

I. Introduction

A. Unimaginable comfort

1. Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into Heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:54-60)
 - a. Full of Holy Spirit, saw God's glory, and beheld Jesus
 - b. Comfort: to give strength or hope; to ease the grief or trouble of
2. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2)
 - a. What have they witnessed? Faithfulness and comfort of the Spirit to the end
 - b. "Sits at the right hand"=so the Comforter can come

B. Paraclete

1. Advocate=truth
2. Counselor=obedience
3. Comforter=peace

II. Comforter

A. Durable peace

1. "with you forever" and "dwells with you and will be in you"
If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, Whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. (Acts 14:15-17)
2. These things I have spoken to you while I am still 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 that I have 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 hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard Me say to you, "I am going away, and I will come to you." If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. (Acts 14:25-29)

- a. Spirit in the name of Jesus
- b. Peace I give in the form of the Comforter
- c. Rejoice that I go away (marriage language, you know what I am doing and what to expect)
- d. *Through the comforting role of the Spirit, we have a durable peace in His presence and power, not like the world.

B. Contexts of comfort

1. In our identity and intimacy

- a. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He Who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you. ... The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (Romans 8:9-11,16)
- b. Secure and sealed by the Spirit is a source of comfort

2. In our grief

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And He Who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27)

- a. Grief from sin and brokenness: sickness, weakness, death, relationships, loved ones struggling, and pain
- b. We don't know how to get from our weakness and affliction to the strength and promises we have in Christ... but the Spirit does.
- c. During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew. (Exodus 2:23-25)
- d. *Grief is not something that Jesus followers are cured/exempt from. But because of the Spirit, grief becomes something that transforms us and reminds us of God's faithfulness.

3. In our suffering

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 affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia.

For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God Who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us. On Him we have set our hope that He will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many. (2 Corinthians 1:3-11)

- a. Comfort in suffering (and ability to comfort others)
- b. Share in the sufferings of Christ and comfort of Christ
- c. Sufferings, comfort, dependence, and trust in God

C. Characterization of the church/bride

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. (Acts 9:31)

- 1. Context: Gospel advancing and persecution increasing
- 2. "Walking in the fear of the Lord"
 - a. Does not mean afraid of God, His punishment toward sin when our sin is already dealt with by Jesus on the cross
 - b. We do fear going back into seeking satisfaction in sin and unfaithfulness
 - c. Isaiah trembles, Ezra falls on his face, even the disciples were afraid when they realized Who Jesus was.
 - d. *With increasing knowledge of God and awareness of Who He is, there is an increasing fear that is in awe of Him—His holiness, greatness, and majesty evoke a sober reality in us.
- 3. "in the comfort of the Holy Spirit"
 - a. We who follow Jesus must have our holy fear coupled with the comfort of the Spirit.
 - b. We are comforted in our fear of being unholy, unworthy, and just not enough by the witness of the Spirit in our lives

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from Whom every family in Heaven and on Earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14-19)
 - c. *When the church, the bride, walks in holy fear of God and in the comfort of the Spirit, we are empowered and able to achieve exactly what Jesus commanded us to do: make disciples of all tribes and tongues!

III. Final thoughts

- A. How the Spirit, in our time of being ready, prepares and purifies us for Jesus the Bridegroom-King
 - 1. In all of His roles, the Spirit is getting us ready for Jesus.
 - 2. The Spirit's roles all work together, different roles but one purpose and result.

3. *The Spirit reveals the truth about who we are and Who Jesus is (advocate) and moves us to obey what Jesus has called us to do (counselor). As we live out our identity through obedience to Jesus the Spirit constantly comforts us and brings a peace in our lives that is not affected by circumstances but is in the confidence of knowing we are the treasure of this Bridegroom-King.

B. The bride has made herself ready ...

Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready; (Revelation 19:7)

1. Unceasing night-and-day **prayer** for God's justice.
And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them? I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on Earth?" (Luke 18:6-8)
2. **Gospel of the Kingdom** preached and demonstrated to every ethnicity globally
And He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. (Matthew 4:23)
And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14)
And He said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16)
3. The church will be **one** even as the Father and the Son are one. Union with God and with one another will reveal the most glorified and unified witness for Christ.
I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. The glory that You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and You in Me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as You loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, may be with Me where I am, to see My glory that You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know You, I know You, and these know that You have sent me. I made known to them Your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them. (John 17:20-26)