

“COMFORT”

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:3-5 NKJV)

The word “comfort” and words related to it like “comfortable”, “comforted”, and “comforting” are probable the most used words in advertising. “Comfort” is used to describe shoes and socks, coats, underwear, a heavy quilted blanket, comfort food, hotel rooms, automobiles. Comfort describes a feeling of pleasantness, ease, well-being, and contentment.

But comfort exists because there is distress, pain, difficulty, grief, disturbance, annoyance, or discouragement which is relieved. We say shoes are comfortable because we have worn shoes that hurt our feet. We eat comfort food when something has upset us. A comforter on our bed drives away the chill of winter in an unheated room. A comfortable hotel room is defined in contrast to a hotel room that is dirty, noisy, has a lumpy, sagging bed, and not enough light.

An elderly woman I knew lost a grown son to a sudden heart attack. He and his family lived next to her. They were in and out of her house. She saw him every evening when he came in from the fields. His death hit her hard. At his viewing and at his funeral there were more than a hundred people. She told me afterward that a lot of people said a lot of things to her, but she didn't hear or remember any of it. What she remembered was the comfort of her friends being there beside her. That was comfort at a time of grief.

1.) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, (2 Corinthians 1:3 NKJV)

Our God and Heavenly Father is merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in loving-kindness. All the false gods who are the product of the imagination of human minds are aloof, detached, and need to be appeased with sacrifices, works, and specific rituals. Our God is a living God and a personal God with whom we can communicate in prayer, whose working we see in the world, whose comfort we can feel in our hearts.

In the Old Testament, the most holy place in the Tabernacle and then in the Temple was the mercy seat which rested on the Ark of God's Covenant. In revealing Himself to Moses, He said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy...." By the prophet Isaiah He promised,

"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" Says your God. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the LORD'S hand Double for all her sins." ... Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong hand, And His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, And His work before Him. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young. (Isaiah 40:1-2,10,11 NKJV)

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified." Isaiah 61:1-3

When Jesus told His disciples that He would be going away, He promised to send them the Comforter. Who is this Comforter? He is the Holy Spirit – God Himself.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: (John 15:26 ASV)

2.) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NKJV)

In six verses in this passage, notice how many times and varieties of reasons Paul gives for people needing comfort: "all our tribulation," "in any trouble," "the sufferings of Christ abound in us," "we are afflicted," "enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer," "partakers of the sufferings," "our trouble," "burdened beyond measure," "despaired even of life," and "the sentence of death in ourselves." In this same epistle Paul catalogs his own sufferings:

... in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness-- besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? (2 Corinthians 11:23b-29 NKJV)

I read about a minister who always ended the worship service by reminding his congregation that all around them, in their neighborhood, on the job, in social gatherings there are people who are burdened with troubles, whose life is darkened by grief, who are living in fear. They need to know that God cares for them. We are commanded to pray for them whether they are Christians or not.

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, (1 Timothy 2:1-3 NKJV)

God does not exist to serve us; He created us to serve Him, whether that be by suffering or comforting others in His name.

3.) For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation. (2 Corinthians 1:5-7 NKJV)

What are the ways in which God brings comfort to us when we are suffering, grieving, in trouble, being tried and tested, or in despair?

The Word of God is filled with God's promises to comfort and help.

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord More than those who watch for the morning-Yes, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD; For with the LORD there is mercy, And with Him is abundant redemption. (Psalms 130:5-7 NKJV)

And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.' (Acts 2:21 NKJV)

And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NKJV)

The Holy Spirit dwells within the soul of every believer. Jesus promised to send Him to us to be our Comforter and Counselor.

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19 NKJV)

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (John 14:26)

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (John 16:13 NKJV)

The Lord comforts us through other Christians. They have suffered and been comforted in the past. My great aunt woke up one morning and found her husband dead in the bed beside her. She felt a heavy burden of grief. She also was worried. They had a young daughter. When she finally came through her own trials, she brought together all the widows in the church to visit, help, and comfort each new widow.