

The Comfort of the World or the Comfort of God

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of denying the comforts of this world and following Jesus on the Narrow Way to experience true rest and comfort.

Scripture: Matthew 8:19

Topics: "Spiritual Comfort", "Faith Journey"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the journey of faith and comfort in following Jesus, highlighting the sacrifices made and risks taken to be near Him, and the subtle temptation to settle into worldly comforts that lead to spiritual emptiness. He emphasizes the importance of staying on the Narrow Way of faith, even when faced with ridicule and challenges, to experience the true comfort and joy found in walking with the Master. The sermon concludes with a call to return to the yoke of Jesus, to work alongside Him, and to receive the Holy Spirit as the ultimate source of comfort and rest.

Transcript

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted with by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. 2 Corinthians 1: 3-5

When we first begin to follow Jesus the sheer thrill of knowing him is so great that we can put up with almost any inconvenience, trouble or pain without hesitation - we'll go without sleep, without food, we'll travel great distances, we'll take tremendous risks for the joy of just being near him and doing his will.

It's easy for us to understand why Peter left his fishing boat and every secure thing he ever knew just to be with Jesus--it was worth it to him.

Some of us have given up promising futures--as the world would see it--without even a quiver of regret.

Some of us have turned away from careers that promised us wealth and prosperity for life.

Some of us have given up small fortunes and never thought of it as sacrifice. We were glad just to be near Jesus.

Our friends raised their eyebrows and wondered if we realized what we were doing - they thought we were living a fantasy. It looked as if we had left the warmth and comfort of our former lives to go out wandering around in the cold with nothing to hold on to but a dubious hope.

We saw it differently. We had entered the kingdom of God, finding the most awesome comfort we had ever known. We had found the treasure hidden in the field. Only a fool would be afraid to sell everything he has to buy that field.

We had begun to live by faith.

We were out on a limb.

Glad to do crazy things...difficult things

...painful things for the joy of pleasing our Lord and walking in his will.

We took risks...we spent ourselves.

We suffered abuse and ridicule from our friends, who finally turned away from us.

We were glad to do these things because we found that when we lived up there on the razor's edge of faith, for all of the suffering,

all the loneliness,

all the hassles,

all the tensions,

all the pain we may have had to endure

...there was never a moment when we were without the comfort of the Living God--a comfort which turned out to be the highest joy we had ever tasted--the most wonderful thing we ever knew--walking with the Master.

It was as if Jesus' presence was so close to us that we could feel him with every breath we drew.

His Spirit was guiding the steps of our feet.

His power was burning in our hearts.

And the evidence of his presence just flowed out from us in signs of confirmation.

But then something happened--happened so subtly that we didn't realize what was going on. We came to a fork on this road of faith and were blind to it.

Here's the Narrow Way and right beside it is this lovely strip of green velvet, and as far as we can see it runs right alongside the Narrow Path. So we said to ourselves, "Why not walk on it?"

It feels good. It's much more comfortable.

We notice words printed in the velvet: "It's time to settle down." .

Isn't that the truth! It is time to settle down. I can't keep up the pace. I can't be a fanatic all my life. Surely I'm entitled to some things that make life comfortable.

But one day we wake up and discover, here we are on the green strip of velvet, very comfortable indeed, ...but the Narrow Road of Faith is nowhere in sight.

Somewhere along the way, it branched off and we never realized it.

Now there is nothing sinful about marrying a wife or a husband; there's nothing wrong with having a decent house or an apartment to live in.

Who can be condemned for reading the newspaper or watching some television...

What's wrong with me kicking my shoes off, relaxing a little bit...

...having a little snack...maybe a little more snack... then a little more?

But something else is going on within us, we're getting spiritually soft and flabby.

Now that I have made myself comfortable in this world, the comfort of God that I once knew is gone!

My heart is empty, and my spirit is cold.

What happened to my faith?

I'm so comfortable I can't even find my way out of this easy chair...

I can't rouse myself to give cold water to the thirsty one.

And so we settle down... not into God, but into the world... and become self-indulgent and self-satisfied and smug.

The only way out of this deluding comfort is to turn around and follow that green velvet path back to the place where it departed from the Narrow Way, and get back on the road.

The "green velvet deception" is not a myth. It is rock-bottom truth, which applies in some way to every person reading these words.

The thing about the Narrow Way is that when we walk this Narrow Way of faith, our steps are so ordered by God that we never get a chance to "settle down."

When we follow Jesus' steps,

the world begins to treat us as it treats him - as aliens, exiles, imposters.

He was barely born before Herod was out to kill him and all the male babies born in Bethlehem. All of his life he is a stranger treated as an imposter.

"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head."

And when we walk with him, even though we may have our own bed, and our own little house ... or big house ... this still applies - we still have no place where we can 'settle down'.

We just don't fit.

We just don't belong anywhere in this world.

We are looked upon, as "speckled birds."

We are the ones the world is going to use as scapegoats just like it used the Jews.

Get used to this, if you're serious about walking with Jesus Christ.

And living in that 'first love' that he gave you, you will never in all your life of flesh and blood, be able to "settle down"--never--you will never find a place that you will call yours. And the minute you think you've found a chair that's truly your chair, somebody is going to come along and snatch it away.

"Why does it have to be this way?"

So that, denied the comforts of this world,

...we may then learn to experience God's comfort--the only real comfort there is.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls."

The rest for our souls that we need is nowhere else--nowhere--but under that yoke with him.

I can ask God to give me peace and he will.

I can ask for answer to my prayer, and he'll give it to me.

I can ask God to come and touch me, and he will.

But if I want God's comfort, there's only one way:

I have to call for that yoke to come down and rest on my shoulders alongside of Jesus.

I'm going to take that cross of my Lord on myself with him.

And I'm going to work side by side with my Master under the yoke of that cross.

As I walk side by side with my meek, and lowly, and laboring Lord,

I then begin to experience the easiest mind,

the most free and joyful heart,

and the most wonderful rest in my life that I have ever known.

and true fellowship with sisters and brothers who walk the Way.

True rest is not found on a soft bed, or a comfortable couch, or a full stomach, or a gratified body, or an indulged flesh, or a stimulated mind. It is found, and only found, under the yoke with the Lamb of God.

If we want to, we can get under that yoke afresh right now--all we have to do is, with a determined act of our will, ask the Lord to come down with that yoke and walk by our side.

Moreover, Jesus not only promises us the rest that we need, he promises to give us the Comforter, who will go with us and abide with us forever.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, for it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he is with you and shall be in you."

Notice how simple this promise is--

we don't have to learn some involved technique in order to receive the Holy Spirit,

we don't have to go to a seminar,

we don't have to master some mysterious teaching

--all we have to do is love Jesus --- and if we love Jesus we will obey his commandments..

And as we begin to obey his commands, as we even begin to try to do the things he tells us to do, Jesus prays the Father and the Father sends the Holy Spirit.

There will be no doubt in any of our minds that the Spirit has come in answer to our Lord's prayer because he will bring to us the comfort of heaven that cannot be counterfeited--

the comfort of heaven that will make us know that in the midst of all the heartache... and trouble... and turmoil...and confusion.... that the Spirit of God is in us and all is well.

When they were loading up that ship for Italy, the most uncomfortable looking person was this little man with shackles around his wrists named Paul.

When Paul tries to warn them there is going to be a storm and they had better not set sail, nobody pays attention: Who does he think he is? That prisoner...

But when they are out at sea and the storm comes and all those lives are in danger, and all hope is given up and all the tackle is thrown overboard, the one comfort amid those 276 souls is Paul, because he is overflowing with the comfort of God..

Now you and I, if we are following Jesus with any integrity at all, are standing in Paul's shoes. We are on a ship which is heading into a storm; and if we are following Jesus, we will get the same kind of response from the world that Paul got.

They'll laugh at us... and ridicule us... and they'll scoff at us as we warn of the storm...

But when the storm hits, then be able to offer the one comfort that lasts.

The question is: Are we truly standing in Paul's shoes?

Are we under the yoke of our Master?

Or have we, in one subtle way or another, settled down and become comfortable in this world?

God help us to get off the green velvet path and back on the Narrow Way.

God help us to get under the yoke of the lowliest One who ever walked this earth, and receive from his hand the gift of the Holy Spirit--the only true comfort there is.

PRAYER

"blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Lord God, how can I help but mourn, when I see the anguish in the world out there, and the hardness of my own brittle heart! May your Comfort empower me to bring true comfort to others.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-e-bieber/the-comfort-of-the-world-or-the-comfort-of-god/>

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