

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

MOTIVATIONAL LESSONS “Comfort from Above”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

We live in a world that sometimes makes us very uncomfortable. Things occur that cause us great discomfort, and as a result we desire to go home and be with God. Today we want to think about comfort that is offered to the Christian from above. Comfort for this life that can help us endure the trials and the troubles that we face is **so** important to the child of God. There are many things in this life that cause us discomfort. Sin probably would be at the top of that list. When a person's life is plagued with sin, it is uncomfortable for that person to have to carry around that burden. The psalmist said in Psalm 38:4 that sin is a heavy burden that we cannot carry, and one that drowns us as we try to do so.

Another very uncomfortable feature in this life is the fact that we are all going to eventually face death. The fact that we have loved ones who have died, and who were near to us, makes us feel very uncomfortable and uneasy. The fact that we are all one day going to die brings us discomfort. Sickness in this life also causes us discomfort. When we have to deal with sickness that affects us or our friends, or when someone gets a dreaded disease like cancer, it causes us great discomfort. The world in which we live is plagued with immorality. For the child of God, it is uncomfortable to live in a world like that where same-sex marriage is often acceptable, or where people live together and marriage is no longer the ideal standard as set forth in the Word of God. Those types of things make Christians feel uncomfortable. Worldliness that is all around us, and the desire to be like those in the world, can bring us great discomfort.

But the Christian needs to know that there is comfort offered from above. How do we find comfort in times of trouble? What do we do to receive comfort from God? And how can we know that in times of difficulty we can find peace in such situations? We must realize that there **is** a God of comfort Who **will** help us in times of trouble. One of the most encouraging things for the Christian is the knowledge that God **does** care! Think about 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, where God is said to be a God of comfort. Paul wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” Numerous times in this verse the word “comfort” occurs, and is directly associated with God. He is the reason that we can have comfort. He offers comfort to us in our difficulties, and in turn we can help others who are having trouble. Thus, the fact that God exists brings us great comfort. The psalmist said in Psalm 14:1 that the fool is the one who says in his heart that there is no God. The very fact that God exists should bring us great peace in our lives. Nature tells us that there is a God. We can look at the world around us that there is a God Who created us and Who cares for each one of us. Think of the words of Psalm 19:1-2, where the psalmist said, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge.” This shows that God does care for us. The design that He has given to us in nature and in our own bodies

shows His care for each of us. Paul said in Romans 1:18-21 that the invisible attributes of God are clearly seen through the things that He has made. Look around at the world and witness the changing of seasons or the stars in the heavens. Look at the trees, and the way that nature is so well coordinated. From nature, we can see that God does exist. Acts 14:17 tells us that the very changing of the seasons serves as a witness to God so that we can know Who He is.

But not only does nature declare that God exists; the Word of God tells us of His abilities, His power, and His love for each one of us. I think of passages such as Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." God said in Genesis 1:26, "Let Us make man in Our image." Thus, God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living being (Gen. 2:7). Yes, the Word of God tells us that God exists, that we have been created in His image, and that He gave life to us. We can know that the Bible is a trustworthy book because of its documentable inspiration. The text of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." The Bible is God's inspired Word, and it reveals to us exactly Who God is. I think of passages such as 2 Peter 1:20-21—"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." I love Psalm 119:160, "The entirety of Your word is truth." Not only can we know from nature that there is a God, but we also can know from His Word that He exists and Who He is. The very fact that we can know God, and that we can have a relationship with Him, ought to give us great comfort in this life. Listen to what Paul said in Philippians 3:10 as he thought about having a relationship with God. Paul said, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." It brought Paul great comfort that He could know God and have a relationship with Him. John 17:3 teaches us, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God." This implies that we can have a deep, abiding relationship with Him.

There are certain things about the nature of God that ought to bring us great comfort. The fact that God is an unchanging God, and that He does not lie, should comfort us in this life. In Malachi 3:6, God said, "For I am the Lord; I do not change. Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob." God was reassuring the Israelites of His unchanging nature." He is God, and He does not change. What a wonderful attribute this is, and what great comfort it should bring us. We know that if God says something, we can rest assured that it will be that way. God is not a God Who lies to us. Hebrew 6:18 says that it is impossible for God to lie. Titus 1:2 teaches us that we are living "in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began." Thus, God's unchanging nature, and the fact that He will not lie to us, brings us comfort. Hebrews 13:8 says that Jesus "is the same yesterday, today, and forever." The Savior that we know is going to stand by our side. We can trust that He will care for each one of us.

The fact that God is a loving God ought to bring us great comfort in this life. How do we know that God is a God of love? We know because of the sacrifice that He made of His Son, Jesus Christ. John 3:16 says that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." God loved us so much that He gave His own Son to die on our behalf! Listen to the words of Romans 5:7-8—"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." This is the kind of God we serve. This is the God Who offers us comfort. I think of the words of 1 John 4:8—"God is love." That ought

to bring each of us much comfort—to know that God loves us more than we can even begin to imagine, and that He has promised to help us in this life through the difficulties that we experience.

Another comforting quality of God's nature is that He is a just God. The question is asked in Genesis 18:25, "Will not the God of all the earth do right?" The answer is a resounding, "Yes!" Nahum 1:7 teaches us that God is not One Who will "acquit the wicked." God is a just God, and if people deserve to be punished, He is going to punish them. When people deserve to be rewarded, He is going to reward them. The text of 1 John 2:25 says, "This is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life." God will not go back on His promise. This is the confidence that Christians can have. Thus, we can be reminded of the words of Jesus in John 12:48 when He said, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." If someone says, "How do you find comfort in **that?**," the answer is that if we live our lives by the Bible and follow its precepts, then we can know beyond the shadow of a doubt that we will live by God because of our obedience. But if there are those who refuse to do God's will, and who live in abject rebellion to Him, then we can know that they are not going to be saved. There is comfort to be found in the fact that we will be judged by an objective standard—the words of God as found within the Bible.

Another attribute of God that gives us comfort is that He promises to protect and care for us in this life. One of the wonderful things that we have as Christians is God's providential care. The psalmist said in Psalm 23:4, "Yea, 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." We can take comfort in the fact that God **does** care for us, and that He has promised to protect us and take care of us in this life. That ought to bring each of us great peace of mind. Think about the encouraging words found in Hebrews 13:5-6, where the writer speaks of the confidence that we can have in God: "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'" God has promised us that He will never leave us or forsake us. That ought to bring us great comfort, knowing that as we walk down the path of life, God will be with us—hand in hand as we follow His will.

God is seen in the Bible as One Who protects us from Satan and from sin. He **does** care for our needs! In 1 Timothy 3:7, we are told that the devil is conniving. Ephesians 6:11 describes him as having many wiles. Jesus said in Luke 22:31, when He realized that Satan was trying to take an active role in Peter's life, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail." Today, God has promised to protect us from Satan by providing us with the plan of salvation, and by giving us His Word to follow in this life. Hebrews 2:14 teaches us that Satan has ultimately defeated the devil. Satan may cause us to struggle, and he may cause us problems in this life. But we can take comfort in the fact that "He [Jesus] likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." Yes, the devil has ultimately been defeated by the Savior. Because of that, and because Jesus offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice, we can have the forgiveness of our sins. How does God protect us and care for us? He helps us with our greatest problem—the sin problem—through Jesus Christ. If we were to sum up all the problems that we have in this life, we very likely could trace them back to...**sin!** Isaiah 59:1-2 says, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." What is the problem that causes man and God to be at

odds with one another? It the sin in which man finds himself. Romans 3:23 teaches us that “all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.” Ezekiel commented on this when he said in Ezekiel 18:4, “The soul that sins shall surely die.” But here is the good news. Although sin brings us much trouble and separates us from God, Jesus came to this world to deal with our sin problem so that we would not have to bear the guilt and the burden of our sin. Think about John 1:29. As John the Immerser sees Jesus approaching, he says, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” Psalm 103:10 says that the Lord “has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.” We have **not** received what we **deserved**. Why not? It is because Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. In Matthew 26:28, Jesus is taking the Passover with His disciples. He takes the cup, and He says this: “This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Jesus has dealt with our sin problem by making the once-for-all sacrifice for sins. Hebrews 10:12 says that Jesus, “after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.”

As we think about God caring for us and protecting us, one of the things that ought to also bring us comfort is that God has promised to care for our physical needs in this life. There is a beautiful passage in Psalm 37:25. David is reminiscing about his life, and he thinks about the care of God. He then says, “I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.” David’s point is that righteous people do not have to stand on a street corner and beg for food. That is the practical lesson for us today. The Bible teaches over and over again that God **will** take care of His children. In Philippians 4:19, Paul said, “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” He did not say that God would supply all our wants, desires, or passions, but all our **needs**. I am reminded of Matthew 6:33, which is the climax to which Jesus brings us as He discusses God’s care of us regarding food, shelter, and clothing. He teaches us, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things [food, shelter, and clothing] shall be added to you.” Thus, we can know that God, in this life, has promised to provide for us, protect us, and care for us.

But there is another comfort that we have in this life. The Word of God brings Christians such great comfort. Stop for just a minute and think about some of the encouraging passages that we find in the Bible—passages that help us when we find ourselves struggling with a problem or that we turn to when we are depressed or disturbed. Think of the words of Psalm 119:50—which is such an encouraging passage as it relates to God’s Word bringing us comfort. “This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life.” Isn’t it wonderful to know that, as the psalmist says, in time of great affliction we can find comfort in the Word of God? Romans 15:4 says “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” Those Scriptures were meant to give us comfort in this life. Think of passages like Philippians 4:13—“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” With Jesus on our side, even during the most difficult times in life we can still overcome and win the victory. This reminds us of Hebrews 13:5-6—“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’” Do you remember the last words of Jesus, spoken immediately after He gave the Great Commission? In Matthew 28:20, He said, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” It should bring us great comfort to know that we can do all things through Christ, and that God is going to take care of us and be with us.

Think about beautiful verses about Heaven that bring us comfort in this life. In John 14:1-6, Jesus said,

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.”

What a wonderful teaching it is, and what a wonderful comfort it brings us, to know that after this life is over, and after all our struggles and trials, we are going to get to go home to be with God. We are going to get to spend eternity with the Father. Remember Revelation 21:3-4? We have been promised a “new heaven and new earth”—a place where sorrow, sickness, death, and all the things that bring us discomfort in this life will not exist. Thus, Paul could say in 1 Thessalonians 4:18, “Therefore comfort one another with these words.” We find great comfort in the Word of God.

Think about passages that deal with the child of God and death. These ought to bring us comfort, too. Psalm 116:15 teaches us, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” When a Christian dies, that is not a bad thing. Rather, it something for which we are to long so that we can be with God. Revelation 14:13 says, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.” It is not a bad thing to die as a faithful Christian. Yes, it can bring some discomfort to those who are left behind. But we must look at it from an eternal standpoint. God is going to care for us in the here and now. Some passages that bring us great comfort in this life are 1 John 4:4—“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” Hebrews 2:14 teaches us that Jesus has already defeated Satan. Thus, today we can have the victory, as Paul would say in 1 Corinthians 15:57 when he said, “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” John wrote in 1 John 5:4, “This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” Faith is the victory that helps us overcome this world. Thus, we can find comfort in the Word of the God Whom we serve.

We also find comfort in contentment. Do you want to find **real** comfort in this life? Then be content with such things as you have. Listen to what Paul said in Philippians 4:11 when he wrote, “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.” Paul said that we do not need to be like the kind of people who “always want more.” Instead, we should find contentment in what we have—and then we will have comfort. When we can learn to be content with the things that we have in this life, and not always be wanting more, then we can rejoice in the things that we do have. If we are always wanting more, and if we always desire to amass more possessions in this life, then we will never find comfort. Remember the rich young ruler in Mark 10? He seemed to be a man who wanted eternal life. But he had one problem—he was very worldly in some ways. He came to Jesus and said, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” (vs. 17). Because he and Jesus both lived under the Old Testament, Jesus said, “Keep the commandments” (vs. 19). The young ruler said, “Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth” (vs. 20). Jesus then said, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” Mark tells us in Mark 10:22, “He was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” We need to be content with the things that we have in this life. Such contentment will help us to be comfortable with our situation.

As we think about finding comfort in this life, another way that Christians can find comfort is through the hope of Heaven. If this life was all that existed, there would be little to no comfort for Christians today. But the fact that when we die we can go and be with the Lord ought to bring each of us great comfort and should cause our souls to rejoice. Think about Romans 8:18 where Paul said, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Do

you know what Paul is saying here? He is saying, "Heaven is going to be worth it all!" Hebrews 4:9 says, "There remains a rest for the people of God." Matthew 25:46 says, "The righteous shall go away into eternal life." Christians often sing songs that remind us of Heaven. We sing of a paradise valley, and of how beautiful Heaven must be. We sing, "Heaven holds all for me." If we are really going to find comfort in this life, we must keep Heaven near and dear to our hearts. As Paul said in Colossians 3:1, we must "seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God." We must set our minds on heavenly things—not things of this Earth.

Do you have the hope of Heaven as your comfort? Do you find comfort in this life, even in the midst of trials? When bad things happen, do you have something on which you can "fall back" in order to bring you peace of mind and help you through difficult times? If not, then you need to become a child of God. The only way that you will find real comfort, and be able to deal with this life, is by becoming a Christian. Jesus teaches us what we must do to be saved. We learn that we must first hear God's Word. Paul said in Romans 10:17, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Once we have heard the message, then we must believe the message. We must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Having believed in Jesus as God's Son, we then must be willing to change our lives—to turn **from** sin **to** God. In Acts 3:19, we are told to "repent and turn again," that our sins might be blotted out. Then, we must confess Jesus as the Son of God. Romans 10:10 says, "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Then, we must be baptized to have our sins washed away. In Acts 22:16, Saul was told, "Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Then and only then can we have "the God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3) as our God.

If you would like to have a copy of today's lesson, we are making it available on DVD. You can come to our Website, www.thegospelofchrist.com, to request one of those. More than anything, we pray that you will get your life right with God so that you can have true comfort.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “COMFORT FROM ABOVE”

1. What one thing is probably “at the top of the list” when it comes to causing humans discomfort in this life?
2. According to 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, God comforts us in something. What is that “something”?
3. What important message is contained in Acts 14:17?
4. What truth is taught in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that should offer comfort to the Christian?
5. According to Philippians 3:10, Christians “have fellowship with Christ” in something. What is that “something”?
6. According to this lesson, what is the important message contained in John 17:3?
7. According to John 3:16, how much does God love humankind?
8. What eternal truth about God is taught in Malachi 3:6?
9. According to Romans 5:7-8, how did God demonstrate His love for humankind?
10. One comfort for the Christian is found in the fact that Christians live “in hope of” something. What is that “something” according to Titus 1:2?
11. From what did the psalmist draw his comfort, according to Psalm 23:4?
12. According to 1 John 2:25, what has God promised those who live faithfully before Him?
13. What comforting promise is found for all faithful Christians in the text of Hebrews 13:5-6?
14. What message of eternal comfort is found in Hebrews 2:14?
15. According to John 1:29, what did Christ do for the human race that should ultimately bring everyone comfort?
16. What did the psalmist say in Psalm 119:50 should comfort us?
17. What did Jesus promise His people in Matthew 28:20?
18. What is the comforting message found in John 14:1-6?
19. What is the message of Revelation 21:3-4?
20. What does Hebrews 4:9 promise the faithful Christian?
21. How can the message found in Romans 8:18 be summarized?