

Comfort in the Storm

By John Thiel, [mp3](#)

Scripture reading: Isaiah 51:12 I, [even] I, [am] he that comforteth you: who [art] thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man [that] shall die, and of the son of man [which] shall be made [as] grass;

Jesus has said, *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.* Many different thoughts come into play in these words, and the one we would like to examine is in reference to the perplexities and heartaches and negatives that are falling upon this planet in these last days, and which include us too; because we are living on Satan's enchanted ground, and God is warning us as to what to expect and He is not stopping the negatives from happening to us, but He is providing us with strength to meet them, a comfort. The Lord Jesus must be with me; He must be my rock so that I can battle through those negatives that come our way.

Because we are confronted by all these negatives which are written of for the end of the world, we need to have a vivid appreciation of Jesus and His presence in our life. This is our focus – a comfort, an assurance, a security that we can absorb to be able to face the battles of the week and the battles that are ahead of us, to be able to face them with a mind fully in tune so that, when next we meet something that really frustrates and upsets and burdens us, we will quickly release that frustration and that burden by the comfort that is found in God's word.

Comfort in Our Tribulations

He, the Lord God, has made it very plain that whatever we meet in these last days, the storms of life, we have nothing to let us be overwhelmed by.

Isaiah 51:11 Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy [shall be] upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; [and] sorrow and mourning shall flee away. 12 I, [even] I, [am] he that comforteth you:

Who is speaking? *I, even I,* says the Lord.

Isaiah 51:12 ...who [art] thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man [that] shall die, and of the son of man [which] shall be made [as] grass; 13 And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid

the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where [is] the fury of the oppressor?

Isaiah was speaking to the Hebrews who, if they would have trusted the Lord, would not have suffered under the oppressor. But because they forgot the Lord, He had to let the oppressor, Babylon, be unleashed upon them. Isaiah was there, and also Jeremiah, to try and help the people so that they would not have to go into captivity. But they would not listen.

We are also on the cusp on being taken into eternal captivity; but if we will listen to the comfort that the Lord gives us, we will be able to glide through it all, like Daniel and his three friends did. They were heavily oppressed; but they trusted the Lord, and they came through; whereas a lot of the others did not.

2 Corinthians 1:3 Blessed [be] God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

God can comfort us in *all* our tribulations. We sometimes get strength when we are challenged by the big confrontations – like having to face the problems of the religious world and the political world around us; then we fight on and we are faithful. But we often fall under the *little* things that cause us tribulation. They frustrate us and we begin to murmur and complain, and the peace of God is gone out of our bosom; we are so distressed. But here it says that even in that tribulation the Lord will comfort us – in *all* our tribulations – *that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted.*

Isaiah 43:1 But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called [thee] by thy name; thou [art] mine. 2 When thou passest through the waters, I [will be] with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

Interesting that the Lord said that before Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego ended up in the fire. They must have heard Isaiah say that. It was a dilemma; it was horrifying; Babylon had come to take Israel captive, and there was death, disaster, and destruction; but those who were listening to God were told, “Fear not; I am with you. As you go through the waters, through the fire, as you go through all these perplexing things where you might be tempted to say, Why did God permit this to happen?? in all these things He says, I am with you.”

We often read through the history and in all the stories that we read of we don't associate ourselves in the horrifying circumstances that those stories contain. Therefore when our horrifying circumstances come, we have no connection with what we have studied and what we have heard. But we want now to pick up on the actual experiences that these people were going through, and to see that only those who would take the comfort of the Lord would come through successfully. We want to come through successfully.

Tangible Help

These scriptures above that we have just considered are the announcements that God is our comfort; they tell us that God is our comfort; but how many have listened to the announcement and yet experienced no comfort whatsoever. I have watched this in my experience over the years. We've just been to church, we've just heard the wonderful messages; then we get back to the grindstone of the week, and it's as if there was nothing said that would help them in that given situation. I am puzzled many times because to me, as I listen to a sermon, I take it in, and I say, "Now, it's going to come;" and when it comes, "Ah! Here it is! I'm going to meet it with the Lord's presence." Sometimes, when I forget, I begin to get frustrated; and then the Lord says, What? "Oh, sorry, Lord;" and straight away there is peace again, no matter how frustrating the circumstance is. We humans need more than an announcement that God is our comforter. We need more than that. We need to see and tangibly feel the comfort. And I hope and pray that through this study we will actually experience that, so that, by listening and absorbing it carefully, when we meet our next frustration we have the fortitude that comes from what we are meditating here.

When our all senses are on the maximum stress, when everything around me seems to be falling to pieces, that is the tribulation I need to find comfort in.

The greatest want of the world is the want of men [and women]--men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall. {Ed 57.3}

Though the heavens fall – this is often used by people as though it was merely a symbolic expression. But wait a minute, what is it symbolic of? One day the heavens will literally fall, and when they do, will you and I be at peace with the Lord? What does it mean when the heavens fall? It is when that which I rely on to be regular and perfectly harmonious, when that harmonious circumstance of my life falls down around me. You rely every morning that the sun shines and the clouds are there, but all of a sudden everything collapses around you. So

when that happens, can I be true to my God in perfect trust? When the time of Jacob's trouble comes, which we are already experiencing little sprinklings of here and there, when things are just not turning out the way I expect them to turn out because God has promised me He is going to take care of me and give me my daily bread and satisfy my needs, when all of a sudden it's not there anymore, I ask, Well, where it is, Lord? Can I trust Him still? Can I still be at peace when things are not coming out the way that I expect them to be because He said He would bless me? Yes, He does bless me. The children of God in the time of the seven last plagues are going to be crying for bread and water as well. For the first few plagues we are told that they will be suffering together with the rest of the world. And a lot of people don't stop to think about that. And when things aren't physically well and then comes the fear of being persecuted because we are faithful Sabbathkeepers – everything crowds in on top of you – can you handle that? We are tested all the time through the week. When things crowd in upon us and “I can't handle it anymore!” I need comfort; I need tangible help in those moments. Don't we? Don't you know that experience? I'm ready to crack and it gets too much. I need a sense of consolation right there and then. And we are picking up the answers in this meditation for us to have it right there and then when it happens next.

An Object Lesson

The disciples are an evidence of this sort of circumstance. Jesus had sent the disciples across the Sea of Galilee while He went to pray; and they met a circumstance that really crowded in upon them. There they were, out on the Sea of Galilee,

Matthew 14:24 ...the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. 25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

Here they were, struggling with the waves, ready to sink.

Matthew 14:26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. 27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

It is I, be not afraid. The circumstance was one of fear, and the disciples, these men that could control a boat in the troubled sea, were all shattered. And now comes a spirit, and they're scared of him. And who is it? Jesus Himself. Place yourself in that circumstance to take in the object lesson for yourself.

Then, when they recognised it was Jesus,

Matthew 14:28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. 29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

Have we started to walk together with Jesus? We are walking on the troubled sea of the human dilemma of these last days.

Matthew 14:30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. 31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth [his] hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? 32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

Here is a picture of an event that shows you that things weren't going smoothly at all. They were on this troubled Sea of Galilee, and Jesus was there, and they couldn't even recognise it was Him because they were so troubled. And then, when they did recognise it was Him, the sea was still rough. And although Peter was walking on the water, when he looked at the troubled sea and he looked at the events around him, he lost sight of Jesus. The waves came in between Jesus and him, and he began to sink. What a beautiful illustration it is of us. Are you sinking in circumstances of negativity? Or are you walking above them without a trouble? This is the object lesson.

A violent tempest had been stealing upon them, and they were unprepared for it. It was a sudden contrast, for the day had been perfect; {DA 380.3}

This is important material. Everything was perfect. And we want everything to continue perfect, but all of a sudden in comes this storm, and I'm not prepared for it.

...and when the gale struck them, they were afraid. They forgot their disaffection, their unbelief, their impatience. Everyone worked to keep the boat from sinking. It was but a short distance by sea from Bethsaida to the point where they expected to meet Jesus, and in ordinary weather the journey required but a few hours; {Ibid.}

Can you see the picture? Everything should be going smoothly; only a few hours; and now all of a sudden, Oh no.

...but now they were driven farther and farther from the point they sought. Until the fourth watch of the night they toiled at the oars. Then the weary men gave themselves up for lost. In storm and darkness the sea had taught

them their own helplessness, and they longed for the presence of their Master. {Ibid.}

Is that not how we feel when everything goes awry around us? Then I see my helplessness. And yes, I do long for the Master, but I'm struggling.

At the moment when they believe themselves lost, a gleam of light reveals a mysterious figure approaching them upon the water. But they know not that it is Jesus. The One who has come for their help they count as an enemy. {DA 381.2}

Think. How many times in circumstances of negativity the Lord comes in certain ways to us and we don't recognise it.

Terror overpowers them. The hands that have grasped the oars with muscles like iron let go their hold. The boat rocks at the will of the waves; all eyes are riveted on this vision of a man walking upon the white-capped billows of the foaming sea. {Ibid.}

They think it a phantom that omens their destruction, and they cry out for fear. Jesus advances as if He would pass them; but they recognize Him, and cry out, entreating His help. Their beloved Master turns, His voice silences their fear, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid." {DA 381.3}

Here is a storm that describes the human depravity and frailty which we meet in the storms of our life as well.

Times That Will Try Men's Souls

We now come to the experience of the disciples when Jesus had been telling them what was going to happen to Him, just like Jesus tells us today what is going to happen to us. And when what He had foretold finally happened, how did they manage to handle the situation? After the disciples had had all their hopes shattered because Jesus had been crucified, they were speaking together,

Luke 24:36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace [be] unto you. 37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

They had just forsaken Christ, and Jesus had shattered all their expectations – He had let Himself be killed. And now they thought this was all over, and there

comes Jesus and they can't believe it. "It's a ghost." Notice the way Jesus now speaks and how meaningful that is to us. I take this in for myself. When I come to these situations and I reflect back on my past experiences, Jesus speaks to me here: "Why are you troubled? Why do thoughts arise in your heart? Why, O why? I have shown you and you are falling apart, although I have already shown you how to meet it all."

The kind of comfort that is needed Jesus came to give them to help them through their troubled-mindedness. The storms of the last days are upon us, as they were upon my father and his father in the First and the Second World War. My father's father became an outright drunkard; he couldn't handle life anymore. My father came to the knowledge of Seventh-day Adventism in Russian prison-camp; but he still was affected badly from the war issues and from his own heredity from his father. And here I am, a son of my father. Can you imagine the internal things that I suffer under? And we all can tell our stories of that which we suffer under in these last days – horrendous material. The storms of the end are upon us, and Christian society is tossed by every wind of doctrine and dissension. Christianity is meant to be a comfort, but what comfort is there with all the dissension, all the different denominational conflicts, and all the human depravity even in Christianity society? And on top of that, with the storms of strife and warfare and natural disasters, everything is crowding in and it gets thicker and more unpalatable as life goes on and as we head on into the very end.

Times that will try men's souls are just before us, and those who are weak in the faith will not stand the test of those days of peril. {5T 273.1}

Under the Spirit of Prophecy the church was warned that times were coming which would try men's souls. It was right in front of them. And when it happened in the First World War, where did the majority go? Not one in twenty would make it. Not even two percent of the membership of the Seventh-day Adventist church made it through the First World War. They failed; they fled. And that was only the First World War. Then came the Second World War; and where are we now? These times will try our souls, and if we are weak in the faith we will not be able to stand the test of these perils.

My soul is much burdened, for I know what is before us. Every conceivable deception will be brought to bear upon those who have not a daily, living connection with God. {CTr 362.2}

What do we need? *A living connection with God.* All sorts of deceptions will get us if we don't have it.

Satan’s angels are wise to do evil, and they will create that which some will claim to be advanced light and will proclaim it as new and wonderful; {Ibid.}

Haven’t you heard it? Haven’t you experienced it if you stand on the platform of the truth that was given to the early Adventists? Haven’t you heard people who are speaking of some new idea that comes through? and they say, Oh, this is wonderful; but you know full well it’s not on the full platform anymore. That is a deception. And all the consequences of these deceptions I have seen in front of me for years. They all become starry-eyed with the new message that has come to them, and lo, and behold, after some years, it falls apart in their experience. This is a terrible dilemma.

...yet while in some respects the message may be truth, it will be mingled with human inventions and will teach for doctrine the commandments of men. . . . Many apparently good things will need to be carefully considered with much prayer, for they are specious devices of the enemy to lead souls in a path that lies so close to the path of truth that it will be scarcely distinguishable from it. {Ibid.}

So the dilemma, the confusion, in consequence of these false doctrines, we are living in that now. It is dilemma after dilemma. To find your way through this whole spiritual side of things is very hard; the path of truth is *scarcely distinguishable*, because the truth and the error are so closely bound up. There is so much truth in it, but there is error as well, and that makes it scarcely distinguishable. These are the realities.

A storm is coming, relentless in its fury. {8T 315.2}

You can read “relentless in its fury” and say, It’s going to be a furious storm. But no; it is *relentless*. What does that mean? It won’t abate, it won’t stop. It gets worse and worse.

Are we prepared to meet it? {Ibid.}

So whatever the fury is, am I prepared to meet it? Remember, Satan is there trying to rattle us. I see him trying to do that with me so many times, just in the little things. He knows he can’t get me on the doctrines because I know what the doctrine is; but he tries to get me in the little things. I can actually see him, and I’m still trying to get that perfection so that it won’t rattle me. Little things, for example: I am unravelling a hose and it gets caught. I’m busy, trying to move fast and the hose gets caught, and I look back and I think, Ahah, that was one of the devil’s invisible angels that just managed to twist it in a certain way so that it would annoy me. I can see him doing it time and time again. It just doesn’t stop; it gets worse and worse. And the Lord keeps on saying to me,

John, are you learning? Are you learning to walk through this madness with Me? I am permitting Satan to frustrate you so that you can learn. Right in the midst of this He is talking to me. “Oh, here I go again, Lord.” To really deal patiently with everything that is going wrong around me, this is what is involved. It is a storm relentless in its fury, and I must be prepared to meet it, religiously, practically, mentally, in every respect. It’s a fury.

We need not say: The perils of the last days are soon to come upon us. Already they have come. We need now the sword of the Lord to cut to the very soul and marrow of fleshly lusts, appetites, and passions. {8T 315.3}

When things go wrong around me, what goes on inside of me? A passion arises. A strong feeling of irritation and frustration comes up inside of me. And what do I need to learn? I need now the sword of the Lord to cut these things out of my life. It says “we need not say: The perils of the last days are soon to come upon us.” They were already upon them when Sister White wrote these words, in the 1890s. Where are we now? Can we really tune our minds to the reality? If we want to be standing on this platform of truth of original Adventism, what do we expect? Everything will annoy us; everything will be there to turn us into forgetfulness of the peace of the presence of the Lord. And, like the disciples, we will keep on seeing Jesus as our enemy. Have you ever done that?

When you murmur and complain about your circumstances and you cry out, “Why aren’t you helping me, God? What are you doing?” are you regarding Him as your friend or as the one who annoys you? This is the important thing. We are to understand what is going on around us, and we need to open our hearts to the beautiful Saviour who is there to help us, not to annoy us. When Satan is there to annoy me by things going wrong around me, God is there, not as my enemy, but as the one who wants to comfort me. He wants to comfort me in the most extreme and frustrating circumstances.

The God Of All Comfort

As I am sharing this with you, don’t think for one moment that I am standing here aloof from you. I am going through it severely all the time. What do I need? What do you need to be able to remember when these things are happening and life just isn’t pleasant to you anymore? Everything is against me; everything is frustrating me; everything is annoying me, and nothing is joyful to me anymore. What do I need?

Isaiah 43:1 But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called [thee] by thy name; thou [art] mine.

O don't forget this. In the midst of all this, He says to you, I have redeemed you, remember? Remember where you came from? I have saved you out of your misery in the past.

Isaiah 43:2 When thou passest through the waters, I [will be] with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee:

It won't shatter you and destroy you.

Isaiah 43:2 ...when thou walkest through the fire [whether it be physical or metaphorical fire], thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. 3 For I [am] the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt [for] thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

There we have the Old Testament provision; but it is a metaphor for us that, in spite of the corruption of the evil world, which are the problems that we are under, the problem of Satan holding the world captive; in spite of that, this world is our ransom. It is given to us in promise, and God will give it to us when He cleanses it all. Satan says, I am the king over this planet, because Adam sold out; but this land, this Egypt, is ours when it is cleansed. This is what Jesus is telling us. Isn't there a comfort here? He says, *And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*, which is the description of the dilemma in which we are living. I am with you even there, He says. Therein lies our security and our comfort. He says, "I am the One who redeemed you; I am with you in this madness. I was going through it Myself; all the heavens fell out of My mind too. I was suffering Gethsemane and the cross. Why was this happening to Me? Because you are going to go through it and I want you to know that I am going through it with you." This is what it was all about.

Christ should never be out of the mind. The angels said concerning Him, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Jesus, precious Saviour! assurance, helpfulness, security, and peace are all in Him. {TMK 166.3}

I am with you. What is with you? Assurance, helpfulness, security, and peace.

He is the dispeller of all our doubts, the earnest of all our hopes. How precious is the thought that we may indeed become partakers of the divine nature, whereby we may overcome as Christ overcame! Jesus is the fullness of our expectation. He is the melody of our songs, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He is living water to the thirsty soul. He is our refuge in the storm. {Ibid.}

Whatever the storm is. If it is a storm as in a tea-cup, a little storm, He is our refuge there; and if it is a big storm, He is our refuge there as well. There is nothing to get us down.

He is our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption. {*Ibid.*}

And what does it mean to you? I have my doubts, and I have fallen, and I slip here and there, therefore I have the precious comfort that although I have fallen and I have lost my temper and I have fallen apart, He is my righteousness, my sanctification, and my redemption, therefore I don't have to fall part because I have failed; I take hold of Him again. And I walk joyfully with Him now after I have failed. I can pull myself out of it just like that, because Jesus is right there and He is comforting me. He says, I am He that is redeeming you, don't forget.

How many people feel shattered at these times, I've failed again! Let's not get shattered about it, but let us realise that Jesus is there in my failure. I want to be at peace with Jesus even though I have failed. He loves me; He will not condemn me for having failed. We don't want to fail, do we? We don't want to make mistakes. But we do, until we learn how to conquer those mistakes. And the first lesson to learn is, when I have made a mistake, not to make the second mistake and doubt that I'm ever going to get there. I am to conquer because Jesus is there.

Salvation Out Of the Storm

Times that will try men's souls are just before us, and those who are weak in the faith will not stand the test of those days of peril. The great truths of revelation are to be carefully studied, for we shall all want an intelligent knowledge of the word of God. By Bible study and daily communion with Jesus we shall gain clear, well-defined views of individual responsibility and strength to stand in the day of trial and temptation. He whose life is united to Christ by hidden links will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. {5T 273.1}

Salvation out of the storm, whatever storm it is; in all my tribulation He will comfort me. It is my prayer that we will not take this meditation as a passing exercise, but that we will let it sink into our mind and have the eternal strength that we have gained from this message to remember it when next our heavens fall. It's going to fall again, and it's going to get worse. And I hate to tell that to people, but when they tell me, "This is just too much! I can't handle it anymore!" I want to say to them, It's going to get worse. Oops, I better not say it now. But I am saying it to you now, It is going to get worse. But just because it is going to get worse, that does not mean that you are going to fail if you take

hold of the message of this hour. Please, I am in agony for every soul who is crumbling around me, because I have an answer that I am giving, and I am just praying that people will hold on to this beautiful answer. I need it like everyone else. If I didn't have it, I wouldn't be standing here before you now after all that I have been through – failures of my own, frustrations because of my alcoholic great-grandfather and grandfather and my father's struggles hereditarily pulsating through my system. If I wouldn't have what I have shared with you here, I wouldn't be here. I can promise you that. The struggles that take place in my soul, I sometimes think are worse than anyone else's. What is the call that God is giving us for what is ahead of us?

Isaiah 26:20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. 21 For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

All our heavens will fall. What are we told to do? What is the call? Come and shut the doors about you; hide yourself. What does this mean?

What are the chambers in which they are to hide?-- They are the protection of Christ and holy angels. The people of God are not at this time all in one place. They are in different companies, and in all parts of the earth; and they will be tried singly, not in groups. Every one must stand the test for himself. {4BC 1143.6}

We are in a group here; but when I go through my test I will feel alone. I am being tested singly and alone. Oh yes, we know we are praying for each other; but when Satan comes with his contortions and deceptions, he will even work to make us distrust each other. Believe me. Haven't we seen this already? And as we meet our experience, we think "the brethren of the church are not supporting me." We believe that "I am going through something which I should be getting help from the church for;" but I don't get it. And I will be tempted by Satan to doubt what I have embraced in this company. The dilemma is severe, and our hope and comfort is that we *can* get through this because Jesus is our helper, our comfort. And how is He my comfort? Because He came along and experienced every temptation and tribulation that I am meeting. There is nothing that He didn't go through; so I can trust Him and look to Him and find Him my helper in every moment of distress. It is the blessed assimilation with Jesus that we are to carry over into every subject and into every experience that will come our way.

May God bless us to embrace in reality the things we have here contemplated in God's word.

Amen.