

A Message of Comfort and Hope

Radio Broadcast

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Welcome to the Grace Abounding Broadcast brought to you by the congregation of the Shreveport Grace Church that meets at 2970 Baird Road in Shreveport, LA. My name is Ken Wimer and it is my privilege to bring to you today a message that seeks to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious person and finished work of salvation accomplished for sinners at the cross. Please stay tuned.

I want to speak with you today from the book of Isaiah 40 and I have entitled this message "A Message of Hope and Comfort," and when I say this, the Bible does not hold out hope in comfort for just anybody. Here as the Spirit of the Lord directed Isaiah to write these inspired words, he said, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." There are many preachers running the land today whose only purpose is just to bring supposed hope and comfort to anybody but we don't find that message in Scripture. In fact, to speak peaceably, to speak comfort to ones who are not the Lord's is a false message. Imagine a doctor knowing that a patient has a terminal illness and comes in and wanting just to be liked or have a good bedside manner says to the patient, "Everything is going to be okay. Don't worry about it," when in reality the patient is dying. Well, the Scriptures are truthful because they are the word of the God of truth and there is a people that these Scriptures address.

Here in verse 1 of Isaiah 40, God says, "my people," and if you take the time to read through the Scriptures you'll see that there is a people that God in his grace and mercy from eternity has chosen out from fallen humanity that he calls "my people," and that in time he sent the Lord Jesus Christ to pay their sin debt. When the Lord Jesus came into the world, it wasn't to die for everybody. If that were the case then none would be lost, all would be saved. But the Scriptures still speak of heaven and hell. They speak of saved and condemned. You say, "Well, who are the saved?" Well, those that God has purposed to save and for whom the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world. In Matthew 1:21, it says, "thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

So, dear friend, this is a word of comfort to any who might be listening right now in whom God by his Spirit has revealed your need, the urgency of the lost estate of your soul, and given you eyes to look to the Lord Jesus Christ alone away from any works of

your own. You can't save yourself. And to look to the Redeemer alone and to that work accomplished at Calvary for sinners that God sent the Lord Jesus to save. You see, this is the Spirit's work to do and so here is a message then of comfort to those who are the Lord's.

Now, the book of Isaiah is divided into two parts: up to chapter 39, we find God dealing with the rebellious nation of Israel and speaking with them of impending judgment. Such is our nature to rebel against God and were it not for God's grace and mercy, we would all be under the wrath of God. But from here forward in this book of Isaiah, we find it to be a message of forgiveness and deliverance but not just in any way. So here is the foundation then of the true message of hope and comfort and we see several points to this chapter. 1. There is an everlasting comfort. When it speaks here of comfort, it's not talking about some temporal relief but a true hope, one that such sinners who are the Lord's can and do rest in as the Spirit of God points them to the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we see the everlasting comfort that is revealed here but it is founded upon the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, the Lord Jesus had not yet come when Isaiah wrote these words but in verse 2 of Isaiah 40, we read, "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins." Now, Jerusalem of old was typical as a type of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a city established and set upon a hill and it was there that the temple was built and in that temple were the sacrifices and the priesthood but all of this was forward looking. It was prophetic of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and that in him even as here in Jerusalem, in the Lord Jesus Christ there would be pardon and there would be forgiveness and peace.

So here Isaiah is instructed to cry unto her, again, connected with "my people" in verse 1. Whenever we preach the Gospel, we're looking for those who are the Lord's. Maybe they don't know him yet. Maybe even as described here, they are away in judgment found in Babylon as Isaiah was prophesying should happen to the nation of Israel because of their sin and yet in time, the Lord would bring them back again from that captivity. All of this is a type of how God delivers his own from out of the world. When Adam fell, we fell and for a time as we're born in this world, we live in darkness. We live under the delusion and captivity of false religion and it's only when it pleases God, just like with Israel, they were not brought back from captivity until it pleased God to raise up a Deliverer and bring them back into the land. So it is with those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ but even with all of the war and destruction that the city of natural Israel, Jerusalem, endured, yet the Lord preserved it and brought his people back into it and established again his people in that land and rebuilt the temple that the worship of the Lord God should continue until such time as Christ should come and fulfill it all.

That's why today we don't put any confidence in natural Jerusalem. There is a Jerusalem. That word means "a city of peace." That city of peace is that people. The Scriptures refer to the church as the New Jerusalem and it is that Jerusalem which the Lord Jesus Christ came to save. It's a people actually from every tribe, nation and tongue called Israel. It's the true Israel, the spiritual Israel. Paul wrote that in Romans 9, "They are not all of

Israel," in other words, "of natural Israel that are of Israel." But there is an Israel according to the seed of promise that was called out of Isaac and that seed is Christ.

So here Isaiah speaks of an everlasting comfort. Not a temporal one. Not related to any temporal Jerusalem. But an everlasting comfort and here he is instructed to cry unto her two things: that her warfare is accomplished; secondly, that her iniquity is pardoned. The reason is given, "for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins." Now, how does this relate to any who are the Lord's? Well, our warfare is accomplished. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, it was to do battle against those enemies of his people that would have condemned them. Their sin is the greatest enemy of all but, then again, we have to remember that even the law stood against those that God had purposed to save and so it took the Lord Jesus Christ coming to satisfy law and justice and the only way to conquer that sin, again a warfare, was for the Lord Jesus Christ to pay the debt.

And when it says here, "she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins," in Isaiah 40:2, that's an important word "double." In the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, there was a double dealing with the sins of the Lord's people. First of all, the sin had to be put away so that's one aspect. In that, the Lord Jesus Christ did in his death. His blood shed unto death. The wages of sin is death. So in that one time and one place and one sacrifice once for all, the Lord Jesus Christ put away forever the sin of this spiritual Jerusalem, this people chosen of God and given to the Son. A city of peace because that peace has been established by the Lord Jesus Christ. There has been a reconciliation that has taken place. So in his death he dealt with that one enemy, sin.

But even as I said earlier, there was the law of God, so this is the second aspect of Christ's work. That law had to be satisfied. So in his death, Christ put away the sin but in his life he answered the very law of God, that law that stood against every sinner and still stands against every sinner that comes into this world but for those who are the Lord's, it stood against even them until such time as the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled it. He said, "I didn't come into the world to destroy the law but rather to fulfill it," and that he did. So he did it with his perfect life, that answered the precepts of the law. And he did it by his death which answered the penalty of the law. So there is a lot here in these first two verses of Isaiah 40 concerning that everlasting comfort which belongs to that people that God has chosen and Christ redeemed and the Spirit is even now calling out of this world unto himself.

Now, the second thing we see here in Isaiah 40 that is the foundation of this message of hope and comfort and that is that it's founded upon an everlasting truth, the everlasting word of God. We see that here beginning in verse 3 down to verse 8 which I'll read for us. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth

upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth," here it is, "but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

So you can see here there is a comfort and a hope that we find in Scripture that is founded upon an everlasting word. Men come and go. The grass withers. The flower fades. Here is what the Scriptures say about that in verse 7. People say, "Well, it's Mother Nature." No, "the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass." So as we consider the different seasons and watch grass whether it's in the summer begin to turn brown because of the heat or in the winter because of the cold, it's the Lord and it's a reminder that such is our nature. There is no comfort in this life that's lasting. There is no blessing that is everlasting. It's all temporal. But the message of comfort, the message of hope is an everlasting truth. It was true when Isaiah pronounced it back here in his day and it's true of us reading it here today as the Lord has preserved this word for us and it is founded upon a word that does not change. Oh, I am so thankful that the word of God does not change.

You say, "Well, what is that word?" Well, in verse 3, the word is, the everlasting truth is that there is a God who has purposed that a way to be prepared in order to save a people and that's what verse 3 is about, "Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." You see, that's what our life is, but a desert, but a wilderness in our condemnation and sin and yet there has been a way that has been prepared of the Lord, for the Lord, and made straight in the desert. Now, we're talking about days when if a king was to displace from one place to another, that whole crews went out to make the way straight, to make it plain. And I believe what is being described here, again, even as verse 2 has to do with the death of the Lord Jesus Christ and what he accomplished, here in verses 3 through 5 it has to do with the one who would come and accomplish it. So the everlasting truth is that God became flesh and dwelt among us. That's what's described here when it says, "the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness." You can go to the New Testament in Matthew 3:3 and see how this was fulfilled in John the Baptist. He was that voice that prepared the way of the Lord and what was his message? "Behold the Lamb."

So even as God had purposed to save a people, here we see that the word of comfort and everlasting word of truth is that this salvation would be accomplished by God himself coming to this earth. That's why verse 3 says, "make straight in the desert a highway for our God." You say, "Well, how did John the Baptist make this way straight in the desert?" Well, he stood and preached against an entire generation of religionists whose pride and self-righteousness caused them to think that somehow by what they did they were making themselves acceptable with God. They completely perverted the message of Scripture and they were blind to their own sin.

Now here when it says, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low," it's talking about the kinds of sinners that the Lord Jesus Christ came to save. When his work is finished, any that are low in their sin and that describes his people, they shall be exalted. Not in themselves but in the Lord Jesus Christ and in his work accomplished.

But it also says, "every mountain and hill shall be made low." In other words, there is no obstacle that would stand in the way of God coming in the flesh and accomplishing the work that he came to do. Here again we see such a difference from what the Scripture says about God and how he is being preached in our day. We're being told that God would like to do many things but he can't unless man lets him. That's not the word of Scripture. That's not the everlasting truth upon which an everlasting comfort is based. The everlasting truth is summed up here in verse 4, "the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain." So complete would be the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in coming that any obstacle that stood in the way or against one of his people, the Lord himself would handle and he would remove. The Lord said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

But verse 5 sums it up. Who is this one who is to come? We've seen already it's God himself. That's an everlasting truth. God in the flesh because verse 5 says the very "glory of the LORD shall be revealed." So in this one who is to come, it was none other than the glory of the Lord. That's who the Lord Jesus Christ is. Yes, that glory was veiled in the flesh and yet nonetheless it was the glory of the Lord that was in that man. Immanuel means "God with us," and even as there was the tabernacle of old that was placed among the nation of Israel, so the Lord Jesus Christ himself is that glory that came and tabernacled among his people.

John in writing about this in his Gospel, in verse 1 it says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But then as you read down in verse 14, it says there that, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." That word "dwelt" is the word "tabernacled." So when you read it in the original, the picture is of a tabernacle. When you looked on that tabernacle in the Old Testament, there wasn't any beauty in it. It was made of badger skins. It resembled in many ways the tents of the people that dwelt around it. But what distinguished it was what was inside. Inside you had the table of showbread. You had the altar of incense. Then you had the veil. Then you had the Mercy Seat and the Ark of the Covenant all covered with gold. You see, all of those are symbolic of the very divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. But also there was that Shekinah glory, that cloud that rested over the Mercy Seat that all could see.

So all of this language is figurative of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," and John says, "and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." You see how that parallels here with Isaiah 40:5 when it says, "the glory of the LORD shall be revealed." None other than God himself was revealed in Christ coming in the flesh. Now, men didn't see it. All they saw was a man and to add to their blindness, when they ultimately crucified him there on the cross, they thought they were rid of him. They were done with it. They thought that they had killed a pretender. You see, the glory of God was hidden from their eyes or else they would not have crucified him is what Paul says in his first epistle to the Corinthians.

So what does it mean here in Isaiah 40:5 when it says, "all flesh shall see it together"? All flesh in the sense of people from every tribe, nation and tongue. Not just the Jew. You see, when Christ came, the Scripture says as the Savior of the world, it doesn't mean that he came to save everybody but there is a people out of every tribe, nation and tongue that he came to save and in that sense, "all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." Now, it is speaking here beyond even the time of Christ on earth when it says, "all flesh shall see it together." In other words, see it spiritually. Eyes being opened. Christ told Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." You see, here in this word there is a reading of this word but it takes God giving the eyes to see that it's all about the Lord Jesus Christ and all about his glory and all about how God can be just to declare sinners righteous before him. That's the everlasting comfort and that's the everlasting truth.

Again, the everlasting truth not only is about who God is, who Christ is, but who we are because in verse 6 we read, "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry?" Here's what he was to cry, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." If you're putting any confidence even now in any kind of health or wealth prosperity, your friend, it's temporal. There is no hope there. "The grass withereth." The day is coming when anything that you are right now is going to be withered up. The only thing lasting is as it says there in verse 8, "the word of our God shall stand for ever."

So here again we see the everlasting comfort. We see the everlasting truth. But thirdly, in verses 9 through 11, there is an everlasting kingdom and I'm thankful it's so. Here it says, "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" Now, Zion, Jerusalem, Judah, these are all physical places. In fact, you can go over there today in Israel and find these places named and yet here it is speaking to something beyond natural Israel. Now here is a spiritual Israel to whom the word is, "Behold your God!"

Verse 10, "Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him." Who is that speaking of? That's the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a kingdom that he came to build when he came into this world. It's a spiritual kingdom. The Lord said, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." But this is a spiritual kingdom and his arm shall rule for him. The strength of the Savior, he is the captain of the salvation of his people. He came and warred and conquered and his reward is with him. What is his reward? It's not a compensation for man's works. His reward is the compensation of his work that the Father gave him to do and his work before him. In other words, he came to accomplish, to finish that which God purposed from eternity and that's why when he hung on the cross his very last words were, "It is finished." All that was set forth of him in the Scriptures, "It is finished." All the types, the pictures, the promises, the prophecies summed up in that finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As a result, verse 11, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd." You see here again his people described as a flock of sheep but notice it all begins with "He." "He shall gather

the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." The kingdom, the everlasting kingdom of our Lord is described as a city, as God's Zion but it's also described here as a flock of sheep. When you see a city with walls, you think of strength, well, our strength is in Christ. But when you think of a flock of sheep, you think of weakness and that's certainly what we are in our nature. We're dumb. Left to ourselves, we'd be easily misled and destroyed and yet it says he shall feed his flock like a shepherd. There is a shepherd that God has established for the everlasting comfort and for the everlasting hope of his people. Notice, "He carries them in his bosom." It's not us carrying Christ. It's not Christ in your hands. It's Christ holding each one of his own in his bosom and gently leading those that are with young, in other words, too young to even walk for themselves. Too weak. Such is our nature but thank God that Christ is that Savior.

I pray that if you are the Lord's, one of those that God has purposed to save and for whom Christ came and paid the debt, that by his Spirit, you indeed will find this to be a message of hope and comfort.

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