

The Holy Spirit is Our Comfortor

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- [0:00] Well, our memory verse was about suffering. It has been about suffering lately.! We just said it's good for a young man to bear that yoke while he is young.
- ! We talked about Romans chapter 8 last week and we saw that we live in a world of groaning.
- The creation is groaning. We ourselves are groaning in this world of death, in this world of heartache, in this world of pain and sorrow.
- Shakespeare's Hamlet, Act 3, Scene 1 is famous. You're going to recognize it right away. And it's famous because it is so very insightful about the condition that we find ourselves in and the feelings that we have.
- Hamlet says to be or not to be, that is the question. In other words, Hamlet is considering, is it better to go on living or is it better just to die?
- [1:26] Why is that even a question? Why is it to go on living is such a hard thing sometimes to choose? Well, he says, whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune or to take arms against a sea of troubles.
- Life sometimes is a sea of troubles. And he goes on and he lists the things that people face. And just because it's a play doesn't mean it's not real.
- He talks about the oppressor's wrong. Oppression. The proud man's insulting you. The pangs of despised love.
- The law's delay. We see things and things aren't right. And it takes so long for justice to come about. He talks about heartache.
- He talks about grunting and sweating under a sad life. Well, in some ways, Hamlet is the Ecclesiastes of Shakespeare because it is all about what do you do when you're stuck in a situation where things are so unfair, where there's death, and you are robbed of justice.
- [2:49] And it's a difficult life. And that's the life everyone in this cursed world has to live in. But, Christian, I want to say that you have special difficulties.
- You have all of those troubles. And you have additional sorrows. Peter is fond of telling and writing to Christians, and he calls them as strangers in a foreign land.
- They're just strangers. At least the unbeliever belongs in this life. He belongs in this world. But you don't belong here. Then you have an enemy within.
- Within you are these two warring principles of the flesh and the spirit. The unbeliever is at least a whole creature. He's holy flesh, but he's whole.
- There's not this huge internal conflict that he doesn't say, Oh, the things I don't want to do, those are the things I keep on doing. You have those sorrows.
- [3:54] Psalm 73 says that sometimes it even seems like the wicked don't even suffer the normal ills of humankind, of mankind. They don't suffer like we do.
- Asaph says, I am disciplined every morning. But with all that additional sorrow, we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.

And that's the promise. That all of these troubles, God says, I'm working for your good. For the unbeliever, all of their good things work for their bad.

And we could talk about that. For the unbeliever, all their good things work for their bad, but all of our bad things work for our good. But there's still one more thing to say about suffering and the suffering state.

And it's this. It's through our suffering that we are brought into communion, into fellowship, into the sympathy and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

[5:01] One reason for suffering is it's only in the context of suffering that we can experience the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

And it's only in the context of suffering that we can come to see God as the comforter. And that's part of his glory. That he is the God of all comfort.

We're going to talk about that later. So we have suffering that the world doesn't know about. But then again, we have comfort that the world knows nothing of.

Now, we've seen the Holy Spirit in a variety of ways. We've seen his ministry in different lights. He's the life giver. He's the indweller.

He's the sanctifier. He is the testifier. He's the witness. He's the author of prayer. And this morning and finally, we're going to see him as the comforter.

[5:56] As the comforter. The Father knew all about these circumstances that we are going to live in. The heartache and the fear. The stress.

The anxiety. He knew that he chose a path for us that was a path of affliction. It's hard for the righteous to be saved, Peter says.

It's a path of affliction. And he knew and he planned that path to be a path that so often is hedged with thorns.

And he knew all those sorrows. And he planned them. We already said he's the one that lays the yoke upon us. So he knows all your difficulty.

But this is the thing. He didn't leave you alone. He gave you the Holy Spirit. To go through this life with you. To hold your hand while you're on this path of affliction.

[6:58] So that when you go into the fire. And when you go through the streams. He doesn't abandon you. The Holy Spirit then comes to you. And comforts you. So on the night our Lord was betrayed.

When the disciples' hearts were troubled. You remember they were very troubled. His heart is troubled. Their heart is troubled. It's this great truth. That Jesus pointed his disciples to.

He says I'm leaving you. I'm going to the Father. And when I get to the Father. I will ask the Father. That he. And he will give you another counselor. Another comforter.

Another one to come beside you. And walk through the difficulties with you. Up until this point. Jesus had been the one that was walking through. The difficulties with the disciples.

The challenges that they were facing. The persecution they were facing. Jesus was there. Jesus was comforting his disciples. But he says. It's good that I go. Because if I don't go.

[7:58] The Father. Will not. Send you the comforter. The comforter will not come. But if I go. I will send him to you.

And so that's what we want to talk about this morning. The Holy Spirit is our comforter. Several points. And the first is this.

That our God is a comforting God. Our God is a God of comfort. Comfort means soothing in distress.

Helping in distress. Distress. So just to get this idea of comfort. When the baby is dirty.

Or wet. Or hungry. And the baby is in distress. The baby cries. And the mom or the dad comes. And he comforts.

[8:54] She comforts the baby. Our God is a God like that. Who when we cry in our distress. He comes to comfort us. Again.

Remember. The Israelites were in Egypt. And they were in distress. And they cried. And the Lord came. And he said.

I am coming to relieve them. I'm coming to comfort them. And so. Our God is a comforting God. In some ways. The Holy Spirit has this special ministry. As comforter. He's the church's comforter.

He's the family of God's comforter. While we walk through this world. But. God the Father is a comforter. Second Corinthians one. Says.

God is the God of all comfort. Who comforts us. In all our troubles. So that we can comfort those in any trouble. For just as the sufferings of Christ.

[9:49] Flow over into our lives. So also through Christ. Our comfort overflows. What is your feeling about God?

Is he a harsh. Cruel. Standoffish father. Is he careless. Or thoughtless. That's not the Bible's God.

God. That's the devil's God. That he passes off to us. That's not God. His heart is the heart of a comforter. Isaiah 41 says. Comfort. Comfort my people.

He says to all of his prophets. My people are in distress. Now. Go and comfort them. Get up on the high mountains. And yell. For everyone to hear.

God is coming to comfort his people. Then Jesus Christ is a comforter. His heart beats in sympathy with ours. In our weakness.

[10:54] He sympathizes with us. And sends us comfort. In a wonderful book. Called the heart of Christ. Thomas Goodwin. A Puritan said this.

And his whole premise was this. That. Sometimes people think that just because. Now Jesus is in heaven. And he is exalted. And he is now. Passed from this world of troubles and sorrows.

That now. He is in some way now callous to our situation. He says that's something that people think that. Well maybe Jesus on earth could have comforted me. But Jesus isn't on earth anymore.

Now he's exalted at the right hand of God. And Thomas Goodwin says. Well let's look at that. And he says. Let's look at some of the last things that Jesus had to say.

Let's look at some of the last things that Jesus did. As he is going out. He is giving to his people. He's saying this is my heart. This is my heart. This is my heart. As I'm leaving.

[11:53] And so now that I'm exalted on high. Don't think that my heart has changed. He's the same yesterday. Today and forever. And he saw his disciples in distress.

And his. And remember. This last night. His heart is troubled. He's the one that is getting ready to go. And drink the cup of God's wrath. And yet his disciples hearts are troubled.

And his heart bubbles over with sympathy. When we're in situations like that. We often shut down. And we say. Who cares about what other people are feeling.

This is me. But his heart bubbled over with sympathy. And on that last night. He spoke. Words of comfort. He talked about where he was going.

He talked about why he was going. He talked about the Holy Spirit. As coming as a comforter. Jesus Christ's heart. Is aware of our weaknesses. He knows our sorrows.

[12:49] He knows the things that trouble us. And he sympathizes with us. The scriptures. The God breathed out scriptures. Is for our comfort. Romans 15.

4 says. For everything that was written in the past. Was written to teach us. That through endurance. And the encouragement of the scriptures. We might have hope. It could be translated through the patience.

And comfort. Of the scriptures. We could have hope. We need comfort. We need hope. The way to heaven is hard.

We need comfort. And God's breathed out scriptures. And God's breathed out. And God's breathed out. And God's breathed out. And God's breathed out. And God's breathed out. as a comforting God.

And that's part of his beauty. That's part of his glory. That in God, he is holy, holy, holy. He is high and exalted.

[13:51] But where else does he live? Also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit to revive the spirit of the lowly and revive the heart of the contrite.

Psalms 34, the Lord is close to the broken hearted. High, majestic, bigger and greater than we could possibly ever imagine.

And yet, paired with that, in his heart, is this heart of tenderness for your sorrows. Tenderness and a broken heart for what breaks your heart.

And that's his glory and that's his majesty. So that, and then just to say, that's the Holy Spirit. He's God of gods. He's light of lights.

Equal in power and glory with God the Father and God the Son. Just as divine. Part of the Trinity. And yet, he is close to the broken hearted. He's a comforter.

[14:51] Now that's the first point. The second point is this. How does the Holy Spirit comfort his people? How does he comfort us? How does he comfort God's family?

Well, turn in your Bibles to John chapter 15. John chapter 15. And verse 26.

And as I read this, I want you to look and see if you can find how does the Holy Spirit comfort us?

John 15, 26. When the counselor, the comforter, counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

How does the Holy Spirit comfort us? What does it say? It tells us about Jesus.

[16:04] The Spirit comforts us by telling us the truth about Jesus. And again, this goes back a few weeks when we were talking about the testifying, the witnessing ministry of the Holy Spirit.

It's through that witness that he comforts us. We saw last week the connection between the Spirit's testifying ministry and how that helps us to pray.

So we learn to pray as we learn to venture on Jesus. And so we come with our sin because Jesus is the Savior and we come with our troubles because Jesus is that great high priest and he's the one that gives us confidence as we pray.

Well today, that testifying ministry is how he comforts us. Listen to Winslow at this point. Here is the true source of comfort. What higher comfort do we need?

What more can we have? In other words, what else could God give us? What more could he do for us? This is enough to heal every wound, to dry up every tear, to assuage every grief, to lighten every cross, to fringe with brightness every dark cloud, and to make the roughest place smooth, that a believing soul has Jesus.

[17:35] We have Jesus. And having Jesus, what do we have? What do we have? Well, we have the complete, you have the complete blotting out of all of your sins.

The complete blotting out, the complete forgiveness of all of your sins. So how does the Spirit comfort us? How does the Spirit comfort us? He tells us of Jesus.

He brings the truth of Jesus to our souls. And we see in him, in Jesus, I have complete and full forgiveness.

And isn't that a comfort? Where could we get comfort apart from that? And, you know, don't tell me about the comfort that the world has.

Don't tell me about the comfort of money or domestic happiness or fun. Because what good do those things do when I have this plague of sin in my heart?

[18:43] Those things don't answer, don't say anything, don't help at all, the sin in my heart. And so what comforts there? Every other comfort is empty.

Every other comfort is poor. And you know that, don't you? You have felt that. because sometimes when we have our sin in our heart, we try to self-medicate it.

When we have the guilt and the shame, instead of going and receiving, again, fresh forgiveness from Jesus, we've tried to dull our senses. We've tried to overeat, over-drink, over-sleep, over-work.

some way of bringing comfort to our own hearts. We run to our idols. And our idols leave us more broken and poor than we were before.

So you know, when we're talking about the biggest problem in my heart, my guilt before God, what other comfort is there? But the Holy Spirit comforts us by showing us the entire blotting out of all of our sins.

[20:04] The devil, the accuser of the brethren, the accuser of the family of God, he wants us to doubt our pardon. He wants us to unhinge our minds from that truth.

He wants us to doubt that and be confused about that. And that's what he's always up to. And so, sometimes he grows strong. He waxes strong in that.

And he brings the doubt. He brings the accusation. And just like John 17 talks about, it's the hour of darkness. And that comes upon us.

And there's trials from the outside and there's doubts within. But does the Holy Spirit leave us in those moments? No, he comes as a comforter.

And he shows us, he shows us the full forgiveness that we have in Jesus. He shows us the effectiveness of the cross.

[21:04] Yes, all that sin is true. But Jesus died. And his blood covers all of that. His blood blots it all out. Takes the stain away.

And once for all, the sacrifice has been made. So now there's no condemnation. That's the witness of the Holy Spirit. There's now no condemnation.

And so now, when we confess our sins, he brings that promise to us. Now when we confess our sins, God is what? First, faithful and just.

God is faithful. It's true. But that's, it's true, but it's not what John says that God is gracious and merciful to forgive us our sins.

That's true. But that's not what John points to. He says he's faithful. He's just to forgive us of our sins.

[22:05] In other words, the very character and nature of God is put on the line, whether he will forgive you or not. Is God a liar or not?

And God is faithful. He says, he says, I will forgive you. And he does. And then he says, it's just. It wouldn't be right if I didn't forgive you.

The Holy Spirit puts us on that firm ground. Not just mercy and grace of God, but the very faithfulness and justice of God. Will the judge of all the earth not do what is right?

He will. And he'll forgive us our sins. And that's how the Spirit comforts us. And so Psalm 34, blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man who knows that witness of the Holy Spirit. There's more. How does the Spirit comfort us? The Spirit shows us our full acceptance.

[23:10] And the way Winslow puts it is our full acceptance from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. He wants us to put dates on our acceptance.

So this day, July 30th, if you are a Christian, you have been accepted by God. It's not something that, it's not like the seasons of the year that grows and changes and is always in and out.

It's not like that. He says, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, from January 1st to December 31st, Christian, you are accepted. And so we stand in grace, Romans 5 says.

We stand in grace. We're adopted, Romans 8. And that's not an adoption that comes and goes. It's not something that God takes us into his home for a while and then we have to go.

No, we belong, we're accepted, the spirit comforts us with all of that. And maybe someone is saying, but what about my sin?

[24:26] Maybe someone here is saying in their heart, but all my sin, all my weakness, all my flaws, all my wanderings. And I'll say, yes, I know it all.

And the Bible knows it all. God knows it all. And none of that, your weakness, your flaws, your wandering, none of that undermines this gospel truth that we're justified by faith, and by faith we've gained access into this grace in which we now stand.

And so all the truths about justification, all the truths about the righteousness that's been imputed to us, all the truth about God's love, all the truth about God's adopting us as children, do, let me ask you, in the Bible, do any of those promises come in the context of us being in heaven and being perfect?

Who are they written to? Well, they're written to people like us. This side of heaven, this side of perfection, and so they come now to all who believe, and the truth is for you.

This truth is for you in your wanderings, in your flaws, in your sin, in your sin. You have the Father's heart.

[25:52] That's how the Spirit comforts us. He loves us and He accepts us from January 1st to December 31st. Does that mean that our relationship with God is just this flat thing that bears no change, that there's not closer and farther, there's not better and worse?

Does that mean that there's no fatherly displeasure or fatherly pleasure? No. But what we're talking about is the status of the relationship.

Once a child of God, you remain a child of God. Once accepted, you have the father's heart. The prodigal son wronged his father and he wandered away and he sinned grievously, but did he ever lose his father's heart?

Well, in that story, what do you see? You see a father who is always looking off in the distance, standing on the field, standing on the porch, looking off in the distance, and he's waiting for his boy to come home.

And then he sees his boy coming home and like a boy himself, he hitches up his robe and he runs down the road to his son. The boy always had the father's heart.

[27:27] And that's the truth that this spirit testifies to. Yes, we wander. And yes, there are low points in our relationship.

And there are things in our lives that God is not happy about. God is But that never changes the status of our relationship. And it never changes our father's commitment to do us good, to welcome us back when we come back.

And that's how the spirit comforts us. And I just, again, I want to say, do you see the love the spirit has for you? someone who loves you comforts you.

Someone who loves you comforts you and see then how the spirit loves you when you're in your deepest and your lowest points. Even when you're like that prodigal son in the faraway country and you're coming to your senses, the Holy Spirit is there.

So, how does he comfort us? He testifies to Jesus. The third point, how he especially comforts us in our trials.

[28:42] He especially comforts us in our trials. Jesus promised the spirit when the disciples were getting ready to face the worst thing that they're going to face in their whole lives, this deep trial.

But the spirit comforts us in our trials. And again, listen to Winslow at this point. Whatever is a cause of depression to the believer, whatever grieves his heart, wounds his spirit, or casts him down, it is a trial.

If it is only a cold look from eyes that once shone with love, it is still a trial. If it is only an unkind word from the tongue that once flowed with affection, it is still a trial.

And in proportion to the heart's tenderness, the keenness of the trial is felt. In other words, God, and really we, as we're thinking about ourselves and thinking about others, we shouldn't measure the trial by the trial itself, but we should measure it by how it hurts the heart.

That's why we can't look at other people and look at their trials and say, oh, those are little things. If that was happening to me, it wouldn't be a problem. Maybe if it was happening to you, it wouldn't be such a problem. But when it happens to them, it really hurts.

[30:10] It's a real test. It's a real pain. And if the things that happened to you happened to them, maybe it would be reversed. It wouldn't be such a big deal. We should measure, and God measures our trials not by the trials in and of themselves.

He measures it by how painful they are to us. But with the pain comes the comforter. And he shows us the father's love in the trial.

Because the father rebukes the son he loves. We need to hold those two truths that we just talked about at full acceptance, and yet there are times of rebuke and discipline.

But underneath both of them is the father's love. The father rebukes the son he loves, and the spirit shows us the father's heart, and the spirit shows us the father's hand, because behind that rod of discipline is this deep and unwavering covenant love.

And the spirit shows us that love. He lets us peer in some way behind the frowning providence to see the smiling face. He sees behind the shadow to the light above.

[31:27] I was just walking this morning, and it was a beautiful morning, and so many of the trees had shadows all the way in the bottom, but at the very top of a lot of these trees, it was sunny. Sometimes it's very gloomy on this side of things, and yet the father's heart is there.

He loves us. So he shows us the father's love. And sometimes the spirit shows us the purpose for the affliction. And I'm not saying we understand everything all the time right away, I'm not saying that, but very often the spirit shows us the reason why that had to happen.

I hear it so often, and I see it in my life so often, that in the moment I don't understand. But six months later, three months later, two years later, ten years later, I see, oh, that was, he was after good then.

This is what he's done. And sometimes he shows us the reasons for those afflictions soon. He comforts us by showing us that the trials don't come haphazardly.

It comes with a purpose. And so we say, it was good that I was afflicted. It was good that I was afflicted. I needed that. The world was making inroads in my heart. My affections were growing cold.

[32:53] I was growing complacent. I was heartless. I was careless. I was just not what I needed to be. My faith was shrinking. My zeal was shrinking. And what I needed was a good spanking.

To get me awake again. To get me lined up with God again. To get me moving again. And the spirit connects the dots between our suffering and the good that it did.

And we are comforted in it. And so we say it was good. There's comfort in it. Maybe the trial didn't change. Maybe the trial is still there. And yet we say, I find comfort here.

And last, how does the spirit comfort us in our trial? He again shows us the tenderness of Jesus. This is what we talked about before.

But the tenderness of Jesus in the trial. He's a brother born for adversity. He's a brother that doesn't lead.

[33:58] He's there. And you go through the adversity. And he's your brother. And he stays there. So we don't have a high priest who is unable. Who can't sympathize with us in our weaknesses.

But we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet was without sin. So let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence. Where does that confidence to go to the throne of grace come from?

It comes from the sympathy of Jesus. Jesus. If he was a careless, heartless person who didn't sympathize with us, I wouldn't have very much confidence going to him.

He's not going to understand me. He's not going to feel me. He's going to have these huge expectations about what I need to say and what I need to do. And if I don't do it right, then no.

But if he understands my weakness and my pain, then he takes my broken prayers and he sympathizes with them and he knows what I'm feeling, it's familiar with our pain.

[35:00] Our nature, he took it. Our sicknesses, he bore them. And our sorrows, he felt them.

And our crosses, he bore them. And our sins, he pardoned them. He went before his suffering people. And listen to Winslow and take this to heart.

It is enough for him. It's enough for Jesus. That you're a child of grief. That sorrow is the bitter cup that you are drinking.

And he asked no more. A cord is in a moment touched in his heart, which vibrates to that touched in yours.

Whether it's a note to be pleasing, whether it's a note, be it pleasing or mournful. For let it be ever remembered that Jesus has as much sympathy for joys as he has for the sorrows of his people.

[36:07] He rejoices with those who rejoice. He mourns with those who mourn. And when the believer suffers, the tenderness of Jesus is drawn forth.

the tenderness of Jesus draws forth his sustaining strength, his sanctifying grace, his comforting love, and all of that is unfolded in the experience of his child while passing through the furnace.

The Son of God is with him in the furnace. Jesus of Nazareth is walking with him in the billows, on the waves. He has the heart of Christ.

And that's how the Spirit comforts us. He brings the heart of Christ to us. And so again, see his love. The Holy Spirit loves you.

He testifies to Jesus. He brings our souls to Christ when we're broken hearted. He brings us to Christ so that we can find healing and restoration and peace.

[37:13] And so the work of the Holy Spirit. I hope you love him more for these seven or eight weeks that we've done this. And I hope you're seeing his love for you.

The Holy Spirit does love you. And you can go in the joy of that. We are dismissed. test.