

God's word comforts us.

"To Comfort" is to ease the affliction or sorrow of someone by actions or words.

God's children find comfort in the sacred Scriptures. "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:4 - 6).

God is the God of comfort and He comforts us through the Scriptures where we read about His goodness and grace: "Let, I pray, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to Your word to Your servant" (Psalm 119:76).

"In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me! Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me! For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me; you take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for you are my

refuge. Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God" (Psalm 31:1-5 ESV).

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You *are* with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

Comforting is needed after punishment. After a child has been punished for doing something wrong, he longs to be comforted. Paul told the Corinthians they should comfort the man who had repented after being disfellowshipped because of sin (2 Corinthians 2:5-8).

In the time of Isaiah, God had punished His people because of idolatry. But He gave a promise of comfort for those who repented. In the midst of devastation He spoke of a time when He would comfort His people: "And in that day you will say: 'O LORD, I will praise You; Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me'" (Isaiah 12:1).

"'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'" (Isaiah 40:1, 2).

“Sing, O heavens! Be joyful, O earth! And break out in singing, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people, And will have mercy on His afflicted” (Isaiah 49:13).

“For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in it, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody” (Isaiah 51:3).

“I, *even I, am* He who comforts you. Who *are* you that you should be afraid of a man *who* will die, and of the son of a man *who* will be made like grass? And you forget the LORD your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth?” (Isaiah 51:12, 13a). “Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem! For the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem” (Isaiah 52:9).

There are conditions. God comforts the humble, but not the godless: “For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name *is* Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him *who* has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones”

(Isaiah 57:15). "But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. '*There is no peace,*' Says my God, '*for the wicked*'" (Isaiah 57:20, 21).

"As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem" (Isaiah 66:13).

About 500 years later these predictions were fulfilled. Jesus said to His followers: "Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Before Jesus returned to His Father, He promised His followers that He would send a Comforter. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, so that He may be with you forever, the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive because it does not see Him nor know Him. But you know Him, for He dwells with you and shall be in you" (John 14:16, 17 MKJV).

The Comforter would lead the apostles as they taught the gospel.

“I have spoken these things to you, being present with you. But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said to you” (John 14:25, 26 MKJV).

“And when the Comforter has come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me. And you also shall bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning” (John 15:26, 27 MKJV).

“But I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you. But if I depart, I will send Him to you” (John 16:7).

On the Day of Pentecost after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, this Comforter - the Holy Spirit - was sent and the church of Christ was established.

“Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied” (Acts 9:31).

Christians are sometimes oppressed and persecuted. But we are comforted by God which

enables us to comfort one another: "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. 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 1:3-7).

Like David we can say to our Shepherd: "Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." Let us read and zealously study the Scriptures. Then "through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures" we can have hope.

"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you

in every good word and work" (2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17).

Amen.

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