

Things Eternal – Part 5

A modern dictionary tells us that the word "comfort" has two meanings as a noun and one meaning as a verb. As a noun, it can mean the physical ease and freedom from pain or constraint, or things that provide physical ease and well-being. As a verb, it refers to the easing or alleviation of a person's feelings of grief or distress.

With these definitions, we might think David, King of Israel, living in a palace, would be very comfortable. But he prays *"My eyes fail with longing for Your word, While I say, 'When will You comfort me?'"* (Psalms 119:82). The things a king may surround himself with to ease and relax the body, are not enough to soothe and relax the mind and its conscience. In Psalms 51:3, David said, *"I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me."* The memories of the past, things we have done, that we cannot undo, often confront us.

Jacob was in great distress when he learned Joseph was no longer alive to him. *"Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, 'Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son.' So his father wept for him"* (Genesis 37:35). Later, the brothers of Joseph confessed all that they did and had lied about and brought Jacob to Egypt as Joseph had directed. *"Then Israel said to Joseph, 'Now let me die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive'"* (Genesis 46:30). The knowledge that his son lived, and they were all together as a happy family was comfort for Jacob's mind.

Today, there is distress in our hearts because of the pandemic that afflicts the world. Numerous are sick, many have died, and many more fear the disease and isolate themselves from society. Because of conditions, many are out of work, food, medications, and even water is not available to many people. Our brethren in Christ in many parts of the globe suffer from the added complications of drought and famine. Our hearts are troubled to hear of their distress and long to comfort them. Paul was distressed for those in Corinth, and specifically Titus when he did not return on time. Paul said, *"I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother"* (2 Corinthians 2:13). Titus did arrive and brought good news from Corinth and the brethren there. Paul wrote *"But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more"* (2 Corinthians 7:6-7). In like manner we are comforted when we hear of the recovery of our brethren.

In John 14:16, 14:26, 15:26, and 16:7, the term "comforter" refers to the Holy Spirit in the KJV and ASV. In the NKJV and NASB, the descriptive word is "helper." The meaning is the same for both comforter and helper. One term identifies the one that will ease the mind and see you through the difficulties, the other term refers to the one who helps you through the difficulty and gives peace of mind. Neither term identifies the problem as being removed but that the effects of the problems will not defeat or cause the child of God to be lost. This comforter or helper, the Holy Spirit, and His appearance in Acts 2, is the answer to David's question in Psalm 119:82. Jesus said, *"These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid"* (John 14:25-27). Luke records that *"The church throughout all Judea*

*and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the **comfort of the Holy Spirit**, it continued to increase" (Acts 9:31).*

The church in Thessalonica suffered persecution by the Jews and would soon receive orders from Rome that they could not obey. Paul wrote two letters to encourage them. In the first, he wrote of Christ's second coming. *"The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).* In the second letter, Paul wrote, *"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and **God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort** and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word" (2 Thessalonians 2:13-17).*

The Eternal Comforter gives us Eternal Comfort.