

## "WHEN TITUS COMES"

TEXT: "But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus".

(II Corinthians 7: 6)

IN TROUBLE There are times in every person's life when he or she stands desperately in need of help. And no one ever described those times better than Paul. In the Letter of Paul to the Corinthians, just before the line I read to you a moment ago, he writes:

"Our bodies had no rest...but we were afflicted at every turn - fighting without and fear within."

Paul is giving us a picture of a person who is in a state of confusion - inside and out. You might say he's like the person standing in the middle of Lexington Avenue, trying to cross against the light. Suddenly the traffic begins to bear down on him and as the cars and trucks and buses swerve around him he has the feeling that he cannot cope with it. The more he feels he cannot cope, the more frightened he becomes and the more frightened he becomes, the less able he is to cope with it.

Conflict without. Anxiety within. He needs help. Or, think of it if you will in this fashion. He's like the person living in an area of low pressure. The clouds are too close. The ceiling is hung too low. Life's more than he or she can handle. Help is needed.

Paul was able to describe those times in a person's life because he had been through them so often. Sometimes we forget that Paul was one of the most turbulent characters in Christian history. He was in conflict constantly without - with the elements, with the weather, with the sea, with the authorities, with some of the people in those little churches he started - always getting into trouble.

And then remember, too, that he had some conflicts within. Paul suffered from some kind of nervous disorder which humiliated him and plagued him to the end of his days. To find Paul himself in such a predicament takes some of the fear out of our hearts and it may give us confidence.

And so we begin our thinking together this morning with this observation: there are times in every person's life - your life, my life, in Paul's life - when we are in trouble and we need help.

THERE IS HELP TO BE HAD Now remember this. When a person needs help there is always help to be had. The person attempting to cross a busy avenue in this city will usually receive help. I'm not saying what kind of help. It may come in the form of some unpleasant remarks offered by passing motorists. Perhaps he or she will be more careful next time. There is always help to be had.

And no one knew this better than Paul. In all of the perils of his travels, he had the help he needed. He was beaten, robbed, ship-wrecked, starved, stoned. And yet in all of those experiences he had the sustaining help of God that he needed in order to survive them - and not only survive them but transcend them in

such a way so as to be a symbol to us of the transcendent power of the human spirit. He found - as you may have found - there is one who never fails to comfort those who are brought low.

When a person needs help, there is help to be had. As a matter of fact, and Paul knew this better than most of us - the very time you need help the most is apt to be the time when you are most likely to get it.

Let me explain. A doctor cannot really help a person until the person is so sick that he wants help. I know from my own experience that a minister cannot help a person in any situation until that person gets to the point where he or she is willing to say, "I just can't handle this by myself...can you help me?" We need to be reminded that God cannot help us in our problems...and with the troubles that beset us until we desperately want help and we will not always want it until we desperately need it...until the time comes when all of our defenses are down, our pride is gone, our false hopes and ambitions have been put to one side.

AND: HELP COMES FROM ABOVE      And perhaps we would do well to remember this thought, too. Help always comes from above, never from below. What I mean is something like this.

I believe there's often the temptation when we find ourselves in a tight situation to look for help down below - take a drink perhaps, or compromise with our standards, have a fling, avoid reality, feel sorry for ourselves, take time off from the strenuous strains of life as we normally live it. Unfortunately this temptation is aggravated by the fact that relief so very often does come that way. Relief, mind you, but not real help.

Temporary relief is relatively easy to find and it often comes the easy way. But real help never comes from below, but always from above.

As Paul put it, "There is one who never fails to help and that one is God." Remember this, too, that you never get up by going down. If you want help, there is help to be had but it will come from the upper regions of your life - from the better part of you, from the best people you have known, from the dependable things you have stood for. There is help to be had. The help that makes a difference comes from above and not from beneath.

FORM OF A PERSON      "But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus". Our text serves to remind us that the help that God gives often comes in the shape or the form of a person. We read, "But God comforted us by the coming of Titus".

Titus was a Gentile convert, probably Paul himself had converted him. He was not only a convert to the Christian faith, but he proceeded to be a partner of Paul on some of his missionary journeys. Titus, together with Timothy, traveled around the countryside of Asia Minor and parts of Greece with Paul helping him to set up churches. Apparently he was one of those people with whom Paul had some unique and sympathetic understanding for from what we know about Paul, he was not an easy person to work for. Titus appreciated Paul and he did everything in the world that he could do for Paul and Paul's affection for this young man Titus is found in these words:

"I went to Troas, but still I had no peace of mind because I had not yet seen my brother, Titus".

In other words, Titus meant a great deal to Paul, so that when Titus came and met Paul after a long absence, the very fact that he was there was enough to begin to relieve some of the anxieties within and to resolve some of the conflicts without. Just to talk to him. Just to see him again. Just to know he was there. This was good enough for him, but there was more than that for Titus brought with him some good news.

THE GOOD NEWS      Apparently Paul had worked very hard with the Corinthian Church and had hoped that it would be welded together into a strong Church. The people of Corinth were not the easiest people with whom to work. There were tensions, conflicts and misunderstandings. His work in Corinth was endangered and his own mind was tormented by restless fears.

Being a pastor myself and knowing how hard it is to build a church and how important it is for people in a church to live together and work together in the spirit of Christ, I know and can imagine all too well how it must have bothered Paul to learn of the conflicts and the tensions in the Church at Corinth. And with all of the impulsiveness that Paul had, he wrote them a rather sharp letter which he probably regretted sending as soon as it had been mailed. It was after this letter was sent that he sat there waiting for Titus - "conflicts without, anxieties within". Had his sharp letter done more harm than good?

And then it was that Titus came with the news that all was well with the Corinthian Church. It was still loyal and still affectionately disposed toward him. They still loved Paul. They were ready to do anything he asked. And the reassurance of the news that Titus brought went further to revive the spirit of Paul. It made a difference. Encouragement and reassurance is helpful medicine to the human spirit.

But there was something even more than that. It was not only the personal presence of Titus, not only the news he brought, but it was something that came from God. That was the way Paul expressed it...some help that was more than could be comprehended by any one person, or conveyed by that person alone, something that was more than the good news he brought, some help that brought the waters of his own life back to their normal level.

PEOPLE LIKE TITUS      How wonderful it is when we meet people like Titus, people who serve as channels of God's power and love.

When God wanted to rescue Francis Thompson, one of the great religious poets of this century, from the gutters of London and from the drug habit, he did it not by an angel or by some abstract idea. But rather He did it through another person. He did it by Wilfrid Meynell who went right down into the gutters of the street and picked him up.

When God wants to help you, the chances are that He will not do it through an idea, perhaps not even through a prayer. He may do it through a person coming into your life, some person you know and feel close to, some person you respect and honor, some person who is able to bring down the help from above.

WHEN GOD CHOSE TO SAVE THE WORLD      And finally we need to remember that when God wanted to save the world, He chose to do this through the channel of a human personality, and so we might well

paraphrase this line from Paul's Epistle to read:

"But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us through the coming of Jesus."

A God, you see, who works through the specific...getting hold of people...using them as channels of His love and power...as ways of communication to reach people and lift them up...a God who is willing to help us when we need help and help in concrete forms, through the lives of other people.

CLOSING

And so when you feel those dark moments coming into your life - we all have them...when you feel unusually low - remember Paul, spiritual giant...in something of the same position..."fighting without, fearing within".

And then remember Titus, arriving on the scene and in his person communicating to Paul that help that comes from above. And then, perhaps, after you have been helped by some Titus, you may want to be something of a Titus yourself realizing that you, too, can serve as a channel of God's love and power - an instrument of His peace.

Thank God for the Tituses of life that you and I have known.

PRAYER

O Thou whose presence is everywhere and whose mercy never fails, graciously regard all those near and dear to us who at this time stand in need of help. Be thou about their path. Be thou within their hearts. And help us as we depart from this place to return to the affairs of the world to remember that ~~help~~ when we need help, help always comes, and that real help comes from above and that you use human beings to be instruments of that help.

In the name and the spirit of Christ, we pray. Amen

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In the name and the spirit of Christ, we pray. Amen

INTRODUCTION     The week of toil has ended. The day of rest is at hand. May the rest and the quiet of this hour of worship refresh our inner life. May it renew in all of us a sense of God's holy and abiding Presence.

In silence, let each now pray as the heart may prompt.

MEDITATION     We rest our hearts in the Promise of Jesus who said:

"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light!"

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction."

"Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage and He shall strengthen thine heart."

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary. And they shall walk and not faint."

"For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you clothed me. As you did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, you did it unto me."

"Ask, and it will be given you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you".

"And all things...whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing...you shall receive. And as many as touched Him were made whole."

PRAYERS / LORD'S PRAYER

O Thou, who hearest prayer, hear our prayers for others, as well as for ourselves.

Touch with healing, O God, those whom we mention in our prayers this hour:

Helen Wier.     Beryl Wilks

Michael Lyalls —

( over )

.....cherished members and friends of our parish.

Comfort the bereaved and the broken-hearted among us. Abide among us as a healing benediction.

In the name of Jesus Christ, I share with you the Good News:

We are forgiven!

Will you all pray with me for: those held hostage in Iran....that they may be strengthened and ~~renewed~~ renewed to live with renewed uncertainty.

Grant them courage and hope.  
Make them receptive to the  
touch of the Holy Spirit.

Answer the unspoken prayers offered to thee on the altars of our hearts, spoken in the name and spirit of Jesus who taught us to say when we pray:

"Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever. Amen."

ANNOUNCEMENTS: June 29, 1980

GREETING We greet the visitors in the congregation this morning....  
delighted and pleased to have you with us today. And we hope  
the opportunity will be ours to greet you personally following the service,  
either at the door or downstairs in the Russell Room where punch and cookies  
will be available.

Please be free in the sharing of your name with us. Take a moment,  
if you will, to sign one of the WELCOME VISITOR cards in the pews, or one of  
the Guest Books in the narthex. Join us on other Sundays in our worship  
and fellowship.

You worship in a Church that has been ministering to the needs of  
others - in the name of Christ - since 1837. It is in His name - in the  
name of Christ - that we bid you welcome this morning.

CONCERNS Please note the word in the bulletin about the meeting of the  
tutors involved in the ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE program...  
today, during the coffee hour in the choir room.

Also, note the announcement concerning the meeting of the Education  
Committee on Monday evening from six to ten - 4th floor lounge. This  
planning session is very important to the Sunday School program of the Fall  
and Winter and we hope that the teachers and committee members will make an  
effort to be present.

MUSIC We welcome Michael D. Reed to the organ console for the next  
two months in the absence of Lyndon Woodside. We also welcome Edith  
Vannerette Nieratka as our solosit this morning and have been looking forward  
for a long time to hearing Edith sing. Thank you for the generous sharing  
of your voice with us today in the worship service.

JESUS SAID "It is more blessed to give than to receive". In this spirit  
let us worship God with our morning offering.