

Hope and Comfort in the Truth (1)

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What is the use? What is the point in all of this? Our ministers and our denomination keep driving home this "truth" thing. It does not seem as if anyone else around worries their head all that much about the truth. We must know the truth, we are told, and we spend from our early years to our late teens being catechized in the Bible and in doctrine. Our ministers keep telling us: "Know your Bibles." We are constantly reminded as well to live in the truth. We must be filled with zeal and enthusiasm in the truth, so that we can go out and witness of that truth to others.

But what is the point in it all? I mean, what is in it for me? What do *I* get out of all of this? All this emphasis is placed on knowing God and witnessing to the truth; but where does that get me in life? Is there any benefit in it for me? This sounds quite selfish, does it not? But then, that is what society is all about today: do not do something unless I can get something out of it.

The point is not: what do I get out of all this, because you and I are not really of the essence. We are puny, insignificant creatures of time. We are here today and gone tomorrow. Isaiah tells us, "All nations before God are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity." When God almighty demands of you and me to obey and fear Him, we do so not because of what we can get out of it. We do so simply because He is the sovereign Creator of heaven and earth, and we are His servants. We are required to do the will of our God. Who are we to demand of God anything? In fact, if we serve God for that reason, to get something out of it, then everything the former speakers at this convention have said means nothing. We have wasted our time here this past week.

Yet, since we are on the subject, we maybe could take a look at the question: is there any personal benefit in knowing and witnessing to the truth? Though it is true that God certainly does not owe us anything, God does give to us something. God is good and gracious to His people in Christ. Though they are deserving of nothing from Him, God gives to them some wonderful spiritual blessings. These blessings are those of hope and comfort. God gives to each one of His children who walks in His precepts and ways the wonderful blessings of hope and comfort! These are valuable gifts. In fact, these are priceless gifts. These are personal possessions the value of which is beyond comparison. There is nothing in this world that you and I can compare to the gifts of hope and comfort.

But perhaps we as young people might think that hope and comfort are not really all that precious to us in our youth. We might think that at this point in life we would rather enjoy our pleasures and wealth. Maybe we might be one who came to the convention this year because it was in California. What a great time we can have in California! Who cares about the speeches or the discussion groups! We will simply bear with them for the few hours, bide our time, and in this way get through them. We came to this convention to have a good time! We are not all that interested in hope and comfort in the truth!

With a little bit of consideration, however, you and I will find out that hope and comfort really are the best gifts that God could ever give His children. Let me see if I can explain the gifts of hope and comfort in a way that I can make you understand just how priceless they are.

Hope, first of all. Hope is an anchor. An anchor, as we well know, is that which keeps a boat from drifting around aimlessly. If that anchor is not down while you are fishing then the boat is subject to the waves or the wind, and the boat will drift around without any direction. But when we drop that anchor down and it takes hold of the bottom of the lake the boat will immediately stop. The boat will take a firm position in the lake and will not drift anymore. It will stay right there no matter what the wind or the waves.

Well, that is hope. Hope is an anchor for you and me in this life. It is that which keeps us from drifting through life without any aim or purpose, without any direction. When we have hope, immediately our life is anchored and this lends purpose and meaning to our lives. Why? Because of what hope is! Hope is looking forward with eager anticipation to something that is coming. It is to expect the fulfillment of that which we desire. For example, all of us weeks in advance were impatiently waiting for the convention to come. You and I were hoping for its swift coming, looking forward to it, longing for the coming of the convention.

From a spiritual point of view God gives His children hope. That hope is the second coming of Jesus Christ. We will be discussing that in our discussion groups in a little while. Why do we hope for the coming of Jesus Christ? Because when Christ comes He is going to usher in the new heavens and earth where righteousness will dwell. He is going to come and bring you and me to that kingdom where there is no more sin, no more crying, no more pains, hurts, or troubles. And we will have this blessed and wonderful, this perfect fellowship with God and Jesus Christ. That hope is an anchor in the life of the child of God. When I have this hope then I am going to aim all of my life toward the fulfillment of that hope. It is like a target in my life. I aim everything that I do and say and every place that I go toward that one goal, the accomplishment of my hope. That lends purpose to the life of the child of God.

There is another gift that God gives His children too. That is comfort. The opposite of comfort the Heidelberg Catechism tells us is misery. When we are miserable, our heart is filled with restlessness and discontentment. There is a lack of joy and luster to our lives, a lack of happiness. Misery is when our hearts refuse to be still and at peace. Comfort is the opposite of that. Comfort is when we are content and happy in life. We experience joy in the things we do, the places we go, and in all our activities. Comfort is encouragement and strength when I feel insecure. And, best of all, comfort is this certain deep-down consolation that I receive from God when I am hurting or face the problems of this present life. Comfort is a gift of God to His children, too, when they walk in the truth. Even when the sorest trials come in my life, the most threatening of circumstances, God gives me in my heart a certain joy and peace that is able to see me through the difficulties of life. In fact, I have seen the child of God stand up under the most adverse conditions in life simply because God gives to him comfort. Comfort is strength!

So, these are the gifts God gives to you and me when we know the truth and walk in it: hope and comfort. These are the best gifts God can give to us as young men and women. When we love and live the truth then hope and comfort belong to us. God gives these gifts to us freely!

The question is: do young people actually need this comfort and hope? We can certainly understand why old people need that comfort and hope. They do not really have all that much more to look forward to in this life. They are going to die pretty soon. They need to have hope in the future life to see them through their older years. And, since they are the ones fraught with all kinds of infirmities in life they really need comfort. But I am a young person and I live in the strength of my youth! I really do not need all that much comfort or hope in my life because the pleasures of this life are enough to make me happy! I could come to a convention and do without

the speeches or discussion groups and go home at the end of the week with all the joy and happiness that I need! All I need is good times with my friends!

So then, do young people need comfort and hope? We will answer that question, the Lord willing, in the August issue of *Beacon Lights*.

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