

Isaiah 40:9-31

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in Isaiah, Isaiah chapter 40. Verse 21, it says, Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? Then verse 25, To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes on high and see who created these. He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name. Then verse 27, Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel?

My way is hidden from the Lord. My right is disregarded by my God. Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. And so on. You know, one of the things that sometimes we can be guilty of is arguing with God.

[1 : 20] Maybe not in an outward way, where we're sort of like speaking to him, but in the quiet of our heart, deep down.

And sometimes the thoughts that we can have with regard to God are not good thoughts. It's possible for God's people to be bitter against God, to be angry with God, to begin to question what God is doing, to begin to wonder if God has forgotten all about us altogether.

And you may say to yourself, Oh, that surely God's people aren't like that. Well, you go to the book of Psalms, and you will find over and over in the book of Psalms, that type of language.

Has the Lord forgotten to be gracious? That's one of the things that we find so often. So that these are actually very real, very powerful thoughts that arise within the human heart about God often.

And it's possible for God's people to lose sight of who God is, to lose sight of God's purposes for them, for God's people to be in the dark, and just not appreciate or understand what it is that God's actually doing for them, regarding his whole redemptive purposes.

[2 : 55] And it's very easy for a person, when everything is going against them, to feel that God is no longer interested, that God no longer cares. And that's exactly what we have here.

In verse 27, the Lord is saying, Why do you say, O Jacob, and of course this is the people of God, and speak, O Israel, My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God.

So I'm in the dark. That's what they're really saying. God's not seeing. God can't see my situation.

God is no longer prepared to vindicate me, and to bring me out into the open, and to deliver me from the accusations and charges that are leveled against me.

And you can see the sort of despair, the negativity, that is found here, amongst the people of God. And sometimes we may say to ourselves, Oh, well, this is rare.

Surely we don't find that too often. Well, unfortunately, it's something that we find over and over and over again in Scripture. Just go back, for instance, to God's people in Egypt, in the time of the slavery.

[4 : 15] Remember when they were, when they were captive in Egypt over many, many years. And the boom time of Joseph's reign had long gone.

And as the years went by, and Pharaohs forgot all about who Joseph was, and how Joseph had delivered Egypt, a Pharaoh came to the throne, who saw Israel as a threat to the children of Israel. And he said, Right, we've got to sort this out. And so he began a program of using the Israelites as slaves. And in fact, it just, it went in a downward spiral.

It was a period of incredible brutality. And the Israelites were suffering terribly. And we read about that.

They were being bullied and abused and whipped and such like. And it tells us their, their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[5 : 19] Now, of course, when it says God remembered his covenant, it doesn't mean that God forgot, and then all of a sudden remembered, in the way that you and I sometimes remember. You know how all of a sudden you say, Oh my, I just remembered I was supposed to have done this, or I just remembered, I forgot all about that.

Now, that God doesn't speak like that, or act like that, because God cannot forget. But when it tells us that God remembers, it is always in relation to his coming to work, coming to sort things out, coming to do something.

An example of that is, it says God remembered Noah during the flood. And when it says God remembered Noah, it meant that he caused the waters to subside.

You know how it says, God will remember our sins and our iniquities no more. Well, there is an aspect to God's being that cannot forget anything that we've ever done.

But it means that he will never, ever, ever take action against us. And that's a wonderful thing. You see, God cannot, as it were, forget any sin.

[6 : 37] We would say to ourselves, I would, there are so many things about my life, I would just love to forget. Well, God cannot, he cannot forget. But in Jesus Christ, he will never take action against us.

That's what it means. Their sins and their iniquities, I will remember no more. It's as if they never sinned. All their sin is cast away, I will never take action against them because I have taken action against Jesus Christ.

So, when God says that he remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it means that he was coming to deliver his people.

He was coming to deliver his people in Egypt. And you remember how God then called Moses. And Moses was so reluctant to go. Moses was just so reluctant to go.

He didn't want to go. And he put up every obstacle and every argument against being the person who was going to go to Pharaoh and who was going to ask for the people of Israel to be let free.

[7 : 44] But, in the end, Moses went. And he went to Pharaoh and he asked that the Israelites would be let go. And you remember Pharaoh's response.

Pharaoh went mad. And rather than letting the people go, he intensified their work. He made the slavery even more brutal. And we find that the Israelites go to Moses and they're complaining to Moses, what is it you've done?

You've made Pharaoh ten times worse by asking that we would be released. And then we find Moses going in turn to the Lord.

And Moses is complaining to the Lord. Why have you done? Listen to what he says. This is a language. Why have you done evil to your people?

That's what he's saying. You can see how angry Moses is. Now, of course, we know that Moses was one of the great men of God. And the Moses that we find 40 years later is a much more, much meeker, more subdued person than he is at this stage.

[9 : 04] But he's angry before God. And he's complaining. What? Look at the... Why have you done evil to your people? Why did you ever send me?

And then he says, you have not delivered your people at all. So here's this great man of God. And he's complaining before God.

And he's saying, Lord, you're not doing what you said. You said you were going to deliver your people. And the reason that I'm saying all this is that, just like Israel and Moses, we can sometimes have a very, very limited view of God.

And we can be just like Moses, and just like Israel, and just like Israel and Isaiah, who are saying, my way is hidden from the Lord.

The Lord isn't seeing me. The Lord doesn't know about me. The Lord doesn't care about me anymore. The Lord isn't interested in what I do, or where I go, or about my family, or about anything.

[10 : 10] My way is in the dark. And that's a difficult situation to be in, and a difficult place. But just as God said to Moses, now, remember, this is, God wasn't finished.

He said to Moses, and I love what he says, now you shall see what I will do with fail. You're complaining, Moses. Look, I will sort this in my time.

And that is part of our problem. is that we don't follow God's timetable. We haven't the patience to see things from, or the perspective to see things from a divine point of view.

And so, we find that we have something very similar here in this chapter. And so, we find that Israel are complaining before God, and they're saying, oh, my way is in the dark.

My way is hidden from the Lord. And you'll notice, I love the way that God deals with his people.

And what does he do, first of all?

[11:16] Well, he addresses them here, and he says, oh, Jacob, oh, Israel. So, what is he doing here? He's bringing his people back to the place in history, the place of covenant relationship.

because God had entered into a covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And he focuses in on Jacob, and he says, you are, you are Israel, you are the people of Jacob.

I found Jacob in the wilderness. And we all remember the night when Jacob had that dream. He had run away from home, and he saw the ladder from heaven to earth, and the angels ascending and descending, and such like.

And the Lord said to Jacob on that particular night when he found him there, I will not leave you, he said, until I have done all that I have spoken to you of.

And I will bring you back again into this land. I am your God. And he made this covenant promise with Jacob. And then, of course, we remember there was a night when Jacob wrestled with the Lord.

[12:35] He wrestled with him all night. And the Lord said to Jacob at the end of it, I am changing your name from Jacob to Israel, because as a prince you have power with God.

So what the Lord is doing here is he is reminding his people, look, you belong to me. I haven't forgotten about you. I cannot forget about you.

And that's one of the themes running through Isaiah is God's love for his people. In one instance, he highlights it like the way of a mother with a baby.

Can a mother forget the baby? Of course she can't. Neither can I forget you. It is so powerful. It is so personal. It is so real.

It's so intimate. And so this is where God begins by reminding his people, and he's reminding you and me today that he is in a covenant relationship with us.

[13:35] And we must never ever lose sight of that. And so that's the first thing that the Lord does, is highlights this very, very thing.

And then after reminding the people of the covenant relationship, he then highlights something about who he is himself. And if we go back to verse 12, we find there that the Lord speaks to us about his power.

And verse 12, just for instance, we'll look at this verse just for a moment. The Lord is asking questions to his people. 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 scales, and the hills in a balance.

You know, if there's anything that will ever stop you in your tracks, really, it's these verses. Because they're quite extraordinary. The Lord is saying here, who has measured the waters and marked off the heavens with a span.

You see, later on he talks about, see in verse 22, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain. Now you look up into the sky where the birds fly, where the planes fly, right up into where the stars are and the planets.

[15:09] And the Lord is saying, you know, just in the same way as you pull a curtain closed at night, I stretched out these heavens, just like that.

It was as simple for me as pulling a curtain. And you say to yourself, I don't understand that. Of course we don't. Because he is God. He is beyond anybody or anything that we could even begin to understand.

The greatness of his being. He then says, who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand. It's magnificent language.

You think of all the great oceans, Pacific Ocean, how long? 13 days or so to cross the Pacific. Then the mighty Atlantic, all the other oceans of the world, in their width, in their depth, bring it all together.

The Lord says, I have them in the hollow of my hand. And what the Lord is doing here is reminding Israel, you think that I can't see you.

[16:18] You think that your way is hidden from me. Do you not realize my power? Because it's really quite extraordinary. And then he says, I've enclosed the dust in Amesh, all, that's what he's

talking about, the earth.

All these vast continents, stretching mile after mile after mile, Sahara desert, I've enclosed them. Just put everything together.

This is what he's saying. And weigh the mountains and scales and the hills in a balance. The great mountain ranges, the Himalayas, the Alps, the Rockies, come closer to home, the Cairngorms, the Coulins, Glencoe, all these, it's like, I've just put them in scales, sorted them out.

This is the God today that we are worshipping. This is the God who brought all these things into being. And this, what the Lord is doing by, is showing us here, of course, this is language which is trying to help us to understand His greatness.

Because God brought everything into being. There is nothing hard for the Lord. The creation of this world wasn't a massive undertaking and problem for the Lord.

[17 : 46] Is anything too hard for the Lord? No. He brought it all into being by the word of His power. You know, I often think that atheists must miss out on so much.

Because one of the things when, often when I view things of nature and creation, and there are sometimes you just stop and it takes your breath away.

Now, I'm not saying for one moment that an atheist isn't capable of appreciating the beauty and the wonder of creation. Of course they are, and they do. But they're missing out.

They're only on one dimension. Because when we view the beauty of creation and when we come on something altogether wonderful and we stop and we begin to reflect and think, it takes us beyond what we're looking at to the God who made it.

It's one of the things that always happens. And we're enthralled, we're in awe of His power and His majesty and His glory.

[18 : 50] And that's exactly what the Lord is getting His people to do here. And then He carries on in verse 13. He moves from displaying His power to His wisdom.

Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord? Or what man shows Him His counsel? Whom did He consult and who made Him understand and such like?

And basically what the Lord is saying here is, here you are and you're complaining about me, complaining about my dealings, complaining that I don't know, who made you?

Who consulted, who did I consult with when I brought this world into being? Who did? Nobody. And the Lord is sort of, He's really trying to make us rethink through again.

And then He highlights also before us, like in verse 15, behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket and are accounted as the dust on the scales. How great is your view of God today?

[20 : 03] You think of this world and its whole population. You think of the nations, just think of China. Think of all the nations of this world and all the people. the Lord says, you know, they're just like a drop in a bucket compared to me and my glory and my majesty and my power and my dominion and my authority.

And so it's, I think this is one of the most marvelous chapters in God's word. And so he's looking in, just the language goes on and on, just helping us to focus upon the greatness of God.

And if there's one thing today that I want us to take home, it is this, the greatness of God, his power, his majesty, his glory. Because far too often we lose sight of that.

And we say to ourselves, ah, we're like Israel. Does God remember me? Does God really care?

Yes. 100% yes. He cares. He is involved with us. And even although your life might be difficult, even although you might have gone through incredibly painful circumstances and trials, he knew.

[21 : 34] You know, sometimes people, I've heard people when there's been tragedy, and they've tried to excuse God by saying, oh well, God didn't know. Of course he knew.

God is involved in everything. And I think it's one of the things we've always got to lay hold on, even the dark things that we don't understand. God is in control of everything.

But the wonderful thing is that even in the bad things and the difficult things and the hard things, God works for his people every single thing for good.

And that is going to be the end product. We don't know how a product is halfway through. We don't know how it's going to, we can't make a judgment about something till the end. Sometimes we're bad for trying to run ahead of God.

But for all God's people today, the end product will be good. God's people are going to do. And so the Lord is really saying to us here, just believe in me, trust in me.

[22 : 44] Have you not known, have you not heard, the Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. Just move on very quickly, time is good. He does not faint or grow weary, his understanding is unsearchable, and so on.

See, God doesn't, like you and I, doesn't become weary and need refreshing. He is continually energized in the fullness of his glory.

Jesus was tired, because Jesus, the Son of God, came in our nature. And in order to be like us, he had to be tired, he had to be weary, he had to experience all these things, but he also knew in our nature what it was to be refreshed and to be strengthened.

But that's what we're told here. It's one of the great things. Verse 29, he gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might, he increases strength.

Even you shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted, but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. And maybe today that's what you're needing, because maybe you've become weak, or you've lost your way, or you're in the dark.

[23 : 59] one of the things you need is to find the Lord's guiding hand and strength in your life again. And the way to find that is to wait upon him.

That's what we're told. Now this waiting is not an idle exercise. It's not like just waiting aimlessly or waiting carelessly. It's waiting, it's a deliberate waiting, it's an active waiting.

We're waiting in the Lord in his word. That's one of the ways we wait upon the Lord. Wait when you come to your own devotional reading. You read every day.

And as you come there, you wait upon the Lord, praying that the Lord will speak to you in his word, that it will be relevant to you, that this is a passage for you. We wait upon him in his house, that's what we're doing just now.

Yes, we come to worship him. We come to meet with him, but we also come that he will speak to us. And you know, that's one of the wonderful things.

[25 : 00] Unknown to anybody else, it can be through the reading, it can be through the singings, it can be through the preaching, but God is taking his word and he's bringing it into different people's situation and different people's experience.

And all of a sudden someone says, whoa, I needed that. nobody else knows, not the preacher, doesn't know a thing about it. The person sitting beside you doesn't know, but you know, it's exactly what you needed.

And this is how God works with us, individually, personally, bringing his word. And this is what we do when we come to God's house, we're waiting on him, waiting that his word will come with reality, with power.

we wait upon him in prayer. This is where we are in touch with the living God. And of course, our prayer, prayer doesn't have to be long.

It's not for our many words that we're heard, but for our heart. The publican and the Pharisee, one prayed for ages, the Pharisee prayed on and on and on.

[26 : 16] The Lord didn't listen to his prayer, because all he was telling the Lord was how good he was. And how much better he was than other people, and particularly that publican over in the corner.

But the publican in the corner, he couldn't even lift his eyes to heaven. All he could do was just bang on his chest. Oh, he said, Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner. That's all.

But that man went down to his house different, justified, because God heard his prayer. So it's not the length of words, it's the heart of prayer. It's the reality, it's the meaning, it's what is there in our heart.

So this is how we wait upon the Lord. And then the Lord gives us that strength. And the picture is given, just to finish with this, that they mount up with wings like eagles.

As we know, the eagle is that amazing bird. It just soars, it just goes up and up. And if you ever watched an eagle, just the way it soars. And apparently it has the most incredible eyesight to seeing, seeing everything.

[27 : 22] And sometimes that's what the Lord does to his people. When he renews their strength, he lifts them right up. Lifts them up in their soul. And sort of opens up their vision again to see.

Because that's one of the problems. See when things go wrong. Spiritually, it's often because we've lost our sight of God. That is normally the problem.

If we lose sight of God, we're off. But when the Lord renews their strength, he lifts us up and helps us to soar up again, our vision is restored and we see him.

Once we're seeing him, hey, we're all right. Things are all right. And that's why we will then be able to run and not be weary and walk and not faint.

Run longer than we used to. Walk quicker than we used to. Because the Lord has renewed our strength. May we today then come to know, as we're saying to the young people today, that we will come to know the author of this book.

[28 : 39] That chapter, and I say, when you go back home, read it again. Because if there's a more, I shouldn't say that there are many, many magnificent chapters, but it's one of these chapters that just humbles you.

As you're brought face to face with just a little of God's omnipotence, of God's omniscience, of where God is altogether powerful, altogether wise, in control.

And how thankful today we are that he is in control. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give thanks today that you are the God who reigns and rules on your throne.

We are your people, and we give thanks for that. We pray for any in here today who may know plenty about you, but don't know you personally.

O Lord, may they come even today to seek you with all at heart. Lord, open any eyes that have so far remained closed.

[29 : 54] Open any hearts that have so far remained closed against you. Come in and do us good, we pray. Press a cup of tea and coffee in the hall after, and take away from us our sin in Jesus' name.

Amen. Our concluding singing is Psalm 62, Scottish Psalter. Psalm 62, Scottish Psalter, verse 5 to 8.

And the tune is Amazing Grace. It's on page 294. Psalm 62, verse 5, My soul, wait thou with patience upon thy God alone.

On him dependeth all my hope and expectation. He only my salvation is, and my strong rock is he. He only is my sure defense, I shall not move it be.

In God my glory place it is, and my salvation sure. In God the rock is of my strength, my refuge most secure.

[30 : 59] Verses 5 to 8, Psalm 62, page 294, my soul, wait thou with patience. my soul, my soul, lift up with patience, upon thy throne alone, hfi hanna!

Miami, days to 8, pray give me to come when peace osob nus. He only my salvation is, and my strong prophecy.

He only is my sure defense, I shall not do any.

In God my glory places, and my salvation true.

In all the glory is all my strength, my refuge, old Savior.

[33 : 05] Give me the grace upon His hands, and in mountain I live.

Before and more, beyond your heart, all is our refuge mine.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.