

Session 29

ISAIAH

Isaiah 40:1-31

Memory Verse

But those who trust in the Lord will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not become weary, they will walk and not faint.

– ISAIAH 40:31, CSB



Isaiah

THEOLOGICAL THEME: The more you know the character and nature of God, the more you will experience the comfort He brings.

CALL TO ACTION: Be reminded of how God works in and among His people. Prayerfully consider who needs to hear these truths and commit to sharing with them about the love of God.

We all have things that keep us up at night: searching a solution for a dilemma, stress over big decisions, worry about the future. These are common concerns that easily overwhelm us when we are trying to relax and rest.

These kinds of thoughts are not new to people. For centuries, people have been plagued with worry, doubts, stress, and questions about the future. Sometimes it seems like the more you try to resolve issues, the more they intensify. Today, we are looking at a passage of Scripture given to bring comfort to God's people that has as much application now as it did when it was first received.

? What are some of the thoughts that keep you up at night or plague you throughout the day?

? When you feel stress or anxiety, where do you turn for help?

Session Summary


The Israelites had received warnings and dire predictions from the prophet Isaiah. The more details they learned, the worse they felt. But in Isaiah 40, God shifted from warnings to comfort. They had heard about the realities they would face, and they needed to be encouraged that God was still with them.

Isaiah reassured them that God loved them and wanted to deliver them. He also made it clear that nothing was too much for God to handle. He has complete power to deliver. One of the most comforting things believers can do in times of trouble is focus on the nature and character of the Lord. When the people grasped the power of God to deliver, they could also understand He wanted to deliver them. He is the Lord, full of compassion, comfort, grace, and mercy. He is love and the more we know about who He is the more we learn the comfort He offers those who wait on Him.

1. The Lord's Desire (Isaiah 40:1-11)

Isaiah chapter 40 moves from warnings of coming judgment to hope for restoration and deliverance. This passage gives hope and comfort that the Israelites greatly needed. Although the warnings of Isaiah earlier were serious and necessary, so was the comfort and encouragement that followed. The Lord is a God of comfort and desires for His messengers to speak comfort and blessings to His people. The concept of “speaking comfort” does not merely mean making someone feel better in the moment but gives focus to the goodness of the Lord on behalf of His people throughout the ages.

Isaiah referred to the prophets crying out in the barren places. Those who were tasked with speaking for the Lord to His people in exile were some of the ones crying out in barren places. He used the analogy of preparing the way or building a road. Obstacles must be removed so the to make way for the Lord as the triumphant King. As the construction of roads face various obstacles to be removed, so does the preparation of the hearts of people. Both are difficult. Both take time. Both require expert help and advice. But God reveals His glory as He prepares our hearts to receive Him. This passage would also have prophetic fulfillment in the person of John the Baptist in the New Testament (John 1:23).

 What are some obstacles in the human heart to receiving the truth about Jesus? How has the Lord made “straight the way” (John 1:23) in your life?

Emphasizing the fleeting glory of man with a comparison to the flowers and grass that wither and fade, Isaiah stressed where permanence was found. The Word of God has endured and will continue to do so. God's ways and decrees will endure and stand for eternity. God is the standard for truth and righteousness through all time.

Isaiah announced a message so great and powerful that it should be proclaimed to as many people as possible. The call to behold the Lord is to study and learn everything possible about Him. This prepares and empowers us as Christ followers to live our faith in the world and to be ready for when the Lord returns.

? What are some ways we can practice “beholding” the Lord daily? Why is this important?

Isaiah highlighted God's care and character as he spoke of the comfort and blessing for God's people. The Lord promised to come with power and might. When the Lord returns at the end of the age, it will be to inspect His work and reward His people. It will also be as a loving shepherd who cares for His sheep. A good shepherd feeds his sheep, cares for his sheep, protects his sheep, and leads his sheep to good places. God has promised to care for His people in this same way.

? Application: Where do you feel in need of deliverance right now? How can Isaiah's words bring you comfort, even if that doesn't mean immediate relief?

2. The Lord's Might (Isaiah 40:12-26)

God can do anything and has all the power He will ever need. He has might and authority over creation as the One who has measured the waters and the heavens. That alone should be enough to convince us that He can do anything, but Isaiah didn't stop there.

God is not only powerful, but He is also infinitely knowledgeable and wise. If He knows how heavy the mountains are, then He surely knows what His people need. The Lord needs no counsel, instruction, or teaching.


? How do you see the wisdom and intelligence of the Lord in creation? In your own life?

Isaiah compared the greatness of God to the most powerful nations. Isaiah challenged the people to think of the greatest nations with their powerful military presences. But compared to the Lord, the greatest power on earth is like a drop in a bucket. Those who take pride themselves and think that they are as supreme display foolishness before the Lord. He has no tolerance for that kind of pride and will come against it.

? What is the most powerful force you can think of in earthly terms? Consider that no matter what that thing is, it is insignificant compared to the Lord. How does this encourage you?

Israel had been in exile and surrounded by people who worshipped all kinds of different idols. These were typically some kind of statue, carving, or other image to represent various gods. Isaiah made clear there was no comparison between the Lord and these empty idols of the nations. Although these carved images were abundantly visible and available, God has no rival.

In verses 21-26, Isaiah used strong language to emphasize the greatness of God revealed in the glory of His creation. He sits above creation, and He created it all. He is the Lord of it all. God's mastery over creation is displayed by His ability to count all the stars and call them by name. When you consider the vastness of the night sky, it is mind blowing that God knows the exact number of stars in the heavens and he is familiar with each one. God not only wants to deliver His people, but He also has abundant power to do so.

 Application: Consider the truth that God knows each star by name. What does this tell you about the way He knows you?


3. The Lord's Proclamation (Isaiah 40:27-31)

We don't only need to understand God's desire and His power, but we also must understand how this makes a difference in our lives. Too many times Christ followers stop short of applying what they know about the Lord. They believe these truths and understand them to a point but unless these truths are taken in and applied to our daily lives, we are missing the point. Isaiah answered the question: if God wants to deliver us and He can deliver us, will He choose to?

Isaiah quoted the Israelites as saying their way was hidden from the Lord and their claim was ignored by Him. Essentially, they were saying: God doesn't see me or care about me. They had believed false claims about the Lord and needed to hear what Isaiah had to say. Many around us believe these same falsehoods and need to know the truth.


 When have you questioned if God saw what was happening with you or cared? How does the cross answer this question for us?

Isaiah responded with the reminder that God gives His power to the weak and those who have no might—those who see their need of Him. Those who are proud and confident in their own strength will not receive strength from the Lord because they have chosen to rely on their own. God's strength is reserved for those who know they are weak and have no might.

 How do we reject the power and strength of God when we rely on our own strength as sufficient?

When you know you need strength from the Lord, you should wait on Him. His strength comes as we wait and trust in His timing. This kind of waiting is not passive but is actively seeking Him and relying on Him as we move forward trusting Him.

Our weak strength is renewed when we wait on the Lord. Isaiah used the image of an eagle in flight, a person running, and one with strong walk to describe those who wait on the Lord and receive His strength. As we do, we are renewed by Him continually.


 **Application:** Where do you need the Lord to renew your strength? How will you rely on Him to do so?


Conclusion

Following warnings and dire predictions of what they would experience due to rebellion, God knew what His people needed—comfort. Anytime God’s people struggle with fear, worry, or anxiety, the answer is not found in our own solutions but in focusing on who God is and how He comforts His people. Knowing God better is the only lasting antidote for the worries of the world.

To know God is to know comfort because that’s who He is. Isaiah reassured the people of the plans that the Lord had for them. It is important to recognize that God has great plans for His people and desires abundant life for them. He does not want His people to be in bondage of any kind, especially as a direct result of their own sin.

Finally, Isaiah moved to who God is and what He has the power to do. God will never change. He will never leave us, and He is powerful to do anything. God never grows weary or tired, and His Word endures forever. When you need His strength, the key is to wait on Him and stop trying to achieve according to your limited power. He loves you and wants to exchange His power for yours. Understanding the character and nature of God brings comfort no matter what we face.

 What do you need to know or remember about the nature and character of God? How can you remind yourself of this regularly?

 How can we as a group encourage one another to rely on the Lord instead of trusting in our own strength?

 Who will you share with about the goodness of God?

Memorize

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- Isaiah 40:31, CSB