“Deliver us from the evil one” – Finding and Giving Comfort & Hope

COMFORT

Comfort is that “thing” something offered or given to those who have suffered loss or tragedy. Finding **comfort** amid tragedies of any kind is hard at best. Tragedies of the magnitude of 9/11 make it nearly impossible for those directly affected to find it on any level. This world is prone to earthquakes, famines, and floods, in addition to acts of terrorism and violence. Throughout history some people have risen to the occasion in response to these tragedies. People and agencies bring much-needed physical relief and assistance. Some offer help on the emotional side, making attempts to **comfort** those who suffer—victims and their friends and relatives.

Examples of comfort any of us can offer include: Sit quietly with them. Give them a hug. Hold their hands. Offer words of consolation if any may be found. Give them that “cup of cold water” Jesus referred to (Matthew 10:42). All of these have one thing in common: they are ***temporal.***

They don’t last.

Christians can and should do those things listed above. **More than that, we can offer to pray for or with them**. Some people welcome this—others not so much. When praying with someone who does not know Christ as Savior, it is harder for us to offer lasting comfort because we know reality on both sides of the Cross. But we can pray God would comfort and console them on their loss. And in our own hearts, we can pray that the God of all comfort would use whatever their case is to lead them to Him. We must always pray that. Everyone needs Jesus!

When studying many Bible verses on comfort, I was reminded by the Holy Spirit that the New Testament was written, in large part, to and for Christians – those born-again in Jesus. So it is hard to use many of those verses to comfort lost people.

Most people know about the 23rd Psalm and it is read among the lost on many occasions of loss or gried – even when they do not know or trust this God in whom they may or may not believe. But everyone likes the calming words of God being their shepherd and lying beside still, calm waters in green pastures. In terms of the word "comfort" in verse 4, it is use of the shepherd's tools (rod and staff). They provide protection and guidance but also discipline.

The best verses I have memorized over the years and used to comfort Christians in times of need or sorrow were written by the Apostle Paul. The word *comfort* is used 6x.

> *"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 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. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our* ***comfort*** *is abundant through Christ*." 2 Corinthians 1: 3-5

As Christians, we know and have experienced this comfort at some point in our lives. Our privilege and expression of love to others is to share that and pray it over those who are lost and/or in need of God's comfort.

At the end of the day, we must allow the Holy Spirit to work in us and ask Him to give us the right actions and words. The latter must at some point in the process include the truth that real, lasting comfort can be found in Christ alone.

Hope. When catastrophes or unthinkable tragedies like Pearl

Harbor or the 9/11 attacks occur, hope can be severely wounded or lost altogether. In videos from the 9/11 attacks we saw the unimaginable in real time. People so desperate and hopeless they jumped out of the burning tower more than 100 stories in the air knowing that death waited to greet them at *ground zero*.

In other videos, you could see people running for their lives, crying or screaming—some asking aloud if "the world was coming to an end." They seemed hopeless. To close our time together, we are going to briefly examine the two kinds of *hope* that exist. As it was with comfort, they are ***temporal*** and ***eternal***. The Bible speaks to both.

<u>Temporal Hope</u>

Perhaps the most common and lamest offer of hope is this: "Everything's going to be OK." Another is, "Always darkest before dawn is another one." People who place their hope in this world or other people are often disappointed. Lost people have three things in common:

- *They hope to live a long, happy life- unscathed by such tragedies or disease*
- *They hope this life can give them all they hope for*
- *They hope when they die, they have been good enough to get into Heaven (if* there is one)

> *"So are the paths of all who forget God; And the hope of the godless will perish,"* Job 8:15

Many false teachers and prophets offer gullible people false hope.

> *"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.* Ephesians 5: 6

Segue to Eternal Hope

> *“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”* 2 Corinthians 4: 18_

<u>Eternal Hope</u>

Perhaps the most appropriate words written by the Apostle Paul for such a time as this:

> *“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”* Romans 15:4

We know evil is alive and well – even prospering – in these latter days. We will suffer at times, along with those we love, even to the point of death. Yet we are comforted in the words of Jesus to His disciples who would all die for their faith:

> *“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world*.” John 16:33

Until Christ returns or call us Home, we live under the instructions of the writer of Hebrews:

> *“let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith* … for He Himself has said, “I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,”I will never leave you or forsake you.” Hebrews 12: 1,2; 13: 5

Praying the Lord gives you the opportunity to share His comfort and hope with someone who is lost and desperately needs Jesus as Savior.

For Christ’s sake,

Walter