

DOCTRINE OF COMFORT (ENCOURAGEMENT)

October 3, 1982

I. Preliminary considerations.

- A. The noun παρακλήσις (paraklesis, 29X), the verb παρακαλέω (parakaleo, 108X), the verb συμπαρακαλέομαι (sumparakaleomai, 1X: Rom.1:12), and the adjective παρακλήτος (parakletos, 5X) are most often used to set forth this doctrine in the New Testament (NT).
1. The basic etymology means, "to call" (kaleo) "alongside" (para).
 2. The latitude of meaning ranges from exhortation to comfort, with encouragement somewhere in the middle.
 3. The context determines whether the translation "to exhort" (Ti.1:9) or "to comfort" (2Cor.13:11) is most appropriate.
 4. The nuance of "comfort" is often not far removed from contexts where the translation "exhort" is most often appropriate (cp. Rom.12:8; Heb.3:13).
 5. Sometimes parakaleo takes on a sense of urgency and should be translated "beseech" (cp. Mt.8:5,31; Rom.12:1; 2Cor.12:8).
 6. This doctrine will emphasize those passages where the meanings include comfort, encouragement, and consolation (verses where exhortation is in view will not be dealt with).
- B. The second word group from the NT includes: the noun παραμυθία (paramuthia, 1X: 1Cor.14:13); the noun παραμύθιον (paramuthion, 1X: Phil.2:1); and the verb παραμυθέομαι (paramutheomai, 4X: Jn.11:19,31; 1Thess.2:11; 5:14).
1. The etymology means "to speak" (from muthos) and "beside" (para).
 2. Hence, the idea expressed here is to speak to someone in a friendly or tender way.
 3. This word group connotes comfort with a greater degree of tenderness.
- C. There is a hapax in the NT, παρηγορία (paregoria, Col.4:11), meaning comfort. It denotes a soothing. A verbal form of the word signifies medicines which allay irritation (English: paregoric).
- D. The Old Testament (OT) presents this doctrine via the word group, נָחַם (nacham), the verb "to comfort"; and נְחֻמָּה (nechamah), the noun "comfort, consolation" (Isa.40:1 "*Comfort, O comfort My people (with divine viewpoint), says your God.*")
- E. The importance of this doctrine.
1. In general, "*All scripture...is profitable*", etc. (2Tim.3:16,17).
 2. That God is the source of all comfort for the believer is to encourage us to expect comfort in our circumstances (2Cor.1:3).
 3. When oriented to this spiritual reality, it produces *esprit de corps* and morale during times of affliction (2Cor.1:4).
 4. The main objective of this study is to sensitize you to this aspect of grace in your life and to encourage you to be an instrument of comfort to others (2Cor.1:4,5,7-11).

II. God is both the author and source of the believer's comfort.

- A. Comfort comes from "the mercy pool", the Phase 2 grace for believers (2Cor.1:3 "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies [grace benefits] and God of all comfort*"; cp. 2Cor.7:6; Rom.15:5).
- B. "Comforter" is a title for the Holy Spirit (Jn.14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7; cp. Act.9:31).
- C. A title for Israel's Messiah (Lk.2:25 "*And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him*").
- D. Application: God actively pursues the adjusting believer with comfort (2Cor.1:4).

III. The law of the kingdom that governs the administration of comfort is found in 2Cor.1:5 "For just as the

sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ".

- A. To the extent and degree you suffer, God will provide comfort (blessing) in your niche (2Cor.1:5,7).
- B. 1. Paul, who suffered much, was comforted much.
- C. 2. No test is too great for God's ability to comfort.
- D. Application: look for comfort on a daily basis to help you pass the common human problems (CHPs); 2Cor.7:6,7.
- E. 2Cor.1:5 is one of the promises we have inherited (cp. 2Pet.1:4).

IV. Comfort and Bible Doctrine.

- A. The teaching of Bible Doctrine (BD) ministers comfort (Rom.15:4 "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope"; Col.2:2; 1Thess.3:2; Heb.6:18).
- B. The application of doctrine under testing (maintaining your spiritual integrity) brings comfort (Job.6:10; Ps.119:52).
- C. Hearing of the positive volition of others is a source of encouragement (Act.15:31; 1Thess.3:7; 2Cor.7:4,7,13; Philm.7).

V. Ingredients constituting a state of comfort or encouragement.

- A. Testing and affliction (CHPs) in one's experience (2Cor.7:4).
- B. Exercising patience (Faith-Rest) under the testing (2Cor.1:6 "*your comfort, which is effective/operative in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer*").
- C. Bible Doctrine - to know what to think and do (Ps.119:76).
- D. To be under the control of the "comforter" (Act.9:31; Jn.14:26).

VI. Comfort and the reversionist.

- A. There is no comfort for a believer in reversionism (Isa.51:17-20; Mt.2:18).
- B. God even removes human viewpoint comforters under the fifth cycle of discipline (Jer.16:7; Lam.1:2,17,21).
- C. However, there is comfort for the believer under reversion recovery:
 - 1. As seen in the case of the incestuous Corinthian (2Cor.2:7 "*so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow*").
 - 2. As seen in the case of the author of Ps.119; Ps.119:75; cp. vs.76.
- D. The reversionist's comfort must be based on his positive volition (Ps.119:50,52).

VII. Comfort is included under the royal imperatives.

- A. We are to comfort others (1Thess.4:18; 5:11).
- B. We are to receive comfort (2Cor.13:11 ["*be comforted*" {pres. pass. imper. of parakaleo} from whatever the source: the Pastor-Teacher, Bible Doctrine, the gift of encouragement, circumstances, category 3 friends, etc.).

VIII. There is a special spiritual gift of exhortation/comfort/encouragement given to the body of Christ (Rom.12:8; cp. vs.6).

- A. This gift is specialized.
- B. This gift functions under and within the royal chain of command.
- C. This gift is a one-on-one gift where the individual needs to be encouraged, straightened out, or advised.
- D. This gift operates under a P-T and keeps him from violating the monologue function.
- E. This gift does not replace the general ministry of encouragement incumbent on all believers.
- F. Barnabas had this gift (Act.4:36, "*Barnabas*" was his Christian name and means "*Son of encouragement*").

IX. Some specific examples of comfort.

- A. The news of the response to BD in others (Act.15:31).
- B. Via prophecy as a subject (1Cor.14:3,31).

- C. Where a believer hears of another's testing and deliverance (2Cor.1:6,8-11; Eph.6:22; Col.4:8).
- D. When a Pastor hears of reversion recovery, he experiences comfort (2Cor.7:7).
- E. Providential circumstances (Act.20:12).
- F. Fellowship (Rom.1:12; 2Cor.7:6).
- G. Application of BD in one's life (2Thess.2:17).

X. Comfort is a doctrine taught in the Old Testament (Ps.119:82 "*When will you comfort me?*").

- A. God is the source (Isa.49:13 "*Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O Mountains! For the Lord has comforted His people, and will have compassion on His afflicted*").
- B. It is a part of the experience of the believer (Ps.23:4 "*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me*").
- C. It is the subject of prayer, both in petition (Ps.71:21) and thanksgiving (Ps.86:17).

XI. Israel will be comforted eschatologically (Isa.12:1 "*Then you will say on that day, 'I will give thanks to You, O Lord; For although You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, And You do comfort me'*").

- A. Application of the doctrine of Israel's future brings comfort (Isa.40:1 "*Comfort, O comfort My people, says your God*").
- B. The Lord is the source (Isa.49:14-21; Zech.1:17; Lk.2:25).
- C. Comfort is used metaphorically for the restoration of the land itself (Isa.51:3; 52:7-10 [note vs.11]).
- D. Comfort is an eschatological reality for those who mourn over the absence of righteousness, justice, and truth on the earth (Isa.61:2; Mt.5:4).
- E. It involves the destruction (total) of all enemies and the flourishing of the third commonwealth (Isa.66:7-16; Jer.31:7-20).

XII. Phase 3 (heaven) is called comfort (Lk.16:25) and Lazarus was a reversionist (cp. Lk.6:24; 2Thess.2:16).

- A. The Holy Spirit is the comforter.
- B. Since we have Him forever, we have comfort forever (cp. Jn.14:16).
- C. Comfort, however, is not a reality for a reversionist, since he rejects the Spirit of truth (cp. Jn.15:26).

XIII. Summary.

- A. God, as a part of His policy of grace, pursues the positive, growing believer with comfort (2Cor.1:3-5).
- B. This comes in a multitude of forms: Scripture, deliverance, fellowship, the gift, encouragement from a word from others, examples set by others, pouring of the details, etc. (Rom.1:12).
- C. Comfort is always there to match the tests (2Cor.1:5).
- D. Comfort does not necessarily mean the removal of the CHP, but can include this, and eventually will include deliverance from the test (in accord with God's policy to deliver us from all tests; Ps.34:19).
- E. God does not comfort the reversionist, but turns on the comfort in the instance of reversion recovery.
- F. Each of us has the responsibility to minister comfort to others and will both knowingly and unknowingly.
- G. Suffering and being comforted qualifies us to comfort others (2Cor.1:4,6).
- H. Since the Pastor-Teacher and his congregation share the same history and niche, they share the same sufferings and comfort (2Cor.1:7).
 - I. Following Paul's lead, a Pastor should brief his congregation on his sufferings and comfort so as to comfort them through his example, and so they can pray for him (2Cor.1:6,8-11).
 - J. The Pastor and congregation are mutually comforted as each witnesses the other's spiritual gifts

(Rom.1:11,12).

K. The exegesis and interpretation of 2Cor.1:3-11 is foundational to this study.

L. Israel, the target of the insults of the nations in the last days (rejection of the covenants), will be comforted by the Lord in the events that culminate in Israel's exaltation in the Millenium.

M. The blessings of Phase 3 constitute eternal comfort.

N. In Phase 2, the Sinful Trend of Adam will rob you of the happiness associated with comfort (cp. 2Cor.7:4,7).

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