

God Almighty

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- [0 : 00] Isaiah, 700 years before Christ, spoke out to the people of Jerusalem and said these words that Peter read to us.
- Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news. Lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem.
- Lift it up, fear not, say to the cities of Judah, behold your God. Behold the Lord comes with might and his arm rules for him.
- Behold his reward is with him and his recompense before him. Isaiah summons the city and says to the population, get this information out to the people.
- Behold, that is, look intently. It's an old word, we don't use it much now, but it's an important word.
- [1 : 15] It's not just gazing at God, passing an occasional glance in his direction. It's looking intently at him, searching for him, inquiring after him.
- This has been a jubilee year. And here's a jubilee that took my interest.
- In July 1972, exactly 50 years ago, a writer in Bristol signed off the introduction to a book and sent it off to publishers.
- He sent it to an American publisher who had the great good sense to accept it and publish it.
- He sent it to an English publisher who said, well, actually, we don't think it's got a wide enough interest among Christian readers. And so he had to find another publisher.
- [2 : 23] Well, the writer was James Packer. And the book, you may have heard it, you may even have read it, is called Knowing God. And it's been a formative book for many of us.
- And what Packer wants his readers to see is this. You need to know God. That is, to know about him.
- To know him by eagerly investigating what he's revealed about himself. And then, you need to know him personally.
- You need to know him personally through faith in Jesus Christ, who is the very revelation of God the Father.
- Well, now, in Jerusalem and in Judah at this time, when Isaiah was speaking, there was a nation in terror.
- [3 : 34] There was the threat of enemy invaders from the north and east. And Isaiah predicted, Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and that which your fathers have stored up shall be carried to Babylon.
- Nothing shall be left, says the Lord. And into this frightening situation, Isaiah comes with this great message in chapter 40.
- And he has this central theme, Look at your God. And in particular, Look at his strength.

See him as God Almighty. As the sovereign Lord, who is strong in every respect. And I want just to go through verses 12 onwards and show you four different, three different spheres in which God is the sovereign Lord Almighty.

First of all, I want you to see how he is Lord over creation. If you have your Bibles, you'd be helped in following this.

[4 : 55] Verse 12, Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in a scale and the hills in a balance?

The Almighty God set it out, the stars in place. The waters of the sea, he marked them off and settled their boundaries.

And the whole of the coastlands, as Isaiah calls it, and the land masses, it's as if God put them in place simply by, as it were, emptying his forklift truck.

Such is the immense strength of God in creation. And importantly, he didn't need a helper and he didn't need any advisor or designer, technician when he was doing all this.

Who measured the spirit of the Lord, it says, verse 13? Or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult? And who made him understand?

[6 : 19] Who taught him the path of righteousness and taught him knowledge, showed him the way of understanding? He did it completely unaided. Such is the greatness of God.

God is to be seen in creation. When Paul was talking to the church at Rome and explaining how God reveals himself, he said, his eternal power and divine nature can be seen in all that he has made.

Now, many people have shut out the possibility of God being visible in the natural world. But his handiwork, his craftsmanship, and his strength in particular is there to be seen.

And the immediate application is this. If you come to this God with problems in your life, be sure that he is not baffled by them and he is not limited in strength as to how he might help you.

Lord over creation. But then next, he's Lord over the nations. Verse 15, Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket counted as dust on the scales.

[8 : 04] He takes the coastlands like fine dust. Verse 17, All the nations are as nothing before him. Counted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.

These vast countries across the globe, they are minute in God's vision. And we people who live here, Isaiah goes on to say, We seem like grasshoppers before him.

And God's control and his supervision and his sovereignty over the nations is immense. He brings princes to nothing.

Verse 23, He makes rulers of the earth as emptiness. You see, he's not fazed by superpowers. Terrorists do not take him by surprise because he is the sovereign Lord.

And then, thirdly, he is Lord over all other gods. Verse 18, To whom then will you liken God? What likeness compare with him?

[9 : 27] An idol? A craftsman casts it. A goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains. You see, idols, in whatever form, are manufactured.

How can we seriously worship a thing that is made? And that actually goes for creation itself. We live in a time when television documentaries about the world about us, they deify.

creation. They speak of Mother Nature as if it's divinity. And they make our world into an idol itself.

And so, we learn that as we look out on a beautiful world, our attitude to it should be one of adoration gratitude and gratitude and a recognition of the creator.

And so, as we think about the greatness of God, we need to think about him as being incomparable. There's no one like him.

[10 : 52] To whom will you compare the Lord God? What likeness compare with him? Verse 18. And the great thing about this is that we have a God who, there's just nothing and nobody that compares with him.

He's beyond our ken. He's out with our imagination and experience. And this, you see, is the great appeal.

We don't have a little God whom we've made into our dimensions. We have a vast God. And that's why we worship him.

Well now, I'd like to apply this in two directions. The greatness and the power of God. The first is he gives strength to his church, his weary church sometimes.

Weary in serving. We, especially in 21st century Britain, live among a people who are at ease without God.

[12 : 21] They're quite comfortable without reckoning on their maker, their judge. And their ignorance is immense.

We were thinking the other Sunday evening about how the Ninevites don't know their right hand from their left, all 120,000 of them.

And it's like that today the spiritual ignorance is immense in Britain. And we can so easily, as we think about how we're going to reach our neighbours and friends and relatives, we can be weary in thinking about how can we possibly win them over.

we talk about unreached peoples and we sometimes think that native Scots are unreachable.

Well, what is the truth? Well, here's a word that is surely helpful.

[13 : 33] Verse 28. Haven't you known? Haven't you heard? the Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth.

Verse 29. He gives power to the faint and to him who has no might he increases strength.

You see, nothing is too hard for the Lord. now, where, when it comes to us in our weakness as churches, where is this strength shown?

Well, let me put my finger on two important areas. First of all, in the gospel itself. what is the good news of the gospel?

Well, Peter delineated it in his prayer. It's that the Son of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, was conceived in the womb of a virgin.

[14 : 56] That Jesus went about totally obeying his Father's will. That Jesus was crucified, a brutal death, but one that the Father decreed would pay for the punishment of sinners, paying the punishment in our place.

and then the resurrection from the dead, by which God declared him to be Son of God with power.

And the gospel itself is strength and power. It is powerfully strong to transform lives.

that good news of Jesus is life changing. But now we need to couple it with something else.

The Holy Spirit is strong and especially how he invests that gospel with his energy.

[16 : 27] It works like this. He comes to people who have willfully blinded themselves to God and he opens their eyes.

He comes to people whose hearts are hardened and he softens them. He the Spirit he moves amongst people so that he shows them who they are in the sight of an all holy God and he touches their conscience and the Spirit awakens in them a desire to come to Christ.

That is the strength of the Holy Spirit. And so you see we as maybe a weary church weary of living in people who are seen resistant to the gospel we need to take in our minds that the gospel is strong it's the power of God to salvation and that the Holy Spirit works powerfully in our lives.

Paul tells of one church that the word came to you not just in word but in power and in the Holy Spirit and in deep conviction and that's what we have.

a great gospel and a spirit who loves to move amongst the people. So we encourage one another with that thought but I also want to say to any here today who's not yet experienced this power and haven't known this life transforming influence of the spirit I want you to reckon with a God who is supremely powerful and he has the strength and the willingness to turn your life around to bring you to himself you know he he did that he's done that in many lives we think in scripture of an out and out rebel who was persecuting the church and he arrested him

[19 : 17] Saul of Tarsus but we think of a more respectable person in the eyes of the church this was a well-off lady who had a good business in selling expensive clothing and he opened her heart that's what he'll do to you open your heart to God well secondly I want to speak very particularly to any individuals who may be utterly lacking in self-confidence and power at this time weakened in one way or another these people in Jerusalem were weakened Hezekiah the king was weakened and Isaiah had to show him that his weakness had come because he'd been cozying up to enemy people and he'd brought them in from

Babylon and showed them his wealth his riches his palace and Isaiah rebukes him and says that you truly have weakened your position and it can be with us as well we flirt with the enemy we let him in and having come in the door he's all the harder to get out but for whatever reason that we may be feeling weak today let's take these words to heart verse 29 he gives power to faint to him who has no might he increases strength even youths shall faint and be weary young men shall fall exhausted but those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength they shall mount up with wings like eagles they shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not faint eagles are one of my things they give me a buzz and a golden eagle over the

Scottish hillside the thing that impresses you is just how effortless their movement is they make use of the updrafts of air and the thermals and they hardly flap their wings for minutes and minutes on end and God comes to his beleaguered people and he gives them that kind of buoyancy and lift and those who are exhausted somehow regain their youth with God but particularly I want to home in on an earlier verse verse 11 I wonder if you noticed it it comes in contrast to everything else in the chapter God will tend his flock like a shepherd he will gather the lambs in his arms he will carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are with young it's actually a startling verse because it comes in this section of scripture that's all about the raw majestic power of God and here with such tenderness

God comes into family life and he says I've got something for you in all the trials and the confusion that you may sometimes have in your families and he says like a shepherd he gathers the lambs in his arms so he has a feel for young children or perhaps those who are young in the faith and he nurtures them but then beautifully he gently leads those that are with young and here's a word surely for embattled parents for those who feel that the trials of raising children are almost unbearable how can I look after my son we ask

I seem incapable of relating to my teenage daughter how can I make a better showing of this parenting business would that my youngster kept better company and to parents with these agonizing questions God comes and he speaks this word he will carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are with young and he speaks to parents believing parents who belong within the covenant community and he says my strength is made perfect in your weakness our God is a great big

[25 : 42] God incomparable supremely powerful we rejoice in him let us pray thank you father that you are the God of all the generations you were strong for our forebears in the faith and you're strong for us and you will be strong for the next generation and we pray that you'll make us a church that is strong in the gospel confident in your ability knowing that the arm of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save amen let us don't let us remember everything we will amen as