

The God of All Comfort

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Brethren, we live in a world which seems more and more to be spiraling out of control. In talking with people at work, there is a general feeling that America and the western world is falling from prominence. The politics of social and national destruction seem to be winning on every front.

The world in general has no hope. The world in general truly does not believe in an all-powerful benevolent God who loves them and cares for them. The world is turning more and more into a Godless society whose atheistic mantra is no longer that “God is dead,” but now it is that “God was never alive.”

As society grows more and more atheistic, society also grows more and more into the narcissistic culture of living only for today. Everyone wants immediate gratification. The world wants everything now, because the world may not exist in the future. Worldwide calamities caused by global warming, thermonuclear war, rampant terrorism, and so many other global evils are thought by millions if not billions of people to make the future of mankind pessimistic and uncertain.

The world lacks hope. And with the loss of hope, another critical casualty emerges. The loss of hope brings about a loss of comfort. But we, as called-out ones of our Heavenly Father, should have a totally different approach and outlook on life.

God the Father and Jesus Christ have given us both hope and comfort in these troubling times, a hope and comfort that the world just does not have and does not enjoy.

Brethren, in my sermon this afternoon entitled “The God of All Comfort”, I would like to explore the subject of the comfort that God the Father has extended to His saints, the comfort that He will extend to all mankind in the future, and the comfort that we should extend to each other in this life.

Brethren, I would like to explore this subject through three points.

The first point concerning our Heavenly Father and comfort is:

1. God the Father comforts His firstfruits in this lifetime

Please turn with me to Psalm 23. We cannot explore the subject of comfort without starting with the most well-known psalm written by David. Most church-goers can recite Psalm 23 from memory. The psalm is used as part of worship services around the world in many churches and congregations in the Christian world. Yet David uses various terms in the psalm which may not be totally understood by people today because they are terms used by a shepherd caring for his flock.

Psalm 23:1 *The LORD [God the Father] is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

2) *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.*

3) *He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

4) *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

So David said that the rod and staff of God the Father comforted him. I've asked brethren many times over the past years why would the Father's rod and staff comfort David (and by extension us in the Church). Especially the rod? Why would the rod of God the Father comfort David? Many, if not most, of the brethren that I asked did not know the answer.

First of all, what were the rod and the staff? The staff was a long, slender stick, often hooked at the tip, used primarily to direct the flock. The staff is a symbol of a shepherd because all shepherds had one. Sheep are notorious wanderers, and once away from the shepherd's watchful eye, they get into all sorts of trouble, such as in the example that Jesus gave in Matthew 18:12-14. The shepherd used his staff to keep his sheep out of danger and close to himself. If a sheep became trapped in a precarious position, the shepherd would loop the curved end of the staff around the neck of the sheep and retrieve it back to safety. The staff was a symbol of a shepherd's gentle leadership.

On the other hand, the rod was a sturdy wooden stick used as a weapon to fight off wild animals who might have hoped to make an easy meal out of an otherwise defenseless flock of sheep. Please turn with me to 1 Samuel 17, and we will read where a young David recounted an incident to King Saul in which he probably used his shepherd's rod.

1 Samuel 17:34 *And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:*

35 – And I went out after him, and smote [struck] him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote [struck] him, and slew him.

David more than likely struck and killed the lion and the bear with his rod. The rod was a symbol of a shepherd's powerful protection of the sheep.

So both the staff and the rod comforted the sheep. Another important concept not always followed by the ministry in the past in the Churches of God is that the shepherd never used the rod to beat the sheep. The sheep were never beaten by the shepherd. Sheep do not need to be frightened or beaten in order for them to comply to the wishes and leadership of the shepherd.

I have heard horrific stories from members of the Churches of God in this country and in other countries where the congregations knew nothing but the rod from their pastor. They never knew what a staff was in the hands of their shepherd. The shepherd of the flock was a comfort to the sheep. The shepherd could never comfort the sheep by beating them with his rod.

The pastors of our Father's flock are to lead and guide their flock by gently dealing with their brethren, using gentleness and kindness in instructing and teaching the flock and in assisting the flock toward the goal of our Heavenly Father's Kingdom.

So David was comforted by both the gentle leadership and love of God the Father (the staff) and by the powerful protection given by God the Father (the rod).

Please turn with me to Psalm 71, where David confidently writes of our Father's comfort.

Psalm 71:01 *In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.
21) Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.*

David was confident that Yehovah would comfort him. The words "on every side" is actually a verb in Hebrew in addition to the verb comfort. The verb is "סָבַב" (sabab) Strong's #5437 which means *to surround*.

The Literal Standard Version translates verse 21 as *You increase my greatness, And You surround—You comfort me.*

So David confidently said that Yehovah would surround him and comfort him. Do we have that confidence that God the Father will surround us and comfort us?

Please turn with me to Psalm 119. David wrote again about the comfort from God the Father because of His merciful kindness.

Psalm 119:75 *I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.
76) Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.
77) Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.*

God the Father comforted David by His lovingkindness that He showed David.

Please turn with me to 2 Corinthians 1. The Apostle Paul tells the Corinthian congregation that God the Father is the God of all comfort.

2 Corinthians 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:
2) Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
3) Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;
4) Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*

Brethren, God the Father is able to comfort us when we are in any trouble or in any test or tribulation or trial or pain or anxiety. He is master of the entire universe and beyond. As Jeremiah wrote in **Jeremiah 32:17** *Ah Lord GOD! [Adonai Yehovah] behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:*

Please turn with me to 1 Corinthians 10. Paul tells us that even when we are in a deep trial or test, that our Heavenly Father will not give us something that we cannot handle to where we will fail.

1 Corinthians 10:13 *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

This is a very comforting scripture when we are in the midst of a severe trial. Sometimes we think that we just cannot persevere, that the road is too hard, the test too hard, the pain too great, the loss too overwhelming. Our Heavenly Father will always help us to succeed. He wants us to succeed. His work in us fails if we do not succeed. Please turn with me to Hebrews 13. No matter how bad life may be treating us, God the Father is always there, and He will never abandon us.

Hebrews 13:5 *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

6) *So that we may boldly say, The Lord [God the Father] is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

Please turn with me to Matthew 5, and we will read a well-known set of scriptures known as the beatitudes. The word translated as “blessed” in the Beatitudes is the Greek word “μακάριος” (makarios) Strong’s #3107 which means *blessed in the sense of being fortunate or well-off or being happy*. In fact, the translations in many other languages translate “μακάριος” as happy.

Matthew 5:1 *And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:*

2) *And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,*

3) *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

4) *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

5) *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*

6) *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

7) *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*

8) *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*

9) *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*

10) *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

11) Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12) Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

An interesting note in the Beatitudes is that, except for verses 3 and 10, all of the Beatitudes in between those verses have the first part of the sentence in the present tense and have the second part of the sentence in the future tense. We have not yet inherited the earth in verse 5. We have not yet seen God the Father in verse 8. And we have not yet been called the children of God the Father by mankind. However, in verses 4, 6 and 7, the future tense is applicable to our lives today as well as in the future. If we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we will be filled today as well as in the future. If we are merciful, then we will obtain mercy today as well as in the future. And in verse 4, if we mourn, we will be comforted today as well as in the future.

Jesus is saying here that we will be comforted. The whole Beatitudes is concerning our relationship with God the Father. He will be the One who comforts us.

Please turn with me to 2 Thessalonians 2. Paul shows to the Thessalonian congregation that God the Father gives us consolation, hope, and comfort.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 *But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:*

14) Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15) Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

16) Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

17) Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Comfort, consolation, and hope are all connected by the understanding that God the Father and Jesus Christ have given us through the knowledge of their plan of salvation.

Please turn with me to 2 Corinthians 13. In his final words to the Corinthian congregation, he exhorted them to be comforted, to be peaceful, and to be loving.

2 Corinthians 13:11 *Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*

Please turn with me to John 16. On the last night of His physical life, Jesus comforted His disciples when He was explaining that He was going away.

John 16:32 *Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

33) These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

By extension, brethren, we should be comforted and be of good cheer that Jesus did indeed overcome the world, that He did live a sinless life, and that He died in our place for our sins so that we do not have to die for them.

Brethren, God the Father comforts His firstfruits in this lifetime.

The second point concerning our Heavenly Father and comfort is:

2. God the Father will comfort all of mankind in the future

Brethren, a large portion of the discussion of comfort in the Bible is concerning the future comfort of God the Father's people in the Millennium. Please turn with me to Revelation 21. We will read of a wonderful time in the Millennium in the near future when God the Father and Jesus Christ will return to the earth when Jesus Christ will be given rulership over the earth with the saints administering His government on the earth, and when God the Father will return to reintroduce Himself to humanity and to be worshipped by humanity. However, God the Father is not an idle Being. As Jesus said in John 5:17 – "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." So both have worked together for an eternity in the past, and both will be working together in the Millennium. What will our Heavenly Father be doing? One thing that He will be doing is comforting His future sons and daughters.

Revelation 21:1 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

2) And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God [ὁ θεός – ho theos – God the Father] out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3) And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [ὁ θεός – ho theos – God the Father] is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God [ὁ θεός – ho theos – God the Father] himself shall be with them, and be their God.

4) And God [ὁ θεός – ho theos – God the Father] shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

5) And he that sat upon the throne [God the Father] said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

6) And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

7) He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

In verse 5, we know that the One who sat upon the throne is God the Father because He says in verse 8 that He will be our God and we shall be His sons. We will not be the sons of Jesus Christ.

Verse 4 shows that God the Father will wipe away all tears from the eyes of mankind, with no more sorrow or crying or pain. That sounds like a lot of comforting will be forthcoming from our Heavenly Father in the future during this 1000-year Millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

Please turn with me to Luke 4. When Jesus began His ministry, He quoted passages from a prophecy in Isaiah 61.

Luke 4:16 *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.*

17) *And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,*

18) *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,*

19) *To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

20) *And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.*

21) *And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

Jesus was fulfilling a portion of that prophecy that day with His ministry – but only a portion of that prophecy. Please turn with me to Isaiah 61 and we will read verses 1 through 3.

Isaiah 61:1 *The Spirit of the Lord GOD [God the Father] is upon me; because the LORD [God the Father] hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;*

2) *To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD [God the Father], [this is where Jesus stopped and did not continue quoting the prophecy – the remainder was not to be fulfilled at that time but would be fulfilled in the future at the return of the Father and Him] and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;*

3) *To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD [God the Father], that he might be glorified.*

The fulfillment of the remainder of this prophecy (the part that Jesus did not quote) did not occur in Jesus' life on the earth, but the fulfillment will occur in the Millennium. And part of that fulfillment includes to comfort all who mourn.

Please turn with me to Isaiah 49, where we can read of this glorious time in the future during the Millennium when all humanity will know who God the Father is and when Jesus Christ and the saints will rule on earth. God the Father will comfort His people.

Isaiah 49:8 *Thus saith the LORD [God the Father], In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee,*

and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

9) That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.

10) They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

11) And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.

12) Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

13) Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD [God the Father] hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

Please turn with me back a few chapters to Isaiah 40, and we will read about that time of comfort in the future which will be during the Millennium.

Isaiah 40:1 *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.*

2) Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

3) The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4) Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

5) And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Please turn with me to Zechariah 1. Again, a joyous time and comfort for the Holy Land is pictured and prophesied at a future time which will be during the Millennium.

Zechariah 1:16 *Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.*

17) Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD [Yehovah – God the Father] shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

Please turn with me to Jeremiah 31. This wonderful time in the future is described again and again as a time when sorrow will become joy, and when distress and depression will become comfort.

Jeremiah 31:10 *Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.*

11) *For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.*

12) *Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.*

13) *Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.*

Let's continue in verse 30 of Jeremiah 31, and we'll read a very well-known prophecy of a brand-new relationship between humanity and God the Father. And that new relationship will bring comfort to all.

Jeremiah 31:30 *But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.*

31) *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:*

32) *Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:*

33) *But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

34) *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

The time of the Millennium will be a wondrous time, a time when mankind will know who God the Father is, a time when mankind will be instructed by God the Father through Jesus Christ and through us, a time when mankind will finally be at peace with one another, with themselves, and with their God.

Again brethren, we have reviewed only a few of the many verses concerning the future comforting of the world. The Old Testament is full of prophecies concerning the future comforting of Yehovah's people in the future. And that future is the Millennium when His people will be gathered back together, and when all mankind is resurrected to be comforted by the truth of God the Father's way.

The third point concerning our Heavenly Father and comfort is:

3. We are to comfort each other

God the Father comforts His children, His firstfruits. He comforts us daily and at all times. God the Father will comfort the rest of humanity in the future. But God the Father also wants us to comfort one another in this lifetime.

Brethren, we all have a wonderful, exciting future ahead of us. Please turn with me to 1 Thessalonians 4. The Apostle Paul wrote about this exciting future when we will be resurrected to eternal life. And then he adds a closing line to the story. I explored this section of scripture in my last sermon, but it bears going over again.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

14) *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God [ὁ θεός – ho theos – God the Father] bring with him.*

15) *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord [Κύριος without the definite article “the” – God the Father], that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord [ὁ Κύριος with the definite article “the” – Jesus Christ] shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

16) *For the Lord [ὁ Κύριος with the definite article “the” – Jesus Christ] himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God [Κύριος without the definite article “the” – God the Father]: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

17) *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord [ὁ Κύριος with the definite article “the” – Jesus Christ] in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord [Κύριος without the definite article “the” – God the Father].*

1 Thessalonians 4:13 (with substitutions) *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

14) *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God the Father bring with him.*

15) *For this we say unto you by the word of God the Father, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of Jesus Christ shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

16) *For Jesus Christ himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God the Father: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

17) *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet Jesus Christ in the air: and so shall we ever be with God the Father.*

And then, Paul closes with the following exhortation in verse 18.

1 Thessalonians 4:18 *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

The Apostle Paul exhorts us to comfort one another with the concept and the truth of the First Resurrection, our resurrection to spiritual eternal life in our Heavenly Father's Kingdom. Brethren, do we truly realize how wonderful our future in our Father's Kingdom will be, and how wonderful it will be when Jesus and the angels come to resurrect us and gather us together with Him in the air to take us back to God the Father's throne to present

us to our Heavenly Father? How unbelievably exciting will that be? Brethren, do we comfort one another with those words?

Please turn with me to 2 Corinthian 2. The Apostle Paul was correcting the Corinthian congregation on the way that they were treating the man who was sinning with sexual immorality. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul corrected them because they were tolerating this continuing sin and the continuing sinner within their midst. Paul instructed them to disfellowship the man until he repented, changed, and bore fruit of that change. The man apparently did indeed repent and change, but then, the Corinthian congregation would not accept him back. Paul's exhortation to the congregation is given in 2 Corinthians 2.

2 Corinthians 2:5 *But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.*

6) *Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.*

7) *So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.*

The man in Corinth had repented of his past actions. He apparently changed completely and showed fruits of his repentance. However, the congregation apparently still was shunning the man and still punishing the man for his past sins. Paul exhorted the Corinthian congregation to stop doing this, and instead, to forgive him and to *comfort him*.

Brethren, do we forgive others when they repent and show fruit of the repentance? Or do we continue to harbor ill against them instead of comforting them? Have we learned to let go of past offenses and past sins, both of others and of ourselves?

Please turn with me to Colossians 4. Toward the end of his epistle to the Colossian congregation, Paul wrote about several of the people who had comforted him in his work as an apostle.

Colossians 4:7 *All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:*

8) *Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;*

9) *With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.*

10) *Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)*

11) *And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.*

Paul was a human just like the rest of us. He needed encouragement, and he needed comforting. Please turn with me to 2 Corinthians 11. When you look at all that Paul

endured during his ministry, we can see why he appreciated the encouragement and comforting from others.

2 Corinthians 11:23 *Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.*

24) *Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.*

25) *Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;*

26) *In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;*

27) *In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*

28) *Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*

Brethren, none of us to my knowledge have been stoned, or shipwrecked, or beaten with rods, or have been naked without food and drink for extended periods of time. Paul's life was not pleasant much of the time, and he received comfort from others. Brethren, do we comfort others in their time of trials and tests and problems?

Please turn with me to 1 Thessalonians 5. Paul again exhorts us to comfort one another and edify one another. This is just part of showing the agape love that God the Father shows us and uses to comfort us.

1 Thessalonians 5:8 *But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.*

9) *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,*

10) *Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.* 11) *Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*

Please turn with me just a few verses further to verse 14, and we will read Paul's final exhortations and instructions to the Thessalonian congregation in his first epistle.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.*

15) *See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.*

16) *Rejoice evermore.*

17) *Pray without ceasing.*

18) *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

19) *Quench not the Spirit.*

20) *Despise not prophesyings.*

- 21) *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*
- 22) *Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

In verse 14, the Greek word for “feeble-minded” is ὀλιγόψυχος (oligópsuchos) Strong’s #3642 which means *faint-hearted or of small courage*. So, among the final instructions to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul was exhorting the brethren to comfort and encourage the other brethren who have lost courage in a trial or a problem in their lives. Brethren, do we do that in our daily lives? Do we lift one another up, or do we tear one another down by our words, by our actions, and by our attitudes?

So brethren, it is so important in these last days of this present age that we comfort one another and help one another toward the Kingdom.

The important point is that God the Father comforts His children, but God the Father uses human instruments many, if not most, of the times to do the comforting. If we are humble and if we submit to His will, God the Father can and will use us to comfort others.

So in today’s message, we have explored three points concerning God the Father and comfort.

1. God the Father comforts His firstfruits in this lifetime. The Bible is full of examples of how our Heavenly Father has comforted His saints throughout the ages. And He continues to comfort us today.
2. God the Father will comfort all of mankind in the future. The Bible is full of examples and prophecies of how our Heavenly Father, along with Jesus Christ and the saints, will comfort all of mankind in the future during the Millennium.
3. We are to comfort one another. It is an imperative duty and responsibility of the firstfruits called out by our Heavenly Father to comfort each other in our times of need, in our times of discouragement, in our times of fear and faintheartedness, in our times of grief, in our times of doubt, and in our times of disappointment and bitterness.

Brethren, for a final scripture, please turn with me to Philippians 4. In closing his epistle to the brethren in Philippi, the Apostle Paul gave to them some final exhortations and instructions for them to follow in the days, months, and years to come. And they are important exhortations and instructions for us to follow today.

Philippians 4:4 *Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.*

5) *Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.*

6) *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

7) *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

8) *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report [the Greek word means praiseworthy]; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

9) *Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*

10) *But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.*

11) *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

12) *I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*

13) *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

There is so much jampacked in these verses for us to contemplate and for us to consider. Especially in this Festival season, are we rejoicing? Are we praying to the Father? Are we thankful for what He has done for us and for His comfort? Do we have peace of mind in a troubled world? What are our thoughts centered on throughout the day? Do we think on the things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, admirable, virtuous and praiseworthy? Are these the things we let in our minds? Are these the things we think about and concentrate on during the day?

Brethren, God the Father is a God of all comfort. He and His Son, Jesus Christ, love us all so deeply. God the Father is always there to comfort us, to console us, and to direct us out of despair. He will never leave us or forsake us. He wants to give us His Kingdom. He wants us to be victorious, and He will do whatever He will to bring about that victory. But still, the final success of our calling by Him is up to us. Will we respond to His direction? Will we obey Him? Will we humbly submit to His will?

Brethren, there is such an exciting time awaiting us in our future when we will forever be spirit beings with Jesus Christ and with our Heavenly Father – God the Father – the God of All Comfort.