



BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

Expository Sermon

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MARCH 2020

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POWER TO PERSIST! STRENGTH TO SOAR!

Scripture Reading - Isaiah 40:25-31. Text Isaiah 40:29-31.

Introduction

This month I want to return to this magnificent passage of scripture in the prophecy of Isaiah. We live in a world where God is largely being dismissed as irrelevant and the Word of God is being displaced by humanistic and secular principles. Moral and ethical values are being set aside and the result is in the words of Dr Robert Bork” that our society is lurching towards Gomorrah.” Corruption is rife everywhere and our society is being encouraged to do its “own thing,” as long as it doesn’t hurt anyone. There is a phrase in the book of Judges that describes much of the attitude so many in our world, “they did that which is right in their own eyes.” **What a dangerous and crass philosophy this is.** It is becoming clear and we are in danger of drowning in the boiling cauldron of moral anarchy and wallowing in the swamplands of its wickedness and it will be the end of our society as we know it. In all the midst of the intensifying darkness, let us never forget God has not nor will He abdicate his throne. A.W. Tozer wrote **“God does His deepest work in our darkest hours.”** He is still alive and will work out His purposes for this world in spite the puny threats of mankind. It is becoming increasingly clear that the hearts of many in our society are failing for fear of the desperate times in which we live. The question is, in the shadow of this darkness, is there a word of hope and encouragement for us? The Word of God has something to say us as we look at the deteriorating moral values and spiritual apathy in our world.

If I were to ask you what kind of week have you had, I would get many different answers. In our spiritual journey we inevitably meet up with all kinds of forces

that seek to make an impact us negatively or positively. I wonder if you have ever been at the point on your spiritual journey where you came to the place of complete exhaustion debilitation or weakness. A place where everything seems to be bathed in darkness, and there is no more strength to push on. You are faint-hearted and weak and you are ready to give up. If you have never been there, you will one day. I wish I could say otherwise. May be you wrestling with some tough issues right now and this week has not been a good one for you. You feel that you are drained of all your strength and you are of a mind to throw in the towel and retreat on God. God in His Word has something to say to us. It is not just a word to the weak and to the faint, but to all of us. It is a word not just designed to give us strength in our moments of weakness and despair, but which will equip us and ready us to face those difficult moments in life when they come to us, and come they will. The architect of this design is God, and this guarantees that it is functional and practical. It is a pledge that it will work. We read that Word in Isaiah 40:29. "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.....those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." This is the promise and assurance of God's word to us. God is not intimidated by that which intimidates or defeats us. The opening words of this chapter, God sets the tone of His message through the words of His prophet. **"Comfort! Comfort! my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for." Isaiah 40:1-2.** The result of this was that the blessing of God had come upon the nation. This was the comfort that God had promised His people. The words "comfort" "comforted" and "comforts" occurs 13 times in chapters 40-66. God was reaching out to His people to comfort them. Although they had sinned, God had forgiven them and given a new beginning. The words of this 40th chapter vibrate with the excitement of who God is, and what He wants to do, and what He can do for His chosen people. The N.E.B. translates the words in 30-31, "Young men may grow weary and faint, even in their prime they may stumble and fall, but those who look to the Lord will win new strength, they will grow wings like eagles, they will run and not be weary, they will march on and never grow faint." Now that is the promise from God Himself. You can be renewed in strength. You can be inwardly fortified by the power of His presence. The words written here are firm, strong and certain. Now why is this so? Why can be so sure of this promise? We can be certain of this promise because,

1. THE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH IS UNFAILING. Isaiah 40:31.

Those who hope! Look! or wait! on the Lord will renew their strength. There is nothing ambiguous about this promise. You cannot misunderstand what God is saying. He is making very clear that He is the unfailing source of spiritual strength. Let me remind you that He is not just any God. The nation of Israel was surrounded by hundreds of gods. You could pick and choose who you wanted to be your God if you so desired. But as you read the 40th chapter of

Isaiah, there is an awesome exposition of the greatness, the glory, the power and the majesty of God. It seems that the Sovereign Lord wants His people to have a correct perception of who He really is. If they recognized and saw God in this way, they would also see Him as the unfailing source of strength. As the source of spiritual strength He would never fail them. How could they be so sure of this? Could they really be certain of this. This assurance emerges from the truths which he underlines in these verses. Note first the truth that,

a. *The Lord is Sovereign. Isaiah 40:9.*

The words of the prophet make this very clear in verse 9. "...say to the towns of Judah 'Here is your God!' See the **Sovereign Lord** has come with power and His arm rules for Him." Here is your God -He has sovereign authority over all things. He is your Sovereign. He comes with power and His arm rules for Him. He has absolute authority and power at His disposal. Here is your God! He is the unfailing source of strength because He is Sovereign. Furthermore this certainty is rooted in the truth that the

b. *The Lord is Shepherd. Isaiah 40:11.*

"He tends His flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those that have young." The prophet moves description from the of God in His awesome power and majestic holiness to present a God who at the same time, has intimate concern and tender compassion for His people. Here is your God! cries the prophet. He is glorious in His Sovereignty, but here is your God with the shepherd heart. He is in touch with your needs, your pain, your confusion and your weariness and your weakness. He cares for His people like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in His arms. He carries them close to His heart, He gently leads those who have young. The prophet powerfully reveals the intense caring and compassion that God has for people. He is a God whose compassion is rooted in His Sovereignty, and in His power. The Lord is Sovereign, the Lord is a shepherd but

c. *The Lord is Supreme. Isaiah 40:12-14, 22-25.* Note these powerful words of the Lord, "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal? says the Holy One." This is a good question. It deals with a fundamental issue. Who can compare with God? and to make this point, the prophet asks a series of penetrating questions.

i. In v. 12. "Who has measured the oceans in the hollow of His hands?" The answer "**God has!**"

ii. Again in verse 12 "...or who has with the breadth of His Hand set limits in the heavens?" The answer is clear "**God will!**"

iii. v. 12. "Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket?" The answer is certain, "**God has!**"

iv. "Who can take the mountains of the earth and weigh them in His scales. He weighs the Islands as though they were fine dust." The answer is filled with conviction, "**God can!**" In verse 15 the comparison with the Sovereign Lord continues, surely the nations are like a drop in the bucket, they are regarded as

dust in the scales.” The Word in verse 22 says that, He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth. And its people are like grasshoppers. V.25. To who will you compare me? Or who is my equal? What image or idol will you compare your God to? An idol is a created god. It is an image conceived of and created in the mind of man. It is the craftsman who moulds and fashions the idol into a visible god. It is the goldsmith who overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains for it.” We may wonder about a poor man who cannot afford this type of God? The prophet tells us in verse 20 that “he selects wood that will not rot. He looks for a skilled craftsman to set up an idol that will not topple.” And the Lord asks, “how can you compare or equate me with gods like these? It was Jeremiah who scornfully writes “Like a scarecrow in a melon patch their idols cannot speak, they must be carried where they cannot walk.” (Jeremiah 10:5.) How can you receive strength for your weakness and power for the journey from gods like these. He relies on the creators mind for his design. He depends on man’s skill for his shape and he leans on the worshipper’s strength for his movement from place to place. How can you receive power for living from these kind of God’s. These are extremely helpless gods. Is it surprising that the word asks “To whom will you compare the Sovereign Lord? V.22. “He sits enthroned as king above the circle of the earth.” V.26. Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens; who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name, because of His great power not one of them is missing. Do you not know have you not heard? THE LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.” Why go to such lengths to present God in this way. It is clear that foundations are being laid for faith and commitment to God as the one who sustains, renews and strengthens his children. This everlasting God - this undisputed creator of the universe - this unmatched sovereign of all the peoples of the earth will not grow weary or tired. Because of who He is “He gives strength to His children and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.” He is the tireless God, the God who never grows or weary. He is the unfailing source of spiritual strength. Secondly note the,

2. THE SCOPE OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH IS UNLIMITED. Isaiah 40:31. “They

that wait on the Lord will renew their strength.” Other various translation have it. They will “win new strength.” or “change their strength.” “They shall pass to power.” These renderings give insight to what is being said here. “They shall pass to power – from fatigue to fitness – from fainting to fresh vigor and vitality. They will become flying, running and walking Christians as you will read in verse 31. The strength that is promised here moves in three dimensions. Vivid metaphorical language is used to describe this vital unlimited power and unsurpassed strength. And it happens because of who God is, we are promised,

a. Strength to fly. Isaiah 40:31. The scriptures are clear on it. “They will soar on wings like eagles...” God pledges His power to enable us to overcome the

spiritual laws of gravity that drag our spirits down. He gives us the ability to surmount those obstacles that hinder progress on our spiritual journey. Let us never forget that the mountains never present a problem to the eagle. They simply use their strength of their wings to soar over them. And God pledges to impart energy to rise above the clouds of discouragement and human weakness into the unclouded day of spiritual victory and freedom. The literal meaning of mounting up or soaring on wings is “reaching for the sun.” God gives strength “to reach for the sun.” He gives **flying strength. But He also gives**

b. Strength to run. Isaiah 40:31. “...they will run and not grow weary...” The figure of speech turns from a soaring eagle to the running athlete. Running demands a unique staying power, toughness and endurance. Reaching for the sun is a desirable exercise, BUT it demands staying power and strong determination. The Christian journey is not just a short sprint but a life-long marathon. The writer to the Hebrews makes this clear in the 12th chapter and verse 1. ‘.....let us throw of everything that hinders and the sin that so easily tangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” Note the important phrase, “...let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” The Christian journey is not a short walk around the garden. It demands endurance and determination.

“An explorer named Fridtjof Nansen was lost with one companion in the arctic wastes. By miscalculation they ran out of supplies. They ate their dogs, the dog’s harnesses, the whale oil for their lamps. Nansen’s companion gave up and lay down to die. But Nansen did not give up. He told himself, “I can take one step more.” As he plodded heavily through the bitter cold, step after step, suddenly across an ice hill he stumbled upon an American expedition that had been sent out to find him. The fruit of his determination was rescue. William Carey said of his biographer, “If he gives me credit for being a plodder, he , describe me justly. Anything beyond that will be too much. I can plod. I can persevere in any definite pursuit. To this I owe everything.” The first step to running on the Christian journey is to begin and then to continue. Charles Spurgeon said that “by perseverance the snail reached Noah’s ark. The Apostle Paul writing to the church at Galatia 6:9 exhorts the Christians “Let us not be weary in doing good for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if WE DO NOT GIVE UP.” “Wait on the Lord,” said the Prophet Isaiah for he gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. But the Prophet also tells us, the God gives,

c. Strength to walk. Isaiah 40:31. They will walk and not be faint.”. The

metaphor changes from a flying eagle, a running athlete to a walking pilgrim. What an assuring message there is here! The prophet is telling us that we can have freedom to fly, to surmount the encumbering seeming impossible obstacles in life. Furthermore we need a strong determination to run and complete the Christian race, and now he talks about walking and not fainting. This speaks to

us of a steady consistent progress, as we move forward in Christ's way of life. The New Testament has a lot to say about the nature of the Christian walk. We are to walk "in love." "walk in truth." "To walk in wisdom," to "walk in newness of life." "to walk after the Spirit." To "walk in wisdom." "to walk in the light." And we are to "walk as Jesus walked." This is the highway of the Christians journey. These may seem to be a formidable array of Christian qualities that make up our journey, but they are an integral part of our walk with God. We may think that they are impossible levels of living and shrink from them. Someone once said that the "impossible is what nobody can do until someone does." But listen once again to the words of the Lord. His message is one of assurance and the promise of hope. Here is the secret of a victorious walk of fulfillment. "...those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength they will walk and be faint." There, said the Prophet is the unfailing source of spiritual power and **the unlimited scope spiritual of strength, and finally note that,**

3. THE SECRET OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH IS UNVEILED. Isaiah 40:31.

What is the secret of spiritual strength? The Prophet tells us that those "who hope in the Lord will renew their strength." There is nothing hidden or unclear in these words. What filters through this message is,

a. The absolute certainty in the promise of spiritual strength. Isaiah 31:30-31.

"Those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength." The word "WILL" dispels any doubt that God will give strength for the weak. Note the certainties which follow this promise.

- i. They WILL renew their strength.
- ii. They WILL soar on wings like eagles.
- iii. They WILL run and not grow weary.
- iv. They WILL walk and not be faint.

The reason that the prophet is so sure of this is because it is the LORD who renews their strength. What are the conditions to renewing spiritual strength. Note further

b. The attitude expected to receiving spiritual strength. Isaiah 40:31. The K.J.V. says they that "wait on the Lord." or some rendered it those who hope or look to the Lord. It speaks of the **assurance of faith.** This is the attitude required to receiving that which only comes from God. It seems so *simple. Hoping in God or waiting on God. It is a word that is used many times over in the book of the Psalms. What does this mean? It means first,*

i. A Humble Dependence on God. Isaiah 40:31. Hope in the Lord. This hope is fixed on God. It is focused on the Sovereign Lord. Not on human power, human ingenuity, human strength or resources. The spiritual strength of the Christian does not lie here. It is in God and God alone that it is found. It is the honest recognition that we cannot go it alone on the Christian journey. It means that we have come to the place where we humbly rely on the unfailing source of strength. It is the humble sensitive recognition of our complete need of Him. And we do need Him. Jesus made this clear when He said "without Me you can

nothing. That is why we wait or hope in the Lord. This phrase also has within it the meaning of,

ii. An Expectant Faith in God. Isaiah 40:31. "Hope in the Lord...." The word hope has within it the twin ideas of expectancy and faith. This is what hoping or waiting on God means. When we wait on Him we expect Him to act on our behalf. We anticipate that His resources will be supplied for our journey with Him, and this expectation is the foundation of the confidence that He will not fail us. Hope or wait on the Lord is the word of assurance and certainty. It means to anticipate with confident expectation and the idea of trust is the heartbeat of it. Do you remember the story of the woman in Matthew's Gospel 9:20-22. A woman who had suffered a hemorrhage for 12 years, wanted to be healed. And so when Jesus came her way she pushed her way through the crowd to get to Him. She knew if she could but touch the hem of His garment she would be made whole. You know the story. She touched the hem of His garment and her faith was rewarded. She possessed and exercised a quality of living expectant faith and was healed. They that wait on the Lord will renew their strength. An expectant faith. Finally there must be,

c. An unhurried expectation for spiritual strength. Isaiah 40:31. It speaks of a patient hope. This is the attitude that is never in a hurry with God. It is the attitude where there is so much trust in God, His goodness integrity and faithfulness, there no need for haste. Yet we as human beings often wish that God wouldn't take so long to answer our longings, desires and requests. Ruth Calkin wrote a poem that describes how so often we feel as we wait on God. Lord, I know there are countless times when I must patiently wait for you. Waiting develops endurance. It strengthens and deepens my confidence in you. I know You are a sovereign God- not an errand boy, Responding to the snap of my finger. I know your timing is neatly wrapped in your incomparable wisdom. – But Lord – you have appointed prayer, to obtain answers! Even David the Psalmist cried with confident boldness: "It is time, O Lord, for you to act." God on this silent sunless morning, when I am hedged in on every side. I too cry boldly. "You are my Father, and I am, Your child. So Lord, could you hurry a little?" But scriptures say the secret of strength and power in our lives is to wait for Him and on Him to fulfill His purposes in your life.

Conclusion

God is the unfailing source of power and strength for life no matter what it may throw at us. This is a simple and powerful promise. The Sovereign Lord – The God of all might and authority is "able to do exceedingly above all that we ask or think." It is high time for the church across our world to recognize this. The crucial question is "Do we recognize this? Is it possible that the achievements of science and technology have minimized our perception and vision of God? Have they diminished Him in our eyes? Even in this day I venture to say that God would ask "who can compare with me? Has technology done what I have done? Has science been able to strengthen you in the hours of pressure and pain?"

Does technology impart power to soar as eagles over the mountains of life's unexplainable and tragic mysteries? It is not that science or technology are to be dismissed. But we are to view them with a correct perspective. As amazing as they are, they are not God, and do not have Divine attributes and as a result have distinct limitations. Our society, however appears to have given to them God-like attributes and thus tend to worship them. What limited and even powerless god's these are! The word from the scriptures is clear, comforting and sufficient that "those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength." To keep our faith rooted in In an Almighty God is the secret of constant power and abounding strength.

