



# God's Promise of Comfort

Isaiah 40:1-11 New International Version



## What gives you comfort?

For me, one thing is a warm cup of coffee. I really enjoy the flavor and cozy feeling it brings. I think it's partly an emotional attachment because no other warm beverage will do. Occasionally, I like to go to a coffee house and get a real good java experience. My wife does not share my love for coffee and that's okay. She loves ice cream. Everyone has something or someone that is comforting and makes them feel good.

I would imagine for many that God and comfort do not belong in the same sentence. God might seem to fit better with "Cosmic Police Man", "Harsh Dictator", or "Distant Dad". Yet, hear what the Bible says about God.

*<sup>1</sup> Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. <sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.*

We do not readily experience God's comfort because the world is broken and disappointment is spread through out our experiences. I doubt there is anyone who has never been disappointed with friends, family, a job, their looks, and other things. After a while, we believe that there is no hope of ever receiving comfort. However, God's promise of comfort is not based on things that come and go.

Listen to the words about God's comfort found in the above verses. God says that He wants His people to have comfort. He speaks tenderly and not harshly. Sin has been paid in full. I used to think that if I did more good things than bad that God would accept me. The truth is that I could never do all that God requires. God helped me to realize that I could never be good enough. Because God is like a fair judge, He must punish sin. Either you pay for your sin with your life, or you ask Christ to pay for it.

During the Regan administration there was an attempted assassination. When the gun was spotted in a crowd of people, a secret service agent dove in front of the president and took the bullet for him. The president went free and Mr. Brady was left more or less a vegetable. In a similar way, Jesus took the bullet for me and he can take the bullet for you as well.

The Bible shows that Jesus Christ has paid for sin. He has taken the bullet that you and I deserve! You can either pay for it yourself and purchase Hell and alienation from God, or you can accept that Christ paid for your sin as He hung on the cross and died. God helped me to see that by His grace, my sin was paid in full and I could no longer have God angry with me. He treats me with love and I know that I will live with Him forever in Heaven. A verse that helped me understand this was Ephesians 2:8-9. It says,

*<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.*

“Paid in full” stamps are kind of like the Maytag repair guy these days. They sit around on a shelf looking for something to do. “Overdue” stamps have out muscled the “paid in full” stamps. Credit card bills are paid each month, but the debt remains. Credit counseling services offer to come to the rescue and they might be a good option for you. Your payment is lowered, but your debt remains.

God does not promise to lower your payment on your debt of sin. He promises to wipe out your debt with the payment of Christ. When you trust Christ to forgive you, your sins are marked “paid in full” and you are not under the weight of guilt.

It was seeing God’s undeserved kindness that led me to turn from my sins and turn to Christ. He brings me comfort and enjoyment even more than a yummy cup of coffee. If you are without Christ, you are without comfort. Christ is your only hope for lasting comfort.



**ave you ever thought that God may want to bring you comfort?**

If so, keep reading for more about God’s promise of comfort?

*<sup>3</sup> A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. <sup>5</sup> And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

“What would God want with me”, I wondered? “If I want God to help me, I must help myself and do better”. I must change and make myself more pleasing to God to get His attention.” Countless people like myself have wondered this at some time or another. I was amazed to find out that God showed His love for me by dying for me while I was still a sinner (Romans 5:8). When I had no interest in Him and did not even go to church.

The Bible verses above say to prepare the way for the Lord. Preparing for the Lord is a change, but it is not the same as “cleaning up your act”. Fast forward in history and a guy named John the Baptist uses these same words.

*In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea <sup>2</sup> and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." <sup>3</sup> This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"*

Preparing for the Lord involves repentance. Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to God. It is not just feeling sorry or believing certain facts about God.

One time I was delivering a pizza in the country. I turned into a long driveway and proceeded down the hill. This was no typical driveway. It was all muddy and thick like oily peanut butter. I knew I was in trouble when my 4-wheel drive jeep was struggling to go down hill. Yes, I was

going downhill. I wanted to turn around but could not. It took the farmer's LARGE horse to pull me out of the mud. I could not get out, but had to ask for help. Repentance is like that.

The change comes **after** repentance, not before. I'm not talking about becoming religious and doing the things you should and avoiding the bad things. This guy John confronted religious people who though they had it all together and told them to live like they had repented. In reality these people had not repented and turned to Christ, but they wanted people to think they were good. They were pretending to be someone that they were not.

So, God wants to bring comfort to your life as you repent of your sins and turn to Christ for comfort. Comfort does not come from living a lie.

At this point you might say, "Bryan, that sounds pretty good. But, I've always believed that if something is too good to be true then it is. "How can I know that you're not just pulling one over on me?" Well ...simple. I am not promising you anything. The promise of comfort comes from God.



### **he promise of comfort is certain**

*<sup>6</sup> A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. <sup>7</sup> The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. <sup>8</sup> The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."*

The promise of comfort is certain because God does not go back on His word. God is reliable and stands forever as contrasted to you and me.

I love plants and flowers, but they are not reliable either. I used to live in Florida where they grow all year. Things are different in Ohio. REAL different. When the cold comes in the fall the flowers turn brown, keel over and die. The green grass eventually turns brown. They are gorgeous when they are in their prime, but they are not reliable to be at prime throughout the winter.

The same is true of you and me. We may have good looks, a wonderful family, a good job, and good health. However, winter is coming. Life will not always be as it is now. Are you ready for when you begin to fade if you haven't already begun?

You can make excuses about why you don't believe God and His word, but they will not get you off the hook. So, I want to comment briefly on the reliability of the Bible. Books have been written on the subject and I do not intend to add to them.

Did you know that as scientific evidence comes in that more and more people, places and things in the Bible are proven to be true? Did you know that events and people in the Bible are recorded in other historical books? Did you know that more than 300 predictions written about Jesus in the Bible have come true? Many are from this book of Isaiah.

Someone with better math skill than I, which is not saying very much, figured out the probability of a person actually fulfilling only 8 of these predictions. Imagine covering the entire state of Texas with silver dollars to a depth of two feet, marking only one with a black "X", and burying it somewhere in the heap of metal. Next, blindfold your friend and ask them

to go find the marked coin. Humanly it's impossible. The probability of this scenario takes into account a person making only 8 predictions come true ( $10^{17}$  probability for only 8). Jesus fulfilled over 300! One such prediction was that Jesus the Christ was to be born in Bethlehem. Did you have any say in where you were born? God and His Bible are reliable.



### **he promise of comfort is to be shared**

*<sup>9</sup> You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!" <sup>10</sup> See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. <sup>11</sup> He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.*

Have you ever had news so good that you couldn't hold back? You just had to let everyone know because you were so excited. What is this great news? Put simply, "The LORD comes." Don't miss the simplicity. The LORD is not distant. The LORD is not uninterested. The LORD is not merely a powerful force. Even the meaning behind the name LORD is personal. LORD is not a title, but close like a family name.

It would be similar if you were Donald Trump's kid and he wanted you to call him Daddy. He has a lot of power, influence, and money. People fear him, but he is Daddy to you because you have a relationship with him. He loves you and he will not, and can not, fire you.

Look at verse 10 and 11. The LORD is like a powerful king who is victorious in battle. The treasure mentioned is a flock of sheep. "This sounds absurd", you say. At first glance you might think that king has mental problems. "He wins the battle and is excited about a bunch of sheep which are stupid, dirty, and defenseless? What lousy loot!" However, notice how He cares for these sheep. He tends the flock, which is to send them out and make sure they have food. He gathers them and carries them close even though they smell and try to bite him. And he is gentle with momma sheep that has little ones who require more care and patience.

The king is also a shepherd. King David was also a king and a shepherd. Jesus is also called a shepherd. I want to go to another section of the Bible to see what it says about Jesus as a shepherd. It can be found in John chapter 10.

*Jesus said, <sup>14</sup> "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me--  
<sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-- and  
I lay down my life for the sheep. **John 10:14-15***

People were confused as Jesus talked about being the Good Shepherd and He replied.

*<sup>20</sup> Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?"  
<sup>21</sup> But others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" **John 10:20-21***

Although some of the things Jesus said sounded crazy, others disagreed because of the miracles that He performed. There are people who want to ignore the miracles that Jesus did because they can not understand how He did them. I heard that Jay Leno even joked about that on the *Tonight Show*. He said that there are some people who want to change the name of the classic movie entitled *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street* to *Coincidence on 34<sup>th</sup> Street*.

Finally the people of Jesus' day could stand it no longer. They needed a straight answer from Him. They pressed Jesus and this is what happened.

*<sup>24</sup> The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." <sup>25</sup> Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, <sup>26</sup> but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. <sup>27</sup> My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one." <sup>31</sup> Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, <sup>32</sup> but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" <sup>33</sup> "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." **John 10:24-33***

It doesn't get any clearer than that. People were furious because Jesus claimed to be God. What will you do with that claim?

When I first heard that claim I was unimpressed. I had everything that I needed and most of what I wanted. However, after awhile, as I read the Bible with some others, God changed me. I realized that I not only needed Jesus Christ in my life, but I wanted Him in my life.

He has proved to be a lasting comfort when girls dumped me before I was married. He was a comfort when my dad died. And He is a comfort in the ups and downs of daily life. When I mess up, He reassures me of His love and forgiveness and continues to change me for the better. I'm not what I used to be, but I'm not what I will be either. The same is true for every follower of Jesus. Consider God's promise of comfort that I have just shared with you. Consider sharing it with someone else.

Thank you for reading.

I'd like to invite you to come and hear the next message in person,

And to join us in singing Christmas songs.

After the message, there will be hot chocolate and cookies for you to enjoy.

~ Pastor Bryan ~