

Double E

Romans 15: 4 (NIV) states “*For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through **endurance** and the **encouragement** of the Scriptures we might have hope*”. The bold emphasis is mine.

In order to be successful in life we need to draw upon a wide array of skills, associations and resources. This is necessary because of the various challenges that we have to face. Sometimes the challenges can be so huge and intimidating that frustration, failure and defeat seem like the only possible outcomes. For times like these we need to feel confident that what we are doing is worthwhile. We need to be convinced that there will be a positive result. Indeed what needs to be drawn upon here is hope: a strong conviction that what is desired will come to pass.

The Bible verse quoted above provides a way to nurture hope when the going gets tough. Hope can be fostered through **endurance** and the **encouragement** of the Scriptures. I like to call this **double E**. In the King James Version the words “*patience and comfort of the scriptures*” are used; different words but the same message.

As we endure, as we keep on going we accumulate little or big successes, small or big gains, possibly some defeats and losses. We need words of encouragement to keep us focused, to help us properly evaluate our gains and apparent losses. How important to us are comments like: “That’s a good job!”, “Don’t give up”, “You can do it!” “Here is a method that worked for me”.

Even if what we are doing is based completely on scriptural principle there is no guarantee that we are going to have a smooth ride. The life of the great King David is a good example of this. In the book of 1 Samuel chapter 16 we see David specially chosen by God to be king of Israel. Yet David had to endure many harsh trials along the way to becoming king.

King Saul did not take too kindly to David’s growing popularity, and he saw David as a serious threat to the royal house. Therefore Saul unleashed a series of direct and indirect attacks against David. In 1 Samuel 18 it is recorded that Saul hurled a spear at David saying, “*I’ll pin David to the wall*”, 1Sam 18: 11 (NIV). This act was repeated in 1 Samuel 19. Furthermore Saul ordered his son Jonathan and his attendants to kill David.

But God had appointed an encourager. Throughout this period of David’s life encouragement came from Jonathan. Jonathan provided this encouragement both by what he did for David and by what he said.

How many times would we like to hear someone say to us as Jonathan said to David: “*Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do for you*”, 1 Samuel 20: 4 (NIV)? Such was the support David received from Jonathan.

We can get that encouragement from reading the Holy Bible. There we'll find Jesus as a friend who wants to be closer to us than a brother (Proverbs 18: 24). We'll find Jesus who wants to be to us as a shepherd, so that we'll be able to say: "*The Lord is my shepherd ...*" Psalms 23. We'll find God who "*is our refuge and strength*" Psalms 46. We'll find God who "*rewards those who earnestly seek Him*" Hebrews 11:6.

The verse quoted at the beginning was written by the Apostle Paul, who is also a great example of endurance. In 2 Corinthians 11 Paul reflects on his imprisonments, his beatings, his shipwrecks and many other severe hardships that God helped him to overcome. We also hear him saying to Timothy, "*Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*" 2 Timothy 2: 3 (NLT).

The Apostle Paul received encouragement through God's revelation. Paul was able to speak of God as the "*God of hope ...*" (Romans 15: 13) and of the ability to overflow "*with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit*" (Romans 15: 13, NIV).

The Bible was written "*to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope*" Romans 15: 4 (NIV). For the Christian, above all else, we have that "*hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time*" Titus 1: 2 (NIV); and we are encouraged when we read in the Scriptures that God "*who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*" Philippians 1: 6 (NIV).

Every morning as we awake to a new day let us remember **double E**.