

One Another – Comfort

Text : **I Thessalonians 4: 13 – 5: 11**

INTRODUCTION :

A. Have you ever really needed comforting ? We all have.

1. There are times when we feel totally helpless and out of control. (*beyond discouraged*)
 - a. You're in a faraway place and the car breaks down.
 - b. You've had an accident and you wake up not knowing where you are.
2. There are times when we feel total despair and can't see past it.
 - a. Your spouse has been suddenly and unexpectedly taken from you.
 - b. Worse, the spouse to whom you are devoted suddenly abandons you.
3. After many years, you lose your job, the economy is bad and you are older.
4. Your faith has been challenged to the point you are having doubts.

B. When these dark times are upon us, how do we respond ?

1. Some become withdrawn and reclusive while others tell the world about it.
 - a. Those who internalize their anxieties become depressed.
 - b. Those who broadcast their distress begin to be avoided.
2. Some seek relief in physical stimuli.
 - a. Some seek comfort in the arms of "lovers."
(*Most marital infidelity stems from emotional inadequacy.*)
 - b. Many have turned to alcohol or other drugs.
 - c. Others seek comfort in activities that produce adrenalin and/or endorphins
... fast cars, rock climbing, skydivers, white-water rafting, walking in Chicago ...
3. Psychiatrists drive expensive cars paid for by the
fearful, the anxious, self-condemner, the lonely ... those in need of comfort.

C. Who do you turn to when life overwhelms you ?

1. Is your spouse supportive enough to carry your burden? (*Spouse may be the problem*)
2. Do you have a close friend like the one spoken of in the Proverbs ?
Prov. 18: 24 – ... **But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.** (*In Christ*)
3. Do you have sufficient faith to turn it all over to the Lord ? (*Even Apostle needed*)
 - a. **I Pet. 5: 7** – ... **casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.**
 - b. That's the ideal, but few are able to just pray and walk away. (*Blessed are that few*)

God is aware of our need for reinforcement as we deal with the fears of life. And in this lesson we will observe some ways He has provided it for us.

I. God is “the God of all comfort.”

A. The comforts worldly people seek out most often provide no long-term solution.

1. One lover is never enough. After the conquest one is left unfulfilled.
2. Chemicals only dull one’s ability to feel so when they are gone the fear remains.
3. Thrills divert the mind, but in the quiet times the fears still haunt the mind.
4. The canned answers of the psychiatrists serve their primary goal ... they enrich him.

B. All true comfort comes through the source of ALL comfort ... our creator God.

II Cor. 1: 3 – Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

C. As well, both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are referred to as a “Comforter.”

1. **John 16: 7** – But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away;
for if I do not go away, the Comforter (Helper) will not come to you;
but if I go, I will send Him to you.
 - a. The word translated “**Helper**” in the NASV is translated “**Comforter**” in the KJV.
 - b. The word “*parakletos*” translated as in other places as comforter and advocate.
 - c. The meaning of the word is :
 - 1 summoned, called to one’s side, esp. called to one’s aid.
 - 1A one who pleads another’s cause before a judge, a pleader,
counsel for defense, legal assistant, an advocate. (Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon)

Note : Different voices and tenses of this word “comfort” “comforter” and related words.
2. Jesus here refers to the Holy Spirit as “**another Comforter.**”
 - a. He refers to Himself as a Comforter or a Helper.
 - b. The Holy Spirit is a replacement Comforter or Helper.

II. God provides comfort through His holy word ... the bible.

A. God gives believers comfort through His holy word.

Rom. 15: 4-5 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning,
that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have
hope. **5** Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be
like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, (NKJV)

B. David understood that there was comfort in the words of God.

Psa. 119: 28 – My soul weeps because of grief;
Strengthen me according to Your word. (cf - Vss **76, 81, 107**)

C. When we feel alone and vulnerable, we remember the promises we have read.

1. “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,” ... **Heb. 13: 5**
2. “God ... will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able,” **I Cor 10:13**

D. The bible is not a magic pill that one takes only as needed in times of distress.

1. There’s not a list of verses one can turn to when in need of a quick comfort.
 - a. There are some passages that are appropriate to certain circumstances.
 - b. One may receive some comfort from a stranger, but longs for a friend’s embrace.
2. The one who lives with the word as his constant companion reaches for a friend.
 - a. In the totality of the scriptures there is great comfort.
 - b. Every problem a person will face is recorded somewhere in the scriptures.

III. God delivers His comfort via His holy people, through fellow Christians.**A. Remember what we saw in **II Cor. 1: 3 & 4** ... listen to the next verse.**

1. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, **4** who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
2. There is a reason for every trial we face in life.
 - a. God uses them to strengthen our faith. **James 1: 2-4** (*Place a value on training.*)
 - b. He uses suffering to prepare us for the ministry of comforting.

*** NEVER FORGET : ALL Christians are ministers, not just elders, preachers, etc.**

3. Jesus was prepared to be our comforter by coming to the earth. (“*called alongside*”)
 - a. **Heb. 4: 15** – For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. **16** Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
 - b. We don’t hesitate to go to Jesus because we know He understands.
 - c. The difference between empathy and sympathy is huge.
4. When you think your sufferings are oppressive remember what Jesus suffered to prepare to empathize with you.

5. The sufferings you endure are part of God working all things to your good.
 - a. **Rom. 8: 28** – And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
 - b. Those who don't love God don't count trials as joy ... they just get bitter /resentful
- B. God prepares you for the ministry of comfort because He has assigned it to you.
 1. **I Thes. 4: 18** – Therefore comfort one another with these words.
 2. This is a direct empirical command that applies to all Christians.
 3. It does not require a special gift, only a willingness to obey God.
- C. This has been the procedure for comforting the brethren from the beginning.
 1. **Eph. 6: 22** – I have sent him (*Tychicus*) to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts.
 2. God's comfort was delivered by Tychicus. (*It can be delivered by you.*)

IV. It's our ministry so how do we go about comforting other people.

- A. We comfort others by well chosen words.
 1. We need to be reminded about things we already know. (*The scripture are comforting.*)
 - a. Troubles can be like clouds that hide the sun.
 - b. When Paul commanded “comfort one another with these words” they described a doctrine they already knew, but emotion had clouded.
 - c. Exegete the context ... apply ... Be comforted, the fear of death is irrational.
 2. Be wise in selecting what you say : Words that edify ...
 - a. **Eph. 4: 29** – Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but

(Three criteria for words)	1- <u>only such a word as is good for edification</u> 2- according to the <u>need of the moment</u>, 3- so that it will give <u>grace to those who hear</u>.
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 - b. **Prov. 15:4** – A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes the spirit
 - c. **Prov. 15: 23** – A man has joy in an apt answer, And how delightful is a timely word!
- B. We can be comforting just by our presence.
 1. When trials come, just the sight of a friendly face can be of tremendous comfort.
 - a. **Acts 28: 14-15** There we found some brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days; and thus we came to Rome. ¹⁵ And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.
 - b. Remember the journey ... shipwreck, etc.

2. When filled with apprehension and fears the sight of a friendly face is comforting.
 - a. God delivered comfort to the Apostle via Titus.
 - b. **II Cor. 7: 4-7** Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction. **5** For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. **6** But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; **7** and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced ...
3. **Job 2: 13** ... The best thing Job's friends did for him was to set quietly by his side.

C. We can be comforters by the example that we set.

1. **I Thes 3: 6-9** But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, **7** for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; **8** for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord. **9** For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account,
2. When we see how other brethren stay faithful through trials it builds us up.
 - a. When aged members make great effort to come to the assembly. (*Stella*)
 - b. When those with great handicaps find ways to serve God. (*John Robert*)
 - c. When brethren face death with anticipation. (*My father .. finished reading bible*)
3. Christians learn to comfort others from their mentors in the faith. (*No comfort class*)

D. We can be comforting by the things that we do.

1. Paul encouraged the brethren at Troas both by his words and by his deeds.
 - a. **Acts 20: 6-12** Paul preached until late in the night.
 - b. Young Eutychus went to sleep in the window and fell to his death.
 - c. Paul raised him from the dead and then went up to finish his sermon.
 - d. Vs. **12** ... **They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted.**
2. We can't raise the dead, but we can greatly comfort our brethren in many easy ways.
 - a. Set with them while they wait for news about a test result. **Pray together.**
 - b. Take them to a doctor's appointment in a far place. (*Pete does this.*)
3. Phone calls, cards, emails, visits, (*I Thes. was written to comfort brethren.*)
4. Just do chores for sick people without being asked. (*Carla*)
5. Bake them a pie, take them a meal, **take them with you when you go out.**

E. When you have experienced comfort look for others to comfort. (*Empathize*)

1. No one knows how it feels to lose a child who has not lost one.
2. When my wife died, a couple came to comfort me saying,
 - a. “*We know just how you feel; father died last year and*”
 - b. Their desire to comfort was appreciated, but they didn’t have a clue.
 - c. Now I can empathize with other’s who lose a spouse.
- * *They say divorce is similar, but in some ways worse than the death of a spouse.*
3. Every trial we overcome gives us the ability to empathize with more people.
 - a. When I was a young preacher, I sympathized with those who grieved.
 - b. In but one year I God trained me to empathize with those who grieve.
 - 1) I lost 12, 000 of my neighbors in a flash flood.
 - 2) While helping to bury them and working disaster relief, my son passed away.
 - 3) A few months later the aunt that I had gone to school and played with died.
 - 4) Six weeks after she died another aunt died. (*Her husband died near a year later.*)
 - 5) In November of that year my Father died a slow and painful death.
 - 6) One week after my father his brother (*my closest uncle*) died.
4. **II Cor. 1: 3-4** ... God allows trials to come upon us as schooling for our ministry.

CONCLUSION :**A. We are all commanded to comfort one another.**

1. We are all trained ministers, qualified to comfort others.
2. All that remains is for us to do it.
3. We must discipline ourselves to be alert to the needs of others.

B. Our greatest problem is our isolation from each other. (We cocoon.)

1. We’ve allowed Satan to convince us to accept it as just how life is in today’s world.
2. It may be the way it is in Satan’s world, but we cannot allow it be that way in God’s.

C. II Thes. 2: 15-16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace,
17 comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

INVITATION :

Only in Christ can one find eternal comfort because of grace.

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13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. **14** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. **15** For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. **16** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. **17** Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. **18** Therefore comfort one another with these words.

5:1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. **2** For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. **3** While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. **4** But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; **5** for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; **6** so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. **7** For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. **8** But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. **9** For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, **10** who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. **11** Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.