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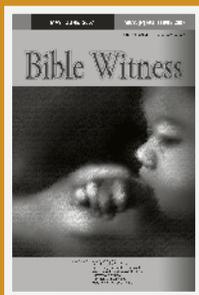
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Bible Witness



Articles Inside: The God of All Comfort
Holy Spirit, the Comforter
Comforting Nature of God's Word
Ministering God's Comfort to Others
Comfort of a Widow
A Diligent Christian Boy
Bible Trivia - Genesis 29 & 30



Editor
Prabhudas Koshy

**Publishing & Circulation
Co-ordinator**
Lok Kwok Wah

Technical Editors
Adrienne Foo, Carolyn Koshy, Jenny Lok
Lok Kwok Wah, Mah Lean Choo

Cover Design
Melissa Neo

Layout
Kenneth Wong

Illustrations
Sharon Ng

Publisher
Bible Witness Media Ministry of
Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church,
Singapore

Printer
Chung Printing

Contact Information
By mail:

Bible Witness Media Ministry
510 Geylang Road, #02-06
Singapore 389466

Tel: (65) 6741-1910 **Fax:** (65) 6741-1016

Web-site: www.biblewitness.com

E-mail: editor@biblewitness.com

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The God of All Comfort

Dennis Kwok

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 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. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation” (2 Corinthians 1:3-6).

Introduction

Out of all the churches which the Apostle Paul had ever ministered, the Corinthian Church was the most problematic one. But Paul did not give her up. He knew the Corinthian believers needed God and it was at such a time they needed to be assured by Him who is the God of all comfort.

From these four verses alone, the root word ‘comfort’ or ‘consolation’ (Greek: *parakaleō*) appears 9 times, not to mention the whole book. This shows the emphasis that indeed our God is the God of all comfort. He assures us of His comforting promise that He will always be present to help us whenever we face sufferings, troubles and tribulations. The Greek word for ‘comfort’ literally means ‘to call alongside’. It describes the power of God to strengthen, encourage, and assure you that you need not fear at all though you may be

walking through the valley of the shadow of death.

Do you know Him who is the Comforter? Do you know how He comforts you?

The Triune God is the Comforter

God the Father is the Comforter

In verse 4, God the Father is described as the One ‘who comforteth us’ (*ho parakalōn*). The word ‘comfort’ here is a participle used as a substantive. It is written in the present tense and active voice, indicating an ongoing or characteristic activity. In other words, it simply means that God continues to care for us and comfort us wherever we may be.

He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and also the Father of mercies. He is One who has compassion upon His little children. What is Paul’s secret for victory when he went through great trials and temptations? His secret is God who has mercy upon him. Without the mercy of God, he could not have made it to the end. He could not have been faithful and true to his calling as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is God your Father? If so, His mercy is upon you! You can be sure He will comfort you beyond what you could have asked for.

God the Son is the Comforter

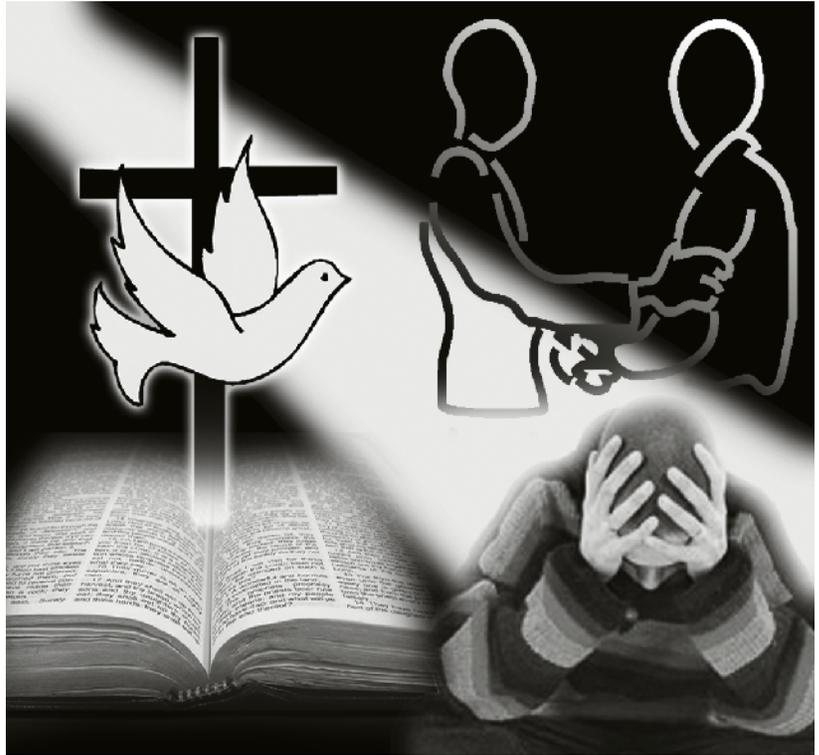
This title ‘the God of all comfort’ though belonging to God the Father, also belongs

The Comfort of God

to God the Son. At the time of the writing of this epistle to the Corinthians, Paul was going through tremendous persecution and suffering for the sake of the Gospel. Yet he was able to find comfort under such situations. The source of this comfort came from God. This is because Paul knew that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself had gone through all the hard times and troubles when He was on this earth.

Since Jesus had experienced trials and temptations while He was on earth, surely He was able to identify and feel with them who were going through these difficult times for the sake of the Gospel.

In John 14:16, Christ Himself is the Comforter. He had gone through the worst kind of sufferings for us, therefore He is able to comfort us and give us sufficient grace to go through them. Hebrews 4:15, 16 prove this point: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Jesus Christ is the great Comforter for all Christians throughout the ages. And when we are comforted of Christ, we may be able to comfort others also who are going through difficult situations like us. God's grace indeed is sufficient for each one



of us when we trust in Him for deliverance (2 Corinthians 12:9).

God the Holy Spirit is the Comforter

God the Father is the Comforter. God the Son is also the Comforter. How about God the Spirit? All the occurrences of the word 'comforter' found in the New Testament refer to the Holy Spirit. Christ Himself has named the third person of the Holy Trinity as the Comforter (see John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). Indeed, the Comforter sent by God the Father in the name of God the Son, has come and is now indwelling us, empowering and strengthening us to run the Christian race victoriously. In biblical term, the empowering is called the filling of the Holy Spirit. With this divine filling, indeed "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). God the Holy Spirit is such a wonderful Comforter. Surely He is to be blessed above all the earth. Blessed be God the Comforter!

How Believers are Comforted

Through God's Word

We are comforted by God's precious Word in all our tribulations. The Psalmist has these words for us, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me. The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law. I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself" (Psalm 119:49-52). A Christian finds great comfort by spending time reading and meditating God's Word. God's Word is the best cure for our troubled and restless soul. It is through God's Word that we receive the knowledge of all His precious promises. If we neglect His Word, we are depriving ourselves of the comfort that God is ever ready to grant unto us.

Through God's Work

Sometimes our comfort comes in knowing that God is at work in our lives. One has written, "A saint's life is in the hands of God as a bow and arrow in the hands of an archer. God is aiming at something the saint cannot see; He stretches and strains, and every now and again the saint says, 'I cannot stand any more.' But God does not heed; He goes on stretching until His purpose is in sight, then He lets fly." Romans 8:28 is the perfect verse for us: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." The more we are tried the more we are comforted since we know God has our best interests at heart.

Conclusion

Let me conclude with this hymn of comfort by John Rippon.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than
to you He hath said –
To you, who for refuge to Jesus have fled?
"Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen and help thee,
and cause thee to stand
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand."
The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
"I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should
endeavour to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!"

May the God of all comfort help us today.
Amen.



**My brethren, count it all joy when
ye fall into divers temptations;
Knowing this, that the trying
of your faith worketh patience.
But let patience have her perfect
work, that ye may be perfect
and entire, wanting nothing.**

James 1:2-4



**The LORD is nigh unto them that
are of a broken heart; and saveth
such as be of a contrite spirit.**

Psalms 34:18



Holy Spirit, the Comforter

Richard M. Tiu

A vital ministry that the Lord Jesus did while He was on earth was in the area of providing comfort to His people. He comforted them by healing their infirmities. The lame walked; the blind saw; the deaf heard, and the mute spoke. Captive sinners were set free. He comforted the bereaved not only by His presence, but also by raising their dead. In so doing, not only were the physically dead raised but the spiritually dead as well. To the poor and hungry, He fed both body and soul. Indeed, this has brought great comfort to lives that have been touched by the Master. But as the Lord set out to fulfil His primary mission as ‘the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world’, He must need be crucified and to die on the cross of Calvary. As His crucifixion drew near, Jesus said to His disciples, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16).

This is the first reference in the Scriptures that depicts the Holy Spirit as the Comforter (cf. John 14:26). When Jesus said that He would pray for ‘another Comforter’, He did not mean that the Holy Spirit would come as another deity to do a totally different kind of ministry from what Jesus had done. There are two Greek words that can be translated into the English ‘another’. One is *heteros*, which

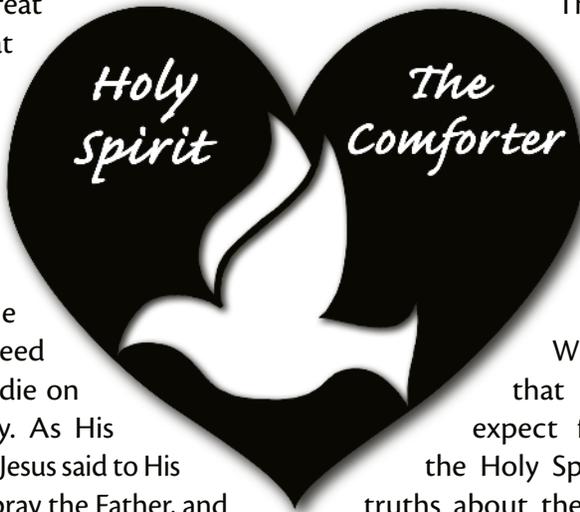
means ‘another of a different or opposite kind’. The other is *allos*, the meaning of which is ‘another of the same kind or genre’. In this particular verse in John 14:16, the Greek word *allos* is used to give us the idea that this is one and the same Spirit of the Lord that will come as the Comforter. This means that after His crucifixion and ascension to heaven the disciples will still have access to the same comfort Jesus bestowed unto them through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord made sure that they would not miss this point by adding the statement, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:18).

What then are the benefits that Christ’s followers can expect from the comfort of the Holy Spirit? There are several truths about the Holy Spirit’s ministry that Christians should look into. As their Comforter, the believers are assured of the following privileges and benefits from the third Person of the Trinity.

Christians are Assured of the Comforter’s Consolation

The early disciples witnessed how their Lord and Saviour was betrayed into the hands of men. He was whipped and tortured, mocked and humiliated, and eventually died a bloody



death as His body was pierced on that cross. This scene undoubtedly had left them cringing in fear, grief, and sorrow. In their distress, the Lord provides for them consolation that can only come from the divine Comforter. The original word that is translated as Comforter (*parakletos*) literally means ‘to come alongside with the express purpose of consoling and giving aid and protection to one in need’. No one can understand our sorrows or disappointments better than the divine Comforter and He comes to our side to comfort us; to sympathize, as well as to empathize with us in our moments of despair.

At any funeral wake, friends and relatives who come to console the bereaved will usually leave one by one as the night vigil wears on. But isn't it wonderful for believers to know that there is one Comforter who will remain and continue to provide comfort and consolation? As Jesus has said, "...that he may abide with you for ever." This guarantees that He will be there not only in times of sorrows particularly but throughout life's ups and downs as well. And the same comfort and consolation of the Holy Spirit is available to the saints on earth in every generation thereafter as long as the Lord carries. Now that's a lot of comfort indeed!

Christians are Assured of the Comforter's Counsel

The original word for 'Comforter' can also mean 'an advocate'. In fact, that is how the same Greek word *parakletos* is translated in 1 John 2:1. It carries the idea of a counsellor or teacher. In other words, the Holy Spirit's ministry also involves teaching and counselling the believers with the Word of God. That is precisely what Jesus said in John 14:26, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he

shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

The Holy Spirit is the believers' instructor in the things of God. He teaches and enables them to understand spiritual truths. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals the deep things of God and His Word. Paul wrote of this in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." The Christian has a divine instructor in the Holy Spirit who will guide him in the proper understanding of the Word of God. This assurance is based on the fact that the same Holy Spirit is described as "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD" (Isaiah 11:2).

Christians are Assured of the Comforter's Confession

When a person is born-again as he confesses Christ as his Lord and Saviour, this confession is actually not his own. It is the confession of the holy Comforter. His indwelling presence in the lives of the believers causes them to utter that confession of faith in Christ. The Apostle Paul helps us to understand "...that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 12:3).

The Scripture tells us that the Comforter will not only have us to confess our faith; He also enables us to testify it to others. Again, Jesus tells this truth to His disciples in no uncertain terms in John 15:26-27, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto

you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” Christians should be confident to go out for evangelism and witness for Christ because we have a divine Companion to aid us in testifying of our faith in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

For more than three years of ministry on earth, Jesus abided with His disciples until such time when they would see Him no more

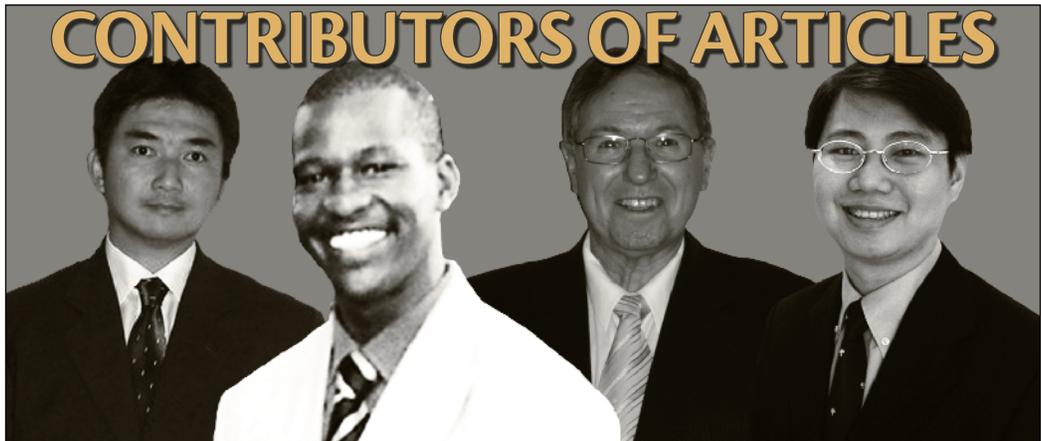
after Calvary. Though the Lord no longer abides with them, He abides in them with the coming of the Holy Spirit. Hence, Jesus fulfils His promise to every child of God that He will never leave them nor forsake them (Hebrews 13:5), and that He will be with them always even unto the end of the world (Matthew 28:20). As long as we live this life on earth, we will always have Christ in our hearts through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He is ever present; and He continues to comfort and guide us as we walk through every trial and vicissitudes of life.



~
**God is never nearer His church
than when trouble is near.**

Richard Sibbes (1577-1635)

~



Left to Right:

Richard M. Tiu (Missionary Lecturer to Bible College of East Africa, Nairobi, Kenya);

Nelson Were (Lecturer at Bomet Bible Institute, Kenya);

Errol D. Stone (Pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church-Perth, Australia);

Dennis Kwok (Pastor of Truth Bible-Presbyterian Church, Singapore).

Comforting Nature of God's Word

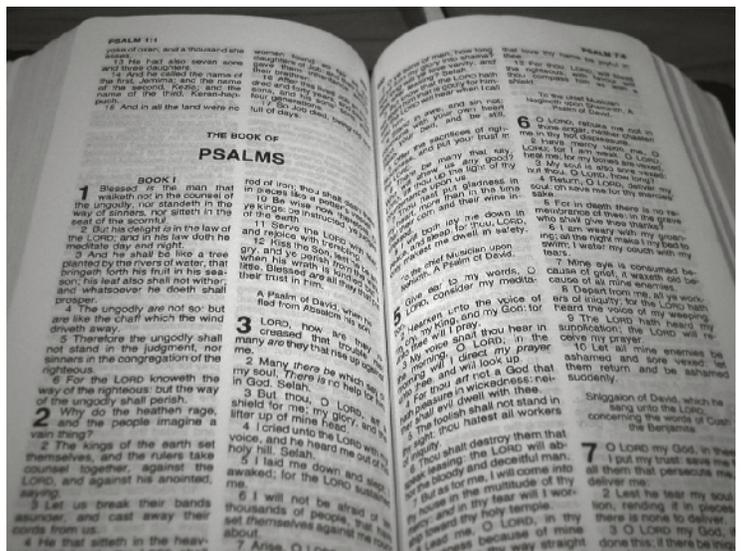
Nelson Were

When we think of comfort, we normally would think of "That which gives security from want and furnishes moderate enjoyment in life." In a sense, this is how many of us define comfort. But when we have this in mind, how many would classify the Word of God as "That which gives security from want and furnishes moderate enjoyment in life"? In life we experience pain and physical distress or uneasiness of body; we go through times when we have distress of mind, trouble and agitation; there were times when we face danger and calamity as well as times of weaknesses and infirmity. At all these times we need support, assistance, encouragement, help and comfort. Can we confidently turn to the Word of God under all these circumstances? Can we rely on it to ease our pains, calm our spirits, guide our paths; strengthen, invigorate and encourage us and thus give security and furnish moderate enjoyment in life? Of course everyone who

believes in the sufficiency of Scripture will be compelled to answer "yes" to the questions above.

The Scripture is indeed sufficient and we acknowledge it. But why is it that when faced with situations similar to those highlighted above, few would turn to the Word? Could it be because we are not aware of or not assured of the comforting nature of the Word of God? The Psalmist in Psalm 119 writes what can be termed as "the directory of God's Word" as it goes through the Hebrew

alphabet from Aleph to Tau (A to Z) pointing out the importance of God's Word to the believer. In it, he describes God's Word deeply and variously, and illustrates with his personal encounters with the Word. He describes the value of God's Word or the law of God in various stages and circumstances in life. Psalm 119:49-56 teaches the comforting nature of God's Word. Concerning this section, Spurgeon wrote, "This octrain deals with the comfort of the word. It begins by seeking the main consolation, namely, the Lord's fulfilment of his



promise, and then it shows how the word sustains us under affliction, and makes us so impervious to ridicule that we are moved by the harsh conduct of the wicked rather to horror of their sin than to any submission to their temptations. We are then shown how the Scripture furnishes songs for pilgrims, and memories for night-watchers; and the Psalm concludes by the general statement that the whole of this happiness and comfort arises out of keeping the statutes of the Lord.”

We acknowledge that life is not without afflictions, yet we desire a life with the least afflictions and for this cause different people go to different lengths trying to find a life that is as comfortable as humanly possible. Few though would turn to the Word and many would ask “How can the Word make my life comfortable?” The Psalmist, on the other hand, says in verse 49 that the Word of God (the most general term of all, embracing God’s truth in any form, stated, promised or commanded) is the cause of hope in him. By this, he presents God’s Word as effecting a state or bringing out a result in his life and what the Word of God establishes in his life

is hope. By hope, it brings expectation and cultivates patience and thus through whatever he goes through, he can wait for the passage of time being rooted in God and having comfort in life. Many times as we go through afflictions, distress, dangers, calamities, etc., we find that when we try to evaluate our circumstances, we cannot understand them, and the many “whys?” left unanswered discourage, depress and deprive us of our vigour in life. In view of this, as we look at Psalm 119:49-56 we learn of the comforting nature of the Word of God.

Firstly, the Psalmist affirms that the Word of God quickens him (v. 50), i.e., it is the Word of God that animates, enlivens, preserves, refreshes, rebuilds and recovers him. What can be noted concerning the nature of God’s Word in its comforting attribute is that it relates directly to life’s various circumstances. The Psalmist is very personal in this section. He highlights the comfort and hope that the Word gives as personal “my comfort” and as related specifically to his condition “in my afflictions”. Secondly, the Psalmist affirms that the word of God fortifies him (vv. 51-52), i.e., it is the Word of

God that keeps him on the right path. In his affliction, if it were not for the Word of God, he would derail because of the derision, but the Word that comforts also steadies him. It offers him peace and safety in that when he recalls its judicial processes and the authority of God who orders and determines all things as recorded in the Word, his resolve is strengthened and his feelings and affliction become bearable. Thirdly, the Psalmist affirms that the Word of God inspires him (vv. 53-55), i.e., it is the word of God that gives him the right perspective. Many of us get severely discouraged when we look at our circumstances and find no answers. But to the Psalmist, through the Word he recognizes that this life is but a pilgrimage and in the Word he finds songs for his pilgrimage. In the Word, he finds horror to sin (v. 53) and through the same word flow melodies that inspire holiness (v. 54). His thoughts stay on the Word. This, he describes not in its progress but in a summary form looking at the action as a whole. The Word which inspires his pilgrim songs, instructs his pilgrim walk and as such he stays his thoughts on the same Word. Circumstances change, but the Word remains firm and as he is stayed on the Word,

he too remains firm. Finally, the Psalmist reaffirms all in verse 56 and underscores the comforting nature of God's Word. Barnes comments, "This I had, because I kept thy precepts - literally, 'This was to me'; that is, 'This has happened to me; this has occurred.' This joyful remembrance of thy law in the night of affliction (Psalm 119:50); this stability and firmness on my part in keeping thy law when proud men have derided me (Psalm 119:51); this comfort which I have derived from meditating on thy statutes (Psalm 119:52); this solicitude for the welfare of others (Psalm 119:53); this peace which I have enjoyed in thy law in the house of my pilgrimage (Psalm 119:54); and this consolation which I have had in thee in the night-season (Psalm 119:55) - all these have been granted to me because I have kept thy statutes; because I have sought to be obedient to find my happiness in thee. These are the proper fruits and effects of keeping the law of God. Such peace does it impart; so much does it do to sustain and comfort the soul."

Thus the Word of God as presented in its wide range of attributes is the believer's

personal consolation. This is so because in its various attributes, the Word builds up the inner man and strengthens him and grounds him firmly in the hope he has in God and enables him to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. When afflictions come, and when he goes through dark moments in life, the same Word that builds him now cheers and lights his winding and dark path. This may be better illustrated by the story of the little girl in the train. "Did you ever hear about the little girl in the train? She couldn't understand why the trainman was going through the car lighting the lamps. She said, 'Mother, it is the middle of the day and the sun is shining, why is he turning on those lights?' The mother smiled, and said, 'Wait a bit and you'll see what the lights are for.' In a moment or two, the train plunged into a long, dark tunnel, and then the little girl saw the wisdom of the lamplighting process." Maybe that is how many of us are! Like the little girl, we sometimes do not see the need of knowing and meditating on the Word of God and to our detriment, it leaves us in darkness and comfortless when afflictions come. Dear friend, that

Bible of yours contains thousands of verses that seem very ordinary and unnecessary. You can't see why God has gone to all the trouble of lighting those lamps of truth, but some day, you're going into the tunnel of bereavement, or the tunnel of temptation, or the tunnel of suffering, and then you will value and appreciate the verses that appear to be commonplace today. Therefore, read it, memorize it, cherish every word in it, turn to it in every circumstance in life, let it guide you, direct you, encourage you, rebuke you, mould you into what God would have you be. Let it be your comfort and consolation, for it has the ability to: 1. Strengthen; to invigorate; to cheer or enliven (vv. 49-50) 2. Strengthen the mind when depressed or enfeebled (vv. 51-54) 3. As law, to relieve, assist or encourage (vv. 55-56). Though we accept that the Word of God is a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths, yet many times we do not turn to the light in our times of darkness. May God grant us grace and understanding to appreciate, know and apprehend the comforting nature of the Word of God.



Ministering God's Comfort to Others

Errol D. Stone

The greatest blessing in this transitory life is to know Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace (cf. Isaiah 9:6), as personal Lord and Saviour (cf. John 3:3, 5, 7, 16; Romans 3:10, 11, 23; 5:8, 12; 6:23; 10:9, 10, 13), and live victoriously in Him even when trials beset us.

Christians have two great sources of help to bring comfort to others. They are God's Spirit and God's Word. The Holy Spirit is our divine comforter (cf. John 14:16,26; 16:26). If we walk in the Spirit, in obedience to Him, He will help us to teach others from the Scripture, that they may be strengthened. Jesus promised, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things

to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

Below, some pertinent passages of the Scripture that offer comfort for the repenting backslidden sinner, the afflicted, bereaved, depressed, etc. are briefly discussed:

Comfort for the Repenting Backslidden Sinner

God extends a gracious invitation and promise to His people who have wandered from Him, that He will heal their backsliding, saying, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jeremiah 3:22; cf. Hosea 14:4). In Jeremiah 3:1-23, the Word of God

speaks of sin in a very strong language, as His people wandered from Him, and were unfaithful, joining themselves unto other gods, and committing spiritual adultery.

The Condition of Backsliding

It is important that we know what backsliding is before we can minister comfort to the



backslidden. Backsliding can be described as falling from the standard of faith, morals and ethics required by the Lord in His Word, living in a condition of being often embarrassed at the Gospel of salvation, and adopting an inferior way of living (cf. Galatians 5:4; Colossians 1:23; 2 Peter 3:17). It can lead to much confusion (cf. Hosea 11:7) and sadness (cf. Jeremiah 2:19). It can also lead one to suffer God's severe chastisements (cf. Hebrews 12:11-14).

Upon reflection, those who have wandered from God often recognize their miserable position, loss of zeal and fervency, downward steps, neglecting God's grace and rather than seeking opportunities to serve God, they used opportunities to sin (cf. Romans 13:14). They will often recognize that they were over-critical of God's messages and His messengers, finding it easy to avoid prayer meetings, fellowship, and conversation with Christians, and secretly enjoy seeing others fall, as it justified their own actions.

God does not desire the backslidden to be miserable and sorrowful, but to have a godly sorrow for their sin, not a sorrow for having been found out. Those who come back to Him, find rest unto their souls (cf. Matthew 11:28).

The Cure for Backsliding

The Lord wants His people to recover from their wandering and return to Him by submitting unto Him (cf. James 4:7), by walking in the Spirit and not fulfilling the lust of the flesh (cf. Galatians 5:16), by walking in victory and not being defeated (cf. Romans 6:14; 1 John 5:4, 5), by being conquerors in Jesus Christ, seeking things above (cf. Romans 8:37; 2 Corinthians 2:14; Colossians 3:1-3), by being faithful to God (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:2; 1

Timothy 1:12), having compassion for souls in sin (cf. Jude 22, 23), giving thanks unto God, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). Let us pray for those who have wandered through a gradual spiritual deterioration (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:11), that they be granted discernment and return to the gracious Lord, who is full of mercy and compassion, remembering His gracious invitation and promises to those returning to the Lord in Hosea 14:4, that He will love them freely and turn away His anger from them, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him" (Hosea 14:4). The promise also for those returning to the Lord is that He will heal their backsliding (cf. Jeremiah 3:22), and they shall find rest for their souls (cf. Jeremiah 6:16a).

The bountiful mercies of God and His forgiveness come by confession and repentance of sin (1 John 1:7-9). God requires worship and a communing with Him in spirit and truth. Consequently, there is a pardoning grace. God invites those who had wandered far from Him to return as obedient children, not as bodyguards of the Adversary, but as soldiers of the Cross.

Comfort for those in Beds of Affliction

Although there are many afflicted, God's goodness, compassion and comfort can be expressed in such trials. God's Word says, "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" (John 16:33). We, Christians, are still exposed to the sorrows and disappointments of trials and tribulations; but through Jesus Christ, who has overcome the

world, we can have strength and hope even in our afflictions.

The Confusion about Suffering

Misconceptions about suffering have led many to blame God for all the disasters, sickness, suffering, death, etc. The Word of God is very clear that suffering and death came as a result of sin in the world, from the Fall which occurred in the Garden of Eden (cf. Genesis 3:16-19), when the harmony with God was shattered due to man's sin, resulting in the penalty of death (cf. Romans 6:23). Consequently, sin passed upon all, and man is culpable for his actions, not God.

Some maintain that personal sin results in suffering, but this is not always the case. The Book of Job is a graphic divine teaching of the problem of suffering, and why God permits even the righteous to suffer. Job not only knew of the Saviour, but also many other Bible doctrines and Biblical truths. He also lived a godly life that pleased God (cf. Job 1:8). Yet he suffered greatly. Jesus Christ also explained to His disciples that the blind man in John 9:1-7 was not suffering because of his parents' sin, or his own personal sin, but was suffering so that God could demonstrate His power through the healing that Jesus Christ would grant him.

Neither is suffering due to a lack of faith. The Apostle Paul was a man of great faith and yet three times he prayed for God to heal him of his affliction (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:8). The comfort from Jesus Christ to Paul in his suffering was, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Although Paul was a man with an undeniable, unflinching and unwavering faith, in his infirmity, God kept him humble.

The Christian is Not Alone in His Suffering

Firstly, let us encourage suffering brethren to meditate upon our Lord's great suffering for our sake. He suffered as our ultimate sin-bearer, for we read "...with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Jesus Christ endured the cruel cross and suffered shame (cf. Hebrews 12:2), and is preparing us for the glory to come (cf. John 14:1-4).

Secondly, let us remind the suffering brethren that Jesus Christ is both with them and working in them even in their darkest hours. When encompassed with prayer, the suffering Christian is able to draw comfort from God's Word, as did the Apostle Paul who said, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). Paul knew that God was with him and he rejoiced in his sufferings, knowing that this life is only temporal and that eternity is everlasting and that his glory was to be soon.

Thirdly, let us reassure the suffering Christian that his affliction is used by God for His glory and to refine His children (cf. 1 Peter 1:6-7; 5:10), and thus moulding him to be conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Romans 8:28-29). Believers share in the suffering of Christ in the sense that through suffering, they identify with Jesus Christ. Suffering can perfect a person in the image of Jesus Christ, whilst it can also help others come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour, as the suffering Christian remains committed to glorify Christ.

Fourthly, let us speak to those who are in their death bed concerning the eternal home that has been prepared, which is our wonderful future hope (cf. Revelation 21:4).

Finally, God's comfort is with those who are afflicted, and they will be ministered to by His Spirit and His Word. Christians can minister to the afflicted (whether they be conscious or unconscious) by prayers, by the reading of His Word, by singing psalms and hymns.



Comfort for the Bereaved

The Word of God comforts Christians in times of the home-going of a loved one and encourages them saying, "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" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Christians do not have to mutilate themselves (cf. Deuteronomy 14:1), or mourn continuously at the home-going of a loved one (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13), as this is a promotion to glory. The Word of God says, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1).

Firstly, let us remind the bereaved that those who die are promoted to glory. The principle learnt from God's Word is that the departing of a loved one, who is a believer, is a joyous matter (although tears will be shed), because the loved one has gone to be with the Lord and promoted to glory. They are enjoying the blessed presence of the Lord Jesus Christ (having a closer fellowship with Him) and all the other saints who have gone to heaven before them. They are not suffering, nor are they in an

intermediate state of unconsciousness before the appearing of the Lord. On the contrary, they are certainly alive as the Word of God says, "...to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Secondly, let us recall that the Apostle Paul declared that the home-going of a saint is gain - "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). He knew of the glory of God that existed beyond the grave. He knew that for the truly born-again Christian, Jesus Christ was not only to be magnified in life, but also magnified in death. Paul understood the meaning of life, and did not fear death, for it is a graduation to fellowship with and in the presence of the Lord.

Thirdly, let us refresh their minds with the Scripture that they who die in the Lord are resting in heaven from all their labours (cf. Revelation 14:13). They are removed from the earthly sufferings, cares of life, temptation to sin and from the evils of sin.

Fourthly, as Jesus Christ is resurrected from the dead, so are true believers promised to

be resurrected (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20-24; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

God's Word says, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 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" (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4).

God is a God of comfort, and has given us His Word that we may be comforted and strengthened in our hour of grief. In the Old Testament, we are given the words of comfort from Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:1-8, 28-31; 55:1-3, 6-13 and, in the New Testament, some include 1 Corinthians 15:1-58; Revelation 21:1-7. May we encourage one another continually with the Word of God, especially in times of need. Let us not isolate ourselves or feel that way, for God is our strength and comfort in times of grief.

Comfort for the Depressed

The Causes of Depression

The causes of depression could be due to any of the following: a recent illness in which one gets behind in work, hormonal changes, a reversal of circumstances, the consequences of simple negligence, guilt over a particular sin, self-pity arising from jealousy or disadvantageous turn of events, bad feeling resulting from resentment, worry, etc.

The Word of God declares that certain people suffered depression because of concealing their sin and subsequent guilt, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall

have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). Cain's so-called depression was due to disobeying God and concealing his sin, "And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door" (Genesis 4:6,7). Cain's sinful offering was rejected by God and he further complicated his position, by becoming angry and jealous. Subsequent repentance and change of behaviour would have reversed his situation, but Cain failed to heed God's warnings. Harboursing a grudge, self-pity, jealousy and anger led him deeper into his sinful dealings (Genesis 4:5) and he killed his own brother. Failing to identify sin initially, and deal with it correctly, complicated matters, leading to guilt, and further failures.

The Cure for Depression

When David concealed his sin, he suffered, but he repented and said, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me" (Psalm 32:3, 4). The remedy for restoration of depression caused by sin, is described by David as he said, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm 32:5). Although he made a mistake, he confessed his sin before God and forsook it, never to go back to it again and said, "Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart" (Psalm 32:11). On three occasions during his trials, when feeling downcast, David said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" (Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5), but he never lost sight of the solution to his depression. David had never been forsaken (cf. 2 Samuel 19:9-40; Hebrews 13:5), though it

just appeared humanly that he had (cf. Psalm 9:12; 37:28), as God never forsakes His own.

When trials beset us, God's Word says, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8, 9). Likewise, the Apostle Paul had the blessed hope of the resurrection and knew that although his outer man was wearing away, he had a daily renewing of the inner man because of salvation (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Although the Apostle Paul suffered much (2 Corinthians 11:23-28), he continued to trust in the Lord and was sustained by God's grace.

Christians are to base the trials of life on truth, not on feelings (Philippians 4:1). Whether the trials be from the world, Satan (the defeated foe) or God, Christians are to count it all joy because of what God can accomplish, not because of the trials itself (James 1:2).

Caution should be exercised with medications, because of the side effects and the masking of the symptoms, allowing the root causes to be ignored. During his depression, King Saul was uplifted by music (1 Samuel 16:14-23).

A spirit of praise and thanksgiving often enables a man to rise above the infirmities of the flesh (Proverbs 18:14). The Word of God says, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Ephesians 5:20).

Conclusion

We have a God who cares and comforts us. 1 Peter 5:7 exhorts us, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." Troubled hearts can find peace in Jesus Christ today, as He begins a new work in a person at conversion (cf. Philippians 1:6), becoming new creatures (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17), when the Holy Spirit takes up residence (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19), and God's great plan is embarked upon, finding joy in a troubled world. As believers are redeemed through Jesus Christ's blood (Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18,19), so they can recognize that the present sufferings can be turned to His glory and the believers' good as they develop a stronger dependence upon God and become more Christ-like (Hebrews 12:11).



Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Isaiah 40:28-31



Comfort of a Widow

Lee Kim Lei

My name is Kim Lei. In November 2004, my husband, Chin, was deceased due to blood cancer (Acute Lymphoblast Leukaemia) after nine months of struggle in the hospital. He left behind three sons: Chin Juo Wi, Chin Jie Wi, Chin Jia Wi. We, as a family, were led to Christ the Saviour three weeks before my husband passed away. I want to testify to you how my love for our great Father has been growing within me for the past two and a half years.

I thought of writing my testimony to glorify the Lord for the salvation and many blessings, which I have received from our merciful Lord through the difficult experiences of my life. I wanted to shout from my heart to praise the Lord whenever I tasted the goodness from our Lord. However, nothing was done. I had no confidence to do it. Our Almighty God knew my weaknesses. During the last church camp, God granted me the encouragement through the love and fellowship of the brethren. I was warmed by “the sisterhood” in the church camp; and I am thankful for sisters who encouraged and helped me to write this testimony. It helped me to focus on Christ. He filled me with His spirit and granted me the courage. I was able to

write this testimony and also read it in front of the congregation with the help of the Holy Spirit in me. I was full of joy.

Our Lord Jesus is Our Great Saviour

My late husband sighed and mentioned to me during the suffering of leukaemia treatment that the purpose of his suffering was for the salvation of his family. His suffering brought care and love as well as unity among his parents and sibling. It also led to the salvation of our three sons and me. He asked me to seek healing of my soul from God two days before he passed away. I am very sure that he is now with the Lord in heaven. Praise the Lord!

I was very frightened when my husband passed away, as I was afraid that my mother-in-law



would put the blame of the loss of her beloved son on me. I was even very worried that she would not agree to a Christian funeral for my husband, as we are the first generation Christians in both of our families. But all praise and thanks to the Lord who caused a 'miracle'. Upon the death of my husband, I had the full support from both of our family members to request a Christian funeral for my husband. Our Almighty God also transformed my mother-in-law to a caring mother to me. Praise the Lord. I am praying to the Lord for her salvation as well as other family members as they occasionally come with me to the church to hear the Word of God.

Our Lord Jesus is a Husband to the Widow

Our God is a comforter as well as a patient and careful husband to me. The Bible tells us that our Lord Jesus will look after the widow like a husband, and the fatherless like a father. "The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow" (Psalm 146:9). He gives protection to me (cf. Psalms 23 and 25).

He cared for me and helped me in the handling of my emotions during my most difficult times as I went through the pain of the loss of my husband. The loss of my husband makes me feel very handicapped, with a broken heart and without the right arm. Emotionally, I was totally depressed. The feeling of insecurity made me extremely frightened. I told my sons not to let anyone know that they had lost their father. I was so afraid that people would harm us, disturb us or bully us. I was so nervous when the quietness of night came. I became very sensitive over any sound, even the sound of neighbours walking past my home.

I also struggled with the operation of the business that my late husband left behind.

Again, the Lord grants me the help I needed and therefore I was able to run it smoothly and thus providing for my family's financial needs. Frankly, I am not familiar with this business. But the Lord has helped me hitherto.

The hymn, "No One Ever Cared for Me Like Jesus" is truly my testimony. This hymn has comforted me for the past two and a half years. Our patient, caring and careful God comforts me through the messages and many wonderful hymns.

He walks with me at my pace, one step at a time, day by day, twenty-four hours a day. He makes me know that I have a most powerful Husband; so no one can ever harm me. Everyday, He gives me new assurance. My faith grows by His grace and assurances to me.

Our Lord Jesus is a Counsellor, a Father to the Fatherless

Nurturing three sons is not an easy task. I felt lost because I did not know whether I should be in the role of a father or a mother. I am used to being a mother. The role of a father is totally new to me. As I was wondering how to provide fatherly love to my children, Psalm 68:5 became a great comfort and assurance - "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation."

Therefore, I prayed day and night, even when I talked and shared my difficulties with my three sons. When I counselled and disciplined them, I prayed to our merciful Father. He is my God who never failed me. He softened the children's hearts and made it easier for me to talk to them.

While I prayed, He sent his servant, our pastor, to enlighten me on my duty as the parent to my children. Praise the Lord! I go through many

troubles as I bring up my children,
but I can expect perfect care from
our Father.

Our Lord Jesus is the Master of Our Family

He plans and sets the right path for
my family in His Word. The Lord
gives me much direction through
the ministry of the Word, and
fellowships in Gethsemane Bible-
Presbyterian Church. I praise the
Lord for leading my children and
me to Gethsemane B-P Church,
and grow spiritually in the last two
and a half years.

I was invited to many charismatic
churches by my friends. I was
moved by their hospitality and
was intending to bring my children
there. However, I was lost and
frightened of bringing up my
children in a wrong church. God
has done miracles and made the
visits not successful. At the same
time, the Lord led me to visit
Gethsemane B-P Church through a
friend of my husband who attends
that church. I thank the Lord for
them, the Gan family. Thank God,
for He has chosen Gethsemane B-P
Church, a church that preaches the
truth of God's Word.

I yield to my Lord according to
His Word in 1 Timothy 5:5, "Now
she that is a widow indeed, and
desolate, trusteth in God, and
continueth in supplications and
prayers night and day." The Lord
is truly my God and my comfort!



THE COMFORT OF GOD

I have been through the valley of weeping,
The valley of sorrow and pain;
But the God of all comfort was with me,
At hand to uphold and sustain.

As the earth needs the clouds and the sunshine
Our souls need both sorrow and joy,
So he places us oft in the furnace,
The dross from the gold to destroy.

When He leads through some valley of trouble
His omnipotent hand we can trace;
For the trials and sorrows He sends us
Are part of His lessons of Grace.

Oft we shrink from the purging and pruning,
Forgetting the husbandman knows
That the deeper the cutting and paring
The richer the cluster that grows.

Well He knows that affliction is needed,
He has a wise purpose in view;
And in the dark valley He whispers,
"Hereafter thou shalt know what I do."

As we travel through life's shadowed valley,
Fresh springs of His love ever rise,
And we learn that our sorrow and losses
Are blessings just sent in disguise.

So we'll follow wherever He leads us,
Let the path be dreary or bright,
For we've proved that our God can give comfort,
Our God can give songs in the night.

- Selected

A Diligent Christian Boy

A real incident from the life of Jonathan Goforth, a Canadian missionary to China.

Bibliography: "GoForth of China" by Rosalind GoForth. The stories are written by Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy. Illustrations are done by Sis Sharon Ng.

During almost ten years of schooling, Jonathan Goforth also had to work often on his father's farm. At the age of fifteen, his father asked him to take charge of their second farm called "The Thamesford Farm", which was about twenty miles away from their home.



One day the father of Jonathan brought him to a large field full of wild plants and weeds and he said, "Get that field clear and ready for seeding. At harvest time, I'll return and inspect."



He laboured hard to clear the land of weeds and stones.



He spent weeks ploughing and reploughing, sunning the roots of the weeds and ploughing until the field was ready for seeding.

Then he searched for the very best seed for sowing and purchased them.



He sowed and watered them, and applied scientific methods to yield good harvest.

He also kept cattle in the farm and ambitiously ran the farm scientifically.



He was well rewarded, because his butter was sold for the highest price in the market.

After months of labour, on one summer morning as he was getting ready for the harvest, his father arrived at The Thamesford Farm.



Jonathan was thrilled to show his father the field that he had left with him to cultivate.

He led his father to a high place from where the whole field of beautiful waving grain could be seen.



Jonathan spoke not a word, but eagerly waited to hear his father say, "Well done."

His father stood for several moments, silently examining the field.



He could not find any sign of weed.

Then turning to Jonathan, his father just smiled, but that smile spoke volumes.



Later Jonathan said, "I knew my father was pleased. So will it be if we are faithful to the trust our Heavenly Father gives us."

Children, you must also be a diligent child. When you are given responsibilities at home or school or in church, do them well with all your strength.



God hates laziness, but rewards diligent persons.

Proverbs 22:29

"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men."



BIBLE TRIVIA - GENESIS 29 & 30

Sarah Yong

READ THE RELEVANT CHAPTERS FROM YOUR BIBLE. FOR EACH STATEMENT BELOW, FILL IN A NUMBER IN THE BLANK/S PROVIDED.

- A. Jacob journeyed east and came to a field where he saw __ flocks of sheep.
- B. He met Rachel, the younger of Laban's __ daughters, when she brought her father's sheep to the well to get water.
- C. Laban promised to give Jacob Rachel's hand in marriage if he served __ years.
- D. However, he was deceived into marrying Leah first, and after __ more years then he was allowed to marry Rachel. In total he served __ years.
- E. Each daughter was given ___ handmaid, Zilpah to Leah, and Bilhah to Rachel.
- F. The Lord blessed Leah with ___ sons and ___ daughter.
- G. The handmaids bore Jacob a total of ____ sons.

FIND AND CIRCLE THE NAMES OF JACOB'S OFFSPRING IN THE WORDSEARCH BELOW.

I	V	E	L	B	D	H	E
S	L	G	N	J	I	P	Z
S	J	A	U	A	N	E	E
A	D	D	T	E	A	S	B
C	A	M	B	H	H	O	U
H	N	U	I	N	P	J	L
A	E	R	E	H	S	A	U
R	☺	S	I	M	E	O	N

Use the remaining letters to form the name of Jacob's last son who would be born to Rachel.

Answer: _____

Answers to Vol. 7, Issue 2 - Bible Trivia - Genesis 27 & 28

- p. 23 - (1) Esau; (2) commanded; (3) raiment; (4) hands; (5) firstborn; (6) Jacob; (7) lord; (8) savoury; (9) sword; (10) slay; (11) Haran; (12) Bethuel; (13) Abraham; (14) Ishmael; (15) Jacob; (16) keep; (17) Luz; (18) tenth.

Message: HALLELUJAH, CHRIST AROSE!

2ND MISSIONARY CONFERENCE 2007 GETHESEMANE BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Venue: Crown Regency Residences
Cebu City, The Philippines

Date: 27th Nov 2007 - 1st Dec 2007

THEME:
**For the Word of God, and
for the Testimony of Jesus Christ**
Revelation 1:9



Objectives

- to encourage and refresh missionaries of Gethsemane B-P Church
- to encourage the mission churches and their believers
- to foster fellowship among like-minded ministers of the Word
- to edify and unite the people of God in the truth of God's Word

Ordination of Our Missionaries

- Bro Ephrem Chiracho Ouchula (Ethiopia)
- Bro Reggor Barazon Galarpe (The Philippines)

PARTICIPATING MINISTERS

Rev Stephen Khoo, Rev Koa Keng Woo, Rev Errol D. Stone,
Rev Mark Kim, Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo, Rev Lee Kim Shong,
Rev Dennis Kwok, Rev Joseph Kendagor,
and Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy.

For more details on registration:

Please call 6741-1910 (Sister Diana Koh) or email diana@gethsemanebpc.com

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