

Sunday July 10th sermon: "Comfort Unto Glory! Christ's Grief, Our Joy"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS, by John Pittman Hey

John 14:1-3; Isaiah 50

Jesus taught us that God hides the Gospel from the "wise and prudent," and reveals it unto babes, because He wants to, and it pleases Him!

This gives great comfort to all believers in times of trouble, because our God takes pleasure in saving us, and He will not fail at doing so, as would we if it were up to our initiative, wisdom, and prudence!

Jesus then promised rest from our heavy labor when we come unto Him. He takes away the burdens of sin and trouble from His people who trust in Him, and bears them Himself in His Own body on the cross.

There is comfort in Christ's salvation and in submitting ourselves to His protection and rule.

As Jesus prepared to go to the cross and die, and then ascend into Heaven, His disciples were troubled and sad.

So He told us not to be troubled of heart, because we ought to trust Him as God. This is difficult for us, since we tend to look upon Christ and see Him as a man (which He is), and therefore dismiss Him as not full of power as God (which He also is).

But in reality, Jesus made the whole universe. He is the image of the Godhead. He is "God with us." He is the Word made flesh Who dwelt among us.

We must shed our carnal thinking about Jesus, and realize that such a meek and lowly man is nevertheless God of very God.

Jesus taught that there are "many mansions" in His Father's house in glory, places of heavenly abode for His people.

Jesus confirms this truth: if it were not so, He would have told us!

Jesus begins to prepare His disciples to understand, that the kingdom glories would not be manifest physically in their lives, but rather later in glory at His return.

Jesus is preparing a place for us!

First, at Calvary, He by His dying for us, made us fit and pure for our ultimate residence in His Father's House!

Second, now in Heaven, Jesus prepares glories for His people!

Dr. John Gill put it this way: "Christ has taken possession of our home in Glory!"

Jesus then promises His people, by way of comfort, and in order that our hearts be not troubled: He is coming one day to take us there with Him into Glory!

The end result is this: that we will be with Christ forever! We will forever be with the Lord! We will see His face, and bask in His love and mercy and glory and power, for all eternity.

This is a great comfort for the disciples, who were used to being and living in the presence of Jesus, and who were sad that He would soon be taken away from them.

One day, all the Lord's people, who have trusted in Jesus, will be forever with the Lord.

Christ made these promises to us, so that our hearts would not be troubled.

When the Lord Jesus prepared His disciples for His impending death on the cross, He acknowledged they would be filled with sorrow. His promise was, that He would see them again, and when that happened, they would be full of joy that no man could take away.

There is a two-fold fulfillment of this promise by Christ.

First, when He rose from the dead, the disciples' sorrow turned to rejoicing!

Second, now that Jesus is ascended, all His people are sad that we cannot see Him now, and be in His presence.

But when Jesus returns, and raises up His people from the dead, and takes us to be forever with Him, that will be ultimate happiness and rejoicing for us all!

Jesus then summarizes the purpose for His teaching: that you might have peace.

We can have peace only in our Savior. Peace with God, and peace in the face of troubles, are only found in Jesus.

But then Jesus reiterates: in the world, you will have tribulation.

Notice how Jesus doesn't preach like the false teachers of these days, like Joel Osteen and other prosperity "gospel" preachers. Christ is straight up with His people about the trials and troubles we will endure in this life.

Christ promises us tribulation. If that promise is true, then so must we take His other promises, of salvation, and everlasting life, and eternal glory in His presence forever!

So when we experience tribulation, we can check that off our list, of promises made by Jesus that are fulfilled.

Then we can know that we are traveling down the roster of Christ's promises that end up in our glorious and everlasting end.

Jesus concludes this portion of His teaching with this commandment: "But be of good cheer! I have overcome the world!"

Our God Rules! Our Prince Reigns! Jesus overcame sin and death and Hell for us!

Now we are waiting to see His enemies and ours made our footstool!

As for Jesus, we already see this with the eye of faith, but one day we shall see it with our own eyes.

Just as we take comfort in Christ's assurance that He has overcome the world in which we now suffer tribulation, so too we take comfort in Paul's promise to us:

"The God of peace shall crush Satan under your feet shortly!"

But in all of this, our ONLY comfort flows through that grief of Christ at Calvary.

There is an Old Testament exhortation to trust in the Lord in dark times, based upon Christ's suffering and vindication for us.

In Isaiah 50, the Messiah answers the question, is God unable to redeem His lost people who have sinned?

Absolutely not! His proof of this is to recite His mighty power over all the creation.

Indeed, Messiah the suffering servant then recounts (prophetically!) how He has been given, in His humanity, the words of comfort for His people.

But the obedience of Jesus to His Father's will in the saving of His people then comes to the fore: Christ's ears are open to the commandment, and a body is prepared for Him in which He suffers death in our place.

Jesus was willing to make an offering for the sins of His people who trust in Him.

Then Messiah describes briefly the suffering He must bear for us: humiliation, and pain, and grief.

But Messiah knows full well, that His offering will save His people. He will not be confused, disoriented, or ashamed by the terrible work He must do to save us.

No, Jesus is confident that His work on the cross will succeed! Christ will be vindicated! Therefore, He will not be ashamed by any failure to accomplish the redemption of God's people.

God will justify Him! Nobody can interfere with that. Anybody is dared to try, and lose.

God will help Him, so nobody can condemn Messiah. Anyone who tries will die out, but Messiah will reign forever.

It is striking how Paul co-opts these same promises to Messiah, and applies them to God's people: Nobody can charge God's people with any crime, because God justifies us! Nobody can condemn us, because Jesus, the One already condemned in our place, is raised in power and glory, and makes intercession for us!

Paul makes it clear, that the vindication promised to Christ is in fact, also the vindication of Christ's people!

We are justified and uncondemned in Christ!

Then Isaiah makes a personal application of Christ's troubles and victory to our own: whoever of you fears the Lord, and obeys Messiah, and lives in darkness and has no light? Trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon thy God!

Even before Jesus came down to save us, Messiah had already announced, that His suffering, and His victory, would be our comfort in times of darkness and distress.

How much better off the saints in these days are from those in Isaiah's time! They could barely understand how Messiah would redeem them, but they knew He promised He would some day.

But we believers today, we fully understand how Jesus saves His people - by dying as our substitute, as God's Lamb, to take away our sins!

We are so blessed that Jesus has perfected our redemption by His obedience and blood shedding. Well may we sing:

"We now look back to see,
the burdens Thou didst bear,
when hanging on the accursed tree,
for all our guilt was there!"

Finally, in Hebrews 12, we are once again exhorted to face trouble like Jesus faced the cross: with a great joy set before us!

He is our pattern in enduring suffering and trouble! He kept His gaze focused on the inevitable outcome: by His dying for us, we will all, Jesus and His people, enter into an exceeding great rejoicing forevermore!

Paul put it this way: "for I reckon that the suffering of this present world is not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us!"

We love the words of that glorious hymn:

"Our pain shall then be over,
We'll sin and sigh no more,
Behind us all of sorrow,
And naught but joy before,
A joy in our Redeemer,
As we to Him are nigh,
In the crowning day that's coming by and by."