

This Week in the Word

Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Ps 119:89.

SEVENTH DAY  BAPTIST



Lesson 3 September 17th, 2016

Foundations of the Earth

Study Scripture – Isaiah 40:21-31

Background Scripture – Isaiah 40

Key Verse:

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints or is weary, His understanding is unsearchable.

Isaiah 40:28

INTRODUCTION

Our Study Scripture continues to take us into a deeper though incomplete study of God though we recognize that there are three specific “Persons” in the Godhead, though we should point out at this time that the word “Persons” is not quite the same in meaning as the meaning given to human individuals for we are referring to Beings who are “spirit”, that is, non-material, and who has created us and with whom we share only few similarities). We tend to focus and give most attention in biblical studies to God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and so we have only a hazy idea who God the Father is, what He does and for what He is responsible.

We speak of God with awe and respect for we are limited creatures with very limited understanding and what is worse we have a spirit and mind tainted by sin. We therefore look at this matter of foundations and the God who established the foundations for their glory and who have invited us to share in that glory

To bring proper and necessary balance to the understanding of who God is, and why Jesus our Saviour tells us that we should pray and direct our prayers and communion to the Father, we point out therefore that God the Father is the Father of Messiah, and that this relationship of Father and Son is not similar to a human father and a human son. See for a definition of this relationship Psalm 2:7, John 1:14, John1:18, John 3:16-18 and 1 John 4:9. The Father has acknowledged this relationship in Matthew 3:17 among other places. The Lord Jesus Christ acknowledged this relationship in Matthew 11:27, John8:54, and 14:12-13. Peter acknowledged this in his famous confession in Matthew 16:16. The demons acknowledged that Jesus was the Son of God in Matthew 8:28-29.

The Father was spoken of as the Father of Creation in 1 Corinthians 8:6 and in James 1:17 as the Father of Lights (a clear reference to Creation), and the One who sent down good gift.

But in addition God the Father is the Father of Angels and so they are called the “sons of God”. Genesis 6:1-4, Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7 when taken together teach that angels are sons of God.

With respect to the nation Israel God the Father is called the Father of Israel in many places such as Exodus 4:22, Deuteronomy 32:6, Isaiah 64:8, Jeremiah 3:4, Hosea 11:1, and Malachi 1:6.

For believers God is called the Father of all believers. See John 1:12, Matthew 5:45; 6:6-15, Romans 8:14-16, 1 John 3:1. The heavenly Father wants you to be with Him throughout all eternity so you will see what glory really is.

God the Father has His work which is in addition to the work ascribed to Jesus the Son and the work of the Holy Spirit and which distinguishes them from Him and His work. John 5:17-26 speaks of this work. Note however that God, the Godhead is One and the differences in what the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit do does not make them separate or means that they have a different nature, different characteristics, or attributes. They really are One, infinite, holy, righteous, flawless, glorious, majestic and eternal. They work together perfectly and seamlessly in the work of Creation, Providence, Redemption, the sanctification of men children and women and in finally cleansing the world and making death, evil, and Satan and his hordes of none effect. One writer lists for us however some of the works of the Father so that we better understand with whom we are dealing and the inexpressibly glory that awaits His children:

First, God the Father generates the Son for all eternity (John 5:17-26)

Secondly, it is God the Father who is the author of the decree that brings to pass all that He wills (Psalm 2:7-9).

Thirdly, the work of election is said to be the work of God the Father (Ephesians 1:3-6).

Fourthly, it is God the Father who sent the Son to do the work of redemption (John 5:36). And Fifth, it is God the Father who disciplines His children. Because He is the Father of believers, He has the right to discipline believers. The work of divine discipline is a work of God the Father (Hebrews 12:9).

God the Father is also called the Father of all men, Acts 17:29, Ephesians 3:14-15, Hebrews 12:9 and so we know God the Father is responsible for the creation of all men and therefore there is a universality of the Fatherhood of God. We as His children have the responsibility to commit ourselves to obey Him and to work to witness and bring His erring creatures back to Him.

As we read of the warnings and words of comfort from the prophet Isaiah let us therefore remember where they come from.

The words come from God who alone is God and who is in inseparable relationship with the Son and the Holy Spirit. They are omnipotent, all powerful. There is no limit to what they can do.

They are omniscient, knowing everything past, present, and future and nothing catches God by surprise. Listen carefully to the warning of one writer:



"His knowledge of everything does not equal His responsibility for everything. For example, because God knows someone is engaging in harmful activity does not make Him responsible for what happens to that person.

Neither is God subject to a time process. He exists outside of time and therefore the past and future are eternally present to Him. The only difference between the past and future to God is that the future hasn't happened to us yet".

In addition, God is omnipresent. He is in all places at all times but He has told us /he resides in a specific location (1 Kings 8:30).

God's nature is eternal. He is without beginning and without end. He lives in an "eternal now".

He is immutable, which means unchanging. The entire universe is changing but the God the Scriptures speak of is exactly the same now as He was then.

THE PROPHET ISAIAH

The prophet Isaiah is regarded as the greatest of Old Testament prophets. His book contains the fullest revelation of Christ in the Old Testament. The revelation of Christ the Messiah is of course the greatest and only source of comfort.

Relatively very little is revealed about Isaiah's personal life but we know he lived and ministered about seven hundred and forty years before Christ, during the reign of the four kings of Judah, namely, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He was the contemporary of the prophets Amos, Hosea, and Micah and so their ministries, though not coordinated was a powerful testimony for Israel.

Though Judah, the southern kingdom saw what happened to the northern kingdom they ignored the warnings of the prophets and toward the end of Isaiah's ministry immersed themselves in idolatry and so eventually suffered judgment from God and was carried away captive, but this time not into Assyria but into Babylon.

The book of Isaiah written by a prophet that lived in a time of great national stress, clearly reveals the problems created when man displays his true nature. Both kingdoms of Israel had deliberately broken the commandments of God, forsaken His ways, and with unbelievable stupidity and obstinacy wandered off into ignorance, stubbornly refusing to turn back to God.

The behaviour of Israel is clearly beyond Isaiah's understanding and he expressed his frustration in the very first chapter by saying in astonishment: "**The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider**".

It was astonishing to Isaiah that not even the animals behaved as stupidly and as stubbornly as the people of God. This was unbelievable. Even the animals knew on which side their bread was



buttered and where they could get help, blessing, and protection. But Israel was being amazingly stupid.

The book is really a remarkable prophecy with chapters 1 through 25 examining events which occurred in the era of the ascendancy of the Assyrian empire. That nation attacked and oppressed both the northern and the southern kingdoms of Israel and as prophesied by Isaiah, invaded and took the northern kingdom into captivity.

Isaiah then wrote a short historical interlude (chapters 35 to 40) during which Isaiah noted several events. He describes how God mightily delivered Judah from the Assyrian Emperor's invasion, then the terminal sickness of king Hezekiah and his prayer pleading to God to extend his life, a request which God granted, and then Hezekiah's boastful and foolish display of the nation's treasures to the ambassadors of the up and coming Babylonian nation.

The last section of the book which runs from chapters 40 through 66 addressed the nation of Judah depicting the time after they were taken into exile in Babylon, the nation that had now risen to become the ruling power in the Near East.

Isaiah predicted that these awful events would happen but in this section of the book he gave the people hope and a great deal of comfort. It was clear to him that they would be captives, strangers in a strange land, feeling the heavy hand of God, and coming to believe that they and their nation had no hope.

These were turbulent times for the people of Judah and Israel, and as expected the people became weary. There was a need for the voice of comfort, strength for the weary, and a reminder that there would be a Shepherd for those turbulent times.

Why was this all necessary? Why was it necessary for the captivity and extreme suffering of the people of God? Was the idolatry of the rulers and the people deserving of the calamity that had previously befallen the northern kingdom? Israel sinned and now Judah followed fast on their heels.

The Babylonians remembered the treasures of Judah and returned for them as Nebuchadnezzar sacked the Temple and took many of the rulers and leading people of Judah back to Babylon. Then he had to come back again and there was a second deportation in 597 B.C. Finally, in 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar attacked and levelled the city, the Temple went up in flames, and the remainder of the important people, as well as the trades people and artisans were deported and resettled in Babylon beside the river Chebar. The place was close to the city of Babylon and there the Babylonians could keep an eye on them.

The princes of Judah, the leaders, the rulers, the professionals, and the priests and intellectuals were now servants, and all the people had to perform manual labor and generally menial tasks; with very few exceptions, for example Daniel and his colleagues.



The location of Babylon and its structure and design would have had a tremendous effect on the Jewish exiles that saw what their slide into idolatry had produced. Now they would be thrust into real pure-bred paganism and experience what this kind of oppression involved. No wonder Isaiah's chapter 40 written nearly 150 years before their exile with its word of comfort would be most welcome news.

One writer tells us how an ancient historian described the city of Babylon. We can just imagine the impact of this on the godly remnant as well as the disobedient. We are told: "**Herodotus tells us what Babylon was like. It was approximately the size of San Francisco, surrounded by a great wall 85 feet high and 65 feet wide, and outside of the wall was a moat. There was a smaller wall on the inside, a second line of defense. Around the wall there was about a hundred gates, eight of them named for the Babylonian gods. If you were a Jew approaching from the north, you would go through the great Ishtar gate, dedicated to the god Ishtar. If you came from the east you would come in through the gate of Marduk, another god they worshiped. The southern gate was dedicated to Shamash, the sun god. The eastern gate was named after Adad.**

Entering Babylon through any of these gates, you would be struck by the large number of temples dedicated to pagan gods. There were 53 temples in Babylon. They were dedicated to Ninurta, Ishtar, Bel, Marduk, Adad, and all the other gods of the Babylonians.

The great ziggurat, which was probably located on the foundation of the tower of Babel, was in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar's palace complex was located there. On every brick of his palace he had his name inscribed, so with that people would read the name Nebuchadnezzar thousands of time.

On the main route from the Ishtar gate to the Temple of Marduk there were great limestone slabs with beveled edges, and every beveled edge read, "To the honor of Marduk".

Everywhere you looked you would see temples dedicated to idols. There was prosperity, security, ease, and peace in Babylon.

And while the horrified Jews in the calamity of exile looked at all of this and remembered that they were here because of their stubborn and stupid disobedience and idolatry they would remember what they had left. The writer continues to tell us what the exiles remembered: "**Off to the west, Jerusalem lay in ruins. The Temple was a smoking, blackened hulk, the King was in chains, life was in ruins.**

The Judeans would ask.

"Where is the God of Israel? Where are the promises made to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob? Where is the land that God promised us? Where is the Seed? We were told that we would be a blessing to the nations. Where is the God of Israel?"

But unfortunately all around them they saw people living and honoring the gods of Babylon and other nations. All they could see as far as their eyes would reach were the impressive temples built to honor the Babylonian pantheon of gods.

They would remember the six hundred miles forced march across the desert to get to Babylon. They would have the time to remember the rapes that had occurred in the city of Jerusalem.



They would have remembered the cannibalism, the bestiality. They would remember the taunting of the Babylonian soldiers that had captured them and had forced them to march away from their homeland. And now they could watch the prosperity, security, comfort, and complete control that the Babylonians had. They were a subject people and very unhappy. They even refused to sing the songs of Zion for the Babylonians.

Comfort was something that they really needed to have.

Isaiah 40 was written many years before the actual exile. But before that God prepared Isaiah for the shocking truth. In the year that King Uzziah died and the throne was vacant, Isaiah was given a vision where he saw the God that had all power and who was now full of wrath sitting on the throne that was never vacant.

He was given his commission from this immense God who was infinite and mighty in strength and he came to realize that this God had to destroy the rebellious creatures that were His people. Isaiah knew that man was helpless. He must have shuddered at the fate of his people. But then God inspired him and gave him the powerful words of comfort that he had to address to his people.

As we look at this text we should consider our God. The times in which we live are not much different from the times in which the exiles lived. We see all around us increasing violence and increasing fear. There is immorality, materialism, injustice, poverty, incest, spouse abuse, child sexual abuse, blasphemy against God, corruption in the house of God, and a denial or neglect by leaders in many countries of their Christian heritage. One writer points out that today **"We face the powerful "religions" of technology, sex, commercial enterprise, and higher education. And elaborate temples built to all these religions fill our sky line as well."**

Our times are as violent and frightening to many believing people living today as Babylon appeared to those exiles.

So we too face different kinds of oppression. We should ask ourselves whether we feel ourselves closed in, living in captivity, living in exile. Are we weary and lacking in strength? Have the pressures and pace of life made us tired and sapped our strength?

If you are, the words of Isaiah are for you, for if you are weary and tired and in exile, you are now a candidate for God's strength. So read Isaiah 40 very carefully.

THE FOCUS OF THE TEXT

Isaiah had revealed that he had been commissioned by God to address the sins of the people but now he added that he has been called also to preach to the people about the comfort of the approaching deliverance. God, the incomparable Ruler of the world and the exalted Creator called him to proclaim this comfort which was in fact a prophetic promise which would certainly be fulfilled.



God had never completely forgotten or rejected His people and so Isaiah would fulfill this part of his commission.

Though the people of Israel are in servitude to the people of Babylon, four words of “comfort” is being offered to a people that considered themselves to be dead.

We too use this word “comfort” or be comforted” in conjunction with other words when we are confronted with someone who has lost a loved one. The idea behind this word is used many times in the book of Isaiah so that Judah cannot misunderstand God. They might have been dead but now they would be alive again.

Note that though Israel was disobedient God used the language of the Covenant to remind the people that He continued to be faithful according to His promise in Exodus 6: 7 and Leviticus 26: 12. So God uses the word “**my people**” and “**your God**”.

God affirmed that exile did not mean the end of the nation and people, but instead they should look at it as marking a new beginning.

The divine command was issued and so Isaiah uses the emphatic phrase “**Saith your God**”. God did not cease to be their God though they were in the midst of suffering His wrath.

Note that this word of encouragement from God is directed to all the people of God, for the Spirit of God is a Comforter, a daily helper, to bring joy to suffering Christians especially. God also says to us with a doubled charge “*Comfort ye, comfort ye*” so that we will be certain of His intentions.

We must never forget that God always has His people in the world and it is His will that even though times are often very difficult for them, He wants them to be a comforted people. He provides ministers and brethren to provide for the comfort of His people and this task should never be neglected.

The voice is commissioned to first speak to “Jerusalem” which means the same as “my people”, for the city of Jerusalem is a metaphor for the people of God. We see this kind of language used when in Revelation 21 the New Jerusalem is pictured as a city and also as a bride with the latter expression being used as a metaphor for the people of God.

The proclamation means literally to “*Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem*”. This is the language of love and God is inviting His people to respond to His love. God speaks a gentle word of encouragement and does not here display His wrath. God is being tender.

The command is given to cry to her, to tell her with vigor that her time of affliction has been fully met and has come to an end, though they are still in a foreign land and are living in bondage and some insecurity.



It is the sins of Judah and Israel that has led them to this exile but Isaiah now says that those sins have been forgiven or atoned for. The justice of God has been satisfied and Jerusalem has fully suffered for her sins, suffering no more than her sins deserved.

God now had compassion on her and there was no need for further punishment, for God turned from wrath to love.

Her hard service or warfare was over and the time would come when the end of the exile would appear, because Israel was forgiven of her sins. The people would eventually return to their land. But they had no need to fear being in Babylon for their God was still with them.

It would appear that the people learned their lesson after having slept with, walked near, worked with, ate before, and never being able to escape the sight of the offensive pagan idols.

One writer explains that phrase “*double for all her sins*” as follows:

“That last phrase, “double for all her sins” does not need that God has punished the nation twice what their sins required. This is a reference to an Eastern custom. If a man owed a debt he could not pay, his creditor would write the amount of the debt on a paper and nail it to the front door of the man's house so that everyone passing would see that here was a man who had not paid his debts. But if someone paid the debt for him, then the creditor would double the paper over and nail it to the door as a testimony that the debt had been fully paid. This beautiful picture therefore is the announcement to Israel as a nation that in the death and resurrection of her Messiah her debt was fully paid”

We should remember when we feel under the burden of guilt today, and we note that many believers have a guilty conscience because of broken relationships, words of condemnation and hostility spoken, that forgiveness of all sins have been made and the bondage of sin has been lifted on the basis of the death of Christ.

If you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you should understand that He has died for you and for all of us and has set us free. So when you truly repent of your sins, accept and understand that you have been forgiven.

For those who do not know Christ, when you accept His work on your behalf, you too will experience His forgiveness and cleansing and the freedom that He will bring to you from guilt and condemnation.

One writer points out to us that the only sin God ever holds against any of us is the sin of unbelief, the sin of rejecting the remedy, and the salvation that Jesus Christ offers.

We should note that Israel had not paid the price for their sins but it was the suffering and death of the coming Son of God, their Messiah, that had atoned for her sins. It was the work of Messiah that lifted the heavy bondage and the servitude demanded by sin and Satan.



The source of comfort in the difficult circumstances was now introduced. All three Synoptic Gospel writers, mainly, Matthew, Mark, and Luke use these words to refer to John the Baptist. It was he who was the forerunner, the one who introduced the Messiah.

It was the ancient custom that when an Oriental monarch traveled he would send ahead an army of workmen to level the rough places, fill the valleys and cut through mountains so that his chariots would travel in comfort.

The imagery is the creation of a processional way to greet the arrival of a dignitary such as the King and so the idea is to prepare for the Lord's visit to Jerusalem for He is the King.

He is coming to Israel and He Himself will clear all hindrances out of His way. They were to make way from Messiah and let Him into their lives, making room in their lives for Him, so that nothing hinders His way when He comes.

The prophet pointed out that evil and the oppressors are as nothing and cannot stand before the breath of God for His breath would blow them away effortlessly. God would manifest His glory in Babylon in the midst of the terrible circumstances of the exile. Jehovah spoke this with His own mouth and this was a promise that would be fulfilled. The word of God was sure and even though men were transitory creatures they should understand and be comforted by the fact that the word of God stood for ever. Babylon would not rule the world forever. They would not live forever for they were finite creatures, but the word of God would exist forever and overcome all evil and bring deliverance to the people of God.

It is of much value to ask ourselves where all the great men of history have gone. Isaiah tells us that God has blown on them and they are gone. God's wisdom and power are seen in His acts of creation and His sovereignty and therefore God asks two questions which have no answer. The prophet makes plain that the pagan religions depend on human effort, ingenuity, and finances, and the rulers and judges of the earth are nothing.

THE TEXT

Verses 18-22.

The prophet declares:

"To whom then will you liken God?

Or what likeness will you compare to Him?

The workman molds an image.

The goldsmith overspreads it with gold,

And the silversmith casts silver chains.

Whoever is too impoverished for such a contribution

Chooses a tree that will not rot

He seeks for himself a skilled workman

To prepare a carved image that will not totter.



*Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundation of the earth?
It is He who sits above the circle of the earth".*

God's children have gone astray. They have attempted to represent God by creatures, and so have changed His truth into a lie and His glory into shame, for they have made images and then said that they resembled God, paying their homage to them accordingly. They have put creatures in the place of God, feared them more than God, as if these creations of wood and stone were a match for the Everlasting God, the Lord of hosts. They loved them more than God, and behaved as if the "nothing" things they had created were to be fit rivals to Him. The challenge to the people is stated in verse 18 and repeated in verse 25, *To whom will you liken God?*

Each statement in the verses is so constructed to allow a credible response from the people for Isaiah repeats, ***to whom will you liken me?***

To God, to Israel, and to all others, man's folly and absurdity is demonstrated. Man has failed God and their sins manifest themselves under a lack of knowledge and acceptance of the wisdom of God though they knew it was God who established the foundations of the earth and all that was therein, and that He was the One who maintained the operation of the earth.

They went and made a visible image which was a corruption of human nature expecting that deity would be present in that image..

This was an intolerable injury to the honour of the divine nature. They also made the creature equal with God in their affections.

This means proud people have control and thus they make themselves equal with God; covetous people make their money equal with God, which is the highest affront imaginable to Him who is God over all.

The prophet describes God as infinitely great and worthy of the highest veneration, so that between Him and the idols there cannot be any comparison. Furthermore, the prophet appeals to Israel to understand from all that has been handed down to them, and from all that was taught and written, that God is a great God, and a great King above all kings and all gods.

He continues to say that beyond any doubt that it is a universally accepted truth that there is an infinite Being who is the fountain of all being. This was and is understood not only since the beginning of the world, but from and by the origin of the universe. This brings up the issue that there are larger secrets in the universe that man does not know and that only God knows. This knowledge has roots in the creation and thus in the foundation of the earth. The prophet indicates that this is undeniable truth even if one refuses to believe in the Almighty God. The prophet refers to the blindness of man and the fact that they are wilfully ignorant.



Verse 22. As he continues with his arguments to show God exists and is above all, the prophet clearly states that heaven and earth are under the careful management of God Almighty. God sits above the heavens and the earth and establishes laws for it, and directs all its motions for His own glory. It speaks of God stretching out the heavens, and His power and providence keeps them in order and stretched out. They will remain so till the day comes when they shall be rolled together like a scroll.

The Scriptures deals with some scientific facts that even now some scientists and astronomers are still examining and researching. The Bible indicated the earth is round, not flat. There are indications or references to an expanding universe which most scientist agree is occurring. But yet some still doubt God!

Verses 23 -24. The children of men, even the greatest and mightiest, are nothing before God. The numerous inhabitants of the earth are as nothing. Though vast numbers may cause another being to take pause, or deter any action they might envisage, to God, all are even less than grasshoppers in His sight. We the created world are little and easily crushed. Our value to God is in what He assigns to us, not in what we make of ourselves. In many places in Scriptures human beings are compared to God. Men are contrasted to grass, to grasshoppers, and to flowers which live and flourish for a short while and then fade and die.

There are princes and judges who have had great authority, and abused it, supporting oppression and injustice, made nothing of those about them. But when the Almighty God was ready He took them to task, brings them down to nothing, humbles them, tames them, and makes them as vanity, little regarded, neither feared nor loved. He makes them utterly unable to stand before His judgments which prevent their settlement in their authority, restricting their growth and prosperity, or blasting them from their God appointed positions. God's wrath is just and sure, even if it starts taking shape in the gentlest of manner. When God judges, He will overcome. Those that will not bow before Him, cannot stand before Him.

Verse 25. God asks a question in this verse which shows that God is beyond comparison. All the things in the world that men worship such as sexual indulgence, power and position, food and drink, men and women, are all foolishness compared to the majesty of the greatness and glory of God.

Verse 26. God reinforces the statement of His incomparable greatness by showing the greatness of the Creator. He directs us to not pay attention to what is happening around us and the powerful forces that control, persecute, and make us weary. He directs us instead to look at the *hosts of heaven* that He has created and that He leads as the lamb is led by the Shepherd, so that none is lost.

The *hosts of heavens* are not in control of themselves but are led by their Creator. He is as a general that arranges them as his army. He knows them all and they serve Him. His might is great and His power is great and He is able to sustain them.



Note that God notices everything whether or not you feel that He does not notice you or is concerned about your affairs.

We know any way that human beings are frail, weak, and fragile and we find it hard to wait on the Lord. But we must expect that God will work and will move in His time. God has all wisdom and all power and He's never going to lose us or to let anything ever get out of His control.

He never gets tired and never loses interest in anything especially His people. He knows perfectly what we need and He knows our circumstances. Our guilt and frustrations and oppressions do not stop Him from doing what He intends to do with us, for He is a powerful, Shepherd Messiah. He encircles us with His strong arms of love at all times. The prophet explains what this God does for His people.

Verse 27. The prophet looks down the corridors of time and even before the event occurs he sees Israel's unbelief. He reproves the exiles who are then captives in Babylon for their unbelief in God and calls them to remember the life of the fathers and Jacob and how God kept them and was with Jacob keeping and protecting him and was kind to him during all his straits. Should they remember his life they should also remember that as his descendants, as God's professing people, they were a people in covenant with God? God's way of dealing with His people involves Him reasoning with them.

This should be enough for us to realize that when we stand against attack, or remember what we have done and we feel guilty, God has provided a Mediator, an Intercessor, to stand with us when we face the Father's discipline.

Verse 28. All prophets and believers throughout the ages have learned from experience that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary. God has made the world, uphold it, governs it, and judges it righteously. He is from everlasting to everlasting, is unchangeable, is the same; and His name alone is Jehovah, the self-existent and all comprehending Being, the Maker and Father of all; who has not only created the earth, and established its foundations. (in reference to the continents and the habitable parts of the world including its extremities) of it, and therefore knows and will take care of His own people. Let them be where they will but given His power and His wisdom, He will never allow His people to sink, or to stay in unbelief and despondency.

There is no searching of His understanding: it is infinite, it reaches to all persons and things, and therefore He cannot be at a loss to provide for His people, or plead their cause; nor can their case be unknown to Him; or He wants either power or skill to help them.

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Verse 29. After reproving the people of God for their unbelief and distrust of Him because of their affliction, the Almighty God makes a tremendous promise. He will give firmness, substance, starch in the backbone of the weary.



It is clear that as one writer says unbelief is an absurdity. Real faith rest upon reason and fact, for to believe in the Almighty and in the all-wise God is the most rational thing in the world. The prophet clearly believes that it is foolish, stupid, wicked and most irrational for a child of God to distrust the Almighty God, doubting His memory, His power, and His covenant.

The self-existent God cannot fail or faint. All power comes from Him.

It is important to note briefly what makes us faint. One writer lists them for us as follows:

1. People faint because they have made the alarming discovery that their own righteousness has proven to be only filthy rags and the merit which they depended on to save them was not really gold but dross. So they are filled with terror and they faint.
2. Some when awakened from sin try by long and hard efforts at salvation to escape from their danger but it all ends in failure. The sooner all self-righteous attempts to obtain salvation stop the better it will be for them.
3. Some grow faint because they feel that they have sinned, and they dread punishment. They even wish to die but they fear the judgment.
4. Some are like the prodigal son that are so affected by circumstances that they become faint.
5. Some children of God faint through lack of faith. Even David said "*I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living*". The cure for this fainting is faith and the best way to prevent fainting is to believe, says one writer.
6. Some faint because they have a selfish resignation such us Jonah who because of his temper was angry with God because he did not get what he wanted. When the sun beat upon his head because the plant that God had provided to provide shade for him died, he fainted and wished to die saying that it was better for him to die than to live. God had to rebuke him for his behavior.
7. Some children of God fall into faintness through trusting in themselves for they thought that they could do everything and sustain themselves through their own strength according to verse 30. The writer says that the worst of it is that this faintness will sometimes come to the strong just when they need all their strength.
8. Faintness also comes from a neglect of prayer. Jesus warned that men always ought to pray and not to faint. By telling us that He implied that if they did not pray they would be sure to faint and so the choice is to pray or to faint.
9. Others faint because of the length of the way, for sometime pilgrims faint because the way is long. We have to persevere in well doing and put up with all kind of misrepresentations and slanders, frowns, slights, and opposition. This is sometimes very difficult and some faint. The brethren must therefore provide help for others in this situation.
10. Some faint because of the heaviness of the burden. We should note that not all are burdened alike and for some the burden is particularly heavy. The remedy for the child of God that is carrying double loads and are often ready to faint because of that is to go to God for double grace and double strength. They to need support especially from the brethren.
11. A frequent cause of fainting is because sometimes the spirit feels itself sinking. Sometimes a child of God can hardly tell you why they are depressed and despondent and sometimes like David they have to cry out from their heart "*Why are you cast down, O my soul?*" Sometimes they have to argue with themselves about the reason for the Depression. One



can only urge that person to, as a writer said, "*Hope in God: for you shall yet praise him, who is the health of your countenance and your God*" and again focus on the Scripture which tells us "*Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me*". Jesus will respond to entreaties and will take your sorrows and your tears in His loving bosom.

12. Some children of God faint because they lack spiritual food, for there are not many churches where people hear the word of God preached in a way that would strengthen them. One must therefore insist that the word of God is preached and there be less sermons and teachings on the doctrines of men.
13. Some children of God faint when in adversity, for sometimes God rebukes us and we faint when we are rebuked of Him.
14. And we should all remember that increasing infirmity and age makes us faint and unfit for our former level of service. We are told in Samuel 21: 15- 17 that when David was old and went to fight the Philistines he became faint and a giant would have killed them if Abishai had not helped him. So we have to be wise when we face difficulties and always depend on God for strength.

Note also that God is merciful and uses His power to help the faint. He has all the power and He gives sufficient power to His people. There is a Scripture which says, "*As your days, so shall your strengths be*".

God gives enough strength so that the devil cannot defeat or take us away. He gives us all the power we need and so we can resist the devil and he will flee from us.

Remember though that we must praise Him when He gives us strength and remember that the strength comes not from our selves but from the Lord. When we receive strength from Him we must be sure to use it in His way and for His purposes.

Verses 30-31.

We must never forget that human strength will always dissipate eventually and that even the strongest of men will get weak one day, for the flesh will fade like the grass. Even Samson became exhausted and had to sleep. Even our mental strengths will fail one day.

God is the only one who is omnipotent and infinitely strong. His strength cannot be exhausted and so what we have to do is to come to Him with our weakness and use His strength to do what He wants us to do. We have to link our self to God and wait on God for everything, expecting that our strength will be renewed by Him.

We all have to learn to wait on God and that sometimes is a difficult matter. But we must not only wait but we must depend on God and make sure that our **expectation** is from Him.

Patience means that we are to hold out and wait for God's time and God's will. We may have to endure affliction, persevere in holiness, remain in our integrity, and continue to hope.



Sometimes God responds to our situation speedily but sometimes He delays and our faith in Him will keep us going. No matter what the situation we do not have to fret or worry.

We need renewing because we are imperfect and our sin nature drives us down, no matter how high up we go. We must realize that we cannot always be at our best, just as all the skies are not always clear and the year is not always summer, says one writer.

God knows exactly how much strength we need and He will keep renewing us so that we will be more and more able to do His will.

We will find that our strength is renewed by continually waiting on God. When we come to God and rest in Him and wait patiently for Him, He will feed us and we will be restored.

God uses three great figures to show us what He will do for us. We will behave like the eagles, mounting up on wings showing a great majesty and strength.

Then we will not only soar but we will run like a skilful long-distance runner and not get tired.

Then we will walk calmly and majestically all through the day and display the glory of God.

CONCLUSION

We know that we like to control everything but God tells us that He is in charge.

Note that God was not telling Israel that He would change the circumstances of their life in exile immediately, for He wanted to change Israel while they were in exile. That was one of the reasons He allowed the exile in the first place.

God wanted them to wait for the Lord, hope in Him, wait confidently and expectantly for Him to fulfill His promise to vindicate and liberate them.

They had to wait in their weakness. We also are similarly advised for that is what is always needed for spiritual reformation to take place. When they were weak and weary they would be expected to turn to God to be strengthened and receive the supernatural strength to endure captivity and to flourish.

We too have to be disciplined and realize that weariness and weakness should motivate us. When the pressures of life reach us this should motivate us to wait for the Lord.

While we wait and focus and hope in the Lord to fulfill His promise to deliver us, we will grow and we will strengthen. Just waiting on the Lord involves turning our mind and hearts to prayer, to study Scripture and to worship Him, and all these activities are exactly what we need to give us strength.



So to instruct us Jesus told a parable of a widow, and widows are a symbol of weakness. Jesus told this parable to show us that at all times we must pray and not to lose heart.

Isaiah told the exiles exactly the same thing and so he encouraged the exiles to focus on God and to wait for the Lord.

Just like the widow then who desperately and persistently appealed to the judge who was the only one that could grant justice we too must have that desperate persistent kind of faith while we wait on the Lord.

When we turn to the Lord He gives us His strength. God might put us in Babylon where we are oppressed and hemmed in so that we would recognize our weakness and actively wait and hope for Him.

When the Lord forms us into spiritually strong men and women we will first soar like eagles, then we will run and not get tired, and then we would walk calmly and not get weary.

This is rather strange for we think that we should first walk, then run, then fly like eagles, but actually just remember that walking in the strength given by God is really the most advanced state of spiritual exercise.

We are often warned that when we are soaring and we are on top, this glamorous life creates great difficulty for us. As a matter of fact, our minds and bodies cannot take that kind of soaring activity. Neither does it give us much strength. But we do like to be on the mountaintop and when we are there we tend to forget that there are valleys.

But when we wait on God He gives us strength to continually put one foot in front of the other, and we learn to live in faithful dependence on God, going step by step, day by day. That is how we actually improve our spiritual life

So be warned, our ways are not hidden from the Lord. So wait for the Lord. His power and wisdom is sufficient for us. He does not change circumstances but instead He changes us.

Just remember that God cannot resist those that are humble and who honestly admit that they desperately need Him. When we are weak we make room for His power.

So let us draw near to the throne of God with confidence so that we can receive mercy and grace to help in time of need.

