

# The comfort of the Gospel (Quality: Good)

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Preacher: Buss, Charles (1913-1997)

- [ 0 : 00 ] As the Lord may be pleased to help me this afternoon, I would venture to speak from words you will find in the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 14, the first two verses.
- Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received at the Lord's hand double after all her sins.
- Isaiah chapter 40, the first two verses. These are well-known verses, but it is a mercy, friends, if we know something of the secret of what is couched within such words as these.
- Really we have a setting forth of the glorious gospel of the grace of God. And it is through the gospel that the Lord is pleased to convey the blessings of his grace, whereby the souls of his people shall be comforted.
- And we do well to, as we examine ourselves in the light of these words, as to whether we are amongst those who need that comfort, that consolation.
- [ 1 : 42 ] The word of God speaks about a strong consolation. And it is well if we are concerned within our hearts for real things.
- There is such a thing as false comfort, false confidence. Alas, it has to be said, there are many who may, as it were, rest themselves in that which is merely false, that which is merely superficial.
- But true comfort and true consolation is that which a living soul desires to participate in, and desires to experience as the Lord is pleased, to make it known.
- And I believe the Lord is pleased to deal with his people in such a way as to bring them to realise how they do need these gospel blessings from time to time as they journey on in the pathway of life.
- It is very clear in this word that it is a word concerning the people of God. And the Lord speaks to his people.
- [ 3 : 00 ] He speaks to a people whom he owns as his people. My people, saith your God.
- How we so clearly see in the word of God, that God has a people whom he owns as his. A people singled out of the teeming millions of this human race.
- They are called by grace. They are called by grace. Save and everlasting salvation. God owns them as his. We notice many references to this in the scripture in a personal way.
- How God dealt with one another in such a personal way. And where it is so evident that they were a subject of his choice.
- They were the people of God. And their experience and pathway all went to prove this as they journeyed on.
- [ 4 : 05 ] My people, saith your God. Did not the psalmist in his desires express before the Lord realise that God had indeed a people?
- Because he prays that God would remember him with the favour that he does bear to his people and visit him with his salvation. It is an indisputable truth that God has a people.

It must not be considered in a universal way. And there are those who would give us to believe that the whole human race comprises of God's people.

But from the point of salvation this cannot be accepted. The word of God is so clear that there is a people in the midst of a people.

And all through the word of God there is that distinguishing line as it were between those of the world, in the world and of it. And those who are the people of God.

[ 5 : 19 ] And they are made so by the grace of God. Nothing to do with what they are or what they may have attempted to do. But according to God's sovereign grace and mercy.

And God owns them as his. My people. You know this is so clearly seen with regard to God's ancient nation.

How God owned that nation didn't he? And that distinguished them from the other nations of the earth. And there is a sense in which this word of course refers to God's ancient nation.

And there are things that go to show that it was to God's people when they were in a very difficult situation.

There were the mountains and the crooked places and rough places. They had had to experience much of the chasing hand of God.

[ 6 : 25 ] And really some of this chapter is to be considered in a prophetic way. Isaiah of course was a prophet. And really it covers a long period in the history of God's ancient nation.

So that there are those verses in this chapter which rather suggest that this is a word prophetically concerning history of people when under the dominion of their enemies.

You notice it may well be perhaps in your Bible over the heading Isaiah 4. The Babylonian captivity.

And in such conditions there was this proclamation of gracious comfort to God's dear people even in the midst of those solemn chastening of his hand.

And it is wild to remember that God in his great mercy in dealing with his dear people down through the ages while he will chasten, he will afflict.

[ 7 : 38 ] And yet there is intermingling of comfort and consolation. There is a beautiful word, if I can turn it up, in Ezekiel, in Jeremiah which reminds us of both of God's chastenings and also his wondrous compassion.

Even to his chastened people and how he designs at length to comfort them with the comforts of his presence and his love.

I was thinking of words which you will find in the chapter 31 in Jeremiah's prophecy. And there the word of God speaks to us about Ephraim.

Ephraim of course setting forth a tribe of Israel, of God's people and a chastened Ephraim. And Ephraim bemoaning himself, Thou hast chastised me and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.

Turn thou me and I shall be turned for thou art my God. Here is something which is peculiar to God's dear people, even with respect to his chastenings.

[ 9 : 04 ] Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourges every son whom he receiveth. If you endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons. For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?

But then in the midst of these chastenings, there is the consolation and the comfort. And God is returning mercy to his chastened child.

Ephraim expresses the effect of this chastening. And he says, Surely after that I was turned, I repented.

And after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh. I was ashamed, yet even confounded. Because I did bear the reproach of my youth. And then the Lord speaks to him.

Or speaks concerning him. And there is divine compassion and comfort to be seen. Flowing from everlasting love. Is Ephraim my dear son?

[ 10 : 10 ] Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him. And this refers, you see, to God's chastening hand. His rebukes and reproofs.

For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore my bowels are troubled for him. This expresses the love of God to his people.

And he says, I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord. And here is a source of comfort. And so in the midst of all the varying dealings of God with his people, which is in wisdom at all times.

Although there may be the things that are so uncomfortable. And we can truly think of God's nation of old in captivity.

They're in a very uncomfortable situation. They wept when they remembered Zion. And their enemies required a song of them. They said, how can we sing in a strange land?

[ 11 : 14 ] They were without comfort. We hanged our hearts upon the widow branches, they said. So they were far from comfort.

And yet, there was to be this proclamation of the gospel. Yes, to these chastened people. And to bring them to realise that the Lord not forsaken them.

We may perhaps feel sometimes when passing through a time of trouble, we're forsaken. We have reference to this, do we not, in this chapter?

Where Jacob speaks. Why sayest thou, Jacob, and speakest thou Israel?

My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God. You see, there was no comfort there, was there? Jacob was troubled.

[ 12 : 19 ] Israel was distressed. Feared that the Lord had forsaken him. And that his way was indeed hid from the Lord.

Came to hasty, wrong conclusions with regard to the matter. And so then, void of comfort.

And yet, there was to be this proclamation of gracious comfort, solid consolation. And there is the ground, the foundation, as it were, for this comfort.

And how necessary that is. You see, that distinguishes between true comfort and false comfort. You see, it is possible to be left sometimes in a condition of ease and sloth, as it were, spiritually.

There's a warning in the word of God concerning those who are at ease in Zion. Well now, that is false comfort. But friends, it is a great mercy if at times we do feel the need the Lord to grant these gracious words of comfort yes, to reach to our hearts.

[ 13 : 53 ] And so really we have a setting forth of the gospel. But you see, it is a gospel to God's people. And it will be gospel to them.

The Lord deals with poor sinners and brings them into an experience whereby they realise they are in need of the glorious gospel and all it proclaims and contains. Having made to know something of their own sick conditions we tried to consider this morning.

And who can bring comfort to sin-sick souls? Or we have to refer to the great physician again, don't we? What comfort the Lord Jesus Christ conveyed to poor needy people tending their needs and granting them healing and delivering them in their times of trouble.

It was a source of comfort to them and so it is. And there is comfort to be known as one another helped to lay their case before the Lord.

Yes, lay their case before the Lord. You know, there were those in Babylonish captivity who knew the secret of this. Or there were in a strange land amongst strange people and they wept by the rivers of Babylon when they remembered Zion.

[ 15 : 28 ] But there were some, not sometimes did they weep but they prayed. They prayed that the Lord would look upon them in mercy. They confessed their sins and implored God's mercy.

And there is comfort in store for those. Yes, when poor sinners are brought to that point, yes, to confess their sins, to implore God's mercy, there is a promise of comfort.

And it is only this comfort that can meet their need as it were. Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, that saith your God.

It was really a commission, wasn't it, to those who preached the gospel. They were to proclaim these things. And what a mercy dear friends that still the gospel, even in these dark days in which we live, and when true religion seems to be at a very low ebb and very much in the minority amongst men, yet still the gospel is to be proclaimed.

and there is comfort to be known and there is the ground, the foundation of this comfort and it is in what God is to his people because not only are they his people but he is their God and here is the source of the comfort.

[ 17 : 06 ] comfort, when everything else may tend another way as it were. We may sometimes consider the times in which we live and look at the world around us as it were.

you cannot draw much comfort in it can you? But still there is a source of comfort that is in what God is to his people that he reigns supreme yes as a sovereign lord over all and every circumstance is under his divine control and he will appear for his waiting people be they perilous times there is a source there is a foundation for this comfort and when you think of God's ancient people in those days I referred to you notice how that the prophet was helped to direct the people indeed to the source of the comfort in God yes he says to them oh

Jerusalem oh Zion lift up thy voice with strength lift it up be not afraid sound to the cities of Judah behold your God well now what about the cities of Judah well in the time of captivity the cities of Judah looked a sorry mess Jerusalem laid waste so then there would be no comfort in looking at the Jerusalem literally as it were the waste it is but the word of the Lord was this and here is the source of the comfort behold your God yes behold your God and surely when it comes to considering these things in a personal way many things as you look upon them as they appear round about us much to distress us no comfort can be drawn from these things and yet there is still that one source of comfort in God behold your

God I know we need faith and God grants us faith to behold faith look above these things to him who reigns supreme yes the Lord God omnipotent who reigns in the earth and reigns on the behalf of all his dear people and where this word was given in this chapter behold your God it follows like this behold the Lord God will come there is a promise of his coming you see his gracious appearing and with strong hand yes to appear in his omnipotence behold the Lord God will come with strong hand and his arms will rule for him behold his reward is with him and his work before him the Lord will accomplish his work whatever men may do

God's work goes on and wherever there is the work of grace begun in the heart of a poor sinner the Lord will further that work he will finish that work and there is a reward not for our duties or desert hurts no but his boundless grace behold his reward is with him and his work before him oh here are some sources of this comfort you see comfort ye comfort ye my people saith your God and then God's kind and watchful care over his people and that is set before us in this chapter like this he shall feed his flock like a shepherd he shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom and shall gently lead those that are with young here is

[ 21 : 47 ] God's kind watchful care over his people as the shepherd over his flock the good shepherd pointing of course as it does to the dear Lord Jesus Christ himself who when here upon earth declared I am the good shepherd yes and I know my sheep and am known of mine comfort ye comfort ye my people saith your God then we come to consider what follows here speak ye comfortly to Jerusalem it is to be proclaimed you see this comfort is to be proclaimed I think you'll find the marginal rendering of this speak ye comfortly is this speak to the heart well that is the secret of the whole matter isn't it when you come to hear the gospel not enough to just hear the voice of a poor man trying to preach the gospel is he you want something to reach your heart yes for the

Lord by his spirit to speak to the heart and that is the blessed work of the Holy Spirit to convey the precious word of the gospel to the hearts of his people and make it good to them make it powerful effectual yes a word with authority and power and life spoken to the heart speak ye to the heart speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her or that there is that to be proclaimed as it were and these poor sinners who sometimes feel to be so so void of comfort and they long for this grace and comfort to be conveyed to them or you may sometimes have been brought into that place where you have felt to need the Lord to come and speak to your heart yes when perhaps you may be passing in times of difficulty and then for the

Lord in his mercy to come you have to wait upon him for it don't you there's much encouragement I feel in this chapter because toward the end of it you see it deals with waiting upon the Lord and waiting for him and the promise of strength given to those who wait for the Lord often a poor sinner may have to wait for this comfort when will comfort me poor Job you know in all his distress and affliction he was so void of comfort wasn't he true his friends came from afar to comfort him but they failed poor Job he described them as miserable comforters they seemed to open the wounds even more as it were and they couldn't understand his case they certainly couldn't enter into it you read how they came from their own place they're not in Job's place and so they couldn't comfort him they were not in his pathway or they could pass their judgment on him and come to some conclusion about the dealings of God with him and suggesting that Job was no more than a hypocrite well that was poor comfort for Job but you see they came from their own place there was not that sympathy not that right understanding true they said some right things with regard to God and his dealings but they misapplied the truth and there was nothing to comfort

Job and the poor man was comfortless yes he had no earthly comforts but how he was led wasn't he led on in that affliction to the time when the Lord was pleased to graciously appear to Job in such a wonderful way and how his latter days were so blessed weren't they and the Lord did smile upon him after having passed through that very trying experience well speak he comfortably to Jerusalem and the word reminds us then of these things which shall be a source of comfort to Jerusalem that is the inhabitants of Jerusalem the living in Jerusalem the church of God yes poor sinners blessed with faith in the Lord

Jesus Christ believing souls those who are pilgrims journeying to this wilderness world having much to contend with in the pathway now there is reason for this proclamation of comfort and it is in what the Lord is pleased to do and has done for his people and so we have it in these words speak he comfortably to Jerusalem and cried to her that her warfare is accomplished that her iniquity is pardoned now let us think of that that her warfare is accomplished well now this immediately reminds us then there's a warfare isn't there yes a warfare there are those two opposing principles that were in the heart of a child of God there's a warfare what will you see in the

[ 28 : 13 ] Shulamite as it were a company of two armies you read in the scripture no true that is every child of God in the midst of such and one within it is as though there's a company of two armies yes the old man of sin the new man of grace and one's opposed to the other and this brings about a warfare and a warfare that cannot be forced as it were with human weapons no but it needs strength it's God's grace but here and here's the source of the comfort the word says that our warfare is accomplished surely this shows to us the Lord has made all provision for his dear people these inhabitants of Jerusalem right down to the end of the journey yes when the conflict comes to an end in a sense the Lord has accomplished all and that in the person and work of the Lord

Jesus Christ and in a sense that in that sense as it were the warfare is accomplished and sometimes faith in exercise can lay hold upon this yes as accomplished warfare you know when Joshua went out to battle although as yet he had not engaged with the enemy yet he was given faith to believe there was a promise of the Lord's delivering mercy and there was faith to believe and so he goes with that as it were confidence not fleshly confidence but confidence in God so he would even anticipate humbly and yet with thankfulness the victory and in that sense you see the warfare was accomplished and

Jehoshaphat saw it come to pass so then concerning Jerusalem the warfare is accomplished and when we think of this as it applied to God's ancient people and Jerusalem being laid waste you know when the time came and the 70 years were fulfilled how the Lord in mercy raised up a man Cyrus to be the means of a deliverance from captivity and the Chaldeans were overthrown and brought to confusion their enemies the enemies of Judah and God appeared for his people and that sense it was accomplished you see when the time came they were set free to go back to their own promised land that our warfare is accomplished and then in the sense of this

I mean the exercise of a child of God joining on the pathway in the midst of the conflict here is something for faith to lay hold upon as it were I know we need faith in exercise to do so this accomplished warfare you see the Lord Jesus Christ procured this for his people didn't he he won the battle for them he conquered Satan yes and all that Satan had set afoot as it were with regard to the ruin that he brought up in mankind with respect to God's dear people the dear Lord Jesus Christ accomplished all that was required to be done to bring about their complete deliverance and their everlasting salvation there's this word also and here's ground for comfort that our iniquity is pardoned this is a great word isn't it it means much to poor sinners yes it wouldn't mean anything to the self-righteous but it means much to poor sinners yes those who feel something at times of the burden of their iniquity yes and the burden of the guilt of it may sometimes

Satan may come and remind you yes of your sins your many backslidings your many failings yes and sins number up as it were and rise up like a mountain but here is a word of comfort that our iniquity is pardoned this is a wonderful word to consider through the mouth of the prophet because it was not until some 700 years later that the dear Lord Jesus Christ was now to the cross as that one sacrifice for sins as that one way of pardon the only way of pardon yet there was this word through the prophet in these days that our iniquity is pardoned oh the pardoning mercy of

[ 34 : 19 ] God oh the here is comfort isn't that you see there can be no real comfort all the time you might feel the guilt of your sin and it may lay heavy upon your conscience but oh some intimation of the Lord's forgiving love and mercy that brings comfort that brings true consolation that our iniquity is pardoned oh how these things point don't they to the Lord Jesus Christ he who accomplished all things for the salvation of his dear people he who went forth as a conqueror and to conquer as it were in their behalf and then to bring in forgiveness yes pardon shedding his precious blood all through the Old

Testament there were types and shadows which set forth God's pardoning mercy and the way through which that mercy came and by way of sacrifice but all pointing to the one sacrifice which would be made at Calvary yes when sin would be pardoned when the dear Lord Jesus Christ would shed his precious blood to put away the sins of his people but then you and I we need this great blessing made known to us don't we we might know it is for our souls to be comforted with that blessed and precious gospel comfort that flows through the Lord Jesus Christ that comfort that comes like a message from heaven as it were to the heart remember the apostles as they preached the gospel you read of them in the

Acts of the Apostles and how that there was this theme wasn't there men and brethren through this man that is this God man Christ Jesus is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins forgiveness of sins that our iniquity is pardoned how to preach that gospel that was the good news these were the good tidings for Zion and for Jerusalem and that their iniquity would be removed no more to be laid at their charge as it were that her iniquity is pardoned and then there is anticipation of this really for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins and that is a great word isn't it double for all her sins can we not think of this as the setting forth of the wonderful fullness of the forgiveness that flows through the

Lord Jesus Christ and deliverance yes from the reign of sin and the power of sin one in the hymn puts it like this doesn't he to cleanse thee from its guilt and power and we need that double blessing yes to be delivered from the guilt of sin and to be delivered from the power of sin for sin no longer to have dominion over us or how it would if left to ourselves sin would have dominion but we need grace to super abound and so there's this double blessing as it were yes to be cleansed from the guilt and the power of sin so then there is this word of comfort a word of comfort to be proclaimed yes to be preached and who will have an ear for this comfort those who fear their need of it not those who rest in false confidence not those who rest in false comforts as it were not those who settle down and think well perhaps everything will come all right at the end not those who rest in what they may think they are or what they think they may do or what they think they may appear before others no but those who realise their only source of comfort truth is in who is the

God of his people and his people yes that he is their God that thou he is comfort ye comfort ye my people that saith your God and you see all through this chapter there there's references to the Lord appearing for his people and in his omnipotent power and making a way for them there's to be comfort you see the Lord making straight in the desert a highway for our God and there should be the exulting of the valleys and the mountains and hills to be made low and the crooked to be made straight and the rough places plain all setting forth the almighty power of God yes going before his people and making a way for them and step by step as they go on so the way opens up before them and all to redound to the glory of the

[ 40 : 47 ] Lord for it says and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it and what a contrast in considering the omnipotence of God in the behalf of his dear people and the vanity of idols the vanity of idols some might say well we don't live in an idolatrous land well in one sense we don't we don't bow down to man-made idols as if we're in that sense but you know there are many idols and everything that comes between poor sin and his gods is an idol and if we may rest on something of ourselves that is like looking to an idol we need to be delivered from these things and remember that our only hope is in

God alone and what he is and what he has done in the behalf of his dear people and it is at times a soul comforting thought when your thoughts are directed to the Lord himself and what he is as the God of his people especially the Lord granted intimation of this and you see the question was put wasn't it to the people of God really these poor Jacobs and Israels who felt their way was hid from the Lord being in a state of void of comfort as it were and coming to rather gloomy conclusions about matters well there are questions put that is such a case has they not known has they not heard that everlasting

God the Lord the creator of the earth faint is not neither is weary there is no searching of his understanding all the Lord is so great he is altogether beyond our poor finite minds to understand him and yet faith believes faith lays hold upon the truth concerning what God is as the God of his people and that he who created the ends of the earth never faints is never weary his understanding is altogether beyond our poor minds to search out as it were and then there's the communication of strength which he gives to his people from that one source his omnipotence yea the Lord Jesus Christ who is the strength of Israel and he giveth power to the faint and to them that have no might he increases strength he is a source of comfort or he may feel sometimes very faint hearted and it may be your strength seems to be so weakened perhaps in some particular sense but in those very places and experiences the

Lord is pleased to communicate from his fullness in his mercy to give power to these fainting ones and to them that have no might in themselves he increases strength in the way of the Lord is strength the upright I was thinking earlier in the week of that word in this prophecy of Isaiah trust you in the Lord forever in the Lord Jehovah his everlasting strength and they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength here is the secret of the way in which the Lord is pleased to communicate he brings his people to wait upon him for it and to look to him to be supplied and to be strengthened with strength sufficient yes day by day and it has to come in that way we do not receive as it were a great stock of strength in ourselves to draw from but rather it is like this as thy days so shall thy strength be but they that wait upon the

Lord shall renew their strength they shall mount up with wings of the eagles they shall run and not be weary and they shall walk and not faint yes oh there is comfort to be known in this those who are taught by his grace to wait upon the Lord there are still the difficulties and still the trials yes the Lord does try his people and he tries their graces faith will be tried and yet there is the comfort there is the consolation and all that wonderful blessing flows so that Lord Jesus Christ heals the comfort of his dear people and by his spirit is made known to them you know the Lord Jesus Christ gave a loving word to his disciples didn't he when he was about to lead them and go his way of suffering he said

[ 46 : 29 ] I'll send you another comforter yes and so his blessed spirit yes is the great comforter he who consoles his dear people that strong consolation and it is spoken of in the word of God as everlasting consolation you see we have earthly comforts and God has granted us many mercies and it becomes us to receive them thankfully we have our comfort in our homes but this comfort dear friends reaches out beyond this life we have to think of comfort in the light of eternity don't we realising that each one of us must come down to the end of this life's journey and face eternity but all to be found amongst those yes and the Lord is pleased to bless to watch over and bring to himself and to bring them into that everlasting consolation even heaven itself or that portion may be yours and mine

Amen amen and conclude by singing hymn number 330 the tune of evening star number 29 thy or hymn Hymn number 313.

Hymn number 313.

Hymn number 313.

Hymn number 313.