

The Source of Assurance

Romans 15:4

This is the third of a four part mini-series on Romans 15:4, a passage that underlines our Church and tells of the focus with which we have to bring to all people the hope we enjoy. *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, **that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*** This morning has its focus on the SOURCE OF ASSURANCE, that is that it is the Scriptures Bring you patience and comfort that you might have hope.

There is a reason the scriptures do so is because **they are the infallible words of God.** In other words, they stem **from his mouth and provide to us the comfort we need** and the patience we need to endure the trials and difficulties of life and also share that comfort to the world. We do this because we trust him at his words. We believe God. We have our trust in God and not man. We believe his words are **true, absolute, infallible and can NEVER be wrong.** This is the ONLY Logical conclusion that can come from a GOD INSPIRED BOOK.

My consideration then of this passage is only that of the few words in the midst of it. *That we through patience and comfort of the scriptures.*

So in this I see

- 1/ The Inclusive Assurance "*That we*",
- 2/ The Means Of Assurance "*Through*"
- 3/ The Gain of Assurance "*Patience and Comfort*"
- 4/ The Source of Assurance "*The Scriptures*"

The Inclusive Assurance

*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, **that we** through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*

"that we"

Paul writes with **an inclusivity that cannot be missed**, "*that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*".

There is a common reference that pertains to all those who have **been born again.** To all those that have been **saved from their sin**, there is an inclusion of experiences that we all **share in**, and in this passage its speaks ALSO to the inclusion of a **common hope.**

As I mentioned last week, this is not a “*hope so*” hope, this is not a “*I hope I win the lottery*” hope, **this is a certain expectation of that which is not yet seen** ([Rom 8:24](#), [Heb 11:1](#) etc).

This HOPE is common to all those to whom Paul is addressing in this letter, all those who have trusted in Christ to save them from their own sin.

It is important to understand that **none of the letters in the New Testament are written for a lost world**, they are ALL written to those who share in a **common hope of Salvation**, those who have **believed the Gospel**, those who have come to know **they were lost in their sin** and believed that Jesus Christ **died for them on the cross** and rose the third day *according to the Scriptures*.

This is not to say that the lost of the world **cant glean anything from the Bible**. The Gospel is clear for all people, but it is to say that this text is NOT written for their encouragement, but for those who share in that HOPE.

The lost world sadly has not such hope to look forward to apart from Christ.

To the Thessalonians Paul wrote;

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” ([1 Thess 4:13](#))

It is interesting from that text that **there is one thing** the world can be considered to have in common, it is “*no hope*”.

Turn to [Ephesians 2:12-13](#)

Speaking of the time when you and I once shared in the hopelessness of the world, Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus saying;

*12 That at that time ye were **without Christ**, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, **having no hope, and without God in the world:** 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the **blood of Christ**.*

[Proverbs 14:32](#) says

*The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: **but the righteous hath hope in his death***

If there is indeed anything the lost of the world currently have a share, it is, **not only the sense of hopelessness**, but truly the lack thereof.

This is why it is so important for them to **SEE THE HOPE THAT IS IN YOU**. (And we will talk more to that next week). Meanwhile, understand that **Christians around the world have an common source of assurance**.

Paul here speaks to **THE INCLUSIVE ASSURANCE**.

**We share in a Common Saviour
We Share in a Common Salvation**

There are, in fact, WORDS in the Bible that ONLY CHRISTIANS share in common. WORDS that do not pertain to ANYONE ELSE. **The inclusivity** Paul speaks of is for **all those who share in the common Saviour and HIS Salvation**.

Lets, consider a few of those words;

- Saints
- Elect
- Chosen
- Brethren
- The phrase “sons of God” in the New Testament (Rom 8:14, 19, Phil 2:15, 1 Jn 3:1, 2)
- “Together”, in Pauls epistles, refers specifically to Christians, the **two times it doesn't**, it refers to a fallen world, demonstrating even there distinct inclusivity;
 - Comforted together Rom 1:12
 - Planted together Rom 6:5
 - Glorified together Rom 8:17
 - Joined together 1 cor 1:10
 - Labourers together 1 cor 3:9
 - Gathered together 1 Cor 5:4
 - Come together
 - Come together
 - Come together
 - Come together
 - Come together
 - Come together (6 times from 1 Cor 11:17-14:26)
 - Helping together
 - Working together
 - Quickened us together
 - Raised us up together
 - Fitly framed together
 - Builded together
 - Striving together
 - Knit together
 - **COUGHT UP TOGETHER!!!!**

But there is one more word, **one word that is applicable to Christians and Christians alone**. It is a word that would otherwise be **indistinguishable if it were not for its first inclusion in English in the King James Translation** and its use is consistently profound.

It is the word “*Charity*”.

The Greek word for “Love” was ONLY translated as *Charitie* by John Wycliffe in his translation of the Bible into English in 1395, then it disappeared completely in Tyndale’s translation, it crept back in in the Bishops Bible 1568, came into full force in the King James Translation on 28 very peculiar occurrences, and now no longer found in modern translations in these places.

Charity in each of those 28 occurrences is peculiar to the love shared between those with this INCLUSIVE ASSURANCE

In 2012 my family and I met about 20 other people that we had never known before in Israel. We shared our journey through the promised land together in a small bus.

We had only just met, but our love for each other immediately was evident, and it was made clear by the bus driver, who was also our tour guide. He felt a little left out.

He said to me that it was obvious we had know each other for a long time and so he felt like a stranger, when I told him that we had only all just met on this trip, he was astounded that we all got along as if we were family.

“How can that be”, he asked.

I told him of our common source of hope, the Bible.

No matter where we go in the world, no matter what the culture or what the language, no matter how long we have known each other, Christians who read from THE BIBLE share in THE INCLUSIVE ASSURANCE.

The Means of Assurance

*that we **through** patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*

Hear we have the means at which we can have that wonderful assurance. The text points us to the means by **the arrow of a single word**, the word “*Through*”, and what a word this is when it is placed in such a context as this.

This **simple preposition** demonstrates a means by which one might **move from one thing to another**, one state to another state.

It is a “Function” word that shows the means with which the change occurs.

*that we **through** patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*

Without this incredible word, we would not have a proper description of the scripture as a **MEANS of patience and comfort that culminates in hope.**

It is *THROUGH* *patience and comfort of the SCRIPTURES* that we have hope! In other words, the word *Through* in this context, **reveals the AGENCY** through which we have HOPE.

Through the Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures! **That is, the Source of Assurance**

Some practical examples;

You can fail at something *through* ignorance.

You can be related to someone, *through* a grandparent.

You can get to the other side of the mountain *through* a tunnel

This word **points to the gateway**, it is the **arrow that marks the way.**

When it comes to the hope we have of eternal life, the Bible says;

*For by grace are ye saved **through faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Eph 2:8)*

Colossians confirms this same function saying; “*In whom we have redemption **through his blood**, even the forgiveness of sins;” (Col 1:14)*

Paul in [Romans 3:25](#) joins the value of these together speaking of Jesus saying “*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation **through faith in his blood**, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;”*

But we also have negative ends in which the function word “*through*” **identifies the means;**

[Ps 10:4](#) says “*The wicked, **through the pride of his countenance**, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts”*

Or

[Eccles 10:18](#) “*By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and **through idleness** of the hands the house droppeth through”*

What we see evident here is that it is **the means that determine the ends** and not the other way around.

Let me explain.

In the above examples, we see that the means (*Faith*) is a good thing, and LEADS therein to salvation (*eternal life*) is a good thing.

By contrast, we see that '*slothfulness*' or '*idleness*' is a bad thing, **and leads** to the decayed house. We see also the wicked, through '*pride*' (a bad thing) LEADS to them not seeking after God, "*God is not in all his thoughts*" another bad thing.

The MEANS DETERMINE THE ENDS

One leads naturally to the other, just like if the source of a fountain is good, so should the waters that flow from it be good; if it is bitter, so too the waters that flow are bitter.

WHAT WE SEE IS THAT THE MEANS DETERMINE THE ENDS!

We have all heard of the phrase, "**the ends justify the means**". No one knows exactly where it originated, whether it was Ovid, a Roman poet in the 1st century, Machiavelli in the 15th century or Karl Marx in the 19th century, **but we DO know that it has been promoted by evil leaders and regimes around the world** for well over a hundred years, **we see it recorded with Leon Trotsky and Jospeh Stalin** and running all the way through to todays **Left wing political ideologies**.

"The Ends justify the means" they say.

The belief in this defunct but often used ideology, is the **exact opposite of what the Bible teaches**, and we should not be surprised.

In the minds of these people, if the end of their imagination is "*Good*" to them, then the means to attain it is justified no matter the ethics. In their twisted view, if the END is moral, then the **means are moral by default**.

Joseph Geobbels, the propaganda head of the Nazi war machine in world war two, has attributed to him a quote titled, 'The Big Lie' which is followed by authoritarian governments to this day.

It is used as a MEANS TO AN END. listen to what is quoted;

*"If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, **for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State.**"¹*

"The ends justify the means".

¹ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/joseph-goebbels-on-the-quot-big-lie-quot>

If the dreams of a communist or Socialist totalitarian state was seen as “Good” by Karl Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot or Hitler, then the denigration, starvation and execution of three hundred million people over the last 150 years must also be, by default, “**morally good**”, because the ends justify the means.

But that is not what the Bible teaches.

*It is NOT the end that justifies the means, **but the means that determine the end.***

It is **THROUGH** a way or act that the ends come!

*that we **through patience and comfort** of the scriptures might have hope*

The Gain of Assurance

*that we through **patience and comfort** of the scriptures might have hope*

There is a fascinating way this verse is presented to us in this passage. On the one hand it looks forward to an end state that has as its prevailing state, *hope*. Yet we find that the source of reference that speaks of that hope to come, **also provides for us a journey that has as its prevailing state *patience and comfort*.**

There is a **gain in our assurance** that is not something we merely look for at the end. This gain remains with us as a **part of the journey!**

Patience and Comfort

It is not possible to limit the ways in which the scriptures provide for our *patience and comfort*, but it is certain that in the **reading of the words of God** we find **evidence** of the many ways through which we are comforted, **some are surprising;**

1. We discover we can be comforted **in tribulations;**

Rom 5:3-5

*And not only so, but we glory **in tribulations** also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

This is vital to know about because we all go through tribulations in life, Jesus said this would be the case, and yet in it we can have peace;

*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. **In the world ye shall have tribulation:** but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (Jn 16:33)*

You see, the scriptures tell us that which we need to know.

We endure with patience that which is set before us, because we are INCLUDED in that which Christ has OVERCOME.

Without the Bible we would not know the simplicity of [John 16:33](#).

Now, how could we have truly known that if it were not written?

Yet this is but a small thing. **Only one verse and yet it makes an infinite difference to our state of mind and heart if you belong to Christ.**

Now, imagine what the entire volume of the Book can do?

Can you understand the peace of David when he could write;

Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all ([Ps 34:19](#))

Or when he writes of the power of God;

By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. 7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. 9 For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. ([Ps 33:6-9](#))

Is it any wonder, knowing the power and might of God and his faithfulness to the righteous, that he refers to the Lord this way;

The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. 3 I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies ([Ps 18:1-3](#))

You see when you read in the scriptures these things of the God that you have placed your trust in, you can see how we enjoy such patience and comfort of the scriptures.

We know this to be true, **we have tried the Lord and found him faithful, we have tested the veracity of his words and have not been ashamed, they are true, they stand true and we see the Lord at work within us.**

A wonderful assurance of all this is given by David the King, who of all people, had witnessed the faithfulness of the Lord;

I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. ([Ps 37:25](#))

We fear the day, we worry for the hour, we set our sights on the future and wonder *how we shall be?* But here **David tells of a lifetime witness of the Lord** and it brings us "*Patience and Comfort*".

This is our GAIN OF ASSURANCE.

Beloved, if this is the case in which we can gain assurance throughout our lives, and all we have considered are a handful of passages out of the Psalms, **what are we to say of the entire volume of the book?**

The book is 72 hours long if you can read it as fast as normal speech, that's all!
At **an hour a day** you can read this book from cover to cover **four times a year** and still have a day off each week.

How many of you have even read it through once?

Then please explain to me **how this verse can apply to you?**

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope

You are anxious, you are frustrated, the world is getting darker and **your mood follows suit.**

You know of the Bible but rarely read it.

You know about prayer but rarely bend your knee.

You look for purpose to distract you, so turn to your work to satisfy, but it doesn't.

You begin new projects, new hobbies in the hope it redeems time well, but it doesn't.

You hope in a relationship, or relationships, but they don't satisfy.

You turn to entertainments, to games, to social media, to television, to programs on YouTube, Apple TV, Disney, Amazon prime, Netflix, Stan and the plethora of other **mind numbing placebo's** in the hope something might help.

The Bible is still there as you walk by.

The couch you once knelt beside to pray is still there.

But sport is on the tv.

It doesn't matter that there are no crowds.

It doesn't matter that the Car Racing is not real

It doesn't matter that the cheering is synthesised

Something is bound to bring the comfort

The Bible hasn't moved from where you left it and you walk by again.

Tell me how you *GAIN* assurance of *ANYTHING* good when you ignore the infinite source of everything good?

The Source of Assurance

that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope

The source of our assurance is the Bible. It is the source for the reasons I mentioned above. I have repeated before the quote of John Bunyan who was asked of the reason for his trust in the Bible. His response is as simple as it was profound;

“I trust the Bible because it was written by him that cannot lie” said Bunyan

And there is more to learn that gives Patience and Comfort for the Hope we have than just the Psalms.

It is the accounts of those who sought for much peace and purpose who found no value in anything but the Scriptures of hope, even VANITY said Solomon.

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. 2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. 3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? (Eccl 1:1-3)

Thus begins a twelve chapter experimental testimony of trial and error, as Solomon, the wisest of all Kings past, present and future, searches for comfort, peace, assurance and meaning apart from the Lord and without his words.

Remember, that Solomon had the Psalms of his father David, he was not without them.

Those words that you and I just read and received great comfort from, Solomon may have had access to the originals written by his father.

Perhaps he saw them laying there as he walked by;

I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: 5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: (Eccl 2:4-5)

Well, it seems he too turned to his work to keep himself occupied, perhaps that would help he thinks, as he walks past the book of the Law and the small book of psalms...

6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: 7 I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions

of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: 8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: (Eccl 2:6-8)

Yes, the pursuit of leisure and wealth is more than enough to distract a man or woman from the present trials of life. No time that way to think of the pains of the world or of others, self, self, self is all you have time for, ignore the darkness, that's the way to do it. "*prophesy not unto me right things, speak unto me smooth things*", yes, hear no evil, see no evil, at least nothing to knock me into reality.

I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. 9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. 10 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. (Eccl 2:9-10)

It seems the games, the Netflix, the sports, the social media has an ancient equivalent able to distract a man just as easily but never able to give the gain of the patience and comfort of the scriptures.

How many times had Solomon walked by the room in which he prayed? How many times did he see his fathers Psalms in the corner of his eye?

¹¹ Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

The end of all our efforts to seek an alternative the simple source of all our assurance is Vanity.

Solomon goes on for another ten chapters telling of the vanity of life in all its vain attempts at finding purpose and meaning apart from God and his word, and concludes the account in the final passage of his book.

(Eccl 12:13-14)

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Well I could conclude it there, as it would likely be enough, but because we ourselves **are so stubborn** on the matter and keep turning as dogs to our own vomit, it might be worth another historical account of yet another King, and we will look to only few verses and I will give the summary of them that relate to this sermon.

The account that came to my mind is that of King Ahaz in [2 Chronicles 28:18-23](#), here we learn of the historical nature of our topic. King Ahaz looked elsewhere for the source of his assurance, no longer to the word of God, nor to the God of the word, but he looked to "other sources" that, rather than become his benefactors, they became his curse.

2 Chron 28:18-23

*For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD. 20 And Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not. 21 For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not. 22 And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz. 23 For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. **But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel.** (2 Chron 28-18-23)*

This is the picture of a multitude of people in the world today, people who will LOOK EVERYWHERE BUT THE BIBLE for their help and their assurance, but rather than deliver them, they become their RUIN.

The inconsistent vanity of those who claim that they do not believe in God because their heart refuses to see the evidence of him, turn to charmes, and to breathing, to chanting and even to the wind. They look to the stars, to the earth, to a tree and fall to worship a block of wood, or in the case of the UNITED Nations, a monolithic STONE.

That take comfort or warning in dreams, in cloud formations, in the leaves of teacup, in the shape that coffee stains make when the cup is turned. They consider the hand and the traverse of lines designed by God to fold according to his unique imprint on the individual.

But what they don't do is consider, they don't take the time to think it through because God has hardened their hearts.

They never see how few of their interpretations of these things EVER come to pass, like the gambler who sinks money each week in a lottery, playing the same numbers again and again, and the moment he wins back one weeks worth of contribution is enough to keep him sinking his income.

Each time I have walked by the local Tattslotto office I smile and see people lining up to pay their Taxes, why do I say that? Because to me tattslotto is simply a tax on those who cant do math.

Eventually gambling becomes the ruin of you and it's the same as those who look to worship the creature and not the creator.

- Those who look to their dreams look to vanity
- Those who look to the earth rather than its maker, look to vanity
- Those who look to the stars and not the creator of the stars look to vanity

They look to nothing more than the chasing after the wind and it will all **become the ruin of them**

Isaiah wrote of the vanity of Judah who were doing just this 700 years before Christ

*Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. 13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, **and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.** (Isa 47:12-13)*

In the 44th Chapter Isaiah wrote of the man who plants a tree, waters it and sees it grow, he cuts it down; part of it he burns to warm himself, to cook food upon, the residue of it he carves into an image that he made with his own hands, then he falls down and worships it, this is how God describes it;

*17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. 18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. 19 And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? 20 He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, **Is there not a lie in my right hand?** (Isa 44:17-20)*

The world has turned to vanity, the assurance of nothing other than their own imagination, **but not you who have the Bible**, you have THE SOURCE OF ASSURANCE that is absolute, **a comfort that is sure and a hope that is steadfast and everlasting.**

Open its pages, turn to it and gain the assurance promised you by the author of life, **until he returns.**

Maranatha.