

# True and False Consolation.

by Horatius Bonar

---

*True consolation can only be found in the truth, which is the foundation of all comfort and strength.*

**Scripture:** Job 21:34, Psalm 34:18, Psalm 119:50, Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 5:4, John 14:26, Romans 15:13, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Peter 5:7

**Topics:** "True Consolation", "The Nature of Suffering"

---

## Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the necessity of true consolation in times of trouble, as exemplified by Job's suffering. He identifies the conditions under which consolation can be effective, including the state of mind of the sufferer, the integrity of the comforter, and the nature of the consolation offered. Bonar warns against false forms of consolation, such as sentimentalism, appeals to self-love, fatalism, and pleasure-seeking, which ultimately fail to provide real comfort. He asserts that true consolation is rooted in truth, particularly the truth of God's character and His purposes in our suffering. The sermon concludes that only the truth of Scripture and the presence of Christ can provide genuine comfort and healing.

---

## Transcript

"So how can you console me with your nonsense? Nothing is left of your answers but falsehood!" - Job 21:34

Man needs consolation- "man who is born to trouble;" specially a man in Job's condition; overwhelmed with calamity. Not one day's consolation, but many; no, constant; for, what between the little cares and the large sorrows of life, its ripples, and its waves, and its breakers, there is no day exempt from trouble. Life has many burdens, heavy or light. But much depends,

(1.) On the state of mind in which the calamity finds us, or produces in us. Where irritation, murmuring, rebellion, and unbelief prevail, it is idle to speak of consolation. We are not in a fit state to receive it. We repel the hand and the medicine of the physician.

(2.) On the people who administer it. If they are not thoroughly trusted or respected; if they are suspected of selfishness, or insincerity, or unkindness, their words are useless, perhaps worse.

(3.) On the kind of consolation administered. Sometimes it is hastily and thoughtlessly poured in, or rather flung at us, as water is hastily snatched up and flung over a flame to extinguish it. Sometimes the most indiscriminate statements are made, and commonplace maxims uttered, as if anything would suit

anybody, or everything would suit everybody. Much depends on these three things; as much on the last as any.

In regard to this let us mark what is NOT consolation; for man is skillful in administering false consolation.

(1.) MERE SENTIMENTALISM is not consolation. This is often poured into the ears of sorrow; but this is not medicine; this is only the relief found in the intoxicating glass. Fine figures, poetical rhapsodies about the sorrows of life, these are dangerous things, they soothe for an hour, that is all.

(2.) Appeals to NATURAL SELF-LOVE will not do. How commonly do we hear a professed comforter reminding a sufferer of the multitude of his sorrows in order to make him feel as a martyr. All that thus appeals to pride, vanity, self, is worse than vain.

(3.) Taking refuge in FATALISM will not do. "We must submit," is the frequent language of the sufferer. This is not faith, but unbelief. It is man feeling himself overpowered by a hand stronger than his own; not falling back on love and wisdom.

(4.) Ascribing all to OUR OWN DESERT. Though there is truth in this, yet the way in which it is generally done is wrong. "If I had not deserved it, it would not have come." If we begin in this way, where shall we end? Our deservings! What is their measure? Hell! Let us be thankful that it is not according to our deservings that sorrow comes, but on a far higher principle. A sorrow may point to the kind of sin, or the seat of sin, but no sorrow of ours can measure the desert of sin; that is measured by the cross and sufferings of Christ alone.

(5.) Betaking one's self to PLEASURE will not do. This is the most wretched and perilous of opiates- it is "strong drink," "mixed wine," which ruins the soul while it makes us for a few hours forgetful of our sorrow. It is not in pleasure that we are to drown our grief; no, nor yet in business.

There is a vast difference between real consolation and unreal; between the true and the vain. It is of this that Job speaks. He needed consolation; never a man needed it more. He was thirsting for it. His friends came to administer it; but they failed. How and why? Because "in their answers there was falsehood." It was not the truth which they administered. There can be no real consolation, then, which is not founded upon the truth. It is the truth that comforts. There can be no consolation in a falsehood. A lie may heal our hurt slightly, but not effectually. The water of truth from the cup of truth can alone refresh, and heal, and console. That cup of truth is ever full.

(1.) There must be the true interpretation of God's ways. We must see their meaning, and bearing on us; what it is in us that they point to; and what God's purpose is in sending the calamity. We have to deal honestly both with ourselves and with God, asking what is God condemning in me? What sin is he seeking to extirpate? What truth to communicate? What scripture to illustrate?

(2.) There must be the true understanding and discrimination of our circumstances. We must know ourselves; and so apply well each dealing of the divine hand; tracing out the aim of each blow or each burden. The unforgiven sinner must not take hold of words that suit only the forgiven saint. There are words for all. Let us apply wisely, else the consolation will be vain.

(3.) There must be the right knowledge of God's character. No "consolation" or "answer" can be of any use which is not made to spring out of this. God is wise, God is great, God is holy, God is love. We must keep these things in mind in every dispensation.

It is the amount of TRUTH we speak that is the measure of the consolation imparted. It is not strong language nor soothing words that will do. Hence, in the day of trouble we should deal much with SCRIPTURE and its words. Then we are on sure ground. God's words are mighty for consolation; for he is the God of all consolation.

The exhibition of CHRIST AND HIS FULLNESS is true consolation. The presentation of the SPIRIT AS THE COMFORTER- the Spirit and the Spirit's love, holy love- this is true consolation. At all times administer only truth, not error; but specially in the day of sorrow. Falsehood is not consolation; it is not peace; it is not medicine, but poison. Truth, the truth of God, that is consolation and strength.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/horatius-bonar/true-and-false-consolation/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**