

Comfort. Comfort

Isaiah 40:1-2

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

The Israelites had for many years vexed God by serving the gods of nearby nations. The main culprit quite often were the kings whose faithless leadership guided the people to embrace these idols. God had patiently sent prophet after prophet to warn them as well as encourage them to return to him. All during their 70 years in exile God had never for one second given up on them, forgotten them or stopped loving them. It is at this point that God sends Isaiah with a reassuring message.

The “comfort, comfort” repetition creates a sense of urgency. On the one hand, it points to the people’s great need of comfort and, on the other hand, to the Lord’s ardent desire to extend the needed comfort. This double comfort is not based on Israel’s sincerity of faith. It is the determined and gracious initiative of Yahweh alone that makes a new life possible.

God always has a message of comfort for His people, even in times of deep affliction; the end of all His dealings with them is their establishment in holiness and happiness including us.

When Isaiah says *my people*, he is saying that after all their unfaithfulness, all their rebellion, all their sins, they are still his people. God remains their God.

The warfare that Isaiah speaks of meant that the Babylonian captivity had come to an end. Sin and death forge chains of bondage for every sinner. Each of us longs for the announcement that he or she is free from such bondage. Because Jesus has come, we are released from death. We are no longer slaves to sin. Our bondage is over because God has achieved our release through his Son, the Messiah.

The word “double” in *double for all her sins*, means that God’s blessings are ample, abundant, and beyond expectations. Our sins have deserved punishment, but God has offered forgiveness and eternal life instead of punishment.

In our own lives, we face the judgment that we have broken God’s laws. We all fall short of what His holiness demands. But there is a great source of comfort for us. God Himself, speaking through His Holy Word, has issued us a full pardon.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for such wonderful words of comfort. Have them create a quiet confidence in our heart as we await eternal life. Amen.