

CONSOLATION

By

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Luke described Simeon as a man who was “looking for the consolation of Israel.” When Simeon saw the infant Jesus, he held him in his arms and said, “Now let thou thy servant depart, Lord...for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” All the hopes of Israel were fulfilled in Jesus.

Luke records that it was the holy Spirit which made the revelation to Simeon; thus he was not under a mistaken idea when he expressed the fact that the consolation of Israel was in Christ, “a light for revelation to the nations and the glory of thy people Israel.” If Simeon recognized that the consolation and glory of God’s people was realized in his own day in Christ, why are Christians seeking solutions in so many other directions?

In defending himself before King Agrippa, the apostle Paul declared, “and now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God to our fathers...that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and unto the nations” (Acts 26:6, 23). Paul preached the gospel of Christ as the hope of Israel. Later, as a prisoner in Rome, he called the Jews together and said to them, “because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.” His preaching had centered on the death and resurrection of Christ.

The consolation and hope of Israel was not economical nor political. It was not the security of their national borders. Rather it was in the kingdom of heaven through the new birth, the hope of eternal life through a resurrection from death, the hope of “an inheritance incorruptible...unto a living hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead” (I Pet. 1:3, 4).

In every nation there is a frantic search for some solution to the deep spiritual and moral stagnation. Christians often try to find consolation as did the Jews through political manipulations, trying to find some way to apply the hope to the nation as a whole, to unbelievers as well as to believers. When this desire is not realized, despair and bitterness often follow, resulting in the frustration that marks the churches today.

There still persists the myth, popular among churches today, that the Christian faith is supposed to be followed by political and military security, prosperity, and freedom from all problems and hardships. The trend is to join a church and sing hymns to Christ on Sunday morning, but throughout the week devote one’s time to fighting for material gain and political power under the illusion that if enough people can be mustered to fight the atheistic conspiracy then peace and happiness will follow.

Christians become so involved in politics that people can no longer look to their church for spiritual help and the consolation which Christ offers as Redeemer and Lord; rather they go from one defeat to another, desperately hoping that somehow someone will come up with the key to delivering the nation from its complex problems. Millions of hours and dollars are spent by Christians in the effort to defeat the conspirators through human agencies which themselves are faulty. Many people spend all their time seeking support for some movement to overthrow one system of power and replace it with another.

Christian victory does not lie in that direction. Often we are reminded of conditions in ancient Rome and how in many respects they were similar to modern conditions in the United States. Yet, conspicuously absent from the Bible record is any effort by the apostles to gain control of economic and political affairs in order to advance the cause of Christ. They rather used the conditions to point out a contrast between the kingdoms of men and the Kingdom of God, and in the midst of the conflict preached that the consolation was in Christ. "This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith," declared John (I John 5:4).

Christian faith is grounded on solid evidence concerning Jesus Christ, not faith in any of the systems of man. As R. J. Rusdoony points out, "Trust in God requires a distrust of man, man as monarch, industrialist, worker, intellectual and clergyman. To be truly dependent on God we must be independent of man except and insofar as God, within very narrow limits, requires it in His world. Sin is not abolished by the abolition of monarchy, democracy, or oligarchy, nor by abolishing the state, the church, or anything else. The problem is in man, and the answer is in God" (Chalcedon Report No. 88/4).

The answer God has given is in Christ, who took upon Himself the penalty for sin and exhausted it in His own death; Who arose from the dead and ascended to the throne of power as King and Lord of the universe. This is the consolation which all believers in Israel looked for, and it is still the consolation of all God's people. It is the everlasting Gospel, that which was good news in the first century, and which will still be the good news right up until Christ comes again. It is good news that a person in any country, under any kind of economic and political condition, can be freed from sin and judgment and made righteous in the sight of God, that he can be transformed from a rotten sinful creature into a humble and godly servant of God destined for immortality in the presence of Christ.

There is a vast difference between the world-lanners and the Christian. The world-lanners are already condemned because of sin. They operate on a dream which has failed from the beginning because it is human, and humanity is sinful and temporary. The Christian works under the hand of God, according to His infinite design, with material which has been cleansed by Christ and which has the guarantee of permanency; that is, eternity through a resurrection to immortality. The Christian's consolation is in the fact that Christ actually entered the world as a man, died for sin in man's place and arose from the dead, assuring us that we too might do the same. It is no dream. **It happened.** Our faith is not something man whomped up in desperation, but that which God himself has given. It is not negative, but positive, to believe in spite of all obstacles, because it is revealed and supported by factual evidence.

Let the nations rage and the people set themselves in array against the anointed One (Psa. 2). Let the rebels rebel and the conspirators plot and scheme. They cannot succeed, because Christ has the first and last word. He uses even the faulty works of His enemies to accomplish his ends. Out of the tribulation in the world He is perfecting a people for His own eternal possession.

The world-lanners go from defeat to defeat seeking consolation in each new idea, each new political movement, every destructive change, including each new wave of violence and sin. The churches have mimicked their folly, searching for a new scheme for security, fighting on the devil's terms, ever destroying old methods for new, ever creating new institutions and organizations to solve the problems. The Christian of Faith knows all

these are to fail, that warfare and tribulation will continue until the end, so he devotes his energies to building up the faith in Christ, upholding His word, advancing the claims of the Gospel, rejoicing in God's grace and thus showing a contrast between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of men.

He has consolation in Christ regardless of national, political and economical conditions of his country. He has the same consolation that Simeon had and that Paul preached, that Christ is the light for revelation to the nations and the glory of God's people because of His death and resurrection.

There will be no end to war. If this is not obvious from lessons in history, it is plainly stated by Jesus, that there will be wars until the end. Men talk "Peace, Peace" when there is no peace. Jesus also taught that poverty will never be abolished in this world. "The poor you have always." The Christian will never be without a means to demonstrate his compassion. There will be no end to crime and violence in this present world, rather they will wax worse and worse until the end, so the Christian is exhorted to fight the good fight of faith, to arm himself for a spiritual warfare, and to resist the devil, who "is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time" (Rev. 12:12).

To Simeon the consolation of Israel was in what Jesus was to do in this world, in redeeming man from sin and its penalty, and in rising from the grave as the "first fruits of them that sleep." Paul said that he was preaching the hope of Israel when he preached the resurrection. The consolation of Israel was not a piece of land in Palestine. Neither is the consolation of believers today the political and economic welfare of the nation, whatever nation it may be. This is the consolation; "that Christ has loosed us from our sins by His blood and made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father" (Rev. 1:5-6).

He has given us a purpose which is independent of the direction of society, a purpose which does not derive from the fashions and trends of the times, but a purpose originating in God's mind, revealed by grace through Christ. Christ did not come into the world to make permanent the frail governments of men nor to satisfy man's hunger for material things. He came to turn men around from the direction of their peers, to translate believers out of the worldly kingdom into His own everlasting Kingdom, that they might glorify God, now in this present world, and forever in the new one.

There is no greater work for a Christian than to demonstrate in word and in deed that he has found the consolation of Israel in Jesus Christ the Lord.

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