

# The Lord Comforts His People

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] We'll sing again to God's praise, this time from Psalm 69, and we'll sing verses 30 to 36.
- Psalm 69, verses 30 to 36. The name of God I with a song most cheerfully will praise, and I am giving thanks to him, his name shall highly raise.
- If this to the Lord a sacrifice more gracious shall prove than bullock ox or any beast that has both horn and hoof. When this the humble men shall see, a joy to them shall give.
- O all ye that do seek the Lord, your heart shall ever live. For God the poor hears, and will not his prisoners contend. Let heaven and earth and seas him praise, and all that move in them.
- For God will Judah's cities build, and he will Zion save. That they may dwell therein, and it in sure possession have. And they that are his servants, seed and headed, shall the same.
- [ 1 : 1 3 ] So shall they have their dwelling there, that love his blessed name. We'll sing these verses to God's praise. The name of God I with a song most cheerfully will praise.
- And I am giving thanks to him, his name shall highly raise.
- Let's sing these verses to God's praise.
- God's praise.
- God's praise. God's praise. God's praise. God's praise. He will sing these verses to God's praise.
- [ 3 : 0 7 ] May his name shall neither do. God's praise. God's praise. God's praise.
- God's praise. God's praise. At all that new in them For God will judge us in the gospel And he will silence him And they may dwell therein and live In true possession of And they not God his serpents seek In heaven shall the same So shall they have their dwelling there
- That love his blessed name And we can turn to the book of Isaiah And we can read chapter 52 Thank you 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
- Shake thyself from the dust Arise and sit down, O Jerusalem Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck O captive daughter of Zion For thus saith the Lord You have sold yourselves for naught And you shall be redeemed without money For thus saith the Lord God My people went down aforetime into Egypt To sojourn there And the Assyrian oppressed them without cause Now therefore what have I here Saith the Lord That my people is taken away for naught They that rule over them Make them to howl Saith the Lord And my name continually every day is blasphemed Therefore my people shall know my name Therefore they shall know In that day that I am he that does speak Behold it is I How beautiful upon the mountains

Are the feet of him That bringeth good tidings That publishes peace That bringeth good tidings of good That publishes salvation That saith unto Zion Thy God reigneth Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice With the voice together shall they sing For they shall see eye to eye When the Lord shall bring again Zion Break forth into joy Sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem For the Lord has comforted his people He has redeemed Jerusalem The Lord has made bare his holy arm In the eyes of all the nations And all the ends of the earth Shall see the salvation of our God Depart ye depart ye Go ye out from thence Touch no unclean thing

[ 7 : 30 ] Go ye out of the midst of her Be ye clean That bear the vessels of the Lord For you shall not go out with haste Nor go by flight For the Lord will go before you And the God of Israel will be your reward Behold my servant shall deal prudently He shall be exalted and extolled And be very high As many were astonished at thee His visage was so marred more than any man And his form more than the sons of men So shall he sprinkle many nations The kings shall shut their mouths at him For that which had not been told them Shall they see And that which they had not heard Shall they consider And may God bless that reading to us Well now we sing from Psalm 27 Psalm 27

Verses 9 to 14 Far from me hide not thou thy face Put not away from thee Thy servant in thy wrath Thou hast an helper been to me O God of my salvation Leave me not nor forsake Though me my parents both should leave The Lord will me uptake O Lord instruct me in thy way To me a leader be In a plain path Because of those That hatred bear to me Give me not to mine enemies will For witnesses that lie Against me a risen hour And such as breathe out cruelty I fainted had Unless that I believed Had to see The Lord's own goodness In the land of them That living be Wait on the Lord And be thou strong And he shall strength afford

And to thine heart Yea do thou wait I say upon the Lord These verses to God's praise Far from me hide not thou thy face Will not come away from thee Thy servant in thy heart O God of my salvation O God of my salvation Leave me not nor forsake Though me my parents both should leave

Though me my parents both should leave The Lord will be a day O Lord In a plain path Behold on those Of me In a plain path Behold on those O Lord Give me not to my enemies will For witness that lies

Against me Against me Wraith and awe And such as breathe And cruelty I fainted Durch man With uncle in me.

[ 12 : 36 ] Wake on the Lord and be the strong and he shall spread the poor.

Come to thy heart in the great I shake upon the Lord.

Well, we can turn back to the chapter we read there, Isaiah chapter 52, and we can read again verse 9.

Isaiah 52, verse 9. Break forth into joy, sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem. For the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.

The chapter that we read there, Isaiah 52, is initially about the return of the captives from Babylon. As they were delivered by God, an amazing display of his power.

[ 14 : 06 ] When he overthrew the most powerful nation or empire in the world at the time. And of course he had done that in fulfillment of the 70 years.

He had predicted they would be in Babylon 4. The 70 years of course was an amazing prediction. But it was said long after Isaiah 52, verse 9. was written. So those who have have have been written.

heard the 70 years of have heard the 70 years.

heard the 70 years. as they looked ahead.

although there were 70 years of discomfort. at least they could work out roughly when it was going to end.

[ 15 : 20 ] and we found and we find that Daniel, for example, that he did that. He realized the 70 years were about to end and therefore he started to pray for God to fulfill his promise.

But those who heard Isaiah's prediction here well they might have had a difficulty understanding what you're referring to.

Because it was a long time in the future. When I when Isaiah was prophesying Judah had not yet been captured.

the and even during the reign of Hezekiah and things like that God had given them great deliverance.

So some folk may have wondered what is Isaiah predicting here even as they might have wondered what he was going to predict next.

[ 16 : 41 ] as he goes on as we can read there goes on to talk about the Saviour that was coming to suffer. But anyway it was predicted long before.

And we have to ask ourselves why did God do that? Why is God always pointing us forward?

even to events that we cannot understand. Even perhaps to events that that in our present we see no connection to them.

And even us as we come to the Lord's Supper we are asked to look forward.

It's not just that we are to look back. Because in a certain sense it's easier to look back. Because the death and the resurrection of Jesus have taken place.

[ 17 : 56 ] But at the Lord's Supper as we know we look forward. Because we do it until He comes. and even the Savior himself when He instituted the Lord's Supper He was looking forward.

Because He said to them didn't He I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in the kingdom of God. And perhaps when the disciples heard that well they might have thought He was going to do it the following day.

but as they no doubt later on reflected on it they would well when is He going to do that?

And of course we should ask the same question shouldn't we? When is He going to do that? And it's a reminder to us isn't it?

That one of the things that helps us in the present is to take from the future. The future has not yet happened but that one day is going to happen.

[ 19 : 08 ] And one reason why Isaiah was given this prophecy to announce to the people of His time was to give them comfort.

Because they were told weren't they in verse 9 and it's kind of phrased in the past tense although it hasn't yet happened and it's not going to happen for a long time. But the time is going to come.

Isaiah was telling them that the Lord hath comforted His people. One day that would be a statement about the past. But when they heard it initially it was a statement about the future.

And they were to take comfort from it themselves. And the same is true for us, isn't it? Where do we get our comfort from?

And I want us to think together tonight about comfort. There are lots of reasons why we should be good to do that.

[ 20 : 24 ] When Jesus was about to leave the world and the last night he was with his disciples there in the upper room and he said many wonderful things to them.

And one of the things he said that he would do after he had gone would be to send the Holy Spirit to them. But how did he speak about the Holy Spirit? Because there were lots of ways by which he could have described the Holy Spirit.

He spoke about Him as the comforter. He is He didn't say to them how long he was going to do this for. He just said that as long as he was with them in this world he would be the comforter.

And that in itself should make us want to think about comfort. because that is the role of the Holy Spirit every day.

Every hour of every day. Every minute of every hour. Of course if we were to say that with somebody else that would be impossible for the other person to fulfill it.

[ 21 : 58 ] But it's not impossible for the Holy Spirit to fulfill it. that when Jesus made that announcement to his disciples he was telling them about that certainty. That when the Holy Spirit comes he will bring comfort.

And of course we all need comfort, don't we? There's lots of reasons why we need comfort. comfort. Our perplexing modern world where things happen today that we couldn't imagine a decade ago.

And at this moment we can't imagine what life will be like in ten years time. so we need comfort for that, surely. In a world that seems to be totally chaotic.

We need comfort. We need comfort in our looking at our own failings. I mean I mean failure is a terrible word, isn't it?

And sometimes we might think failings is a slightly less word. But it's not really. a failing a failing and a failure well they're kind of similar.

[ 23 : 40 ] And who of us as Christians has not failed? What does God think of our failure? failure? Does he think about them at all? And if he does what's he going to do?

And there's other reasons as well why we can think of the need of comfort. Isaiah in another chapter of this book was told by God my God comfort you, comfort you my people.

When God says something once it's important. When he says it's twice what does that say about him?

I mean does that double instruction instruction to Isaiah comfort you, comfort you my people. Does that speak of God's eagerness to comfort?

[ 24 : 59 ] Of God's desire that Isaiah's listeners would know about God's interest comfort and then being comforted.

So comfort is important. I just want us to first of all think about some Bible verses about comfort and just ask some questions.

About what kind of situations or what kind of circumstances comfort can be expected. And then secondly some ways to find comfort and then thirdly the effects of comfort.

So I've got some verses here I just want to mention as we go through this service. How would we describe the mission of Jesus?

Jesus? Well how did he describe it himself? Well we're told the verses that he quoted in Nazareth as he was beginning his three years of public ministry he quoted from Isaiah 61.

[ 26 : 30 ] And there are verses that we know very well but I'll just read them. the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, the Lord's to comfort all who mourn.

So why did Jesus come? How did Jesus understand his mission? It's easy for us as it were to jump from Nazareth to Calvary.

the lullaby. But there were three years between them. What did Jesus do during those three years?

Well, he comforted those he met. And no doubt we can think of many examples of that. just how gently and surprisingly at times he comforted people.

[ 27 : 59 ] So the mission of Jesus is about comfort. how does God react when sinners repent?

Well, Isaiah again tells us in chapter 12, in verse 1, I will give thanks to you, O Lord, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away that you might comfort me.

comfort me. It's almost two opposites, isn't it? There's divine anger before they repented. Having repented, what they now experience from God is comfort.

The opposite of anger. I suppose when we read Isaiah chapter 12, we should say to ourselves, what comfort am I getting today?

Because that's what God does. He gives comfort. Personal comfort. That you might comfort me.

[ 29 : 26 ] There's a song there in Isaiah chapter 12. And as we can see from the verse I just read, the presence of comfort made the person saying the verse want to give thanks to God.

Thanking God for his comfort. comfort. His gentle dealings with an unworthy sinner.

How about when we're going through difficult times? Well, Psalm 23, which we know very well. verse 4. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

For you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. of course, we normally link that verse to people coming to the end of life's journey.

And there's nothing wrong with that. But it's not really the point that the psalmist is making. The valley of the shadow of death is just a valley where danger exists.

[ 31 : 01 ] And the sheep have to go through it. And in this dangerous valley there's threatening animals.

And there's also the possibility that sheep being sheep might just slide off the road. And if they hear the roar of the wolves, what do they need to see?

And the psalmist tells us, what they get comfort from is the shepherd's rod and staff. The rod that can easily deal with a wild attacking animal.

And the staff that can, as it were, drag the sheep back up onto the right path. And this rod and the staff, of course, are just pictures of God's awareness of where they are.

Awareness of their fear. And the psalmist says, in picture language, when I hear the noise of the wolf, and when I see the danger of sliding, I just look at the shepherd's rod and staff.

[ 32 : 54 ] The signs of his capabilities. And when I look at them, they comfort me. And of course, we are constantly being urged to look at what God can provide.

The eyes of our souls. Just taking the equivalents of that shepherd's rod and staff. And saying, that gives me comfort.

What our God can do. What are the signs of a healthy church? Acts chapter 9 verse 31 tells us.

And in that verse it tells us five things that mark a healthy church. So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up.

And walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. Five things are mentioned there, as I'm sure we noticed.

[ 34 : 18 ] Peace. Edification, edification, being built up. The reverend. Walking in the fear of the Lord.

And growth, it multiplied. But the fifth one is, and they're walking in it, walking in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

If somebody, say, said to me this morning, where are you walking? It's not a kind of question people normally ask, but just imagine that they ask them, where are you walking?

Well, I would have replied this morning, I am walking in Inverness. But if they said to me, where are you walking spiritually? Would I have been able to say, with Luke, as he describes the believers, in Israel at that time, that they were walking in the comfort of the Holy Spirit?

I mean, it's a very graphic picture. Where is your next step going to be? Even as your, where was your previous step?

[ 35 : 37 ] Walking in the comfort of the Spirit. It's a beautiful description. It's also, as I'm sure we know, a beautiful reality when it happens.

To have the comfort of God, warming our hearts, no matter where we are.

Where we are. How about a benediction? Well, Paul gives one to the Thessalonians.

Now, may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us, and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish them in every good work and word.

And what is Paul wanting for these Christians? Well, he reminds them that the God who has given them eternal comfort, also we could say gives them timely comfort.

[ 36 : 59 ] The God our Father, the God our Father, who loved us, and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace. That's great.

The comfort he gives can last forever. But that same comfort, Paul goes on to say, comfort your hearts now, and establish them in every good work and word.

So comfort, it's a wonderful thing, isn't it? How much comfort does God have to give us?

In 2 Corinthians chapter 1, Paul tells us, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort.

What does that little word, all, mean? It's not the only time Paul has got this kind of sentence structure. For example, elsewhere he talks about God as the God of all grace.

[ 38 : 22 ] But there in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, he's talking about him as the God of all comfort. Well, this may be wrong, but it looks to me that the word all means he's got the total amount.

That we don't need to go anywhere else to get it. And in fact, we can't get it anywhere else. Because he's got all of it. The thing is also telling us, of course, he's got the God of all kinds of comfort.

And as we'll see in a minute, there is a range of comforts.

But why was Paul given that comfort? The God of all comfort, the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Comfort. Well, Paul is saying there, isn't he, that not only do we become recipients of comfort, but we also become channels of comfort.

[ 39 : 58 ] And the comfort that we receive, it's not meant to stop with ourselves. But it just carries on to others.

So if, just take an example, if God speaks to us in a verse from the Bible, say this morning, what we meant to have done with it.

Was it only given to each of us for our own comfort?

Or was it given to us certainly for our own comfort, but also for others? To be a channel of comfort.

Well, that's a privilege. I think it's more than a privilege. It's a responsibility.

[ 41 : 18 ] It's a responsibility. But I have something comforting to say. That God himself has given to me.

Has he only given it just for me? Well, Paul tells us there in these verses that it's not just for him.

And since he uses the word we, he's talking a bit more than himself. He comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction.

The comfort that Paul got was for his own particular affliction. But he also realized that God could use that for people with other afflictions.

and therefore he just resolved to share it. What do we do about those who once were backsliding?

[ 42 : 38 ] Well, Paul again in 2 Corinthians says this about some person who had been dealt with because of something he had done.

He says, For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough. So you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him.

For he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him.

Comfort. Comfort. Channels of comfort. Anyway, these are just some verses that Paul and other Bible writers mention.

Even when we look ahead when we're seeing someone whom we loved and enjoyed being with in this world and they pass on.

[ 43 : 58 ] And that was a problem in the church in Thessalonica because they had only been Christians for a short time and Paul and Silas were forced to flee the city and they didn't have time to tell them everything.

And some of their members, some of their number had died. And they were concerned about what happened to them.

Would they somehow miss out on blessings? And Paul wrote them these wonderful words in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 about how the dead in Christ will rise first.

And then those of us who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will they and us just going by what things are at present together will meet the Lord.

And then he says comfort one another with these words. So there's lots of things that we can get comfort for and have comfort in and share comfort with.

[ 45 : 30 ] A means of grace. a means of grace. A sharing of heavenly treasures. So that's just some circumstances or questions about where comfort can be known.

But ways to find comfort. Well, we've kind of hinted at some of them already, but how does comfort get conveyed?

Well, the normal way if we're going to do it to one another is by using words. There's no other real way, is there?

I mean, even if we choose to write it out it still works. Or send an email or whatever. It's actually very difficult to convey comfort without using words.

And of course, say it with all reverence that it's words themselves that God uses. Whatever these words might be.

[ 47 : 01 ] But, you know, there's that wonderful verse in Malachi 3.16 How they that feared the Lord spoke often to one another.

And the Lord listened. And the kind of idea there behind the Lord hearkened is that it's just an illustration but it's often hearing something unusual.

I mean, the people in the previous verses in that chapter, they're moaning. What's the point of fearing God? God hears that.

He doesn't hearken to it. But then those that feared the Lord spoke often one to another and the Lord hearkened.

He heard a sound that delighted his heart. And he, as we know, he resolved to write it down.

[ 48 : 15 ] I mean, God doesn't need to write anything down but he's just letting the people know that he remembers it. And the day will come when he'll reward them.

On the day when he makes up his jewels. So we speak to one another about Christian experience.

I read this the other day but one of the Puritans said this. It is a great comfort to a godly man when such as are of a discerning spirit approve his condition.

But you can't approve it without speaking about it. It's a great comfort to a godly man, a godly person, when such as of a discerning spirit approve his condition.

I have to ask myself, when did I last say to somebody, I think your Christian life is great. But that's rarely love, isn't it? Sharing comfort with a godly man.

[ 49 : 34 ] And that's rarely love, isn't it? Sharing comfort with a godly man. We're going to speak of a Christian experience.

I've already mentioned God speaking to us in his word but lots of other Christian experiences. But we're not going through life by ourselves.

We're going through life with other Christians. We need comfort from them. And they need comfort from us.

Divine Promises. Read the newspaper, 9 of Comfort there. Watch the news.

No Comfort there. Watch the news. No Comfort there. But what comfort are we giving? In this world of discomfort. Well, Divine Promises. Divine Promises.

[ 50 : 44 ] That all yea and amen in Christ. Just Say one, each morning, each morningrich each morning to one another.

Here's comfort for today. Of course we get comfort ourselves personally.

But I think it helps us when we're alone with God to take his word with us.

But when we're concerned about our sins, then maybe we take Psalm 51 with us or Psalm 130 because they guide us through our confession of sin.

And all other kinds of situations. It's kind of an act of self-depriving to go to God without his word.

[ 52 : 30 ] Because his word is a lamp to our feet. And I like to our path in that most unusual of places. The presence of God.

What do I say when I am there? What do I do when I am there? His word tells us.

We'll stop in a minute. Our faith and comfort. When our faith is meant to be active.

Quite often, speaking for myself, it tends to be passive. But faith is meant to be active.



I was reading a book some time ago and the man in it said, the man that wrote it, sorry, he said, talking about the office of faith. And he said, it's the office of faith to accept and to hand spiritual comfort to the holy soul.

[ 53 : 58 ] So you and I, we have our faith. Our faith in God, our faith in Christ. What's it meant to do?

This faith of ours. But that man said, its office is to accept and to hand spiritual comfort to the holy soul.

So, our faith reads a promise. What's it meant to do with that promise? It's not meant to leave it at a distance and say, well, that would be wonderful if it happened.

Rather, according to that man, our faith accepts it and applies it to ourselves.

to ourselves. So if I am sensing that comfort is missing, what do I do about that?

[ 55 : 26 ] Well, I would suggest that I should check whether or not my faith is active and I accept and hand spiritual comfort to my soul.

what would happen if I did that? Well, I think my assurance would grow, wouldn't it?

and I think yours would as well. Sometimes you complain about lack of assurance.

It's good to recognize it but it's not good to stay in it. and we have to get our faith active under God's guidance, of course.

But if we did that, because comfort gives assurance, doesn't it? It would also make us thankful our hearts would be overflowing with gratitude if comfort flooded our souls.

[ 57 : 01 ] And the indwelling spirit, he's the comforter. And lastly, if that happened, I think we'd be praying for more to come, wouldn't we?

Because we're meant to look forward. And what lies ahead of us in the path of discipleship? Well, the clouds are getting dark.

And who knows what's around the corner. But one thing can be experienced in any situation, as Paul himself made clear, and that's the comfort of God.

And therefore, we have every reason to expect the Most High to constantly give His comfort.

comfort in our circumstances. Shall we pray? Lord, we come to you, the God who has revealed Himself as the God of all comfort.

[ 58 : 39 ] Each of us has our own sense of unease, whatever that might be. And whatever may be the cause of it.

Maybe the devil's trying to discomfort us. Maybe our memories are doing it. But we thank you, Lord, that you have comfort for all of us because you're the God of all comfort.

So we pray that by the Holy Spirit you would give to each of us spiritual comfort at this communion season.

So be with us, we pray, and remember us for good. For Christ's sake, amen. We'll close by singing from Psalm 119 at verse 49 and we'll sing to verse 52.

Remember, Lord, thy gracious words thou to thy servant speak, which for a ground of my sure hope thou causes me to take.

[ 60 : 09 ] This word of thine my comfort is in mine affliction, for in my straits I am revived by this thy word alone. Those men whose hearts with pride are stuffed they greatly me deride, yet from thy straight commandments I have not turned aside.

thy judgments righteous, O Lord, which thou of old forthgave, I did remember, and myself by them comforted have.

Verses 49 to 52. Remember, Lord, thy gracious word, con con This world I might come for is in my heavenly vision.

For in my strength I am revived, I miss my word alone.

The man whose heart with bright eyes stars, It fit me, meet me, I.

[ 62 : 18 ] Yet from my strength, from my heart, I am not trying to say.

Like dust and dry, I just, O Lord, With love alone for me.

I did remember, O Christ, Thy death of all with us.

Amen. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God the Father, And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Amen.