

Words for Comfort: Greek “paraklesis – parakletos – parakaleo”

By Dr. Gary M. Gulan, ©1993 (Rev. 96,10)

1. The English word “comfort” comes from two Latin words, “cum” in Latin meaning “with” and “fortis” in Latin meaning “fortification, fortress, or fortify.” The English word “comfort” then means a “strengthened-wither [or someone who is with you giving strength].” (The Love of Life, Donald Grey Barnhouse, Glendale: G/L publications, 1973, p. 187)
2. This word “parakletos” comes from two Greek words, “para” and “kletos” meaning to “call to one’s side.” (The Analytical Greek Lexicon, Harold Moulton, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978, p. 303)
3. This word for comfort is used 142xs in the Greek New Testament its various Greek forms: “paraklesis” is used 29xs; “parakletos” is used 5xs; and “parakaleo” is used 108xs. (Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament, J.B. Smith, Scottdale: Herald Press, 1977, p. 275)
4. “We have no single word in our language that can express the rich, powerful meaning of ‘paraclete,’ the English translation of our unique title John uses....” (John, Roger Fredrikson, Waco: Word, 1985, The Communicator’s Commentary, p. 231)
5. This word is translated into English many ways:
 - “parakaleo” translated “beseech” used 43xs
 - “parakaleo” translated “comfort” used 23xs
 - “parakaleo” translated “exhort” used 21xs
 - “parakaleo” translated “desire” used 8xs
 - “parakaleo” translated “pray” used 6xs
 - “parakaleo” translated “intreat” used 3xs
 - “parakaleo” translated “exhortation” used 2xs
 - “parakaleo” translated “call for” used 1xs
 - “parakaleo” translated “be of good comfort” used 1xs
 - “paraklesis” translated “consolation” used 14xs
 - “paraklesis” translated “exhortation” used 8xs
 - “paraklesis” translated “comfort” used 6xs
 - “paraklesis” translated “intreaty” used 1xs
 - “parakletos” translated “comforter” used 4xs
 - “parakletos” translated “advocater” used 1xs(Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament, J.B. Smith, Scottdale: Herald Press, 1977, p. 275)
6. The “calling to one’s side” suggests to give aid and help by the use of admonishing, encouraging, consoling, exhorting, inviting, entreating. Its opposite would be “warning” (Gr. “parainesis”). (A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament, Ethelbert Bullinger, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975, p. 168)
7. This word for comfort “...can properly mean only ‘one called to the side of another,’ and that with the secondary notion of counseling or supporting or aiding him.” (The Gospel According to St. John, B. F. Westcott, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, p. 212)
8. The Rabbinical writers understood the term stating “An advocate is a good intercessor before a magistrate.” The “classic usage of the word ‘paraclete’ was ‘advocate.’” (The Gospel According to St. John, B. F. Westcott, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, p. 212)

9. The Septuagint (LXX, 250bc-150bc, Greek translation of the Old Testament) used the word “comfort” (Hb. “naham”) for the word “comfort” (Gr. “parakaleo”).

(The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Colin Brown, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979, vol. 1, p. 569)

10. The usage of this word prior to the New Testament times was “to make an appeal (102bc),” such as (1.) making an appeal for three soldiers to come to a certain place, and (2.) of the insertion of name in an agreement of indemnity at the appeal of others. (The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, James Moulton and George Milligan, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980, p. 485)

11. The usage of this word during the New Testament times was (1.) “calling to one’s aid,” and (2.) “imploring or appealing on the part of someone.” (Greek-English Lexicon, Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953, p. 1313)

12. This word for comfort “...was used in the first century of one called into support another or give him aid. It was a technical term to describe a lawyer in the Greek law courts, one who was called in to aid the accused.” “This word denotes one who acts in another’s behalf as a mediator, an intercessor, or a comforter.” (Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Kenneth Wuest, “John,” Edwin Blum, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Wheaton: Victor, 1983, p. 328; Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, Walter Elwell, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989, Vol. 2, 1614)

13. The usage of this word after New Testament times was (1.) “to call to one’s side,” (2.) “invite,” (3.) “summon to one’s aid;” and it was also used as: (1.) “appeal to, urge, exhort, encourage,” (2.) “request, implore, appeal to, entreat,” (3.) “comfort, encourage, cheer up,” and (4.) “console or conciliate.” (A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979, p. 613)

14. In church history by the time you arrive in the 1,300’s, this word for comfort was used in several ways in the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches: (1.) as service of supplication to the Mother of God (theotokos); (2.) as music used: in times of sorrow or distress, and in the supplicatory canon used first two weeks in August; and (3.) as prayer of intercession to any saint for help in sorrow or distress.

15. This word for “comfort” (Gr. “paraklete”) recorded by John (John 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:17) was being used by Jesus in a way that was obscure to the disciples but would be a new characteristic of God shared with them through the Holy Spirit. (Commentary on John’s Gospel, Frederic Louis Godet, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1978, p. 839)

16. This word for comfort is “...used in contexts of fear and where hearts were troubled (John 14:1,27).” (Encouraging One Another, Gene Getz, Wheaton: Victor, 1987, p. 23)

17. When Jesus introduces the term “comforter” He assures them he would not leave them “comfortless” (John 14:18). The word He uses is “orphans” (Gr. “orphanoi”), those who have no one to come along side them and care for them. (The Gospel of John, F. F. Bruce, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983, p. 303)

18. This type of “comfort” can not be given by the world (John 14:27).

19. This type of comfort is “commanded” (Gr, “parakaleite,” present active imperative, three times in Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11; 5:14) as an on going and continuous responsibility of Christians to other Christians. (“1 Thessalonians,” Thomas Constable, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Wheaton: Victor, 1983, p. 708; (The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Colin Brown, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979, vol. 1, p. 571)