



Light from the Word

Comfort One Another

Editor's Note: The Bible uses the term "one another" multiple times and it is clear God is very interested in our relationships. Jesus taught that the second greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. In 2018, we will look at several of the "one another's" in the Bible.

Theme verse: *"Wherefore comfort one another with these words."*

We all find ourselves in need of comfort at times. We live in a fallen world, and each of us takes our turn experiencing sorrow or fear, separation or loneliness, affliction or discouragement. And yet we are not left to endure grief and distress alone and comfortless. God has provided us with His Word, that *"we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."* And He has provided us with each other, that we would *"comfort one another with these words."*

How is it that we comfort one another? The original Greek word for 'comfort' means to call to one's side. To be effective comforters, we first come alongside of one another, and then we gently encourage each other to come near to the side of Jesus to feel the comfort of His healing power and hopeful promises. Let's take a closer look at the Bible's many comforting truths and practical examples of how we can comfort one another.

In Corinthians we read that God himself is *"the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."* From this we learn that to comfort one another, we share the same comfort we ourselves experience from God through His Word, His Son Jesus, and His Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the most fundamental comfort we share together is that of God's love and mercy manifested

in the sending of His Son Jesus Christ. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* Jesus loved us enough to endure trials, temptations, sorrows, and grief. Through suffering He became both the Captain of our salvation and our Comforter, giving us *"everlasting consolation and good hope through grace."*

We can further remind each other that Jesus promised that He would *"pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter,"* the Holy Spirit. When we feel His Spirit abiding in us, we know that we are His and that He is yet with us. At times we need each other to help us see the evidence that the Holy Spirit accompanies us through dark valleys.

When those in our church family suffer grief or pain, God encourages us to *"weep with them that weep"* and *"remember...them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."* When *"one member suffer(s), all the members suffer with it."* We see this fulfilled by both the Jews and Jesus as they wept with Mary and Martha at the death of their brother Lazarus, and we see this fulfilled in our own communities when tragedy and afflictions arise among us and many gather around to weep together.

Job endured deep sorrow and painful affliction with unanswerable questions and distresses. His three friends initially set a wise example as they came alongside him and sat together in silence for seven days. They could not fully relate to Job's depth of grief, and yet acknowledged his unspeakable sorrow and communicated love and support simply by being quietly present.

Ironically, the three friends later became miserable comforters when they began to speak and found no answer to his complaints, and yet condemned Job. The fourth acquaintance, Elihu, spoke words of truth which helped Job see himself

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and God more accurately. In the end, Job humbly received God's divine counsel, comfort, and promises.

Jesus spoke words of comfort in the night of His betrayal, reminding His troubled disciples of the Father's promises of love and redemption. He prayed a compassionate and loving intercessory prayer on their behalf. They together sang what must have been a sober yet encouraging hymn. And when Jesus Himself was overwhelmed with agony, He sought the comfort of having His closest disciples near him in prayer. Many of us in like manner have experienced comfort as we encourage one another in God's promises, lift our voice in song, and in close communion watch and pray together.

We may feel moved to comfort one another not only through prayer and shared tears, but also by embracing each other. The Ephesians sorrowed at Paul's departure, knowing they would see his face no more. Paul *"kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him."*

Often we find ourselves desiring to provide comfort

when we cannot be present in person. Paul wrote letters of encouragement and prayer to those in tribulation and sorrow, exhorting them that, *"God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."* We can echo these words whether in person, or through cards, e-mails, texts, and social media, reminding one another of God's intent for our salvation and His promise of eternal deliverance. And let us not forget the simple power of praying for one another, even those we don't personally know well. Many who experience great tragedy or deep burdens have expressed how they felt carried by the prayers of the brethren.

At times we may need encouragement in our spiritual walk, even as Paul wrote to the Romans and desired to be *"comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me."* We can comfort one another simply by living a life of faith and bearing the fruit of the spirit. In the unfortunate circumstance where Satan gets the upper hand in a believer's life, we can fulfill Paul's instruction to the Corinthians in how to relate to a soul who after falling into a deeply hurtful sin had experienced

a sufficient time of repentance: *"forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow."*

And finally, we can encourage one another to accept comfort and not be as Jacob when he lost his son Joseph: *"All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted."* Let us instead help one another in times of darkness to open ourselves to our Lord's comfort, allowing Him as our shepherd to gather us in His arms, and gently carry us in His bosom.

End Notes

- ¹ 1 Thess. 4:18
- ² Rom. 15:4
- ³ 1 Thess. 4:18
- ⁴ 2 Cor. 1:3-4
- ⁵ John 3:16
- ⁶ 2 Thess. 2:16-17
- ⁷ John 14:16
- ⁸ 1 John 3:24
- ⁹ Rom. 12:15
- ¹⁰ Heb. 13:3
- ¹¹ 2 Cor. 12:26
- ¹² John 11:33-35
- ¹³ Job 32:3
- ¹⁴ Job 33:32
- ¹⁵ Acts 20:36
- ¹⁶ 1 Thess. 5:9-10
- ¹⁷ Rom. 1:12
- ¹⁸ 2 Cor. 2:7
- ¹⁹ Gen. 37:35
- ²⁰ Isaiah 40:11