**WHERE I GO FOR COMFORT**

I’m sure many of you (ok, ALL of you) have had those melancholy days when your mood is “down” and you are desperately looking for something, anything, to chase away those blues. By nature I’m a happy guy. Always have been. I don’t often fall into moody swings that cause me to be downcast or negative about life. But somedays it just comes upon me out of nowhere, blindsiding me with a spirit that needs comforting.

Perhaps its news of a brother who has been struck with a heart attack, or a sister who has been diagnosed with cancer. Sometimes it’s the unfaithfulness of a fellow Christian that smacks you between the eyes. Perhaps it’s the doom-and-gloom of the newscast that causes my heart to sink. Whatever the reason we all face days (some of us face weeks, months and even years… that’s called depression) that cause our spirits to lose their joy. Christ promised us the “*abundant life*” (Jn. 10:10), but just one chapter later we read “*Jesus wept*” (Jn. 11:35). Even the apostle Paul, who we know wrote “*rejoice in the Lord always*” (Phil. 4:4), also wrote “*I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart*” (Rom. 9:2) when he thought about his lost Jewish brethren. So what did Jesus and Paul do to overcome their melancholy? How did they shake off their despondency?

*“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”* (Rom. 15:4-5).

Did you connect verse 4 with verse 5? Read it again. We get *patience* and *comfort* of the Scriptures to revive our hope because God is the God of *patience* and *comfort*. If I have fallen into a mood of “*great sorrow and continual grief in my heart*” - then I need to do what Paul did for patience and comfort, turn to God’s comforting Scriptures! Now.

*The God of Patience – The Scriptures of Patience.*

Patience in this context is the word *HYPOMONE* and means “steadfastness, endurance, constancy.” It carries the idea of a God who never swerves from His conviction and purpose. Nothing sidetracks Him. Nothing makes Him change His mind. He stays the course He has set. What this means for us when the same word describes His Scriptures is that His promises never fail. Whatever He has spoken or written is guaranteed both in time and eternity. This means I can trust with unwavering certainty everything God has said! He is a God who doesn’t take unplanned detours; is not wishy-washy, fickle and erratic in His purposes, is not unpredictable and unreliable in His decisions. God is true north and I can take every word He speaks as gospel truth.

If you Google the internet with this question: “How many promises of God are in the Bible?” you will get a range anywhere from 3,000 to 30,000. If you ask how many are in the New Testament to Christians, you get a range from 250 t0 1,000. I’ve never actually researched it for specific promises to me, but I should. It would be very comforting. I do know this, the promises I have found and meditated upon have given me “*patience*.” It makes my faith stronger, my resolve tougher, and my prayers of thanksgiving longer. I come away energized. Like the battery bunny, I feel like I can keep on going, and going, and going, and…

*The God of Comfort – The Scriptures of Comfort.*

This word *comfort* is from the Greek word *PARAKLESIS*. It carries the idea of calling someone to your side to support, encourage or help you. With someone who you deeply trust by your side giving you words to lift your spirit you find comfort and strength to endure the present trial. We adults smile when an infant is pacified by his pacifier, or a toddler falls asleep with her stuffed animal and raggedy blanket. But God must smile when we take as much comfort, and sleep in peace, by reading His message of salvation.

While it is God who is the source of my comfort, He often uses people to do it. Barnabas (“*son of encouragement*”) was just such a man to so many in the first century church (Acts 4:36). Onesiphorus was another, for Paul wrote of him: *“he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; when I was in Rome he sought me out very zealously and found me. …you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.*” Open your eyes, God’s comfort often comes through the people He puts in your life. Who among us is your *PARAKLESIS*?

But mostly God’s comfort comes through reading the Scriptures. As I read I not only see all God’s promises fulfilled from the past (for example, read all of the 300+ Messianic promises of the O.T. that came true in the 33 years of the life of Christ), but I jump for joy as I read all His future promises He will yet fulfill (“*For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen*” – 2 Cor. 1:20). For instance, when I think of a beloved friend suffering or dying I default to I Thessalonians 4 and am comforted:

*13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore* ***comfort one another with these words****.”*

Yes, today I was sad as I began my day. I needed someone (“Someone”) to come to my side and offer me words of patience and comfort. I turned to that Someone and found what I needed. If you are feeling blue today, read these words from your *PARAKLESIS*:

*“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”* (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

Until tomorrow… “cheer up my brother, live in the sunshine, we’ll understand it all by and by.”

I love you, and thank you for loving me.

Rick