3. The ultimate goal of all the Scriptures.**

What’s it all leading toward? What direction is Scripture aiming us, in its hope? Do you see that in verse four? *“Whatever was written in former days was written...so that we might have hope.”* That is why God gave you the Bible. This is a Book designed to create, waken, and sustain in you hope. Hope, so that you can endure. The Christian life calls us to a long obedience in the same direction, as Eugene Peterson’s book puts it. The Bible calls us to a warfare, to a fight. It’s not an easy life to live in this fallen world as a Christian. We need endurance. We need perseverance.

The way the Bible encourages us to persevere is not through just gritting our teeth. It’s not through trying harder. The Bible encourages us to persevere through the power of hope. It shows us a whole new perspective on where this world is heading, where our lives are heading, how we can process life’s difficulties in light of the life to come.

I ran across what I thought was a breathtaking statement from the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard this week. He said this:

If I were to wish for anything, I should not wish for wealth and power, but for the passionate sense of what can be, for the eye which, ever young and ardent, sees the possible. Pleasure disappoints, possibility never. And what wine is so sparkling, what so fragrant, what so intoxicating as possibility?

I read that and thought, “Yeah, that resonates with me.” When we can dream beyond what we can see, when we can look above what’s weighing us down, when we can see there are new possibilities and new options, then there’s hope. The Bible does that for us. Scripture opens our eyes to new possibilities beyond this sin-ravaged world. And friends, the Bible does more than that for us. The Bible shows us not merely possibilities, but certainties.

What is faith? Hebrews 11:1 (NET), *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see.”* When we face troubles and opposition, faith says—in the words of Samuel and Amy Zwemer, missionaries to the Muslims 100 years ago—“God is turning the world upside down that it may be right side up when Jesus comes.” I think that’s a great summary of the story of Scripture. They wrote that in a children’s book, saying, “This is what the

Bible is all about. God is turning the world upside down that it may be right side up when Jesus comes.” That’s the kind of stuff the Bible tells us to give us hope.

The Bible tells you that just as caterpillars become butterflies, just as carbon is converted into a diamond, just as a grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies produces a harvest, just as winter is transformed into spring, so believers in Jesus will be raised from decay and death, along with all creation, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. We will be forever set free from decay in the new creation. That’s the hope the Bible is pressing before our eyes. *“Now, hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope what we do not see, we wait for it with patience”* (Romans 8:24-25). That’s perseverance. That’s endurance. The Scriptures are designed to give you living hope.

This is the hope that empowers us to live in harmony and unity with one another, to bear with each other’s failings, to sacrifice ourselves in love, to build others up for their good, to welcome one another—not rejecting one another—because we know where all of this is heading. We know that God is working all this together into such a glorious plan. “No hope, no cope.” But if you have hope, you can cope with an awful lot. You can endure through the encouragement the Scriptures bring you.

I want to apply this today to the glad but grueling labor of parenting. It’s glad labor, but every parent knows it can be grueling at times. Who has to bear with more failings of weak people, who needs to sacrifice more, die more to pleasing one’s self, endure more difficulty for the good of others, than a mother? That person has probably sacrificed more than anyone else in your life. Moms endure a lot.

As predicted in Genesis 3:16, moms have- to go through the pain of childbearing. They grow weary sometimes. They have to chafe sometimes against ungodly authority from their husbands. Sometimes they cringe at the demands of their children. Sometimes they grow weary of constantly cleaning the house. Sometimes they fight against their kids’ sinful hearts, then they have to fight over their own hearts. Sometimes they are tempted to replace devotion to Jesus with devotion to their children and their exaltation and their success.

Kim Ransleben writes about this, saying, “This is our thorny field, where the cursed ground is hard. It seems like only thistles grow, despite all our weed-pulling.” That’s sometimes what mothering feels like. It feels like gardening in a thorny field. It’s glad, but it’s grueling. And nothing is more needed in this wonderful vocation of motherhood and parenting than hope—hope that it’s not in vain.

I love how Kim Ransleben concludes her article: “Do not fear the death you see in your children’s lives...”—when they’re complaining and murmuring, when they’re sending tweets that

scare you, when they're not responding considerately, when they're wandering off on a path that concerns you. "Do not fear the death you see in your children's lives. God knows what to do with it. After all, dry bones are all He's ever had to work with in His people."

Where is she going there? She's going to Ezekiel 37, where the prophet looked out at a valley of dry bones and God said to him, "*Son of man, can these bones live?*" Ezekiel said, "*O Lord God, you know.*" Then he saw what God can do with a valley of dry bones. That word gives us hope as parents. I have not preached much about parenting in my years, because I don't feel I'm an expert at it at all. I'm not here to dispense advice on how to parent.

But I can tell you one thing I've observed after being a dad now for 24 years. I believe the biggest difference maker in the experience of children growing up in a Christian home is whether their parents are motivated primarily by hope or by fear. Are we motivated by hope, or by fear? Fear imagines a future in which God's grace and goodness will be abandoned. It's all going in a bad direction. We're going to be left without help from on high. Hope imagines a future in which God's grace and goodness will triumph, including in the life of our families.

Fear—because it's imagining a dismal future—tries to control and results in behaviors that are full of anger and absent of joy. Hope surrenders to the God Who promises to do exceedingly abundantly more than all we could ask or imagine for those who trust in Him (Ephesians 3:20). Hope results in joy and peace, a joy and peace that sustains you when the kids squabbling and when they're not saying thank you. What you need is gospel hope—hope that the God Who speaks life to a valley of dry bones and light into the darkness is able to breathe life into your kids.

If hope is what we need the most as parents so that we can endure, then what we need to be doing more than anything, as dads and moms, is saturating ourselves in the Scriptures—because that's where our hope comes from. Nothing is more vital to our parenting than that we stay connected to the taproot of hope in the Bible and that we let it be cleansing us, feeding us and fueling us, as well as encouraging us day after day.

Husbands, the greatest gift you can give your wives is to wash them with the water of the Word. Of course, that means you yourself have to be a man of the Word. You have to be someone who ransacks the Bible, looking for hope, seeing how it points toward hope. You can look at Psalm 69, which is an imprecatory psalm (not one of the happy ones), but you can find hope there because you see it's talking about Someone Who bore reproach that we deserved so it doesn't fall on us. Then you'll say, "Oh, that Old Testament Scripture is about Christ. That gives me hope." That's how you fight for hope. Husbands, be men of the Word, so that you might endure and persevere and share the hope of the gospel with your wives and children.

Last week, I was talking about running with a friend of mine here in the church and he gave me permission to share this example. He said, “Son, I haven’t been running or reading my Bible for the past two weeks. I’ve been so swamped with work, I haven’t had time to run or read the Bible.” His son, a teenager in our youth group, said, “Dad, I think you know that reading the Bible is the better of those two choices.” The dad said, “You are correct.” We need to be in the Scriptures in order for our hope in Jesus to be sustained.

I want to close by sharing some of the Scriptures that have given Kate and me hope in our role as parents. First, Isaiah 44:3-5. What a wonderful promise this is! God says:

*<sup>3</sup> For I will pour water on the thirsty land,  
and streams on the dry ground;*

*I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring,  
and my blessing on your descendants.*

*<sup>4</sup> They shall spring up among the grass  
like willows by flowing streams.*

*<sup>5</sup> This one will say, “I am the Lord’s,”  
another will call on the name of Jacob,  
and another will write on his hand, “The Lord’s,”  
and name himself by the name of Israel.*

I read that promise and say, “O Lord, there’s hope.” It encourages me to pray, “Lord, would You pour out Your Spirit on my children so that they will see themselves as those who belong to You, who live as those who bear Your name.”

C.H. Spurgeon comments on this verse, saying:

The Holy Spirit will move [your children] by first moving you. If you can rest without their being saved, they will rest too. But if you are filled with an agony for them, if you cannot bear that they should be lost, you will soon find that they are uneasy too. I hope you will get into such a state that you will dream about your child...perishing for lack of Christ, and start at once and begin to cry, “God, give me converts or I die.” Then you will have converts.

So we don’t sit idly by as parents, saying, “If God wants to save them, He will.” Nor do we allow ourselves to despair and think, “There’s totally nothing I can do.” No, we take hold of promises like Isaiah 44:3-5: “*I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring and my blessing on your descendants.*” You out to pray, “O Lord, do that in my family, for Your sake and for their good.” God hears and God is pleased to answer prayers like that.

Then I selected Scriptures for each of my kids that I pray. For our oldest child, my prayer is Romans 16:19-20:

*<sup>19</sup> For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. <sup>20</sup> The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

When I think of our oldest child, I pray—as she, a young woman, grows up in this world that is so full of tribulations and temptations and challenges and falsehoods—that she will be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. I rejoice in seeing evidences of that grace in her life.

For our son, John 1:47: *“Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, ‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile...’*—no falsehood, no deceit. That’s my prayer for our son, that he would be a man of truth and sincerity, and that like Nathaniel of John 1, he would say, *“Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”* and live under the authority of King Jesus in his life.

For our younger daughter, when we dropped her off at Wheaton College, the chaplain said, “Pick a verse that you will pray for your child during their four years at Wheaton.” The verse that immediately came to mind for Ruth is Luke 12:32: *“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”* I pray for courage for her and the understanding that the Father is generous toward her. He gives His kingdom to her.

When Kate got cancer in January 2010, I was praying early that month that the Lord would give me a text of Scripture that would set the trajectory for our church that year. The first sermon I preached that year was from Jeremiah 32:40-41:

*<sup>40</sup> I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. <sup>41</sup> I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.*

That was in my heart that whole month of January and that was the first thing that came to our minds in the emergency room on January 29th when we heard that Kate had cancer: *“I will not turn away from doing good to them...I will rejoice in doing them good...with all my heart and all my soul.”* Then out of the blue while we were still in the emergency room that night, 15-year-old Rebecca sent us these verses from Psalm 66:8-12:

*<sup>8</sup> Bless our God, O peoples;*

*let the sound of his praise be heard,  
9 who has kept our soul among the living  
and has not let our feet slip.  
10 For you, O God, have tested us;  
you have tried us as silver is tried.  
11 You brought us into the net;  
you laid a crushing burden on our backs;  
12 you let men ride over our heads;  
we went through fire and through water;  
yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.*

Does that give you hope, to get a Scripture like that from a 15-year-old child? I'll tell you, it does. I can't hear those words anymore without remembering all that God has done for us.

Sometimes people think that a pastor's home is kind of this bubble of placidity, that everything within the home is always nice, people never yell, everything is just so good all the time. If that's true, then I'm not a very good pastor. That's not always the case in our family. There have been times when we feared that Satan was trying to destroy our family. At one of those times, Kate said to me, "David, we need to pray Ezekiel 36:8-11."

*But you, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot forth your branches and  
yield your fruit to my people Israel, for they will soon come home.  
For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you....And I will cause you  
to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to  
you than ever before.*

This gives us hope to pray and persevere. Then in one of those times, my dear friend Mike Bullmore just looked at me and said, "David, Proverbs 14:26 is for you." "*In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.*"

If you're with your wife or your loved one, I want you to take her by the hand or put your arm around her, and I want you to be thinking right now of Scriptures that have sustained you.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!  
What more can He say than to you He hath said—  
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

[How Firm a Foundation by George Keith, 1787]

Quietly where you're seated, I want you to think of how God has sustained your hope in Him, through hard times and good times, thanking Him for that. Throughout this coming week,

I want you to bless your wife by pointing her to Scripture promises of hope that will enable her, through that encouragement, to endure with hope in God.

Mothers, I want you to ask God to show you ways that His Word speaks hope into your vocation as a mom, then jot down some Scriptures that you can lay hold of, that you'll see God do in the lives of your children, that will bring great joy to you and honor to Him. If you can't think of any Scriptures, ask one of the elders, or ask someone you know in the church who's a good friend. Come to one of the pastors and we will point you to a Scripture that is perfectly designed for your situation to give you hope, because whatever God has written, He has written so that we might have hope.

Let's just take a moment to quietly pray.

Lord, I pray You would do more good to the homes of this church than ever before. I pray that You would lift our eyes above the difficulties to the possibilities, that You would help us to see our present trials and challenges in light of the glory that's going to be revealed to us. I pray that You would breath hope into moms today, breath hope into husbands, breath hope into families. Breath hope into single lives today. Breath hope into the elderly of our church today. Lord, thank You that Your design throughout all Your Word is to give us hope. May all the people of God rejoice in You. Amen.

---

## New Covenant Bible Church

4N780 Randall Road, St. Charles, IL 60175

(630) 584-2611 ♦ [www.newcbc.org](http://www.newcbc.org)

*All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

Text provided by sermontranscribers.net ♦ [emily@sermontranscribers.net](mailto:emily@sermontranscribers.net)