

THE FIRST 15

Friday, November 15, 2024

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As we endeavor to build our lives on Christ the Cornerstone, we see how God's grace moves us from self-concern to concern for others.

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed and holy Lord God, I come to this quiet place to spend some time alone with You. I quiet my noisy thoughts and still my restless body. I breathe deeply and slowly, inhaling the promise of Your love and peace. Open my heart to receive a fresh experience of Your Holy Spirit. Open my ears to hear the message You have for me today. Open my mind to sympathize with the struggles and disappointments of others. Open my mouth to offer words of kindness and encouragement. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

REFLECTION

In this brief passage from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians he uses the word "comfort" nine times. That is a lot of comfort. According to the English dictionary, the word comfort means "to give strength and hope," "to ease grief or trouble," and "to console, soothe or reassure." Paul names God as the Father of Compassion and the God of all comfort. That is the kind of God we have. A merciful, compassionate, comforting God. So whatever you are dealing with today, remember who God is. If you are troubled by something, seek God's comfort. If you are distressed about something, seek God's comfort. If you are suffering in some way, seek God's comfort. If you are anxious about the future, seek God's comfort. If you find yourself comforted, do as Paul suggests and from your more comfortable position comfort someone else.

An important aspect of Christian fellowship is to share in one another's difficulties and suffering. Christians are not to be "fair weather" friends. Paul says that if one part of the Body of Christ, the church, suffers, every part suffers with it; and if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it (1 Corinthians 12:26).

As Christians, we weep together and we rejoice together. When someone in our faith community suffers we suffer with them. Believers can actively share and participate in the troubles of our brothers and sisters in Christ. How do we do that? We show our concern, visit

them, call them, spend time with them, talk with them, listen to them, help them as we are able, provide resources, write them a note, offer encouraging words, serve them, pray for them, and love them through their difficulties and disappointments. These actions provide great comfort.

This is called the fellowship of suffering. If you have ever been on the receiving end of this sort of fellowship in a season of trouble you know what a great blessing it is and how God worked through other people to bless you. And if you have ever been on the giving end of this fellowship and took part in helping a Christian brother or sister go through a season of difficulty, you know how blessed you were as well. We have a God of all comfort. He comforts us and He calls us to comfort one another.

Ask: In what way do I need God's comfort today? What can I do to bring a little comfort to someone else?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord God, as Paul tells us, You are the Father of Compassion and the God of all comfort. I call out to You as a new day dawns and share the depths of my distress, suffering, troubles and concerns. Bring comfort to my soul. Give me strength and hope. Console my heart, soothe my spirit and reassure my mind. Increase my awareness of the struggles of those around me. Give me a heart of compassion and inspire me to offer comfort to others as you have comforted me. Amen.