

Isaiah – Chapter 40

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Theme: After 39 chapters of judgment, Isaiah's second half has glorious news of Messiah, God, and help.

Short Outline:

- 1-2 Prophets Comforted Jews at End of Chastening
- 3-11 John the Baptist and the Coming of Messiah
- 12-17 God's Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Glory
- 18-26 God's Infinite Superiority to Idols and Rulers
- 27-31 God's Wisdom and Power to Help Believers

Preparatory Reading: Malachi 3-4; Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3:1-23; John 1:1-18; Psalm 62; 146.

Related Links:

- A. [Isaiah – Introduction](#) (outline).
- B. [Boasting of God – Isaiah](#) (slides).
- C. [Boasting of God – Job](#) (slides).
- D. [Knowing God's Attributes](#) (outline).
- E. [Psalm 91 Comfort](#) (sermons and outline).
- F. [When Things Seem Hopeless](#) (sermon).

Introduction:

- A. This is the favorite chapter of Isaiah to many, and it is the favorite chapter of the whole Bible to some.
 - 1. This is the great divide between the first and second halves of this sublime and Messianic prophet.
 - 2. Many consider the second half of Isaiah to be the finest and most beautiful chapters of the O.T.
 - 3. Isaiah had short references earlier of coming deliverances and Messiah, now they are preeminent.
 - 4. Some delight in the glorious introduction of John and Jesus with the familiar N.T. terminology.
 - 5. Some delight in the sovereign power of a Creator God over all things, nations, idols, and rulers.
 - 6. Some delight in the personal help He will give His fainting children to soar and run in difficulties.
 - 7. For those familiar with a movie, *Chariots of Fire*, the story of Eric Liddell, Isaiah 40 reminds them.
- B. After 39 chapters, many of which foretold terrible judgments, here comes glorious comfort from God.
 - 1. From the first chapter to the historical section (36-39), Assyria and Babylon would ravage Judah.
 - 2. Assyria's war with Judah is emphasized for being in Isaiah's time, but Babylon's war is also told.
 - 3. But notice the very last prophecy before chapter 40 – Babylon would take all captive (Is 39:6-7).
 - 4. The comfort here begins with an end of Judah's chastening and the introduction of John and Jesus.
 - 5. The comfort here extends to include God's power and superiority to other gods to truly help Judah.

6. For those living under Isaiah knowing that Babylon was coming, they needed comfort and hope.
- C. We want more than sound bites from this chapter, though this chapter has some of the best in the Bible.
1. The short outline for the chapter above and the short introduction next show glorious progression.
 2. All parts of the chapters 31 verses work together to build a glorious case of comfort for all time.
 3. While soaring like an eagle is a wonderful sound bite, you are not an eagle; embrace the metaphor.
 4. The *nations as a drop of a bucket ... all nations before him are as nothing ...* are glorious words.
- D. We cannot exhaust every phrase or verse here more than other verses we covered in chapters 1-39.
1. What is the lesson of this incredibly beautiful chapter? What is its value for us beyond sound bites?
 2. There is a progression we want to admire. There are rhetorical questions we should never forget.
 3. The great lesson and value are to encourage yourself in the Lord of Christ and God's saving help.
 4. If the exposition is too hurried for you, then take the 31 days of March and meditate on each verse.
- E. This chapter not only opens the second half of the book but also a nine-chapter section of God boasting.
1. This section of 216 verses are the largest section of the Bible where God boasts about Himself.
 2. The nine chapters use the first person singular *I* (96 times), *my* (42), *me* (33), *mine* (9), *myself* (4).
 3. It is how He reveals Himself, mocks false religion, rebukes doubters, to humbles and comfort us.
 4. For those that fear, love, and delight in God, these chapters are some of the finest reading of Him.
 5. **Boasting of God – Isaiah.**
- F. Apostate textual critics say Isaiah 40-66, more chapters in some cases, was actually written by others.
1. They deny supernatural, detailed prophecy of Cyrus by name before he was born, so they say parts of Isaiah were written during the Babylonian exile or later – history instead of prophecy!
 2. This is how seminaries destroy faith while claiming to be Bible institutions – deny faith-building, praise-inducing fulfilled prophecies of God – to question, *Yea, hath God said* (Gen 3:15).
 3. Many volumes have been written about Isaiah, questioning and speculating about the variety of writers and the times of their writings that make up this book, though all of them for no profit.
 4. These Bible-skeptics invented *Proto-Isaiah* (1-39), *Deutero-Isaiah* (40-55), *Trito-Isaiah* (56-66).
 5. The bold ones will also actually suggest many more contributors to many places in chapters 1-39.
 6. We reject the liars without a real job by the book's name without any stated distinction anywhere.
 7. A unique phrase to Isaiah, *Holy One of Israel*, is throughout the book (25), unlike other prophets.
 8. There are other unique wordings with similar or identical clauses in both parts or halves of Isaiah.
 9. There are similar descriptions of coming events by contemporary prophets that deny a late date.
 10. There are detailed prophecies about Babylon, including Persians and Medes, in both halves of it.
 11. Best of all, available to elementary readers of the Bible, the N.T. assigns quotations from all parts of Isaiah as belonging to Isaiah (John 12:38-41, etc.), especially the latter half of Isaiah (Matthew 3:3; 8:17; 12:17-21; Luke 3:4; 4:17-19; John 1:23; Acts 8:28; Romans 10:16,20).
 12. For a short defense of one Isaiah ... <http://thebiblecanbeproven.com/one-isaiah-or-two-isaiahs/>.
- G. While the Isaiah division of 39 and 27 chapters is compared to the division in the Bible, be careful.

1. There are 66 books in the Bible and 66 chapters in Isaiah, so simple eyes light up with excitement.
2. Then the big and obvious division is after 39 chapters, just like the O.T. ends after its 39 books.
3. Chapter 40 of Isaiah begins with comfort like the N.T. in general and by its Isaiah 40 quotations.
4. Chapter 66 of Isaiah refers to new heavens and earth like the 66th book of the Bible, Revelation.
5. We will not pursue more similarities; there is little value and many difficulties pressing the issue.
6. Here is an example of **some trying to match Isaiah chapters to the Bible**.

Prophets Comforted Jews at End of Chastening – Verses 1-2

¹ ***Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.***

- A. The plural comforters addressed here by ye are the prophets of God from Isaiah forward.
 1. The emphasized audience of the Jews were their Jewish preachers told to comfort.
 2. Since comfort progresses all the way to Messiah, preachers later are also included.
 3. Compared to coming of Messiah, they could endure war with Assyria or Babylon.
 4. Note the last previous prophecy – that of Babylon taking all away (Isaiah 39:6-7).
- B. The preciousness of the verse should be weighed against the judgment of 39 chapters.
 1. Isaiah foretold terrible trouble by Assyria and Babylon, but great relief was coming.
 2. The timing is at the end of punishment when Jews were weary – still in Babylon.
 3. The arguments will be of future deliverance that transcend national power or idols.
 4. The comfort begins with Messiah (1-11) but then returns to Cyrus (chapters 41-48).
- C. Do not be confused Isaiah 40 introduces Christ but then backs up 500 years to Cyrus.
 1. This back and forth in Isaiah has been seen repeatedly; Babylon was in chapter 13.
 2. Do not be confused by the present tense imperative verb *comfort* – it was yet future.
- D. There are times like this that we must remember agricultural wisdom (Isaiah 28:23-29).
 1. He will never abuse us; His timing is perfect, just like a farmer with various grains.
 2. **Exposition of Isaiah 28:23-28.**

² ***Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.***

- A. Isaiah from this point forward sees large events coming of a much more positive kind.
 1. Following the first verse, the instruction for prophets/preachers was to comfort Jews.
 2. The first and greatest event that follows is Messiah but then 8 chapters about Cyrus.
 3. Assyria first destroyed Judah and besieged Jerusalem; then Babylon totally razed it.
 4. The latest prophecy was Babylon (Is 39:6-7), but then the second temple and Christ!
- B. The comfortable preaching before introducing Messiah was to tell an end of chastening.
 1. Her warfare was accomplished; terrible wars with Assyria and Babylon were over.
 2. Her iniquity was pardoned; her national sins that brought the wars were forgiven.

3. The LORD Jehovah had fully punished her for all her national sins. Now Messiah!
 4. *Double* is less mathematical or technical than complete fullness (Rev 18:6; etc., etc.).
 5. The Jews did not think they had been chastened too much for their sins (Ezra 9:13).
- C. It is a false interpretation to make this verse describe legal forgiveness in Christ's death.
1. We must constantly guard against sound bites that are sweet but violate the context.
 2. The warfare accomplished and iniquity pardoned is not at Calvary but by enemies.
 3. The double for all her sins is used by the prophets for judgment (Jer 16:18; 17:18).
 4. The context before is chastening judgment and the context after is rescue from it.
 5. Christ died a substitutionary death in which we were not judged for sin (Is 53:5-12).

John the Baptist and the Coming of Messiah – Verses 3-11

³ The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

- A. This is John the Baptist and preparatory preaching before the public ministry of Jesus.
1. He did have a very comforting message of Messiah coming ... but with repentance.
 2. He was a man sent from God to introduce and identify the Word of God made flesh.
 3. Unrepentant sinners are never a good audience for God so John demanded it of all.
- B. Compare Mark 1:1-9, where this verse of Isaiah is used regarding John the Baptist.
1. Mark 1:2 is a quotation from Malachi 3:1, though modern versions say it is Isaiah.
 2. Mark 1:3 is a quotation of Isaiah 40:3 here, so the KJV uses *prophets* in Mark 1:2.
- C. John had to make ready a people among the Jews prepared for God Himself to visit.
1. Remember that Jesus is also named Immanuel, which is God with us (Matt 1:23).
 2. John identified Jesus of Nazareth as Lamb and Son of God for Israel (John 1:19-36).
- D. Do not overlook or minimize what John's ministry identified as getting ready for God.
1. Malachi prophesied John's ministry was to reconcile fathers and sons (Mal 4:5-6).
 2. Gabriel told Zacharias that it was right relationships that prepared men (Luke 1:17).
 3. **Righteous Relationships.**
 4. **Righteous Relationships – Chart.**
- E. This straight highway in the desert has nothing to do with dirt but everything with truth.
1. The next verse will use civil engineering and highway construction metaphors well.
 2. Do not look or think further than a people prepared for the Lord with full repentance.
 3. John required repentance and men pressed after Christ by it (Luk 16:16; Matt 11:12).
- F. Are you and your family a straight highway for God? Is your church a straight highway?
1. Jehovah of Heaven dwells with those that have poor and contrite hearts (Is 66:1-2).
 2. The High and Lofty One of eternity requires a contrite and humble spirit (Is 57:15).

⁴ ***Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:***

- A. Do not take these civil engineering metaphors farther than repentance and truth for God.
- B. The obstacles of ignorance and sin would be taken out of the way by John's preaching.
- C. There would be a people ready in knowledge and godly living to welcome Jesus Christ.
- D. John warned every part of the nation and their need for reform (Luke 3:7-14,18-20).

⁵ ***And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.***

- A. Jehovah's glory was revealed in the Person of Jesus (Jn 1:14; II Cor 4:6; Hebrews 1:3).
 - 1. Jesus' coming was not done in a corner but for Gentiles also (Jn 18:20; Acts 26:26).
 - 2. Jesus visited Tyre, Sidon, Galilee, and Jerusalem. Pilate and Herod both met Christ.
- B. The certainty and the first cause of this glorious incarnation was God's zeal (Is 9:6-7).
- C. His word by His prophets was absolutely certain and no effort by man could restrain it.

⁶ ***The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:***

- A. The voice here is God's instruction to His preacher John and apostles following Him.
 - 1. The singular, male pronoun is John, and he himself heard God's voice (Jn 1:32-33).
 - 2. There are two voices in this order – John crying and God telling him what to cry.
- B. The message of the gospel is that man's word is nothing and God's omnipotent (Is 40:5).
- C. All flesh should not be restrained to the Jews only, for the Gentiles were grass as well.

⁷ ***The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.***

- A. The Jews by natural pedigree and power were like grass or flowers to wither and fade.
- B. The power of Jehovah by His Spirit works for Christ against men (Luke 1:35; Is 63:10).
- C. All people, Jews or Gentiles, are surely nothing but grass before God's Spirit and word.

⁸ ***The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.***

- A. The ambitions and plans of all men, political or religious, will all surely wither and fade.
- B. However, the word and zeal of the LORD of hosts stands forever and ever (Is 9:6-7).
- C. Peter quoted Isaiah to describe preaching of the more sure word of God (I Pet 1:24-25).
- D. Consider how Jesus exalted His preaching of God's certain words (Luke 21:32-33).

⁹ ***O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!***

- A. Zion = Jerusalem, as can be seen here by the parallelism of the text's two main clauses.
 - 1. Zion and Jerusalem had mountains. A high mountain to muster troops (Is 13:2; 18:3).

- 2. Out of Jerusalem would go the gospel of Jesus Christ by apostles to Judah (Acts 1:8).
- B. The gospel, boring to most men, is good news of glad tidings of good things (Ro 10:15).
 - 1. It began with the good tidings of the birth arrival of Jesus (Luke 1:19; 2:10; 8:1).
 - 2. It continued with the news of His saving death and resurrection (Acts 13:32-33,38).
- C. John was fearless, and apostles after Pentecost, declaring His word (Acts 2:14; 4:13,29).
- D. The message was fabulous! Unbelievable! God had visited planet earth in His Israel.
 - 1. Jesus was *Immanuel*, meaning *God with us*, declared clearly (Matt 1:23; John 1:14).
 - 2. John boldly declared Jesus of Nazareth to be the Lamb and Son of God (Jn 1:29-36).
 - 3. Paul testified the foundational axiom that Jesus was God in a body (Colossians 2:9).

¹⁰ ***Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.***

- A. Jesus = Jehovah, for the text here declares of Jesus' incarnation He was the Lord GOD.
 - 1. **Jesus Is Jehovah** (slides).
 - 2. **Jesus Is Jehovah** (outline).
 - 3. **Jesus' Sonship** (slides).
 - 4. **Jesus' Sonship** (outline).
- B. Jesus came with mighty power to defeat foes and rule and to do God's work and reward.
 - 1. Isaiah already declared Him to be the Son of David with kingdom power (Is 9:6-7).
 - 2. Malachi prophesied He would come to take the kingdom to reward (Mal 3:1 – 4:6).

¹¹ ***He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.***

- A. Shepherds feed sheep; Jesus is the Good and Great Shepherd (John 10:14; Heb 13:20).
- B. Jesus kindly and warmly received repentant sinners that burned Pharisees (Lu 15:1-32).

God's Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Glory – Verses 12-17

¹² ***Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?***

- A. This is a new section after prophecies of Messiah and the gospel to exalt God's power.
 - 1. To accomplish what has been and will be foretold, there must be enormous power.
 - 2. There were nations in the way that must be removed (Is 39:6-7), could God do it?
 - 3. After power, God's wisdom and glory far transcend any nation to fulfill His will.
- B. Here are five rhetorical questions to exalt the sovereign power of their God (Is 40:10).
 - 1. You can only hold 1-2 ounces of water in your hand, but God measured the oceans.
 - 2. You have a span of 9 inches (thumb to little finger), but God measured the universe.

3. You have measures, but you can only use a third, which God used to measure dirt.
4. You know what a scale is for weighing things, but God used one to weigh mountains.
5. You know what a balance is, requiring an offset weight, but God did so with hills.

C. The lesson of the questions is to exalt the power of God sufficiently to fulfill His word.

¹³ ***Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?***

- A. God is also infinite in judgment, knowledge, and understanding to fulfill all His words.
- B. The rhetorical questions deny that any being has ever directed or counseled the LORD.
- C. The lesson of the questions is to exalt the wisdom of God sufficiently to fulfill His word.

¹⁴ ***With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?***

- A. God is also infinite in judgment, knowledge, and understanding to fulfill all His words.
- B. The rhetorical questions deny that any being has ever directed or counseled the LORD.
- C. The lesson of the questions is to exalt the wisdom of God sufficiently to fulfill His word.
- D. A virgin birth, resurrection, converting Gentiles, and fall of Babel would take wisdom.

¹⁵ ***Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.***

- A. When God views the nations, they are not only insignificant but also immaterial to Him.
 1. The drop of a bucket is that immaterial amount of moisture retained in an empty pail.
 2. Small dust of the balance is the fine dust that is irrelevant and ignored in weighing.
- B. The isles of Cyprus, Crete, Greece, Sicily, Britain, or others is a very little thing to Him.

¹⁶ ***And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.***

- A. Here is the glory of God, which He will never allow to be compromised, exalted highly.
- B. Lebanon, the region by the same name today was known for forests – inadequate wood.
- C. Lebanon, the area by the same name today was known for beasts – inadequate sacrifices.

¹⁷ ***All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.***

- A. All nations when viewed or ruled by God are nothing; He counts them less than nothing.
 1. Let Americans humble themselves before this God and His view of their total vanity.
 2. Let Christians know their God can achieve His will in, through, or over any nation.
- B. Recall and stress the lesson that God's power, wisdom, and glory will fulfill His will.
 1. Though prophecies for Judah included the impossible, God could bring them to pass.
 2. Though you might stagger at God's promises, you should not; He can do anything.
 3. Though you might pray for the impossible, believe in prayer, for He can do anything.

God's Infinite Superiority to Idols and Rulers – Verses 18-26

¹⁸ ***To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?***

- A. This is a new section after God's power, wisdom, and glory to mock and ridicule idols.
 - 1. To accomplish what has been and will be foretold, other religions must be defeated.
 - 2. Babylon had great idols they believed made them great (Is 39:6-7), could God win?
 - 3. The questions will be repeated to close out the section after some ridicule (Is 40:25).
- B. Here are two ways to ask how Israel's God could be compared to anyone or anything.
 - 1. Pagan nations made their gods to resemble someone or something they saw in nature.
 - 2. Egyptians, Greeks, Romans all copied men, animals, or other things (Rom 1:22-23).
 - 3. The following verses will mock idolatry for craftsmen copying something in nature.
 - 4. What is the likeness of God with infinite power, wisdom, and glory just described?
- C. The lesson of the questions is to exalt the true God and His religion over any other god.
- D. We should realize that colossal or growing religions prove nothing about truth of God.

¹⁹ ***The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains.***

- A. Craftsmen then and now have gifts to make images of things they wish to copy or invent.
- B. This particular idol is made of metal, for it required a workman melting metal for it.
 - 1. This is set in distinction to the totem pole or other wooden idols made from a tree.
 - 2. After the basis figure is crafted, a goldsmith decorated it with gold and silver accents.
- C. Get used to this glorious ridicule of idolatry, for our God has much more coming soon.

²⁰ ***He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved.***

- A. For poor nations or the poor persons in rich nations, there is another option altogether.
 - 1. Since they cannot afford metals for an attractive god, they can choose a yard tree.
 - 2. Or as the very poor do, they use a block of wood and choose a mantel god instead.
- B. Many nations and their gods could be mentioned, but think of Indians and totem poles.

²¹ ***Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?***

- A. These four questions relate to the first two questions that are repeated (Isaiah 40:18,25).
- B. It is obvious by creation, providence, conscience, and revelation that a great God exists.
 - 1. Pagans may have only creation, providence, and conscience, but they are sufficient.
 - 2. The Jews also had revelation, which clearly revealed their God trumped all idol gods.

²² ***It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:***

- A. The true and living God of the Jews was totally unlike the manmade figurines of pagans.
- B. The true and living God of the Jews was infinitely beyond any likeness or comparison.
 - 1. He sits on the circle or sphere of the earth as its Creator, Sustainer, and Restrainer.
 - 2. Our God, the LORD Jehovah, views the earth as nothing more than His footstool.
 - 3. In the sight of God, Greek or Roman pantheons were images of mere grasshoppers.
 - 4. God views the heavens (plural) as a curtain, so forget images of heavenly things.
 - 5. God uses the heavens (plural) as His tent, so what can a craftsman possibly do?
- C. Note carefully that this verse does not end with a period ... leading into the next verse.

²³ ***That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.***

- A. This great and glorious God, just described various ways (Is 40:12-22), crushes rulers.
- B. For the prophecies preceding and following, Messiah or Cyrus, rulers must be defeated.
- C. Neither they nor we should ever fear what governments may do against the true religion.
- D. God can reduce princes, priests, or people to foolish idiots (Is 19:11-12; 29:14; 44:25).

²⁴ ***Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.***

- A. This verse continues God's mockery of princes and judges of the nations against Judah.
- B. Comparing them to plants throughout the verse, they shall fail and disappear in all ways.

²⁵ ***To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.***

- A. Back to the first questions of this section (Is 40:18), which were to mock false religion.
 - 1. As Sennacherib had boasted, pagan nations trusted to idols, and Babylon was great.
 - 2. How could God fulfill glorious promises of Messiah (before) and Cyrus (to follow)?
- B. Here we have another name of our God, not the everlasting God, LORD, or Creator!
- C. There is no God holy like Jehovah. He alone is infinitely pure from all evil in all ways.

²⁶ ***Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.***

- A. Here is one final thought that takes in both this section and the one before it about God.
- B. The stars of heaven deserve your study, but you can start by looking straight up at night.
 - 1. We know far more about stars than any generation before us, so we should believe!
 - 2. The creative power of God is so great that the stars are as an afterthought (Gen 1:16).
 - 3. The creative power of God is so great that He made them with His fingers (Ps 8:3).
 - 4. How many stars are there? You cannot comprehend it ... but 1 billion trillion or so.
- C. There are about three features of stars that God wants you to consider about His power.
 - 1. He brings the host, or very large number, out at night; they do not rise like the sun.
 - 2. He has names for all the stars, and He calls them into obedience, by His great might.

3. It is His sustaining power that keeps them from failing or going out before their time.
- D. Remember the lessons in these sections – God is greater than nations, idols, and rulers.
 1. This faith-building exercise was to help the Jews believe His promises would occur.
 2. You should never doubt any promise or fear any situation or threat; He is your God.
- E. Remember further that the host of heaven (stars) are like the angels for Lord of hosts!

God's Wisdom and Power to Help Believers – Verses 27-31

²⁷ ***Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?***

- A. Make sure you fully understand that the hiding and passing over here is about trouble.
 1. There is a temptation, though difficult in this context, to think of God missing sins.
 2. Isaiah here rebuked the Jews for thinking their troubles meant God forsook them.
 3. Wisely note context for language like this – Psalm 139:1-12 is comfort, not warning.
- B. Never talk like this. Talk to each other of His saving mercy and strength (Mal 3:16-18).
 1. It is a blasphemy or close to it to get angry with God or accuse Him of forgetting.
 2. The next verse will appeal to Jehovah's creation, His strength, and His wisdom.
 3. It is at times like this that we must remember agricultural wisdom (Isaiah 28:23-29).
- C. Here is one of the great verses for an alternative sense of judgment – *just deliverance*.

²⁸ ***Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.***

- A. Here is the source of all comfort – the context moves from their doubts to glorious help.
 1. David encouraged himself in the LORD in very terrible circumstances (I Sam 30:6).
 2. David told us exactly how to do it ourselves in a Psalm of deliverance (Psalm 27).
 3. Details about **Psalm 27** (J. Cutler).
- B. Isaiah reduced the overwhelming situation of Judah's troubles to some basic questions.
 1. Paul used, *Know ye not* (Romans 6:3,16; 7:1; I Cor 3:16; 5:6; 6:3,9,15,16,19; 9:24).
 2. These basic facts must be taught to children, reminded to spouses, spoken of often.
 3. These basic facts should never be forgotten. They should be emphasized perpetually.
 4. We cannot forget them, for blaming or questioning God is blasphemy to be judged.
- C. Isaiah by inspiration used His memorial name and titles to exalt His ability to its max.
 1. We want to think of God this way, speak of Him this way, respond to life this way.
 2. He is the everlasting God, in that He has not and will change, so wait still for Him.
 3. He is the LORD, Jehovah, I AM THAT I AM, His memorial forever (Ex 3:14-15).
 4. He is the Creator God, not only of things close and known, but the earth's extremes.
 5. In these names is His independent, perpetual power to do anything that God can do.

- D. Beyond His names are His attributes, which should be perpetually remembered as well.
 - 1. Our God never gets tired, like everyone else you know, so He is always able to help.
 - 2. Elijah mocked prophets of Baal about him sleeping, but not our God (I Kgs 18:27).
 - 3. He is infinitely wise to know your every difficulty and the perfect solution for rescue.
- E. **Knowing God's Attributes** (detailed).

²⁹ ***He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.***

- A. This verse describes lack of ability sufficient to fail in ordinary or modestly hard events.
 - 1. Them described here are faint, which can arise due to age, sickness, constitution, etc.
 - 2. Others have no might, either by birth, age, exhaustion, combination of adversity, etc.
 - 3. This distinction about ability differs from the next verse's focus on circumstances.
- B. But God is able to supply your need for help to overcome weakness or circumstances.

³⁰ ***Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:***

- A. This verse is to describe circumstances sufficiently difficult to defeat natural abilities.
 - 1. Youths are the regular talk of the older generation for boundless activity and energy.
 - 2. Young men have life's most testosterone and human growth hormone for power.
 - 3. This focus about circumstances differs from the previous verse's focus on ability.
- B. But the trials that will come in life can defeat the best of men or women in their strength.

³¹ ***But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.***

- A. Grasp the context of difficult times in which the LORD would provide winning strength.
 - 1. The threat against the Jews in context is that of Babylon, their rulers in captivity.
 - 2. This powerful enemy appeared invincible, and Israel seemed doomed to the pagans.
 - 3. The chapter before ended with it (Is 39:6-7); the next chapter stresses it (Is 41:2-4).
 - 4. The prospect of escaping captivity was one problem and rebuilding rubble another.
- B. Let it be stressed greatly – the precious promises here are for only a very few persons.
 - 1. Renewed strength, flying like eagles, running tirelessly, and walking powerfully, etc.
 - 2. The inspired disjunctive *but* means opposite the falling described; some will prosper.
 - 3. Only they that wait upon the LORD shall obtain these blessings of the great Jehovah.
 - 4. It is folly to think the Bible and promises as these are like Dale Carnegie mantras.
 - 5. For a valuable comparison, consider how Psalm 91's promises are only for very few.
 - 6. **Psalm 91 Comfort** (sermons/outline).
- C. What does it mean to wait upon the LORD? It means to believe He can and will save.
 - 1. It does not mean to be His waiter in the sense of doing duties toward Him (Nu 3:10), which is a very rare or nonexistent sense of the word in our relationship to God.

2. It means to believe and trust in your heart against any odds that He will deliver you.
 3. It means humble dependence on God rather yourself or natural means of assistance.
 4. It means hoping in His mercy and expecting His strong deliverance in His timing.
 5. It means to encourage yourself in the LORD and wait for His timing (I Samuel 30:6).
 6. David's use of *wait* for waiting on the LORD is precious and powerful (Ps 27:13-14; 37:7; 39:7; 52:9; 59:9; 62:5; 69:3,6; 104:25-27; 123:2; 130:5; 145:15).
 7. Other Bible writers also help us understand waiting on the LORD (Isaiah 8:17; 25:9; Proverbs 20:22; Lamentations 3:25-26; Habakkuk 2:3; Gen 49:18; Rom 8:24-25).
 8. Since *waiting on the LORD* is the condition for the blessing, make sure you know it.
 9. **When Things Seem Hopeless.**
- D. The four metaphors are glorious and are often memorized. Make sure you grasp them.
1. But they are metaphors, not literal promises for your next H.S. track meet or a 5k.
 2. The metaphors do not describe surviving; they describe great success over adversity.
 3. Your ability to withstand evil events is very limited, but trust God anyway (Is 40:29).
 4. Circumstances will arise in life that can easily shake fit persons; trust God (Is 40:30).
 5. A movie, *Chariots of Fire*, a story of Eric Liddell, uses this verse with indirect truth; one of the American team gave him I Samuel 2:30 before his race for his *waiting*.
- E. To most others, a person of faith will appear calloused or an imbecile facing difficulties.
1. Remember the mourners when Jesus told them the dead girl was sleeping (Mat 9:24).
 2. Jonathan and his armorbearer both knew that numbers meant nothing (I Sam 14:6).
 3. Three young Jews told a furious Nebuchadnezzar they were not afraid (Da 3:16-22).
 4. There are many stories of martyrs with absolute confidence facing torture and death.
 5. This author knew a woman that facing blasts always said, "The LORD is in control."