

## **“Comfort” Greek “paraklesis – parakletos – parakaleo”**

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**Introduction:** At the start of each lesson we want to remind you of the ministry of “comfort.” The English word “comfort” is the “anchor word” we are using in our series. Our English word “comfort” comes from two Latin words, “cum” in Latin meaning “with” and “fortis” in Latin meaning “fortification, fortress, or fortify.” One commentator stated the English word “comfort” literally means a “strengthened-wither” or more understandably “someone who is with you giving strength.”<sup>1</sup>

We are going to explore other words that although not translated “comfort,” can give “comfort” by their very nature, meaning and usage.

### **1. Word Usage in Language/Translations**

#### **A. forms used (Greek)**

This word “parakletos” comes from two Greek words, “para” and “kletos” meaning to “call to one’s side.”<sup>2</sup>

#### **B. Times used**

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.<sup>3</sup>

#### **C. Ways used (translated)**

“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....”<sup>4</sup>

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 “entreat” 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 “entreaty” used 1xs

- “parakletos” translated “comforter” used 4xs
- “parakletos” translated “advocate” used 1xs<sup>5</sup>

### **2. Word Usage in History**

#### **A. Classic writing**

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”).<sup>6</sup>

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.”<sup>7</sup>

## **B. Rabbinical writing**

The Rabbinical writers understood the term stating “An advocate is a good intercessor before a magistrate.” The “classic usage of the word ‘paraklete’ was ‘advocate.’”<sup>8</sup>

## **C. The Septuagint writing**

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

## **D. Pre-New Testament writing**

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 a name in an agreement of indemnity at the appeal of others.<sup>10</sup>

## **E. During New Testament writing**

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.”<sup>11</sup>

This word for comfort “...was used in the first century of one called-in to 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.”<sup>12</sup>

## **F. After New Testament**

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.”<sup>13</sup>

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 the first two weeks in August; and (3.) as prayer of intercession to any saint for help in sorrow or distress.

## **3. Word Usage in the New Testament**

### **A. John 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:17**

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.<sup>14</sup> The disciples were going to experience fear, disillusionment, confrontation, and a crushing of their hopes, when Jesus would be put to death and buried. This word shows that Jesus was a “comforter” to them while he was alive because he was “personally along side them.” Jesus also taught there was another ‘comforter’ of the same kind that he would send to them and who would be inside of them.

### **B. John 14:1,27**

This word for comfort is “...used in contexts of fear and where hearts were troubled (John 14:1,27).”<sup>15</sup> Jesus used “reassurance through comforting words and through a constant reminding of the truths of God.” This type of “comfort” can not be given by the world (John 14:27).

### **C. John 14:18**

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.<sup>16</sup>

## **D. 2 Corinthians 1:3**

Paul tells us that “God” is the “originator or source” of this “comfort.” God is the only one who can give this type of comfort because it comes from His character.<sup>17</sup> Paul uses the words “of all” (Gr. “pases” genitive) “comfort” which has a couple of ways it is viewed: (1.) the genitive reveals that God has the feeling of pity on the hurting Christian (“mercy” genitive of possession) and He puts forth a special action of comforting (“of all” effective genitive);<sup>18</sup> and (2.) the genitive reveals that God is the “possessor” of the full package of comfort. (possessive genitive).

Paul uses this word “comfort” (Gr. “parakleseos”) in two ways: (1.) “comfort” (5xs, 1:4,4,4,4,6) and (2.) “consolation” (4xs, 1:5,6,6,7). God comes “along side” to give His comfort. His special ministry in and with the believer reveal His care and love for them. Paul uses this word “comfort” (Gr. “parakleseos”) in the singular and in the passage he uses the word for “afflicted” (1:6, Gr. “thlibouethe”) in the plural; showing that this “comfort” is a package and a one-of-a-kind comfort that addresses and relieves any and all kinds of “distress.”

Paul reveals four “purpose clauses” (the word “that”) attached with the word “parakelesis:” (1.) In 1:4, Paul reveals that one of the purposes why we receive this comfort from God is so we may minister to other believers; (2.) In 1:7, Paul uses the word “if” (Gr. “eite” with present indicative) which is a first class condition showing the statement is assumed true and should be translated “since.”<sup>19</sup> Since the Corinthians were already suffering under affliction, they would also experience the comfort: (3.) In 1:9, Paul reveals through the situation surrounding the giving of God’s comfort, that we would “trust not in ourselves” but in God. God’s activity within these situations is to develop within us the ability to trust in God; and, (4.) In 1:11, Paul reveals that in God giving comfort that many people can be thankful (Gr. “eucharistethe”) for what God has done.

## **E. 1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11; 5:14**

This type of comfort is “commanded” (Gr. “parakaleite,” present active imperative, three times in 1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11; 5:14) as an on going and continuous responsibility of Christians to other Christians.<sup>20</sup>

### **4. How are we to understand this word?**

- used with someone who is fearful
- used with someone who is agitated
- used with someone who feels loneliness and aloneness
- used with someone whose heart is troubled
- coming alongside
- using gentle words of truth
- giving personal care
- reassuring through truth

Christians are commanded to use this “comfort” with other believers.

Perhaps a definition of “paraklesis” or “comfort” would be “called to the side of another, giving aid through comforting, encouraging, or consoling.”

### **References:**

<sup>1</sup>The Love of Life, Donald Grey Barnhouse, Glendale: G/L publications, 1973, p. 187

<sup>2</sup>The Analytical Greek Lexicon, Harold Moulton, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978, p. 303

- <sup>3</sup>Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament, J.B. Smith, Scottdale: Herald Press, 1977, p. 275
- <sup>4</sup>John, Roger Fredrikson, Waco: Word, 1985, The Communicator's Commentary, p. 231
- <sup>5</sup>Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament, J.B. Smith, Scottdale: Herald Press, 1977, p. 275
- <sup>6</sup>A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament, Ethelbert Bullinger, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975, p. 168
- <sup>7</sup>The Gospel According to St. John, B. F. Westcott, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, p. 212
- <sup>8</sup>The Gospel According to St. John, B. F. Westcott, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, p. 212
- <sup>9</sup>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Colin Brown, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979, vol. 1, p. 569
- <sup>10</sup>The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, James Moulton and George Milligan, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980, p. 485
- <sup>11</sup>Greek-English Lexicon, Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953, p. 1313
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- <sup>13</sup>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
- <sup>14</sup>Commentary on John's Gospel, Frederic Louis Godet, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1978, p. 839
- <sup>15</sup>Encouraging One Another, Gene Getz, Wheaton: Victor, 1987, p. 23
- <sup>16</sup>The Gospel of John, F. F. Bruce, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983, p. 303
- <sup>17</sup>"2 Corinthians," David Lowery, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Wheaton: Victor, 1983, p. 554; Stand Firm in the Faith: An Exposition of II Corinthians, Robert Gromacki, Schaumburg: RBP, 1978, p. 8; 2 Corinthians, Albert Barnes, Barnes' Notes on the Old and New Testament, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979, p. 9; 2 Corinthians, Simon Kistemaker, NTC, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985, p. 42; 2 Corinthians, John MacArthur, MNTC, Chicago: Moody, 1991, p. 18-20
- <sup>18</sup>St. Paul's Epistle to I and II Corinthians, R. C. H. Lenski, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963, p. 815
- <sup>19</sup>2 Corinthians, Simon Kistemaker, NTC, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985, p. 42
- <sup>20</sup>"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