

## Hope and Comfort in the Truth (2)

Rev Wilbur Bruinsma

*Speech given at the Young People's Convention, Redlands, 1999.*

*In the last issue, Rev. Bruinsma explained "comfort" and "hope" as gifts from God. He defined comfort as "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." He explained "hope" as follows: "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." Rev. Bruinsma then left us with the following paragraph:*

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!

I have had only 21 years in the ministry—not a very long time. But from what I have seen in my short ministry we need a hope and comfort that earthly pleasures cannot bring! Hope and comfort give inner peace and joy! Do we think that we are exempt from needing that?

I was still in grade school, not quite yet a teenager, when I hung around with a boy my age. He was my best friend! I had to watch my buddy cry because God took away from him at that time a father. He was not going to have a father to be with him like I did through those difficult teen years. He needed comfort and hope. In my ministry I have stood by the death bed of a middle-aged mother who suffered from degenerative heart failure. I stood by her bed with her husband and teenage children to read and pray with them that they might be comforted in the death of their wife and mother. Every one of your ministers can tell you of similar experiences in their ministry. A young mother was taken away by God because of a blood clot lodged between her lungs and heart, leaving behind seven children, from preschool all the way through high school. A young father and husband was buried alive while at work and spent the rest of his time on earth comatose. A young father of five has just fallen from the roof of a house and is lying even now comatose in the hospital. These things do not affect you as young people? I know they do! These do not just touch the lives of adults; they touch the lives of young people too. A young person needs hope and comfort!

We have not only seen older people die but God has at times taken from us close friends too. I can name a number of these instances too. Where do we go when we are confronted with such pain and sorrow in life? We run to God and to our Savior. Why? To find comfort and hope in these times of our lives. We need then a comfort and hope that no earthly pleasure or treasure can give to us!

And that is only the half of it! What about the pain the hurt that can confront a young person due to sin? What about the excruciating pain we feel in our hearts when a father or mother forsakes us and goes away because of their sin? What about the abuse we might experience in our lives by the hand of a father or mother? In the church? Yes, these things can happen in the church too! What about the hurt that a brother or sister causes us because they are living a life of rebellion and sin, causing war and strife in home and family? There are friends who turn their backs on us, who perhaps mock us because we will not follow after them in their sin. How often cannot you as teenagers feel so all alone! The Heidelberg Catechism tells us that life in this sin-cursed world is nothing more than a valley of tears.

It is not as if we do not have our good times. It is not as if we do not enjoy the pleasures of this present life. God gives us these too. We have happiness, especially when life seems to be going well for us. But let's get real! Life is not always a bowl of cherries, as the saying goes. There are sorrow, hurts, and pains sometimes, it almost seems, that are too great to bear. You and I need to be comforted!

We need hope too! As we mentioned, hope gives to our lives direction, a goal that we aim for. It gives us purpose to live and go about our activities in this world. The unbeliever has his hopes and dreams too. But these are based on things that are temporary. For that reason, the unbeliever's hope is so fleeting. He might have hope for a little while in something, but when that hope is finally accomplished, then he finds out that his life is just as empty as it was when he was trying to hope for something. When we look around us through spiritual eyes at the mass of young people in our society, we see a bunch of unmotivated, wandering, confused souls who have no real purpose or goal in their lives. They are not even able to establish their own identity much less know where they are going in this life. And when they set out to prove that they are an individual who has some worth to his life they always go about doing this in a sinful way. They do it by means of rebellion against God and those in authority. "Here I am! Don't you see me? Bang! I'll shoot my fellow classmates, then I'll shoot myself!" Visions of making a name for oneself in this world so that no one will forget them! "Hey, I'm cool!" So I spike my hair and tint it purple or green! I put rings in my ears and nose, through my lip, eyebrow, tongue (cannot even talk straight), bellybutton, or through other unmentionable parts of my body! And if rings will not grab other's attention then I'll add to it all a few tattoos! Why? Because I am an individual. See me? Here I am! I have worth in my life. I am somebody. I do not know where I am going, I do not know who I am, I do not understand my purpose in life! But here I am!

It is this lack of hope that leaves a young person floating about in this sea of life with no anchor. They drift aimlessly in life! The result? They become involved in riotous living, drunken parties, fighting and brawling. They immerse themselves in alcohol, drugs, fornication, filling one's heart and soul with the noise and lyrics of songs so ungodly that worldly psychologists cringe at the words. They frequent the bars, indulging in the night life of this world. Why? Because unbelieving young people have no goal and no purpose to their lives! They float about aimlessly in this world until through their sin God takes them away!

They might even make us think that they have somehow found joy and happiness in life. That they have the key to finding comfort and hope. You can hear them laugh. Their laughter is loud and hearty. They can sound so happy! You know what? It is all emptiness. It is empty laughter because those same people go home and if they have but a moment to reflect on their life they are the most miserable of all people. They fill their lives with activity from the moment they get up to the moment they fall asleep exactly because they do not want time to think about the purpose and end of their lives in this world.

There are those of you too, young people, who follow after these sinful ways! You know why that is true of some of you? Because your lives are empty, too. And they are empty because you do not have hope! If your hope was in Christ and in His coming upon the clouds of heaven, then you would have something to aim for in life, something to live for. But there is no hope. So, you too seek out the earthly pleasures only to drown out your own lack of hope and comfort in Christ!

Let's face it: young people need the hope and comfort that can be found in cross of Jesus Christ alone. That we have only when we dwell within the sphere of the truth! It is not ours when we walk and live the lie. God does not give comfort to those who walk in sin and rebellion against Him. We ought to keep that in mind in our lives too. When life seems to us empty and meaningless, when nothing seems to go right for us in life, is it not because we are not living in the knowledge of the truth? Our restlessness, our own lack of direction, our lack of joy or motivation ought not to be blamed on others. Do not blame it on parents, do not blame it on the church, do not blame it on friends. Take a good hard look at yourself! Do we know the truth, do we love the truth, and do we live in the truth? That is the first thing that we ought to examine in us when life does not seem all that happy!

The great comfort that we find in Jesus does not simply drop down to us from the skies so that it is automatically there when we need it. Do not take comfort in that false assurance that so many people have today. Even the wicked like to try and comfort themselves with this false assurance that even though they walk in sin, God still loves them. Comfort is rooted in our hope. You and I cannot be comforted in this life unless we look in hope to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and the eternal kingdom that will be ushered in at His coming. Here is David's hope in Psalm 27:4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord [in heaven—W.B.] all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple." That is my desire, David says, that is my hope! That is what gives us comfort in life. Psalm 27:13, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Is it not true that we also with David will then say every time we confront a difficulty in life: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." Comfort is rooted in hope.

And hope, in turn, is rooted in truth! If I want to have hope I have to know the truth. Our hope and comfort is found in the knowledge of the truth. "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness," the hymn goes. I need to *know* that truth if I am going to be comforted. Freedom from the worries and cares of this world is rooted in the knowledge that God is my God forever and ever. Freedom from the anxieties and the hurts of this present world is rooted in the knowledge that we are saved from wrath in the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

So necessary it is for us to know the truth because, after all, Christ is the truth! He tells us that: "I am the way, the truth and the life!" And when we know Christ together with our heavenly Father, then that is life eternal. Christ is the solid Rock into which we drop our anchor. That anchor of faith takes firm hold in Him and the restlessness of life will no longer move us. And that is true because Christ is holding on to us. We would let go of Him so quickly! But Christ holds us! He gives to us all the comfort and hope we need to get through the difficult circumstances of life. No matter what burdens we have to bear—and I know there are at times some pretty heavy ones—no matter what the struggles are, our hope is rooted in Jesus Christ. He will never let us go! God does not leave or forsake His covenant children. He will uphold you, young people, in the hardest times.

Here is the conclusion to the matter: know the truth! Learn the objective truths of the Scriptures. The more we learn of God and Jesus Christ the better we will know them. The better we know them, the more strongly we will be rooted in them. The more we are rooted in them, the more we will find hope and comfort in this life. May God give hope and comfort to you as the covenant youth of His church.

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