

# Comfort Ye My People

Our progress through Isaiah's prophecy has brought us to a new section. Of course, there has been much of Christ in earlier chapters as we have seen. There have been details about His incarnation and the virgin birth as well as anticipation of what Christ would accomplish at the cross for His remnant people. However, here we step through into the more evangelical and spiritual part of this prophecy. This reaches to and includes the whole Gospel age from the coming of John the Baptist to the second coming of Christ.

## **A worrying time**

At the end of the previous chapter Isaiah spoke of Judah's exile and captivity in Babylon after the death of Hezekiah. Now Isaiah himself is to comfort the Lord's captive people. The prophet is a type of all the prophets and of gospel ministers tasked with preaching Jesus Christ to the remnant people of God. There is repetition of the call to give comfort to God's elect, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people'. We might conceive one call to Isaiah directly, the second to every other preacher of grace. The Lord will have His people comforted with the good news of redemption accomplished and applied.

## **A message of hope**

Jerusalem is a type of God's people and the Church is comforted in knowing her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned and a full and complete sufficiency has been gained despite all her sins. Blessings are doubled by Christ's death; complete forgiveness is secured and perfect righteousness imputed. All the prophets preached Christ but here in Isaiah 40 John the Baptist is identified as immediately preceding the coming Messiah. His gospel, and ours, meets the need of every chosen sinner. Those brought low are lifted up, the proud are humbled, dark sayings are illuminated and hidden truths made plain to understand.

## **Christ will come**

The 'glory of the Lord' is Christ Himself. Following John's preparatory ministry the Lord will be revealed to the Jews and ever after revealed in the gospel preached. Nor is this restricted to the Jews. Here the worldwide gospel ministry is anticipated. There are not two gospels, one for Jews and another for Gentiles. All flesh will together see Christ in the gospel. This is also an explicit declaration of sovereign grace. Men and women, God's elect, will assuredly see Christ savingly in the gospel. God's grace is efficacious grace and there is no conditionality based upon man's freewill contained in it.

## **Preach the gospel**

The cry spoken of is preaching. Gospel preachers do no more than preach what the Lord has said and revealed in His word. Their message is one of mankind's frailty, inability and worthlessness before God. Men as grass wither. God and His word endure forever. God's truth strikes and offends man's pride, first it humbles our spirits then it binds up our wounds and comforts our souls. Judah would be struck down and humbled by Babylon but yet there was hope for the elect for the promise of the Messiah endures forever.

## **Strong and gentle**

Verses 9-11 encourage the Lord's church to behold their Saviour in Jesus Christ. The church in the Old Testament just as surely as the church in the New and the church today are to be encouraged to 'behold your God'. We behold Him as He strongly overcame Satan, death and hell on the cross while at the same time we behold Him gently leading His flock by still waters to feed and nourish even the smallest and weakest of the lambs with utmost gentleness and love.

## **Free grace is unconditional**

We behold our great and gracious Shepherd full of power and majesty. Our gentle, tender Saviour is the same God who created the world and all in it. He holds the islands in His hands, the nations as a drop in a bucket. Remember, Isaiah is continuing to supply the only message that comforts God's elect. God's grace is free. It is not earned by merit or secured by service. Nothing we do recommends us to God. Not all the trees of Lebanon on an altar, nor all the animal sacrifices imaginable can please God. Only the Lord Jesus Christ pleases God. There can be no greater comfort to troubled saints than free grace and to behold in the man Christ Jesus their loving Saviour and all-powerful Friend.

### **Our idolatrous hearts**

Here, too, is testimony to man's impotence and inability by the Fall. By nature we worship the works of our own hands as sufficient to please God. Self-righteousness is at the core of all false religion. So prone are we to idolatry that if we cannot have a golden image to fall down to we will be content with a wooden one. We are so blinded by sin that unless grace finds and teaches us of the real, true, powerful and holy God we will be content with an idol of our own making. The Lord Jesus Christ is unique and there is no one to whom our Saviour may be likened or equated.

### **Perfect and complete**

The closing verses of our passage show God Himself reasoning with His people and confirming Isaiah's comforting words. The Lord sees and knows our needs. He is eager, not weary, to help. He empowers those who otherwise have no strength so they may press on and persevere when young men succumb and the strength of nature fails. Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Waiting is not always easy but patience will have its reward. 'Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.'

Amen

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