

COMFORTER

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you **another Comforter**, that he may abide with you for ever;

On our monthly communion nights, we are taking a break from the thru-the-Bible studies, and discussing some of the names of Jesus.

The Lord is so perfect; He is so complete; that no one name...or symbol...or emblem... or simile... or metaphor... could capture Him. Many hundreds are needed to appreciate all the many facets He presents in all His manifold grace.

We first looked at Jesus being called The Last Adam. Then we discussed Him as The Bridegroom. Tonight we move on a letter and find that Jesus is the **Comforter**.

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you **another Comforter**, that he may abide with you for ever;

The other **Comforter** is God the Holy Spirit. And we rightfully call Him the Comforter. But He is **another, just like Jesus** – Who was and remains **Comforter**.

If Jesus is the **Comforter**; and if we are to comfort others in His absence; we should know something about how to go about it. When we think of the word comfort we have a tendency to expand it to mean *comfortable*. For example: we describe certain soft blankets as *comforters*. It can give us the wrong impression of Jesus' role as **Comforter**.

Certainly, the Lord is gentle and kind. But being or becoming comfortable is not what the word comfort means. It is not a weak, sentimental word. The word itself in the original language means *with strength*. It is a tough word, a disciplined word – in many ways the very opposite of comfortable.

The best description of biblical comfort is in the opening verses of Second Corinthians. There the word, in one of its forms, is repeated over-and-over. In one very instructive verse we read,

2 Corinthians 1:6 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.

We receive comfort from the Lord, our **Comforter**; then we comfort others in the same way. Comfort, also translated consolation, **is effective for enduring... sufferings**. It is not intended to *end* suffering, but rather to *endure* it.

Christian comfort is the strength which is effective for enduring suffering.

You know – when you need comfort, it must be strong. It must be based on truth – and the truth is, things aren't always going to get better!

Jesus is perfect as Comforter, having been touched by all the things that affect us. He's experienced loss, and death, and loneliness – all in ways much greater than we could ever even imagine.

Today I was involved in a death notification. Perhaps because I was thinking about this study, and Jesus as Comforter, that I was reminded of when Jesus' friend, Lazarus, died. Jesus was some distance away when He first heard the news that Lazarus was gravely ill. The Holy Spirit – the One Jesus named as **another Comforter** – instructed Jesus to delay coming to Lazarus. He delayed Him until, by the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had died.

In a classic scene, Lazarus' sister, Martha, told Jesus that her brother would not have died if Jesus had been on hand to heal him. It's not unlike any person blaming God for the suffering and death of a loved one.

The death of Lazarus; and the gentle accusation of Martha; provide the perfect opportunity for us to see the Comforter at work. Let's listen in...

John 11:23 Jesus said to her, **"Your brother will rise again."**

John 11:24 Martha said to Him, **"I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."**

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

John 11:26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

John 11:27 She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

I want you to forget that Jesus went on to raise Lazarus from the dead. Jesus' comfort to Martha had nothing to do with the fact Lazarus would be alive in a few minutes. Jesus was only talking about eternal life.

I'm suggesting that His comments are a good example, maybe the best example, of true, strong Christian comfort. Jesus said nothing trite or cliché; He set her mind to thinking about eternity and eternal life. Sure, He went on to raise Lazarus; but that doesn't happen on a regular basis! We're left with the example of speaking strong words of true comfort, so that folks can endure their suffering from a Calvary perspective.

One thing I'd add: The picture we get in this episode is that Jesus was present with them; He suffered with them; His Words brought them comfort.

Enduring your suffering is **not** a dreary, discouraging, gritting of your teeth. It is not the product of your own strength or self-discipline or capacity for pain. It is the supernatural release of joy and peace right in the midst of your trouble. It is the experience of the presence of God in your life, and in your midst, even as you are suffering.

Conclusion

One day, all suffering will be ended:

When you go to be with the Lord at death; or when we all are taken to be with the Lord in the Rapture; our suffering will be ended.

In the mean time, it must be endured – **but with the joy of the companionship of your Comforter!**

Communion

Communion is a beautiful, symbolic act that Jesus instructed His followers to do in remembrance of Him. The communion table is representative of the Last Supper, during which Jesus taught His disciples about what He was about to do by giving His body and blood to save the world from sin. Luke 22:19 says, **And he (Jesus) took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them (the disciples), saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.'**

We like to share Communion in a setting of worship. It gives us the opportunity to remember back on what Jesus has done for us; to reflect inward on what Jesus is doing within us; and to rejoice forward in the Lord's return for us.

(Procedures...)

COME TOGETHER

1 Corinthians 14:26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.