Nov. 8, 2020 p.m.

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

Reading: **1 Thess. 5:11-18**

Part 2 of sermon request – why difficulties come to some and not others – how to encourage and be encouraged

**We are commanded to *comfort each other*.**

* **1 Thess. 5:11, 14** *“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.” “Comfort the fainthearted”*
* **Heb. 12:12** *“Therefore, strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.”*
* Are these commands only for a few? I don’t think so. How do you apply the text?
* We can learn to be thoughtful – we think and study how to be of comfort to others.
* There’s a difference between praying that God comforts someone when we cannot be a help and praying this when we can be a help.
* Are we asking God to do something that He has also told us to do? Are we praying for those in need to *“be warmed and filled?”* (James 2:16)
* “Lord, comfort those who just went through a hurricane.”
* ‘I’m comforted when I know others are praying.’ (Betsy)
* Why, because we think everything is going to be alright? Healing is always going to come? Or is it that others are thinking of us? There is comfort in knowing this.
* How might God do this? How might He answer our prayers? With people?

***“Therefore comfort one another with these words”*** (**1 Thess. 4:18**)

* The comfort came from *these words* – *words* of hope – *words* of truth.
* These were comforting words for those whose brothers and sisters died in the Lord.
* They were blessed and were at rest from their labors. (**Rev. 14:13**)
* Sadly, we must admit that not all of those we love die in the Lord.
* *These words* will bring no comfort in such situations. We are careful with our words in these cases – if we need to say anything at all. At the most, ‘I’m so sorry’ will be enough. We cannot give folks false hope.
* Our faith will see us through – we will endure mentally, emotionally and spiritually. We have tried to teach them but they would not listen. Our love for the Lord and His honor is stronger than our feelings.
* The Holy Spirit is called a Comforter or Helper. (**John 15:26** - see **Acts 9:31; 15:31**)
* The comfort/consolation/exhortation of the Scriptures gives us hope. (**Rom. 15:4**)

SOMEONE WITH SKIN

A little girl was frightened by a storm as she lay in her bedroom along. She called to her father asking him to come and comfort her. He told her to pray about it. A few minutes later she called again. He told her not to worry; God was with her. She replied, “I know God is with me, but I need someone with skin on him!”

We are like that sometimes. Although our ready access to God in prayer comforts us, some-times we need the assurance of a listening ear, an understanding touch, a sympathetic nod. That is not a sigh of weakness, either. I believe that God designed us this way, and that He provided the church so that we could comfort one another.

May we always be there when a brother or sister needs “someone with skin on him!”

(anon. via Whit Sasser, Exhortations and Stuff, Aug. 28, 2020

**Bible examples of some who comforted others:**

* *“Isaac took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.”* (**Gen. 24:67**)
* Rebekah was more help to Isaac than friends telling him they would be praying for him. That is unless Rebekah was an answer to a prayer. (She was the answer to the servant’s prayer.)
* Spouses can learn to be able to comfort one another. Hard when they’re gone.
* Jonathan loved David *as his own soul*. His soul was *knit to the soul of David*. (1 Sam. 18:1)
* Jonathan helped David while his own father wanted to kill him.
* *“There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”* (**Pr. 18:24**)
* *“… for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very diligently and found me.”* (**2 Tim. 1:16-17**)
* Onesiphorus was more help to Paul than friends praying that God would comfort him as only He could.
* He took the command in **Hebrews 13:3** personally.
* Not everyone could do what Onesiphorus was able to do.
* No one can help everybody but everyone can help somebody.
* The brethren from Rome met Paul at Three Inns and he was encouraged. (**Acts 28:15**)
* Did someone pray at the previous assembly that God would be with Paul and see that he had all that he needed? “Lord, please encourage Paul.”
* An angel appeared to Jesus, strengthening him. (**Luke 22:43**)
* The apostles, especially Peter, James and John were of no help at that time.
* Jesus just wanted them to *watch with (Him)*. (**Matt. 26:38, 40**)

**Some examples of “someone with skin on him”**

* Bruce Hall, son of Bill and Charlotte Hall – died at 34 in Jordan, Ontario (preaching)
* What helped? What Bill remembers now – people telling them something (specific) they admired about him. A lady telling them how Bruce defended the faith in a class in college and that influenced her to follow the Lord. (she was not a Christian at the time) Jay Ogden, close friend of Bruce, coming to their house the day after and simply weeping, unable to say a word. (personal presence)
* Bob Deweese died 11 years ago. Wanda - becoming a young widow. Becoming invisible to others. A young Christian asking her to go out for lunch.
* Andrea Deweese (Bob and Wanda) – liver cancer, tumor size of grapefruit at 14 months old, chemo for 8 months and then died. (1 out of 500,000) Wanda in recent conversation. What helped? What didn’t help? Close friends. People not afraid to talk about Andrea. (not forgetting about her) “At least you are young, you can have more children.”
* Earl and Lois’ daughter Anna was stillborn – people didn’t know what to say and they were patient. They asked why. What did I do wrong? Learned as time went on – Lord knows everything – was this a better way for her to go? Who knows what might have happened later. Good comes from tragedy. Good friend Bruce Key on their front porch when they got home. Weeping together on the phone when he called me.
* O.C. Birdwell writing about the death of his 20 year old son – “A great friend and brother in Christ came to our house and sat for a long period of time. He, by nature, is a quiet man and little was said. He confessed, ‘I don’t know what to say.’ I responded, ‘You do not need to say anything. Your being here says it all.” (Guardian of Truth, Sept. 1, 1988 in file)
* Justin Nash (17 years old), friend & his aunt and her friend in accident on I-75 in 1999
* “Our friends and family were, and continue to be, a much needed source of help and strength. We could not have managed to survive this tragedy without the support of fellow Christians. God would not have it any other way. In His wisdom, He made provision on earth for His creation to have help. This help is to come from our fellow man in general, but especially from fellow believers.” (Roger Nash, *Enjoy Life, But Think Eternal*, p. vii)
* Guidelines to help parents (who have lost a child): (From Day by Day, Sunday March 2, 2008, Florence, AL in helping those who are suffering file)
* Be available to listen.
* Allow them to express as much grief as they are willing to share.
* Let them talk about the special, endearing qualities of the child they lost.
* Don’t avoid them because you don’t know what to say – being avoided by friends adds pain to an already intolerably painful experience.
* Don’t say you know how they feel unless you have had a similar experience.
* Don’t be afraid to mention their child’s name for fear of reminding them of their pain.
* DON’T POINT OUT THAT AT LEAST THEY HAVE THEIR OTHER CHILDREN!
* DON’T SAY THEY CAN ALWAYS HAVE ANOTHER CHILD!
* On cards I received after my grandmother died: “May you find comfort in the memories that are yours to cherish always, and strength in the companionship of those who share your loss.” (on card from Glenda Mullins) “Friends to comfort you, memories to strengthen you, love to bring you peace…” (on cover of card from Bill Hall)

**What if the way through this is to show up for each other in any way we are able?**

**(Facebook Post)**

When someone is going through a rough time, just sit with her/him… no preaching, no advice. Just be there. (Joan Gurtler, Facebook Post, Oct. 30, 2020)

“We do not understand why such things happen to good people, but we do have faith in God who is in control of all things. It is this faith that sustains us through

our trials in this life.” (Roger Nash, Justin’s father)