

Romans chapter 12 verse 12

Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation,
continuing instant in prayer.

Holy Scripture is a great miracle, given by inspiration of God. It teaches good doctrine, it lays the foundation for a family, a predestinated family. The Holy Ghost is given to quicken souls whom Christ has bought. These, all strangers to God by nature, are brought into the family. No more strangers, no longer strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. United to Christ their living Head, they are brought into spiritual union with Him and with each other in Him as they are brought together in the wise providence of God, gathered into churches, visible churches as at Rome, Ephesus, and so on, and to these families the heavenly Father of all of them is pleased to give rules, directions and precepts for their behaviour and this is the way God builds up in the scripture - First the doctrine, then a call, an effectual call by grace, then the precepts. God brings His children to Himself, forgives their sins and then speaks to them, speaks to them lovingly, but very firmly, as to how they are to behave themselves and this chapter is an example of this. After having laid down good doctrine and the mercy of God therein, the Apostle opens this chapter thus "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service". Gentiles offered to God by precious faith in the Bleeding Lamb, bring these, their poor bodies, that is to say, themselves, and the sacrifice is holy. Not that their bodies, but the sacrifice is itself a separating grace that they have, a grace that separates them from the world and cuts them off from themselves, and brings them to hate themselves and forsake all below as the Apostle Paul speaks and by these mercies given to them freely, bestowed on them powerfully, they are exhorted "I beseech you by all that God has done for you, all that He has taught you, all that He has revealed in you, all that He has done in you, I beseech you with these mercies, walk, not as other men walk in foolishness, in darkness, and in the unfruitful works of darkness, walk as men born again". Christ's, spiritually quickened, enlightened, led, instructed, forgiven, brought into union with the Lord Jesus, walk according to all that, and be not conformed to this world. What a solemn word. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Not that you may talk about it only but prove it and find it in your souls and feel that what God has done for you is a very prevailing reason why you should not be conformed to

this world. Dear friends, has not God done something for you? Are there not some here who have received that holy calling, heavenly calling of which the Apostle speaks in the Hebrews "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" If it is so, then may we remember what here we have before us - the offering up of our poor selves, bringing our poor evil selves by faith and prayer to a blessed God and offering up these poor creatures, through the infinite merit of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is as I judge what is meant by the offering up of the Gentiles being acceptable to God. You never did take your poor self without this precious reason for acceptance - the Person and work of the Lord Jesus, and never did you take yourselves to God properly, rightly, without the operation of the Holy Ghost, and then what Christ said you found to be true - He that doeth the will of God shall know the doctrine, and you can say "I know that is right. I know it is right for me to go as a poor forlorn creature to the Lord Jesus. It is good for me to take my poor self and I have nothing better to take; good for me to do this in the name and for the alone sake of the Lord Jesus. What a reason, what a ground we have then, as many of us as are blessed with the grace of the Holy Ghost, thus to do, by the help of the Spirit. Follow, as God may help you the exhortations in this chapter, they are good, they are good, and I believe to every gracious person they are acceptable. Each good man will say, "I am sorry that I am not more conformed to them." "I am sorry in my spirit, before the Lord sometimes, that I do not walk as I ought to walk according to these precepts, but they do not offend me" Each will say that. I know you will not say you are offended with these precepts, as many of you as have the grace of God in you, but you will be saying often - "I wish I could walk better. I wish I were more simple minded, more godly, more tender, more prayerful, more hopeful, more humble, and more resigned to the will of God. Now the text appears to include all that a good man has in his soul, all that he desires to be and do - "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer" and these three things shall form the ground of what I have to say or may be helped to say to you this evening.

Hope is a grace wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost. The opposite of despair. It has a ground and the ground is God, the object is God. "O the hope of Israel" God in Christ. In Christ, of whom the Spirit by Paul uses these remarkable, mysterious, yet blessed words "The brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person." Brethren, we have a God; happy he who realises that. The character of God is expressed in the Person of Christ. The brightness of His glory shines in Christ. Christ said to His

Father - "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst Thou pleasure therein", as if they could remove sin "but a body hast Thou prepared Me" This Jesus dies, but He could not be holden of death. God loosed the pains of death and by His glorious power and love brought Jesus forth from the dead. This Jesus is in heaven at the right hand of God, a High Priest ever living to intercede for all who come unto God by Him. This Jesus is our hope. To Him, we have said, many of us, many times -"O Thou hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble". It comes to my mind this moment that it will be forty six years ago in June since I first occupied this pulpit and my second text, the text in the evening of that, blessed to me, Sunday, was that "O the hope of Israel" I have no other hope now. I have no other Jesus to preach now. I have nothing else to talk to you about as a ground of hope but this Person, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. But He must be seen; He must be known. O may we thank the Lord that Jesus Christ is knowable, may be known. Yea, more than that, that the Holy Ghost is given to teach the knowledge of Him. "He shall glorify Me for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." Now that showing of Jesus Christ by the Spirit to the disciples works in them the grace of hope, The grace of hope reaches after the object of hope, fixes in the object of hope, looks to, wants to live in and accept all goodness from the Lord Jesus. This grace of hope will never let you despair, will never leave you in the blackness of despair; it will hang about God. It is spoken of as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast which entereth into that within the veil. That within the veil is the object, the ground of hope. The anchor of hope puts, and again and again does really cast its flukes into that ground - which hope we have as an anchor of the soul. The poor thread of human hope, the poor thread of resolutions, will snap at the first little movement of the vessel but the anchor of hope will hold you fast. This is the grace in which we are to be rejoicing. What a mercy it is for us to have a real hope. Now no child of God can ever live on his experience, but he will again and again hold fast the beginning of his confidence and the rejoicing of his hope. It is spoken of thus - "Hold fast the beginning of your confidence and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end" There was a beginning. Yes, we remember when we had it not. Many of us can say that. We remember when we had no hope in God according to our feelings. It was nothing but condemnation, then there came a moment, O blessed moment, when faith got a sight of the Lord Jesus and hope sprang up at once, a real hope, a hope that we should be pardoned, that God would bless us, that He would guide us, help us and bring us

honourably to our graves. This is the hope, Look at the two things the ground of your hope and your hope, and you will find that the ground and the grace are not apart. You wont always enjoy the hope, it may very well be, but the ground of hope and the grace of hope are not separated in the scripture. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul which entereth into that within the veil" The Christian's hope can never fail. The reason is not that he is a strong person in himself, but that the God of hope cannot fail. The God of hope can never fail. He will not fail you. By two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, He has manifested His willingness to give us strong consolation and good hope through grace. Think of it. A world of disappointments, a wilderness in which we have nothing but dependence, a pathway in which are many difficulties, but in and under and with them all is this grace of hope. David had it very sweetly once "O my God" he said "I am cast down" - "O my God, my soul is cast down within me". Then his memory was blessed with a movement backward and he saw where he had been helped - "I will remember Thee from the Hill Mizah" and so on, then looking at himself, and at his condition, then his eyes were raised up to his God and he said to his soul "Why art thou cast down O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me, hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him". His hope preached good tidings; it said to him - "There is plenty in God" Nothing in yourself but evil and misery, but there is plenty in God, plenteous redemption. The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands" O what a God, this hope has before it sometimes; everything you can need in providence is in Him. This is the God of hope, Now the grace of hope speaks thus to the soul - "Hope in God" "Hope thou in God" This grace the Apostle Paul here looks at. He sees it in these christians at Rome and he says to them, now although you may have trouble and you will have tribulation, rejoice in hope. That is, first of all, rejoice in the Lord Jesus as the Apostle says to the Philippians - "Finally my brethren, rejoice in the Lord" and in the same Epislt he says "Rejoice in the Lord, yea I say rejoice always". This rejoicing is really a looking forward an expectation, an expectation which sometimes is so bright and so warm in the heart that the poor sinner leaps in his spirit and says "God will help me through." "David's Lord and Gideon's Friend will help His servant to the end" This hope, thus rejoicing and leaping does not regard the difficulties but the God who reigns over all. Now have not you found it sometimes that your soul has as it were looked through time, looked beyond the times which were pressing on you, and the wants which were before you and said to you

"Now there is plenty in God" and faith has been made strong and you have been enabled to say "Thou didst say, "I will bless thee" "Surely in blessing I will bless thee" and Thou didst enter into a Covenant with me and Thou didst bring me into a Covenant with Thee by sacrifice, now do as Thou hast said and, sometimes, added to this motion of faith and hope there is this that you can say "I have had some answers. I have had some blessings. He has spoken to me. He has delivered me here and there. He has guided me through difficulties. He has made many mercies known to my soul and therefore will I hope in Him. Now the Psalmist had this in his spirit on one occasion; He said "I love the Lord" Why? Because the Lord hath heard my voice and my supplications, and then with respect to his future he says "Because He hath inclined His ear unto me therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live" There was a real living on God and a rejoicing, a gladness in his spirit, glad that he had a friend in heaven, a redeemer, an intercessor, and king there; glad to see life, though he himself was a poor dead thing, and glad to perceive a full supply in the Lord Jesus. Now this is what the people of God are here exhorted to - rejoice in hope. When you live on and in your troubles, you die. When your heart is fixed on things here below then trouble is long, and intolerably heavy. When you look at trials then you sink exceedingly, until faith moves and hope begins to talk in your soul and says to you - "Now cast these things on the Lord. Look to Him" Did ever a poor sinner call on God and fail? Did ever the Holy Ghost lead a sinner to Christ and then that sinner be left to perish? Did ever a needy creature go to God and was sent empty away? Rejoice in this that you have got a God; a good God, a faithful God, a suitable God, suitable to your needs is Jesus Christ. Suitable to the case He ever will be, therefore rejoice in hope. May the Lord help us to do it. There is plenty of natural reason against it, and plenty of natural trouble to damp it, to put it out, but, says the Spirit of God by Paul "Now you christian people whom I have called by grace at Rome, to whom many mercies have been revealed, rejoice in that God and in your hope in Him. Expect Him to bless you. "Oh that is too much" one says. Too much, for a child of God, to whom the Lord has made His mercy known? No; hope all that heaven has good. Hope everything that He has promised. Why there are some here who would not dare to say they have got no promise in their hearts and to everyone who has a promise or promises in his heart I would venture to say this - You have not emptied the promise. You have not exhausted it, no matter how many fulfilments it has had already, it is still a full promise, pregnant with blessing, full of goodness, full of God. There is the gospel in every promise, Christ in every promise, goodness divine in every promise, a full Saviour in every promise, therefore says Paul "Rejoice in hope"

Secondly be patient in tribulation. Tribulation is the cart-wheel that goes over the corn, the old fashioned English flail by which the corn

was thrashed and the modern threshing instrument, that is what it is. It is pressure; it is separation; it is beating out, cleansing. Well, dear friends, it is something to have tribulation. A sinking thing often, a beating of a poor sinner out of himself, and separating the precious grain of faith from flesh and separating a living soul from his dead self and a dead world. O it is very heavy. God can make what seems to your neighbours a very little thing, a threshing instrument to your soul, a separating work to you and in you. We cannot judge of what God means by just the trouble that He sends. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord"? Who has been His instructor as to how and by what means He shall separate the chaff from the wheat? He uses His own means and we may thank Him that He does so. His means are made effectual. They may be in themselves apparently small, or they may be so large as to threaten our destruction. It looks very very threatening to us, a stack of wheat put into that machine which is revolving and has wheels and teeth to separate, but when God begins this business of tribulation, it is the real thing, a very real thing - It says "This is not your rest" O very easy that is to quote, very easy, but when God brings a man into the wilderness, think of it, when He brings a man into the wilderness and when wants press and no supplies appear, when enemies surround and there appears to be no covering and no leader, O then life is threatened. Some of you understand me I know, life is threatened. Now here, hope will come in, and it will say as it did in the Psalmist, to the soul, "Hope in God"

"Hope thou in God" But this patience, what is this patience?

It lies, I believe, it lies first in submission to the holy will of God. When you can say before Him "I would not alter my state. I would not get out of my trouble. I would not throw this burden off my shoulders if I might, before the Lord's time." Secondly, it has in it an eye to the will of God. His will is best; that will, when faith looks at it, is such a bed in trouble, that the soul can lie down upon it and say "I await the pleasure of God" and faith is not slothful in this business. It is a business with God, a dealing and treating with heaven and a sinner in his own soul's experience says "I wait on the Lord" "My soul, wait thou only upon God" and waiting is being silent in some cases. Waiting is keeping silence. Yes, the murmur of the spirit is silenced, the rebellion of the heart is silenced. Wishing your own way is put down and the will of God is approved as it is in this chapter said good, perfect, acceptable.

One of the greatest of all our mercies in trouble is to find that the will of God is a good will in the trouble, an acceptable will to our hearts, a perfect will in our soul's judgment. Proving what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, and sometimes faith will talk to you and say "Can God do an unwise thing?" You answer, "No". It will ask another question "Can God do an unkind thing?" The answer is "No", and when the answers are in faith, then the soul is patient. You do not want to run away. The chastened child is a repenting child; the chastened soul lies down before God. No doubt the prophet had this patience when he said "I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against Him" "I will wait on Him until He arise and plead my cause" A good believing view of what we deserve will be a great aid to patience. You will believe sometimes that He exacteth of you less than your iniquities deserve. O yes, if it were put to you now - Is this all you deserve; is this affliction all you deserve? O what an answer would be given. No, Lord, No. If I were reduced much more than I am; if Thou were to deal much more severely with me than Thou art dealing with me, it would not meet the case. I deserve hell. Now then the sinner says - "O let me lie patiently before the Lord" This patience is not indifference, it is not carelessness. It is not sleeping nor slumbering, there is a waiting on God in it, a looking to Him; ye are there with a living hope in exercise, by such a looking to Him and after Him that you will be saying to yourself "Will He come this way or that way, how will He come? Then you will say "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning" Patient in tribulation. "In tribulation's thorny maze" you may now be walking, not knowing which way to go, and which turn to take, but when faith is in exercise it will talk to you very comfortably and tell you the right way is to go to God. The right way is to commit your way to Him and call upon Him in the day of trouble and open your mouth wide and He will fill it. Patience; to some people it is wonderful to have patience for a few hours. Impatient by nature, it is wonderful to some people just to lie down in the revealed will of God. When I say the revealed will of God I mean the will of God as it is revealed to you in your present trouble and circumstances. Just to lie down in that. Lie down, say you, how can I? You can with faith and hope. Yes, you lie like a child, weaned from lordly self, worldly self, strong self, good self, full self, wise self, holy self; you will be weaned from self and you lie down before the Lord. I do not say this out of a book written by somebody, though I have read

something about patience, but I have learned it in a little, very little degree. I have learned it for myself. It is good, O so good to lie down in the revealed will of God. I think it is Rutherford who says "The will of God is a bed in a fire" Some of us have proved it in some fiery trial, we have proved the sweetness and the mercy of God when we could lie down in His will and say "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good". That is the second point.

Now the third point is continuing instant in prayer. Converse with God; opening up to Him your case, bringing your needs to Him, confessing your sins, waiting for His mercy, praying that He would hold you up - "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not" Prayer is the soul's motion to God, the lifting up of holy hands without doubting, the expression of a sinner's mind toward God, his gracious God, the spreading out of an evil case, the taking of a leprous soul before God. Every want, as convinced of it; every sin taken to God, but it has in it other things. It has in it adoration of the holy, holy, holy God. O I wish I knew more of this. It has in it admiration. If Jesus Christ will be admired when He comes to all them that believe, is He not at times, even when we are in trouble, admired. Have not you admired His wisdom? There is also true spiritual worship - the heart and mind engaged in worshipping that God - Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Ah, it is a great mercy to be at this business. Sometimes you are kept awake perhaps and it is a good and a pleasant thing for you to be awake when this blessed One is before your faith and not far from your soul, not far from your feelings, and you are gathered up to Him. Jesus is the object; Jesus is the desire of your soul, to be near Him to live on Him, to live in Him, to live to Him is your desire and to bring every want and every feeling and all hardness and sins and lusts and pride and vanity, to bring all before Him. It is very beautiful to find that He is listening patiently to you; that He does not repel you, but rather attracts and draws you more and more to Himself, as if He should say in your heart what He has said in His word "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it" This is God's way for us to live, this is His will for us to live, We must live this way, He has said it - prayer. Hart very, very truly says "Prayer was appointed to convey the blessings God designed to give, long as they live should Christians pray, for only while they pray they live" and then because we do not know how to do it, poor, blind, foolish, weak creatures, how can we reach this blessedness? The Spirit comes and helps us to it, helps our infirmities, helps us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Perhaps some of you could say, you pray according to your judgment and your feelings, you pray more when you are walking about, or when on your beds, than you do when you have a set time to turn aside and seek the Lord in a

form. O, but it is a great thing to pray, it is a great thing to pray. In these my latter days I am often at it in the night season and glad I am then to be awake. It is a great thing to have the ear of God, a great thing. If you get His ear you have got his heart, that is He loves you. He heareth not sinners, but we are sinners, but He does not hear hypocrites, but He hears poor sincere souls, and their sincerity is His gift and work in them. He hears them. Sometimes He draws them wonderfully with cords of love, with the bands of a man and sometimes He says to them "Wilt thou not from this time, cry Thou art my Father, the guide of my youth" Memory is very useful to us. God sanctifies memory sometimes and carries it back. Some of us have a great many years to go back to. He carries it back and we look at things done in us and listen to words spoken to us, listen to them again as if they were speaking afresh to us. What a good God we have got. O my friends what a God we have got. Think of it and He says "Now continue in prayer, I have plenty of blessings, come to Me, and ask for them. I have made a covenant for you and My will is that its provisions should be sought for by you. Open your mouths wide, open them wide. Ask blessings of Me. Continue instant in prayer that God would bless your tribulation to you; that the end of the tribulation may be answered in you, the separation of the chaff from the wheat. O pray for this. What a wilderness there is sometimes; what a feeling almost of desperate giving up, there is. This is a grief and I must bear it; I must get on as well as I can with it and that is a stifling of prayer but when we are reprov'd for that, then the Lord opens the mouth again and we continue and ask Him to bless the trouble to us - make it a blessing, wean us from self and from the world by means of the tribulation. Continue in prayer. Ask Him to be with you that you may not fall. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; ask Him to be with you that the steps you take with pain, weariness, and very slow steps they may be, that they may be safe steps. There is a solemn passage in the Psalms, with which you are all acquainted. Asaph, impatient, fretful, trying to understand what God had not revealed to him at that time, how a good man should be afflicted and a wicked man prospered, but he soon had a lesson - a double teaching. It made him, I do not doubt, more than content to be in a rough way, for he saw the wicked set in slippery places. You would not like to be there would you? A child of God says - No, the rough way is the means of holding me up and keeping me out of destruction. Then pray that the trouble may be sanctified. Instant in prayer. Also that God would be glorified in you by means of this affliction. He is to be glorified in His saints

and admired in all them that believe. Glorify the Lord in the fires or in the valley. Seek that He would glorify Himself in you, His grace being sufficient for you as it was for the Apostle Paul. "My grace is sufficient for Thee," that His love may warm your heart and His mercy humble your soul before Him. Continue instant in prayer that He would keep down that corrupt rebellion; that He would preserve you from that evil spirit of self-pity; that He would overcome the devil in you and for you. Continue instant in prayer that He would bring you to the end honourably. I am not indifferent about my approaching end. O to come honourably to my grave. Who can bring me so to it? The God of all grace. The God of all grace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, make you perfect, accomplish in you all His will. Thus may He help us to continue instant in prayer. Instant in prayer one for another that the kingdom in Christ may be extended and accomplished, that the number of God's elect may be completed and that we may meet the Lord with all His blessed people in the air and so be for ever with the Lord.