

Overhead outline; outline sermon text on following pages

'Comfort My People'

A. Introduction

1. resuming our messages from Isaiah
2. last 27 chapters have many familiar verses
3. reading of Isaiah 39:1—40:2
4. our text, Isaiah 40:1-2

B. Isaiah 40—66 – Context and Theme

1. historic background
2. the 4 kings of Judah
3. the mounting storm
4. Isaiah 39 – entry of Babylon
5. the audience to Isaiah 40-66

C. Our God is a God of Comfort ... 40:1a

1. 'Comfort, O comfort'
2. God is the only answer

D. He is Our God because we are His People ... 40:1b-2a

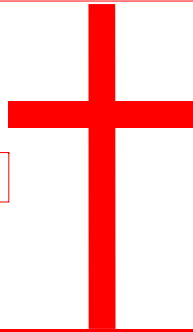
1. 'Comfort, O comfort My people,' says your God. 2 'Speak kindly to Jerusalem; ...'
2. these words apply equally to the Church of Jesus Christ

E. We are His people because He has dealt with Our Sin ... 40:2b

1. '... and call out to her, that her warfare has ended, That her iniquity has been removed, That she has received of the LORD'S hand Double for all her sins.'
2. the good and bad sides of the gospel
3. the three promises

God's Elect (chosen)

(God's people through history)



Gentiles only enter through Israel

Both
Gentiles
& Jews
can only
enter by
the cross

Abraham,
Isaac
Jacob

All Israel
that came
out of
Egypt

All true
Israel =
remnant
of Israel

**Only true
Israel =
Jesus, the
Messiah**

All true
Israel =
those in
Christ

A. Introduction

1. today we begin our study of Isaiah chapters 40 on
 - a. this is a familiar section of Isaiah
 - b. many of its verses been set to music, not only by Handel, in his Messiah, but by many other hymn writers
 - c. so we will linger more in these chapters than the earlier
 - d. to refresh ourselves of the context of today's text, lets read beginning in Isaiah 39: 1 ...

2. Isaiah 39

- a. 1 At that time Merodach-baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered. 2 Hezekiah was pleased, and showed them all his treasure house, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious oil and his whole armory and all that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them. 3 Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, 'What did these men say, and from where have they come to you?'
- b. And Hezekiah said, 'They have come to me from a far country, from Babylon.'
- c. 4 He said, 'What have they seen in your house?'
- d. So Hezekiah answered, 'They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasuries that I have not shown them.'
- e. 5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, 'Hear the word of the Lord of hosts, 6 "Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left," says the Lord. 7 "And some of your sons who will issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away, and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon."
- f. 8 Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, 'The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good.' For he thought, 'For there will be peace and truth in my days.'

3. then, our text for today, Isaiah 40:1-2
 - 1 'Comfort, O comfort My people,' says your God.
 - 2 'Speak kindly to Jerusalem;
And call out to her, that her warfare has ended,
That her iniquity has been removed,
That she has received of the LORD'S hand
Double for all her sins.'

B. Isaiah 40 through 66: Context and Theme

1. background

- a. Isaiah's primary audience was the people of Judah; the Southern Kingdom; its capital, Jerusalem; the portion of Israel remaining loyal to the kings descending from David
- b. it consisted of the tribes of Benjamin and Judah and some people from the other tribes, mainly Levi and Simeon
- c. Isaiah lived and preached in a time when Judah's outlook was gradually worsening; war was approaching
- d. Uzziah, a strong king governed the land well, and it had prospered; but in later years pride was his downfall
- e. Jotham, was next, a good king; and yet, at the end of his reign, his land began to be harassed from the north by the countries of Israel and Syria
- f. then came King Ahaz, who forsook God; the war worsened – he sought Assyria as an ally, but it became an enemy – threatening to do with Judah what it had done with Israel: taking her away into captivity
- g. this was the situation that King Hezekiah inherited
- h. for the rest of the first 39 chapters of Isaiah, it is Assyria who is the enemy of God's people in the land of Judah

2. in Isaiah 39, just read, Babylon looms on the horizon

- a. in the earlier chapters, Isaiah is preaching to a wilfully deaf people, holding out Assyria to them as a warning
 - (A) Yahweh God is Sovereign over the nations
 - (B) their Yahweh, covenant God, will deal with Assyria

- (C) but Judah and Jerusalem are called upon to repent
- b. but a willfully deaf people will not hear, and a willfully blind people will not see; there is no heart repentance
 - c. God therefore announces to Hezekiah in chapter 39, that Judah – particularly her rulers on the throne of David, and if her rulers, then also her principle citizens – are one day going to be taken away into exile by Babylon
3. the final chapters, 40 through 66, of Isaiah
- a. are spoken to the people foreseen to be in exile
 - b. a prophecy so specific that rationalistic, liberal schools refuse to acknowledge it as having been written before the fact, despite the internal and external evidence that it is so
 - c. the Messianic promises in the earlier chapters of Isaiah were given as the assurance that Yahweh, sovereign, will deliver Judah out of the hands of Israel, Syria, and Assyria
 - d. the Messianic promises in these later chapters of Isaiah are that the true Israel of God may find comfort in God's chosen or elect One, the suffering Servant
 - e. in one sense, this chosen, suffering servant is the faithful remnant scattered among the nations by Babylon, as we read in Ezekiel 11:16, 'Therefore say, "Thus says the Lord God, 'Though I had removed them far away among the nations and though I had scattered them among the countries, yet I was a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they had gone.' " '
 - f. this remnant is described in Isaiah 43:10, "'You {plural} are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "And My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me." '
 - g. whereas, in other cases, it is an Individual, the Messiah, who is described in these terms, as Isaiah 42:1, 'Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.'
 - h. who is God's elect? ... his Servant? – as we shall face this question in the coming chapters, let us take a minute to clarify by this diagram the term, 'God's Elect' as used progressively through the Scriptures.

(see the diagram in the overhead outline above)

4. with this background, let us consider the message of 40:1-2
 - a. Our God is a God of Comfort
 - b. He is Our God because We Are His People
 - c. We Are His People because He Has Dealt with Our Sin

C. Our God is a God of Comfort 40:1a

1. **Comfort, O Comfort ...**
 - a. this is a command; it is given to more than one person
 - (A) but it is not Judah being addressed
 - (B) as is evident in the words that follow
 - b. the command is first to Isaiah, the Evangelical Prophet
 - c. but it is also to every one of God's spokesmen
 - d. the gospel message is a message of comfort
 - e. of hope and of assurance to a world that is lost in sin
 - f. and the person who claims to preach and omits this gospel of comfort, is only a pretender; a false prophet

2. For God is the only answer to the problems of this world
 - a. we sing, 'Where could I go, Oh where could I go, Seeking a refuge for my soul? Needing a friend, to help me in the end, where could I go but to the Lord?'—^{2}.
 - b. another hymn, which we seldom sing (maybe it is because of the name) begins, 'Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish— Come to the mercy-seat, fervently kneel; Here bring you wounded hearts, here tell your anguish; Earth has no sorrow that heav'n cannot heal.'—^{3}.
 - c. God is a God of comfort, and His message through us is to be a message of comfort: Paul wrote these words: 2 Corinthians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

D. He is Our God because We Are His People 40:1b-2a

1. 'Comfort, O comfort My people,' says your God. 2 'Speak kindly to Jerusalem; ...'

- a. in Isaiah, and the prophets that followed him, Jerusalem becomes more than just the geographic name of a city, but represents the people of God who dwell in her
- b. that is clear in this verse with is parallel phrases
 - (A) ... comfort My people ...
 - (B) ... speak kindly to Jerusalem ...
 - (C) which say the same thing in two different ways
- c. these are God's people because He has chosen them as His own special people; a nation His own choosing

2. these words of comfort equally apply to the church of Christ

- a. the church is destined to live in the new Jerusalem
- b. they can take as their name that of Zion and Jerusalem
- c. 'We're marching to Zion ... the beautiful city of God' sings Isaac Watts' hymn
- d. the inspired writer, contrasting the people of God in Christ with those under the old covenant, says in Hebrews 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.
- e. indeed, we are assured that we are God's people by that gospel in a nutshell found in Titus 2: 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.
- f. thus, as part of the people of God, the Christian can expect the comfort of God

E. We Are His People because He Has Dealt with Our Sin 40:2b

- 1. the gospel message, whether in Isaiah, or in the NT, has 2 sides
 - a. it is indeed good news, a message of comfort

- b. it also contains in it bad news, a message of discomfort
- c. the bad news it tells us is that we are sinners
- d. yet hear this reminder:... **And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, That her iniquity has been removed, That she has received of the Lord's hand Double for all her sins.**
- e. because, those who put trust in the Lord, will find that God has dealt with that sin
- f. although spoken 700 years before Christ it is in the past tense: in God's mind it is certain; God's plan to save man from his sin through Christ's death was a good as done
- g. God, through Isaiah, makes three promises to Judah and us

2. He promises peace

- a. **'... her warfare has ended ...'**
- b. the last 27 chapters of Isaiah divide into three sections
- c. the first two end with the words, **'There is no peace for the wicked'** and the last describes the destruction of the sinner
- d. but in Christ, we are taken out of that warfare into peace
- e. Romans **5: 1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**

3. He promises forgiveness

- a. **... that her iniquity has been removed ...**
- b. there can now be peace – and hence comfort – between God and man, because He has fully and finally dealt with sin
- c. sin is described here as being removed: the picture drawn is that of a great debt for which the creditor needs to exact a payment in full – for our sin, that payment was made at the cross when we were redeemed, not with silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ

4. He promises deliverance

- a. **she has received of the Lord's hand Double for all her sins.**
- b. this does not mean Judah received twice the punishment she deserved, but rather that she had brought upon herself such abundant punishment – but now God in his mercy and lovingkindness steps in to bring

- it to a close; God says, 'it is enough' and delivers them from their oppressor
- c. Christ died for our sin, 'it is enough for all your sin' says God and He delivers us

F. Conclusion

1. I have a word of invitation for everyone here this morning
 - a. have you accepted the gift of forgiveness offered to you by faith in Christ? 'Today is the day of salvation.' say the Bible
 - b. are you as a Christian, yet still bearing the load of sin that He took on Himself on the cross? Leave it at the cross.
 - c. then you will discover in your life that He is indeed the God of all comfort. 'Comfort, O comfort My People.'

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NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
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2. *Where Could I Go?* by James B. Coats (1901-1961), © 1940 Stamps-Baxter Music & Prt. Co., renewal 1968.
3. *Come, Ye Disconsolate* by Thomas Moore, (1779-1852)