



GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

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Subject: Comfort, God

THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort. 2 Corinthians 1:3

Few men ever have an encounter with a burning bush that will not go out, but Moses did. Few people ever audibly hear the voice of God, but Moses did. Few individuals are given supernatural signs which convince others that they have had an encounter with God, but Moses was! Yet--and I want you to make that word a bookmark for what I'm saying--yet Moses cried out to God: "If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you..." (Exodus 33:13).

Ah, yes! Knowing God was the desire of his heart. So was it with Paul, who also had an encounter with Jesus Christ, God's Son, unlike anything that you will ever read or hear about. Paul--then known as Saul of Tarsus--was on his way to the city of Damascus, and his was not exactly an errand of mercy. His objective was to find followers of Jesus Christ and to arrest them and put them in prison. Nice guy, this Saul of Tarsus!

On the way, he was blinded by a great light, and Jesus Christ revealed Himself in such a way that Saul's life was completely upended--conversion, we call it--and he became the great missionary-theologian-evangelist of the early church. Yet--remember that bookmark?--yet Paul voiced the earnest desire of his heart when he said, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Philippians 3:10).

Paul says that through "the fellowship of his sufferings" he came to know and experience Christ in a deeper, more intimate way than he would have if he had been spared the cup of grief and pain.

I am convinced that there are valleys and dark nights of the soul which no other one can really understand who has never walked through them personally. Like what? Like the loss of your mate who has been by your side for many years! Like the loss of a baby who suddenly begins to choke, turn blue, and then dies in your arms. Like the loss of your health, or the loss of your limbs.

"I understand what you are going through," people sometimes say. But in reality they don't. Take, for example, the young woman in vibrant health who dives into the surf and becomes a paraplegic, dependent on others for the rest of her life.

Now, go back to that bookmark, "yet." Yet there is One who does understand, One who has been there, One who can comfort you when others offer empty words which sting rather than heal. OK, you say, tell me who this person is.

Paul, who experienced grief, loneliness, persecution, abandonment, and, yes, at times even bouts of depression described Him as "the God of all comfort." In the letter we call Second Corinthians, here's what Paul said: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3).

His words are like a balm for the weary soul. Focus on those two phrases in relationship to your life: "the Father of compassion" and "the God of all comfort." God manifests Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and all three are involved. Jesus came identifying with your needs--God in the flesh.

This is not a make-believe story fabricated by those who wish it were true, but reality touching our world, our lives, at the point of our deepest needs. But God the Holy Spirit, says Jesus, is the Comforter, the One whose touch brings healing and help. In closing please notice that little word *all*, "the God of *all* comfort." You are included in its arms, embraced by a loving God when others just cannot understand.

Resource reading: 2 Corinthians 2.