

THE GOD OF COMFORT

April 5, 83

PAUL IN WRITING TO THE CORINTHIANS LONG AGO, SAID, "BLESSED BE GOD...THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT: WHO COMFORTETH US IN ALL OUR TRIBULATION..." (II CORINTHIANS 1:3-4)

WHEN SORROW COMES

WHEN SORROW COMES, AS COME IT MUST,  
IN GOD A MAN MUST PUT HIS TRUST.  
THERE IS NO POWER IN MORTAL SPEECH  
THE ANGUISH OF HIS SOUL TO REACH  
NO VOICE, HOWEVER SWEET AND LOW,  
CAN COMFORT HIM OR EASE THE BLOW.

HE CANNOT FROM HIS FELLOW MEN  
TAKE STRENGTH THAT WILL SUSTAIN HIM THEN.  
WITH ALL THAT KINDLY HANDS WILL DO,  
AND ALL THAT LOVE MAY OFFER, TOO,  
HE MUST BELIEVE THROUGHOUT THE TEST  
THAT GOD HAS WILLED IT FOR THE BEST.

WE WHO WOULD BE HIS FRIENDS ARE DUMB:  
WORDS FROM OUR LIPS BUT FEEBLY COME:  
WE FEEL, AS WE EXTEND OUR HANDS,  
THAT ONE POWER ONLY UNDERSTANDS  
AND TRULY KNOWS THE REASON WHY  
SO BEAUTIFUL A LIFE MUST DIE.

WE REALIZE HOW HELPLESS THEN  
ARE ALL THE GIFTS OF MORTAL MEN.  
NO WORDS WHICH WE HAVE POWER TO SAY  
CAN TAKE THE STING OF GRIEF AWAY -  
THAT POWER WHICH MARKS THE SPARROW'S FALL  
MUST COMFORT AND SUSTAIN US ALL.

WHEN SORROW COMES, AS COME IT MUST,  
IN GOD A MAN MUST PLACE HIS TRUST.  
WITH ALL THE WEALTH WHICH HE MAY OWN,  
HE CANNOT MEET THE TEST ALONE,  
AND ONLY HE MAY STAND SERENE  
WHO HAS A FAITH ON WHICH TO LEAN.

SORROW IS UNIVERSAL. NO ONE CAN ESCAPE IT. MAN IS BORN TO TROUBLE. JOB FACED IT LONG AGO. HE HAD A TREMENDOUS FORTUNE OF LAND HOLDINGS: HE HAD SEVEN SONS AND THREE DAUGHTERS. HE HAD EVERYTHING - FAITH, FAME, FAMILY,



FORTUNE, FRIENDS. THEN THE FUTURE CHANGED. ENEMIES FELL ON HIS GRAZING FLOCKS, KILLING THE HERDSMEN AND DRIVING OFF THE CATTLE. FIRE DESTROYED HIS CROPS. HIS CHILDREN WERE INSTANTLY KILLED. HE WAS AFFLICTED WITH ULCERLIKE SCORES FROM HEAD TO FOOT. HE WAS OVERWHELMED WITH GRIEF.

TODAY WE FACE A WORLD FILLED WITH PAIN, SUFFERING, ACCIDENTS, TRIBULATION.

THERE IS NO FLOCK, HOWEVER WATCHED AND TENDED,  
BUT ONE DEAD LAMB IS THERE!  
THERE IS NO FIRESIDE, HOWSOEVER DEFENDED  
BUT HAS ONE VACANT CHAIR.

IN SUCH A TIME THERE IS BUT ONE WHO CAN BRING LIGHT OUT OF DARKNESS, WHO CAN HEAL THE HEART THAT IS BROKEN BY GRIEF, WHO CAN BRING PEACE OF SOUL AND STRENGTH OF SPIRIT. THAT ONE IS THE GOD WHOM PAUL CALLED, "THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT." HE DID NOT FAIL JOB. HE DID NOT FAIL PAUL. HE DID NOT FAIL CHRIST. HE WILL NOT FAIL YOU. WHEN MOSES BID A FINAL FAREWELL TO THE ISRAELITES, HE SAID TO THEM, "THE ETERNAL GOD IS THY REFUGE, AND UNDERNEATH ARE THE EVERLASTING ARMS." "LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED: YE BELIEVE IN GOD..."

GOD DOES NOT GIVE ASSURANCE AGAINST ACCIDENTS, HARDSHIPS, FAILURES, TROUBLE OR SUFFERING. TOO OFTEN, PEOPLE HAVE FELT CHRISTIANITY WAS A MIRACLE DRUG TO MIRACULOUSLY MAKE LIFE EASY WITHOUT SUFFERING AND PAIN. THE PURPOSE OF CHRISTIANITY IS NOT TO AVOID DIFFICULTY, BUT TO PRODUCE A CHARACTER ADEQUATE TO MEET IT WHEN IT COMES. IT DOES NOT MAKE LIFE EASY: RATHER IT TRIES TO MAKE US GREAT ENOUGH FOR LIFE. IT DOES NOT GIVE US ESCAPE FROM LIFE'S BURDENS, BUT STRENGTH FOR MEETING THEM WHEN THEY COME.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST MAKES PLAIN TWO FACTS: FIRST, THAT IN THIS WORLD EVEN THE INNOCENT ARE NOT EXEMPT FROM SUFFERING; AND SECONDLY, THAT THERE IS A POWER ABLE TO SURMOUNT EVIL, RISE ABOVE TRAGEDY, AND TO COMFORT IN THE FACE OF DEATH. IN THE CROSS WE CAN SEE GOD SUFFERING WITH US: WE SEE AN EXAMPLE OF TRIUMPH OVER AGONY. GOD PUTS IN US A BIT OF HIMSELF: HE LENDS US REASSURING POWERS TO THINK: HE PUTS LOVE IN US SO WE LOVE OTHERS: HE PUTS FORGIVENESS IN OUR SPIRIT SO WE ARE NOT BITTER: HE GIVES US AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO MEET SUFFERING - AND TO TRIUMPH OVER DEATH.

DR. DAN POLING IN HIS BOOK FAITH IS POWER, TELLS OF HIS SON'S

departure for overseas duty in world war II as a chaplain. HE SAID TO HIS FATHER, "DAD, I DON'T WANT YOU TO PRAY FOR MY RETURN. IT WOULDN'T BE FAIR. I HAVE NO PREMONITIONS, BUT JUST DON'T PRAY FOR MY RETURN - JUST PRAY THAT I SHALL NEVER BE A COWARD: DAD, PRAY THAT I SHALL BE ADEQUATE." CHAPLAIN CLARK POLING WAS ONE OF FOUR CHAPLAINS OF THREE FAITHS TO GO DOWN ON THE DORCHESTER WHICH SANK AT 1:15 AM IN THE ICEBERG WATERS, FEB. 5, 1943. HIS ACTIONS IN SAVING LIVES OF MANY MEN AND GIVING AWAY HIS LIFE BELT MAKE HIM ONE OF THE WAR'S GREAT HEROES OF COURAGE AND CHRISTIAN WITNESS. DR. POLING, WRITING OF HIS SON'S DEATH, SAID. "THE ONLY PRAYER HE WANTED WAS ANSWERED: HE WAS ADEQUATE."

MAY GOD MAKE YOU ADEQUATE TO FACE THIS AND EVERY TRIAL OF LIFE