

Where Do I Find Comfort?

“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts”

Colossians 3:15

Words are the tools of my trade. I love to research words and how they came to mean what they do in modern usage. The word comfort is interesting when you consider the two Latin words from which it comes.

The Latin prefix “com” means “with”. The Latin word “fortis” means “strong”. So our word “comfort”—though redefined as sympathy over centuries of use—should be understood to mean an action by someone to make the wounded person strong again.

All too often, when we are in difficulties, we may be deceived into thinking that what we need is pity. A little pity goes a long way, like salt. Too much pity reduces us to people incapable of getting on with life. It can paralyse us if we take a large dose of it.

When a person is pitied rather than comforted they lose hope by thinking their problems are greater than the resources they have to cope. Pity leaves us useless while comfort redirects our focus onto the things that can

still be accomplished in a tragic situation.

I well recall an elderly man in my congregation many years ago who had suffered a dreadful railway accident in his younger days. He fell under a railroad locomotive and lost both legs above the knees. I did not know him until many years after the accident.

What I found out about this man was that he worked diligently to learn to walk with canes, got a job where he could be seated all day long, and so made adequate provision for himself and his family. One time when I sought to get door-to-door visitation going in the church where he worshipped, he was one of only two people who came to do the work.

I was amazed to hear him say to me, “Pastor I’m going to go door to door with you.” It took some persuasive efforts on my part to get him to stay and pray while the other man and I went out on visitation. When I went through some difficult times in my life, I would reflect on that dear man and realise he was an amazing person. I thought to

myself that if he could remake his life after suffering like that, then so should I.

I have been comforted by that man’s example. I trust that as people see how I handle physical limitations and other issues, that they too will be comforted, made strong in the grace of God to deal with the problems they face in life. All of us as Christians should recognize the potential for good we may be, as we accept from the Lord the challenges life brings.

You never know who is watching you, Christian. So find the peace and comfort of God that is promised you, and carry on in life to be a demonstration of God’s grace to others. Those who suffer have the best opportunity to demonstrate how wonderful it is to be a Christian, and have the great hope of our heavenly Father’s presence now and always. “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7 (NIV)

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