

Title: Comfort for Zion
Text: Isaiah 51: 1-52: 7
Date: February 14, 2021
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At the time the LORD sent this word, God's elect in Israel were greatly troubled. They were captives by an enemy nation. They were cast down, fearful of men, full of anxious thought and unbelief. They were looking at their circumstances and troubles like the apostle Peter when he looked at the waves. So the Lord sent this word

Isaiah 51: 1: Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD:

The LORD turned them from things below and said, "*Hearken to me*"; three times he says "hearken", each time, "*hearken TO ME.*" This is the Lord speaking—to you that follow after Christ our Righteousness—*hearken to me.*

Isaiah 51: 1...Look unto the rock *whence* ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit [*whence*] ye are digged. 2: Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah [*that*] bare you:

Each of us born of the Spirit are Abraham's spiritual children—look unto Abraham your father. We are children of Sarah, the free woman—children of God's everlasting covenant of grace. Now, hear what the Lord says about Abraham.

Isaiah 51:2:...for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him

God says, "I am the only one who gets the glory, I called him alone." God called him from eternity. He called Abraham out of his idolatry in Ur. Throughout Abraham's life the Lord kept calling, "Abraham!" Abraham would say, "Here am I, Lord." When Abraham sinned, God called him; when Abraham did not know what to do, God called him; when Abraham was down, God called him; when it came time to die, God called him. God never stops calling his child. Therefore, we never stop coming to Christ—"To whom coming!" That's God's covenant promise.

Isaiah 51: 2: and [I alone] blessed him,

God blessed him with all spiritual blessings in Christ from eternity. In time, God blessed him with all blessings spiritual and eternal. Abraham lacked nothing because God blessed him.

Isaiah 51: 2:...and [I alone] increased him.

God alone increased him. He increased him with the promised child Isaac, and Jacob, the twelve tribes, with all spiritual seed. God increased him when Christ the Seed came. God is still increasing him every time he calls one of his elect to Christ. Everything Abraham had, including every trial, every up and every down, was the Lord increasing him.

That is God's summary of Abraham's life, and ours, the Lord says, "*I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.*" What is the Lord teaching?

Isaiah 51: 3: For the LORD shall comfort Zion:

That is the promise of our Lord. The reason we are comforted with the gospel is because God called, blessed and increased Abraham. The Lord calls, blesses and increases us because

through this gospel the LORD shall comfort Zion. He calls, blesses and increases his church because through the gospel of Christ the LORD shall comfort Zion—he shall do so until each lost sheep is called to Christ.

Proposition: Our covenant keeping God promises, “The LORD shall comfort Zion.”

Subject: Comfort for Zion

We are so weak, so desolate, a wilderness, a desert. But he said, “*My strength is made perfect in weakness.*”

Isaiah 51...3: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

God has chosen to use us foolish things—strengthless sinners—sinners who can do nothing except it be given from God above. He uses us to preach the gospel of Christ. But the power is all of God. He said,

Zechariah 4: 6: Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit saith the Lord of hosts.

How does the LORD comfort Zion?

COMFORTED BY THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Isaiah 51: 4: Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people. 5: My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

The Lord comforts us by the gospel of Christ’s finished redemption. *A law proceeded from God*—the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. Christ the Covenant came forth from God in human flesh. *My Righteousness is near*—Christ is God’s Righteousness; *My Salvation is gone forth*—Christ is God’s Salvation for his people gone forth to accomplish the salvation of his people.

On the cross, Christ fulfilled, honored and magnified the law for God’s elect and made *his judgment to rest for a light of the people*. In Christ crucified we behold the Light of how God’s righteousness and mercy have met in harmony. Through the gospel Christ gives Light, discernment, to know that God’s judgement rests in Christ. Christ is our Righteousness and our Salvation.

Now from heavenly Zion Christ’s law—the gospel—proceeds from Christ. He brings his righteousness near—into the heart of his child through faith. He salvation comes forth into the heart.

Romans 10: 6: But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*;) 7: Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) 8: But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord

Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11: For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Christ's gospel shall go forth from him until his last child is called—*on mine Arm shall they trust.*

COMFORTED BY ETERNAL SALVATION

Isaiah 51: 6: Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. 7: Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. 8: For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

The LORD comforts us by declaring that those who believe on Christ have eternal life and everlasting salvation. This heavens and earth shall vanish away like smoke. It shall wax old like a garment. All flesh shall die due to sin. But Christ has created his people anew. His new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness is his people created in his righteousness and his holiness. The new heavens and new earth shall be forever. He promises, *My salvation shall be forever.* Christ established us in Righteousness which shall not be abolished. In the new birth Christ creates a new man in his child of the living and abiding Word so that we live and abide forever.

1 Peter 1: 23: born again,...of incorruptible [seed], by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 24: The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

This is the comfort wherewith the Lord comforts Zion. All this temporal creation shall vanish into nothing. But "*My salvation shall be forever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished.*" We have eternal life by Christ.

So the Lord makes the application to each of his believing children, "*Hearken unto me, ye that know [Christ our] righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law [my eternal Word]; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.*" Brethren hearken to the LORD. Do not worship out of a fear of any man. Do not live from a fear of any man. Do not follow any man but the GodMan, Christ Jesus. God says, "*You are righteousness in Christ! Do not fear the reproach of men.*" God says "*My eternal Word is in your heart! Do not be afraid of men's reviling.*" Why? "*For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.*"

COMFORTED BY RENEWAL

Isaiah 51: 9: Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. 9: Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? 10: Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the

great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?
11: Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

When the LORD comforts us he renews us inwardly and mortifies our flesh. Isaiah and the elect in Israel were cast down. But with this comforting message they awoke and began calling on the Lord, *Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD!*

But notice who woke who? The Lord began speaking to us, “*Hearken unto me!*” Through the comfort of the gospel he wakes us to cry, ‘*Awake, awake, put on strength, o arm of the LORD.*’ Christ is the Arm of the Lord. It is by his strength that we are renewed and stirred up to call on him.

He renews us day by day so that we remember his works of old and praise him for all his works, *Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab [Egypt], and wounded the dragon? [serpent; Pharaoh] Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?* Our Lord Jesus is the arm of the Lord, the strength and power of his people. It is Christ that conquered all our enemies and shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly. He dried up the sea of God’s wrath against us, made the depths of God’s justice a way for *the ransomed* to pass over. We are the ransomed, believer! Christ conquered sin, death and hell for us and in him we are passing over

When he brings us to cast all on him, he gives assurance. Since Christ ransomed us he promises we are assured *Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion.* In Adam we departed. Our sin separated us from God. But Christ redeemed us and called us so now we are *returning to our God in Zion.* This world is not our home. We are marching to Zion. God promises we shall *come with singing unto Zion and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.*

Notice it says everlasting joy shall be upon their Head (singular). But in Isaiah 35: 10 it says heads (plural). Everlasting joy shall be on our heads. But also everlasting joy shall be on Christ our Head when Christ has brought each of his redeemed home to glory with him.

Revelation 21: 3:...he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 4: And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

In our Redeemer, we are glad and rejoice right now; we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

COMFORTED BY THE LORD ALONE

Isaiah 51: 12: I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; 13: And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? 14: The captive exile hasteneth [anxiety] that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. 15: But I am the LORD thy God, that

divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name. 16: And I have put my words in thy mouth and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand that I may plant the [new] heavens, and lay the foundations of the [new] earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.

Our Savior promises “*I, even I, am he that comforteth you.*” So after reminding us we are eternal, immortal, everlastingly righteous, eternally saved in Christ, he asks—*who are you that you should fear a man that shall die, the son of man who is perishing grass and forget your Maker?* Our Savior says *I stretched forth the heavens.* He says *I laid the foundations of the earth.* Our Redeemer,

Isaiah 40: 12:...meted out heaven with the span...22:...stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:

He says, *and [you] fear continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?* Harken to this word of our Redeemer,

Isaiah 54: 5: For thy Maker *is* thine husband; the LORD of hosts *is* his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called...15: Behold, they shall surely gather together, *but* not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. 16: Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. 17: No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

He illustrates the fear and anxiety of unbelief—*The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail.* Unbelief takes us captive as we fear men, fear circumstances, fear tomorrow, fear things. We hasten to loose ourselves lest we die in the pit or our bread fail.

God says *But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name.* He speaks this to his prophet Isaiah to comfort, to strengthen, to renew. He speaks it to you and I who believe—*I am the Lord THY God.* I redeemed you from the sea of my wrath in my precious blood. *The LORD of hosts is my name.* Men, things, all creation is controlled by him.

Colossians 2:15: And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Then our LORD comforts his witnesses by reminding us why he called us, *And I have put my words in thy mouth.* Remember, how he put the live coal on Isaiah’s tongue. He says, “I called you and have sent you to preach my word.” *And I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand.* Christ said, “No man shall pluck them out of my hand and no man shall pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.”

Here is great comfort and assurance, brethren. Why does he send his church forth to preach the gospel? *That I may plant the [new] heavens, and lay the foundations of the [new] earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.* With every elect, redeemed sinner he calls through this gospel, he plants the new heavens and lays the foundations of the new earth, *that he might say unto Zion, “Thou art my people.”* That is why he put his word in the mouth of his

messengers. This is why he covers us in the shadow of his hand. He will call each of redeemed to faith in Christ and shall *say unto Zion, Thou art my people*. That is security, brethren!

COMFORTED WITH GREAT ASSURANCE

Isaiah 51: 17: Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung *them* out....22: Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God *that* pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, *even* the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again: 23: But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee;

Christ drank the cup of God's fury to the dregs on behalf of his people. He wrung them out so the LORD says to his church, "Awake, awake, stand up O Jerusalem!" Righteousness is established, justice is satisfied. Christ has plead the cause of his people. So he promises every believer you shall no more drink it again.

He describes their day and our day. This is why he awakens us preach his name—**Isaiah 51: 18: *There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up. 19: These two things are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee?*** He said, *I, even I, am he that shall comfort thee*; he said *I will comfort my people through the gospel*—so he says to us.

Isaiah 52: 1: Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

Our beautiful garments are the righteousness and holiness of Christ. Now that Christ has arisen we have arisen in him. He is our strength. He promises through the gospel that all his redeemed shall be regenerated and made holy in the blood.

Isaiah 52: 2: Shake thyself from the dust; arise, *and* sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. [redeemed from bondage] 3: For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money....

Christ redeemed us from curse of the law. He has taken off us the yoke of the oppressor. He redeemed us without money or price. It cost his precious blood therefore it is free justification unto us through faith in his blood. Like as Israel was in bondage, captive to the Assyrian, made to howl due to their oppressors—so is God's elect Israel who are yet captive in sin under the binding yoke of will-works religion. But Christ says,

Isaiah 52: 5: Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the LORD; and my name continually every day *is* blasphemed. 6: Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore *they shall know* in that day that *I am* he that doth speak: behold, *it is I*.

Christ sends us to preach his gospel. He promises, *my shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak, it is I*. Christ says, I, even I, am he that

comforteth my people. Therefore, my people shall know my name in that day that I alone call them, I alone bless and I alone increase them. They shall know I am he that doth speak, behold it is I. And God promises this gospel age shall not end until ALL his redeemed know his name. He said all shall know me, from the least to the greatest (Heb 8: 11). When he calls and comforts us with this good news, we say,

Isaiah 52: 7: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Brethren hearken to our LORD. He comforts us with assurance and boldness to believe and keep declaring the gospel. As he did Abraham, so he shall do for us, and so he shall do to the last, *“I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him! For the Lord shall comfort Zion!”*

Amen!