

# What Is the Comfort?

by J.R. Miller

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*The comfort of the religion of Christ is that death interrupts nothing beautiful and good in a Christian life, and that the believer's life belongs to Christ, who has called them to service elsewhere.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 34:18, Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 5:4, John 14:1-3, Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Philippians 4:7, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Revelation 21:4

**Topics:** "Divine Purpose", "Comfort in Grief"

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## Description

J.R. Miller reflects on the profound sorrow of losing a young pastor who, after extensive preparation for ministry, dies unexpectedly. He emphasizes that death does not interrupt the beauty of a Christian life, as the young man's life belonged to Christ and his early death was part of a divine plan for service in heaven. Miller also addresses the grief of the young man's fiancée, reassuring her that their love and experiences have enriched their lives for God's purposes, and that her work on earth continues despite her loss. The sermon highlights the comfort found in faith, even amidst deep sorrow, and the transformative power of grief in shaping one's character for service. Ultimately, Miller conveys that God's plans transcend human understanding, offering hope and purpose in the face of tragedy.

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## Transcript

He had just completed his long course of preparation. He had been graduated from the University, and then from the Theological Seminary. He had been called as pastor of an interesting church, and had been ordained and installed. Then almost immediately, he became ill. He was tenderly watched over. The best medical skill was procured in his behalf, and all that could be done, was done. But all availed not. One October day, he sank away into the quietness and stillness of death.

Truly it seemed a mysterious providence. The sadness is always peculiar when a young person dies. The old have filled up the measure of their days, and have finished their work; but the young are only beginning to realize the dream of their heart. This young man died at the close of a long and costly preparation for life. He gave also unusual promise of a most successful career. "He will be an eloquent preacher!" men said. Yet after all this course of training, and with all this brilliant promise for the future -- he had no opportunity to try his powers. The consecrated talents laid upon the altar, were employed in no active service of earth. Ready for beautiful and noble work -- his hands were at once folded in death's repose.

From childhood, his parents had watched over his life with gentlest care. They had brought him up for Christ. They had given the most diligent and intelligent thought to his education, sparing no pains and no cost that he might be well fitted for the chosen work of his life. They had dreamed large things for his future. They had expected that his voice would be heard throughout the land in eloquent tones, as he delivered his message from God to man. No words can describe the bitterness of their grief and disappointment, as they bent over the coffin, which held not only the precious form of their beloved son; but seemed to hold also all the fond dreams and hopes of their hearts for him.

What is the comfort of the religion of Christ, in such a case as this? There must be comfort, for life has no experiences for the believer in which the light of the gospel does not shine. One comfort is that death really interrupts nothing beautiful and good in a Christian life.

It might seem that it was scarcely worth while to spend so much in the education of this young man, when he did not live to make any use of his trained powers in this world. But we must remember that his life belonged to Christ, and that his early death meant only that his Master had called him to service elsewhere, nearer the heavenly throne. His parents did not know it; but through all the years of their self-denial for his sake, and their patient nurturing of his life, they were educating and preparing their son for service in the blessed fields of glory -- instead of for ministry on the earth. Could any honor be greater than this? The long, patient training was not in vain; he is finding opportunities now for the use of all his fine gifts and cultured powers, in the holy service in which he is engaged close to Christ.

There was another most pathetic element in this providential mystery. The young man was engaged to a noble girl. For years they had loved each other, and had ardently dreamed of the day when they would be united in marriage. This dream, too, seemed on the verge of fulfillment. They intended in a little while to be wedded, and then to set up their home in the parish over which he had become the pastor. But this sweet dream was not realized; it, too, lay among the broken hopes which were folded up and shut away in the coffin.

What comfort has the gospel of Christ for this sorely bereft and sorrowing girl, in her pathetic loneliness? For one thing, she has the assurance that this strange thing which has happened, was no accident. The two faithful lovers had their sweet dream of life together in this world. They hoped to share each other's cares and trials, and to go hand in hand in their work for Christ. But this was not the divine purpose for their lives. From the beginning, it was the Master's plan that one of them, when fully trained and ready for service, should be transferred to another field, in a brighter country -- while the other should remain on earth, to serve Christ here, without the loved companionship.

This separation, therefore, was no accident, no surprise to God; it came as part of the divine plan for their two young lives. Hence we know it was not a calamity to either one. The years of love had their part in the building up of the character, and the culture of the spirit, of him who was called to higher service. He is the better servant of his Master now in the bright fields where he is, for the enriching of his life which that sweet love wrought in him. She who was left, has also received from the experiences of love, an enlargement and a culture of heart, by which she has been fitted for gentler and more effective ministry in this world. Then the sorrow through which she has passed, has also had its influence upon her life, anointing her for yet holier and more helpful service.

She is not the girl she was in those lighthearted days when the two used to walk and talk together while love's dreams were so bright. It is not long ago; but in the little time she has learned very important

lessons -- lessons which have gone deep into her soul. All of life has been changed for her, and in her too. She is a woman now, set apart by the baptism of sorrow. The light still shines in her face; but it is not morning light now -- it is the serious light of the midday. She has new joy now -- joy which is sorrow transfigured. God's comfort is in her heart, and a holy peace is in her eyes. She has experienced sore loss -- but she never was so spiritually rich as she is now.

This bereft girl need not think of her life-work, as in any real sense broken up by the sorrow which has brought such disappointment. It is still God's plan for her which is going on amid the desolation of her hopes. Her friend's work in this world was finished when he passed over to take up new and holier service; but her work is yet here, and she must not lose an hour -- even for sorrow. Her grief was but an incident in her life; and she must not allow her spirit to be broken by it, or her serving of Christ to be hindered. With heart made more tender by the pain, with hand made more gentle, with sympathy deepened, and her whole nature enriched -- she is ready to go out now to be a blessing to many. God will care for her life, that no sweet hope of her heart may perish -- but that in some other way than she had dreamed of, every holy vision of her love shall yet come true.

"Strange, strange for you and me,

Sadly afar;

You safe beyond, above,

I beneath the star;

You where flowers deathless spring,

I where they fade;

You in God's paradise,

I beneath time's shade;

Strange, strange for you and me,

Loved, loving ever;

You by life's deathless fount,

I near death's river;

You winning wisdom's love,

I strength to trust;

You amid the seraphim,

I in the dust."

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