

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
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“Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another...”

Date: March 2006

OPENING PRAYER

SCRIPTURE LESSON: I Thessalonians 5: 11

“Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.” (King James Version)

“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. (New King James Version)

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing.” (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

“Therefore encourage one another and build up one another just as you also are doing.” (New American Standard Bible)

“So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.” (New Living Translation)

“That’s why you must encourage and help each other, just as you are already doing.” (Contemporary English Version)

“Therefore encourage [admonish, exhort] one another and edify [strengthen and build up] one another, just as you are doing. (Amplified Bible)

“So speak encouraging words to one another. Build up hope so you’ll all be together in this, no one left out, no one left behind. I know you’re already doing this; just keep on doing it.” (The Message)

GOAL: To understand spiritual encouragement as it relates to believers.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Explore the comfort believers have in Christ.
2. List examples of spiritual encouragement.
3. Clarify the type of support, edification, and encouragement the church ought to be able to offer.

ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS/QUESTIONS:

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforted us in all our tribulations that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Cor. 1:3-4, Eph. 4: 11-13).

Compassion for others leads us to comfort them. Encouragement builds them up and gives them courage. God has commanded us to comfort, edify and encourage others, and what a privilege that responsibility is. He has comforted us in the same way that a mother comforts her children, and has been as compassionate toward us as a loving father. Therefore, we must always show tender, loving comfort, encouragement and edification to one another.

LESSON INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

Time: 51 A.D. Place: Corinth

The Church in Thessalonica was established on Paul's second missionary journey. Paul, Timothy and Silas traveled to Thessalonica after being persecuted in Philippi. For three Sabbaths, Paul preached to the Thessalonians from the Scripture. Jews, Greeks, and women heard the Word and became believers. However, some Jews became jealous of their influence. When it became too dangerous for the trio the believers sent them to Berea.

After the Church was established in Thessalonica, the Christians suffered persecution by stoning, beatings, crucifixions, "torture and even death". Not only was there a problem of persecution, but also the Christians were confused about the second coming of Christ. They thought Christ would return immediately after His resurrection. They could not understand why their loved ones were dying before Christ had returned. They were grieved because they felt their loved ones who had died in Christ would be left behind. Almost three years after the church was established Paul wrote this first letter to the Church at Thessalonica. The purpose of the letter was to strengthen their faith and assure them of Christ's return.

I Thessalonians 5:11, "Wherefore comfort each other, and edify one another, just as you also are doing" (NKJV) stresses that believers encourage and comfort each other. The command to encourage one another is found throughout the Bible. The Word suggests that all that we say or do should edify and build up the Church (Eph. 4: 29). When Timothy visited the Church in Thessalonica they were doing just that, encouraging, comforting and building up each other.

LESSON CONTENT (Input and Modeling)

OUTLINE:

The Greatest Comfort—Christ, Our Living Hope!

[I Thessalonians 4: 14- 17, 5: 1-11, Romans 1: 4: 6, 4: 25-5: 1-5]

For Christians who believe that Jesus died and rose again, comfort for sorrow is ultimately related to what the future holds.¹ Under the constant threat of persecution and death, the Thessalonians, though steadfast in their faith, grieved because they thought their deceased loved ones would be left behind when Jesus returned. Paul corrects their erroneous thinking and assures them that the dead in Christ would indeed rise with the Lord upon His

return (*I Thessalonians 4: 13-18*). In *I Thessalonians 5*, Paul outlines why believers can comfort encourage and edify each other. Because of our spiritual position in Christ; we are no longer ‘in darkness, but sons of the light’. This metaphor of darkness and light represents the difference between believers and non-believers. Believers have the truth and understanding about God; non-believers are ignorant of the truth of God. Non-believers are spiritually blind; believers have their spiritual sight. Non-believers lead self-directed lives that may not be in accordance to God’s Word; believers live in righteousness by the power of the Holy Spirit.² Being in Christ helps us to know God’s truth, have spiritual sight and live righteous lives guided by the light of God’s Word. What a comfort!

Christians will not be surprised by Christ’s return, because they have been told it is coming. They will not be desolate because they will be with the Lord (*I Thessalonians 4: 13-18, 5:9*). In other words, the world is ignorant of the impending judgment associated with the Day of the Lord. The unsaved live under a false sense of security and will be caught unaware when Christ returns. Our position in Christ is why we ought to be ‘sober and not drunk’ (*I Thess. 5: 6-9*). The assurance of eternal life in Christ must not lead to complacency. We must remain ‘spiritually alert’ always striving to live in a manner consistent with our standing in Christ.³ Knowing we are God’s children is the deepest comfort of all!

Similarly, modern day believers also need the comfort of God’s truth regarding our future. We live in an immorally sin-sick world where threats of violence, war and terrorism are part of our daily lives. We are comforted because our living hope is in Christ. Christ’s resurrection is the undeniable proof that He is God’s Son and our Savior _the solution to sin and both spiritual and physical death (*Rom. 1: 4 and 4: 25*). While the world spirals towards destruction we have the assurance that we do not share the same fate as non-believers. **It is with these truths that we can comfort, encourage, and edify one another.**

How Can Believers Comfort Each Other?

[Proverbs 3: 5-6, Acts 9:31-32, James 5: 15-16, Colossians 3: 15- 17, II Cor. 1:4.]

How do we support and encouragement each other? How do we build each other up?
What resources does God provide for our ministry of comfort?

1. **God’s Word.** The Word of God is our means or blueprint for encouraging one another. It is the revealed truth of God upon which we build our hope and faith and in turn the hope and faith of our brothers and sisters. Within the Word of God, we can find comfort for every one of life’s dilemmas. We can trust the Word of God. (*Prov. 3: 5-6*).
2. **God’s Holy Spirit.** Jesus told us that God would send another comforter when He went away (*John 14:16*). The Holy Spirit (the ‘*Parakletos*’) indwells, teaches, empowers, illuminates, intercedes, and walks alongside each of us. The early church was edified and multiplied as they relied on the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit (*Acts 9: 31-32*). We are commanded to comfort each other with the comfort God has given us (*II Cor. 1:4*). As we yield to the Holy Spirit, we become instruments of comfort and encouragement to each other. We are edified as we recognize the power of God flowing through the heart, mind, body and spirit of another believer.

3. **The Prayer of Faith.** James 5: 13-16 cites yet another resource. *“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”* How many times have we been healed and comforted in times of grief, confusion, and disaster through the prayers of saints? Both the Old and New Testament are replete with illustrations of the power of prayer!
4. **Faith Expressed in Action.** Another method of comfort rests in the provisions we make when someone is in need. Although we are saved by faith alone, genuine faith produces good deeds. What good is it, if someone comes in need of food and clothing and we send them away with nothing? We comfort, encourage, build each other up by supplying basic need such as food, clothing, and shelter (James 2: 14-17).
5. **Teaching, Preaching and Corporate Worship.** Colossians 3: 15-17 states, *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”* The ‘Word of Christ’ refers to His teachings. We have a responsibility to teach and support the application of God’s Word. God has provided ‘*apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to prepare us for works of service to build up the body of Christ*’ (Eph. 4: 11-12). Likewise, participation in corporate worship encourages, edifies and builds up our fellowship. How many times has powerful preaching quickened our faith, comforted and convicted hearts, and drawn souls to Christ. Singing hymns, where important Christian doctrines are expressed, and songs which recount and praise God for His mighty acts, serve as a witness to quicken our faith. There is great comfort to be found in the words of hymns and songs that vividly portray God’s love for us!

Barnabas, a great encourager, is a role model for us. He was named the ‘*Son of Encouragement*’ because he encouraged Christians to remain true in the Lord with all their hearts (*Acts 11:23*) and true to their faith (*Acts 14: 21-22*). Remaining ‘true to the Lord’ refers to how we live what we believe; while remaining ‘true to the faith’ relates specifically to what we believe.⁴

All Christians ought to be encouragers and comforters. We need to reach out and be available to do so. Think of someone you can encourage; someone who might be spiritually confused, discouraged, bereaved, afraid, ill, lonely, under pressure, or in failure. What will you say? How would you do it? Will it be in person, by telephone, by a card, letter, or religious tape?⁵ Does your knowledge of God’s Word enable you to speak comfort with the power and blessings that come from the Word of God?

¹ Keathley, J. Hampton, III, Th.M. *“The Comfort and Challenge Concerning the Day of the Lord.”* (I Thessalonians 5: 1-11). Internet Source: www.Bible.org

² Keathley, J. Hampton, III, Th.M. *“The Comfort and Challenge Concerning the Day of the Lord.”* (I Thessalonians 5: 1-11). Internet Source: www.Bible.org

³ Keathley, J. Hampton, III, Th.M. *“The Comfort and Challenge Concerning the Day of the Lord.”* (I Thessalonians 5: 1-11). Internet Source: www.Bible.org

⁴ Getz, Gene A., **Encouraging One Another**, 1989, Victor Books, Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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SUMMARY/REVIEW/CLOSURE:

As long as we are connected to Jesus, we have an inexhaustible source for comfort. (*John 15:5*). How often have you tried to comfort or encourage someone during a difficult experience only to find that God supplied an ideal solution for their problem in a sermon? The Word of God not only brings comfort and reassurance, it is the way that God draws

us to Himself. The *power* of God's Word fulfills its purpose for those who need Him. Nothing is too hard for God!

You may have noticed that a spiritual calmness falls over the congregation when a minister recites the Scriptures as he prays for church family members. Haven't we witnessed the love God places in the heart of a pastor, which absolutely compels him to expound on the Scriptures so that souls are drawn to commit their lives to Christ? God grants unique gifts to pastors that empower them to evangelize, disciple, and comfort weary souls.

Bible Study, along with the gifting of the Holy Spirit, empowers us to comfort and encourage one another. As we grow in the knowledge and use of the Word of God, our faith will be increased, our prayer lives enriched, and our personal relationship with the Lord strengthened. God's Word is comprehensive and can be applied to any situation in life. He has assured us that His Word will not return void (*Isaiah 55*).

DISCUSSION/APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

- 1. In what ways has our church been effective in providing comfort and support for its members?**
- 2. Are there some ways we might improve our ability to comfort one another?**
- 3. What might be some ways our church can help members increase their knowledge and effective use of the Word of God?**
- 4. Reflect on a time when you felt encouraged, comforted, and built up by a sister or brother in Christ. What were some of the methods they used?**

GLOSSARY

Wherefore: *Dio* (dee-o'') Word origin: Greek, conjunction, Strong #1252

1. wherefore, on account of
 - a. **KJV word usage**
 - i. for which cause

Comfort: *Parakaleo* (par-ak-al-eh'-o) Word origin: Greek, Verb. Strong #3879

1. To call to one's side, call for, summon
2. To address, speak to (call to, call upon) which may be done in the way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, etc.
 - a. To admonish, exhort
 - b. To beg, entreat, beseech
 - c. To console to encourage and strengthen by consolidation, to comfort

Together: *Allelon* (al-lay-lone); Word Origin: Greek, Strong #240

One another, reciprocally, mutually

Edify: *Oikodomeo* (oy-kod-om-eh-o); Word Origin: Greek, Verb, Strong #3618

1. To build a house, erect a building
 - a. to build (up from the foundation)
 - b. to restore by building, to rebuild, repair
2. Metaphor.
 - a. To promote growth in Christian wisdom, affection, grace, virtue, holiness, blessedness

Even: *Kathos* (kath-oce'); Word Origin: Greek, Adverb, Strong #2531

1. according as
 - a. just as, even as
 - b. in proportion as, in the degree that
2. since, seeing that, agreeably to the fact that

Also: *Kai* (kahee); Conjunctions, Strong #2532

1. and, also, even, indeed, but

Do: *Poieo* (poy-eh-o); Verb, Strong #4160

1. to make
 - a. With the names of things made, to produce, construct, form, fashion, etc.
 - b. to the authors of, the cause
 - c. to make ready, to prepare
 - d. to produce, bear, shoot forth
 - e. to acquire, to provide a thing for one's self
2. to do
 - a. to act rightly, do well carry out, to execute
 - b. to do a thing unto one
 - c. with designation of time; to pass, spend
 - d. to celebrate, keep
 - e. to perform: to a promise