

Rick Miller – Isaiah 40 (Part 1) - March 26, 2023

Isaiah chapter 40, verse 1:

1“Comfort, yes, comfort My people!”

Says your God.

2“Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her,

That her warfare is ended,

That her iniquity is pardoned;

For she has received from the LORD’s hand

Double for all her sins.”

It's interesting that this is really a transitional chapter. The first 39 chapters were really more of an emphasis on God's judgment, God dealing with the enemies of Israel. But of course dealing with his people and preparing their hearts. Then we see this change from judgment more to grace and it jumps out at us in the very first verse. Comfort, yes, comfort my people.

It's a principle that we see in the Bible where in order for someone to receive from the Lord you have to have a heart that's prepared. You have to have a humble heart. You have to have a repentant heart. So the emphasis on judgment and correction and God dealing with his people and other nations in the first 39 chapters of Isaiah, it just fits right in with the way the whole Bible is designed.

In fact, what I think is interesting is even the numbering scheme here of how the chapters were numbered. Isaiah 39, similar to the 39 books in the Old Testament, which obviously emphasized more of a judgment and a preparation for the Messiah. And then the last 27 chapters of Isaiah, just like the last 27 books of the Bible, the New Testament, emphasized the coming of the Messiah for a people whose heart has been prepared and the forgiveness and the grace of God.

We see, interestingly enough in chapter 39, even this kind of condensed preparation of the people's heart showing the pride of Hezekiah and the selfishness, of which of course, mirrors our pride and our selfishness. You know it's funny, we can look at certain individuals in the Bible and say, oh, look how messed up that guy was. Hezekiah, you know, he was so proud, he was so selfish.

And yet really, if God was to zoom in on our lives and make our lives public to everyone like Hezekiah, a lot of the same stories would be told about our lives, right? And so we look at Hezekiah in chapter 39 where we covered last time and we see him showing off all of the riches to the Babylonian envoy that had come.

Then Isaiah came and rebuked him for doing that and saying you're really lacking wisdom, Hezekiah. You're showing off the treasures of the house of the Lord to the enemies of the Lord. And actually these Babylonians that you're trying to impress, they're going to take the nation into captivity in the future, and your sons and grandchildren will be taken into captivity into Babylon.

Then Hezekiah says, 'well, I guess that's good because it won't happen in my day. It'll happen in, you know, my grandchildren's time.' So obviously not the best reaction. It's showing his selfishness. 'Well, at least I'm protected even though my family will be impacted. I'm okay.'

But again I think that condenses in one short chapter, the picture of the human condition that we are so full of pride, that we are so selfish, and isn't that what we're fighting as Christians? We have enough self-awareness to see that in ourselves and we're trying to work with the Holy Spirit to let him reveal these areas of pride and selfishness that we could then repent and say, Lord, please change my heart.

I see that it is wrong and I want to be like Christ. I don't want to be proud. I want to be humble. I don't want to be selfish. I want to be giving like Christ. And so God proclaims to the nation of Israel, you are going to be corrected. You're going to be carried off to Babylon. Now, this would not happen for another hundred years from the time Isaiah spoke this, that they would be taken off into captivity.

That would last 70 years and then they would be brought back, those who had been taken captive into Babylon. The Jews even prospered in Babylon while they were there. Then when the 70 years were finished only a remnant really wanted to come back. A small number wanted to come back to Israel.

It was almost like God was purging and preparing this small number of people for the coming of the Messiah which would happen several hundred years later. It's a picture of how God is working in our lives to prepare our hearts, to walk with him more closely, for him to purge out those things in our life that are displeasing to him.

So notice in verse one of chapter 40, where he starts out saying, “*Comfort, yes comfort my people, says your God. Speak comfort to Jerusalem and cry out to her that her warfare has ended and that her iniquity is pardoned.*” So here the Lord had just pronounced judgment in the previous chapter and yet now he's saying comfort my people.

Notice what he says though. He's saying comfort, yes, comfort my people. So the word of the Lord, of comfort, is to his people, his people who are born again. We think of it in the New Testament view, those who've been given new hearts, that you want to please God, you're his child, your desire is to serve the Lord, to live for the Lord.

I know, in my life, when I became born again at 17 years of age, I saw within my own heart such a radical change that I didn't expect. I was thinking about becoming a Christian and I thought, well, you know, I guess I won't be having fun anymore, but at least I'll be a good person. I won't go to hell.

That's how I viewed Christianity before I stepped across the line and gave my life to the Lord. Once I said, Lord Jesus, I'm ready to surrender my life to you, come into my life, the Holy Spirit came in me at that moment. It was such a dramatic experience for me. Then I saw over the next weeks and months how, wow, all my desires have changed.

I wanted to be with God's people. I used to avoid Christians like the plague because I was convicted. Now I wanted to be with God's people. I wanted to please God. Before I was born again that was something I never thought about. Pleasing God. I mean, I'd pray once in a while, you know, God, if you get me out of this problem, I'll serve you. Bargaining with God before I was a Christian.

But the radical change that God makes in our hearts when we're born again; we're now his people and the Lord sees our hearts because the Bible says he gives you a new heart, a new spirit. If any man is in Christ, he becomes a new creature. All things are passed away. Behold, all things are new.

I remember when I first was a Christian, I read that verse, ‘If any man is in Christ he's a new creature. All things are passed away. Behold, all things are new.’ I said that's exactly what's happened to me. I'm like a new person and my old life is passing away. New things are coming.

For those of us who are born again, who want to please the Lord, even though we stumble and we sin and we make mistakes, there's a difference because

we're not planning sin as it were, right? I mean before you were a Christian you'd think about, oh, I'm going to go do this sin and I can't wait to get there, you know? And you're actually planning sin in your life.

As a Christian we're more like, we stumble into it, we're weak, the devil kind of gets us when we're in a weak point. He brings a temptation and maybe you stumble, you fall, and the Lord sees your heart. He says, look, I understand. You're but flesh. And you're weak and you stumble sometimes, but your heart's desire is to please me.

See that word is to us comfort. You should be comforted. The Lord, yes he brings correction in our lives. If we're without correction, we're illegitimate children, the Bible says. He's like a good parent, right? Like that little child who keeps disobeying. They're running in the street and you have to spank them and they're crying.

And yet you're saying, sweetie, come here. You know daddy doesn't want to have to spank you, but you keep disobeying me. You keep going in the street and you're going to get hit by a car. They can't even really understand your perspective, so you're correcting them, but you're also comforting them.

I think that's what the Lord is to us. It can be hard being a little kid, right? Getting corrected all the time. God knows it's hard being a Christian. You're being corrected. You're being attacked by the devil. You're being corrected by God. You're living in a fallen body.

I think there's a word of comfort for us. Paul talks about that in 2nd Corinthians. We don't have time to go there but in the first chapter of 2nd Corinthians he talks about us being comforted in our sufferings that were then able to comfort others. And so God doesn't promise a comfortable life, does he?

No he doesn't. But when we are living for him and serving him, he does comfort us in our difficulties and sufferings that we can turn and comfort others. I love this where the Lord starts out this chapter, this section of Isaiah, with comforting my people. And notice he repeats it.

Comfort, yes, comfort my people. And then verse 2:

*2 "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her,
That her warfare is ended,*

That her iniquity is pardoned;

And that idea that as believers we're not at war with God anymore, we're not in rebellion. And sometimes we need to stop and remember your sins are forgiven.

Many of us are so serious about our Christian life and we're wanting to grow, we're wanting to achieve. We're wanting to get closer to God. We're wanting to serve the Lord. We can get so works-oriented, out of balance sometimes, and you sometimes need to step back and take a deep breath.

Just realize, wow, I'm forgiven. I stand holy before a holy God because of what Jesus did for me. My iniquity is pardoned. I'm at peace with God. Then notice what it says; for she has received from the Lord's hand, double for her sins.

That's kind of a difficult passage, where you think, well, wait a minute. Why would you double up the punishment for my sin, God? I heard one preacher say in the original Hebrew and studies he's made, he feels like the picture is more like doubling over a piece of paper where you're perfectly covering the other side of the piece of paper or doubling over a cloth.

And the idea is more; your sins are perfectly covered by the blood of Christ, and I like to think of it that way.

The Lord has dealt with our sins. He has dealt with us and he's saying, look, be comforted by me. I'm doing a work in your life. I know it's not easy but you need to trust me. I have a purpose and a plan that I am working. Let's go on to verse three.

3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the Lord;

Make straight in the desert

A highway for our God.

4 Every valley shall be exalted

And every mountain and hill brought low;

The crooked places shall be made straight

And the rough places smooth;

5 The glory of the Lord shall be revealed,

*And all flesh shall see it together;
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”*

Another interesting passage as we come into this new section of Isaiah where it's really talking of the preparation for the coming of the Messiah. I'm sure many of you recognize this as the passage used in the gospels identifying the ministry of John the Baptist. Where this scripture is quoted, this prophecy being fulfilled.

The picture is preparing the way of the Lord. So the king is coming back in that day where maybe a smaller town heard that the king is going to come and visit them. So you would want to prepare the roads for the coming of the king. Fill in the potholes and any kind of mounds that needed to be lowered, make a straight path for the king so he can come into the town and you're in other words, like, rolling out the red carpet for the king. Of course, the Lord is talking now here spiritually as John the Baptist applied it. Prepare your heart for the coming of the Messiah. The context there was repent.

Come to John the Baptist, be baptized in the Jordan for the remission of sins. So people would come and say, yes, I know I'm a sinner. I want to change my life. I want to follow the Lord. I want to be prepared for the coming of the Messiah. So that's a picture for us as believers that God is working things out in our lives, right?

Smoothing out those rough places so we can walk with the Lord, pleasing to him. So those rough places in our life, he's smoothing out. The crooked places he's making straight. The mountains of pride he's bringing low. The valleys are brought up. It's interesting how we can go to different extremes in our walk with God where we can have pride and God is trying to deal with us and humble us, or we can be in a valley of depression and self-loathing and we're out of balance that way.

The beauty of the Holy Spirit's ministry, the spirit of truth, is where he can walk us through. Lord, what are you dealing with in my life? Spirit of truth, what is true? What is not true? What's my attitude toward God? Can you straighten out those twisted ways of thinking about you, about myself?

This is what God is saying there. There has to be a preparation of the heart for the coming of the Messiah. Then notice verse five. It says the glory of the Lord

shall be revealed. All flesh shall see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken in that glory of the Lord. Jesus came and his glory was revealed.

It says that the law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Of his glory we have seen glory upon glory. The apostle saw the glory of Jesus Christ. You think of the Mount of Transfiguration when the glory of Christ was shown to Peter, James, and John.

This is ultimately what the Lord desires to do in our lives, to reveal his glory. He wants a relationship with us and we have to keep that in mind as we're going through those corrections from the Lord, whereas he's straightening our thinking out as he's working on our heart. Ultimately God wants us to have this glorious relationship with him.

And then verse six:

6 The voice said, "Cry out!"

And he said, "What shall I cry?"

"All flesh is grass,

And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.

7 The grass withers, the flower fades,

Because the breath of the Lord blows upon it;

Surely the people are grass.

8 The grass withers, the flower fades,

But the word of our God stands forever."

So this crying out of this voice. We saw this crying out in the wilderness in verse three of preparing the way of the Lord. Now we see this other crying out; this truth that all flesh is grass, all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. We could see this in a couple different ways.

The importance of a person of God having eternal things in view, recognizing the truth about ourselves, like our life is just temporary. We're here, we're gone. So it only makes sense to live for eternal things, right? That's the truth that's very important for a person of God who's allowing God to work in their lives.

But there's another truth here that I think fits in the context of this chapter as we're going to get into later in the chapter. And it's a long chapter. We're not going to finish it today, but this idea of the power of these forces of evil that Judah is seeing, people of God are seeing in the world. They're seeing this Assyrian empire dominate the world.

Certainly the Lord doesn't seem to be dominating the world at that time, and certainly in our world today, it doesn't seem like God's dominating, right? Evil abounds, but God is saying, look, I'm working a plan and these powers of evil you can just consider them like the grass that comes up in the morning and then fades away.

You as my people need to understand who's on the throne. I'm on the throne and ultimately Jesus is going to come back and rule and reign in this world. We know that but we also need to remember he's Lord of our lives now. Just as we look at the world and say it's not like it should be, you look at your life and you say it's not like I would like it.

I would like a lot of things changed, and you might even be distressed about that, like, I don't understand. Now jump over to verse 27 of this same chapter and you'll see, I think, where we're headed with all of this. Verse 27 says;

27 Why do you say, O Jacob,

And speak, O Israel:

"My way is hidden from the Lord,

And my just claim is passed over by my God"?

Now this is what I think God is getting to. He's saying, look, you're my people. But I understand the struggle you're in as my people. I see your heart and I see your prayer and you're saying God, why aren't you hearing me?

Why are you allowing me to live with this suffering? I can look around at you guys. I know many of your stories and I know many of your struggles. And we could think we're Christians, we're trying to live for the Lord. Why is the Lord allowing this depression or this loneliness, or this financial struggle, or this relational issue, or this health problem?

You know, what's going on? I've prayed about it. Nothing's changed. It seems like my way is hidden from the Lord and my just claim is passed over by my

God. But see, this is what God is calling us to. He's saying, look, you need to recognize I'm on the throne. I'm all powerful, and even though you don't understand what's going on in my plan, you need to trust me.

You need to wait upon me. You need my strength to walk through these difficulties. It's not that God's just going to take you out of that difficulty. Now, sometimes that happens, sometimes God just delivers us, but many times it's God saying I want you to get my inner strength and I want you to walk through this fire.

Now we don't like that but you know what? We come out the other side and we're strong. Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace. They walked out of there and they were better for it. God did a work in their heart. Now again, if we continue down from verse 27, we're asking this question and then God's goes on and gives a reminder to them of how great he is.

And then I'm sure many of you have this section memorized and we're not going to get into it in depth right now, but just a reminder where he says, *“If you will wait upon me for my strength, you will mount up with wings as eagles, you'll run and not get tired. You'll walk and not faint.”*

Okay, so God is saying you're questioning me why it doesn't seem like God is answering your prayer. But I'm telling you, you need to wait upon me in faith and remember how great I am. I'm going to give you power inside your heart, your life. I'm going to give you wisdom.

I'm going to give you power and you're going to walk through this thing with my strength. So we think about that concept of, ‘they that wait upon the Lord’. Verse 31; ‘those that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength’. And we think, well, what does that mean? Well keep reading.

In chapter 41, it says;

*1 “Keep silence before Me, O coastlands,
And let the people renew their strength!*

So the idea of waiting on God is keeping silent before him so you're recognizing how great he is and meditating on that, and saying, yes God, you have all wisdom. My life is in your hands.

You know what you're doing. Empower me to walk through this thing. Now I jumped ahead, I understand, but let's jump back now to verse six, where he was crying out.

"What shall I cry?"

"All flesh is grass,

And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.

So what God is saying in that context is these forces that seem to be dominating are evil, they are grass that's going to fade away. You need to trust me; you need to remember how great I am. Let's go on to verse nine. This will all come together as we keep going.

9 O Zion,

You who bring good tidings,

Get up into the high mountain;

O Jerusalem,

You who bring good tidings,

Lift up your voice with strength,

Lift it up, be not afraid;

Say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"

See, this is the beauty of God's people. Zion, Jerusalem, God's people. This remnant that was God's people. He says this is the good news. This is the good tidings. This is the message that I want you to give to my people. What is it? Real simple. Three words. Behold your God.

Now we can read past that and move on. But think of what he's saying there. He's saying the preparation of the heart, rightly viewing what's going on in your life, is all going to come clear when you behold your God.

Now I think that ties into what we just read, waiting upon God or keeping silence before God. If you don't get anything else from this sermon, if you can remember that, behold your God, wait upon God, be silenced before your God. It's the same kind of truth, right? In three different ways.

God often speaks to us. If we don't get it from one phrase, he'll give us another one, and yet another one. He's building this truth. He's saying I'm God; I want you to look at me. Remember how great I am. What he goes on to then in the rest of this chapter, is to show us how powerful he is. How loving he is and how powerful he is.

So let's go on to verse 10;

10 Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand,

And His arm shall rule for Him;

Behold, His reward is with Him,

And His work before Him.

11 He will feed His flock like a shepherd;

He will gather the lambs with His arm,

And carry them in His bosom,

And gently lead those who are with young.

He is reminding his people that as you behold your God, remember I am a God who cares. You think that your just claim is hidden from me? You think that I don't see what you're going through, but I'm telling you I am like a good shepherd. And a good shepherd does not neglect his flock. A good shepherd is very involved. He knows what's going on with every one of his flock, every one of his lambs.

And you see that beautiful picture. He's gathering the lambs in his arms, carrying them in his bosom. That's how much God cares about us, how much he loves us. So God's saying, you're saying I don't see you, I'm not listening to your prayers? But this is the truth of who I am, I want you to behold me. I want you to see that I'm this precious shepherd who loves you. Then he moves on into verse 12, about not only his love, but his greatness.

12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand,

Measured heaven with a span

And calculated the dust of the earth in a measure?

Weighed the mountains in scales

And the hills in a balance?

So he is saying, my people, remember how great I am. I can take the whole ocean right here in the palm of my hand. I can measure heaven with a span. A span is from the tip of your thumb to the tip of the little finger. Just like God can hold it up to the heavens, the stars and say, yeah, I measure it like that.

I can weigh the mountains in the scales and the hills in a balance. God is powerful. God is almighty. Verse 13:

13Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord,

Or as His counselor has taught Him?

14With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him,

And taught Him in the path of justice?

Who taught Him knowledge,

And showed Him the way of understanding?

God is saying, not only am I powerful, but I'm very wise. I know what I'm doing. I don't need your advice. I always love where the disciples would try to give Jesus advice, and the Lord saying is who has directed the spirit of the Lord, who's counseled him or taught him? You can't teach God anything.

We need him to teach us. And sometimes in our prayers we're telling God what to do. This is what you need to do. God says will you just wait on me. Will you just behold? Will you just be silent before me and recognize how great I am?

It's okay to pray and say, Lord, give us this day our daily bread. But there's also that part of the Lord's Prayer where we say, hallowed be thy name, right? Holy are you God, you are holy. You are great. You are mighty. I'm going to meditate on your great power and I'm going to meditate on your great wisdom.

And then I think about how in our lives we need to remember the power of God. We need to remember the wisdom of God. And I was thinking about the verse in 1st Corinthians where Paul talks about how Jesus has become to us the power

of God and the wisdom of God. It totally fits in with what we're reading here in Isaiah, because it's the same God.

It's the same principle, just as he was telling his people back then. You need my power. You need to remember how powerful I am and I'm working in your lives. You need to remember how wise I am and you need to trust in my wisdom. I want to go to 1 Corinthians chapter one and talk about this principle of the strength we need as believers and the wisdom we need as believers to walk through the difficulties of life. Not just always trying to get out of the difficulties, but walk through them with his strength.

So in verse 18:

*18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written:
"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."*

So notice the subject of power and wisdom here. Verse 20:

20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For Jews request a sign, (or they request power) and Greeks seek after wisdom; (So you've got power and wisdom) 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish

things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29that no flesh should glory in His presence. (See, that's the key) 30But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— 31that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”

So Paul is breaking down here the same principle that we are looking at in Isaiah. The power of God and the wisdom of God in God's people. The beauty of that is that Christ has become that to us. Verse 24, “*Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.*” So by you, just in faith, looking to Jesus your savior - Lord, I need your power, Lord, I need your wisdom to walk through this difficulty.

Am I viewing this difficulty like I should Lord? Am I viewing this need like I should? Give me your wisdom, Lord, give me your power. Now notice verse 30 of 1st Corinthians, chapter one. “*But of him, you are in Christ Jesus.*”

God put us in Christ when we first believed. That whole concept of being in Christ is amazing. All of the resources of who Christ is, we have access to, because we're in him and he's in us. I heard one preacher say it's kind of like a sponge in the ocean. The ocean is in the sponge, but the sponge is also in the ocean, and the sponge is living off the resources of the ocean. We're in Christ. He's in us. But we're living off of him. We're feeding on him.

So he became for us wisdom from God. Then it says in verse 30; “*But of him, you are in Christ Jesus who became for us wisdom from God.*” And now here's the power part, I believe; and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. So earlier he was saying Christ is the wisdom of God and the power of God. Now he's saying Christ is the wisdom of God. Then I think he breaks down the power part of it into these three words - righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. To live a righteous life, you need power. Have you noticed that? There are temptations. This world wants to pull us down. This flesh. The devil. To live a righteous life we need the power of Christ. And yet it's available to us by faith, humility and faith. Lord, I don't have righteousness in myself. You

know that. But Lord, pour into me your righteousness and sanctification. Sanctification just means you're being set apart from the world.

You're being set apart by God for a purpose. So it would be like in the temple back in the Old Testament where they would have a cup that would be used by the priests. It's holy, it's sanctified, and it's dedicated for the purpose of the temple. If you were to use that for other purposes, you would be in trouble.

And that happened where the pagan kings were drinking from the cups from the temple and God brought judgment on them because that's a holy thing. You don't just take that cup and use it for whatever you want. So you are holy. You are being separated, that's why you don't fit into the world anymore, into their mold.

You're being sanctified but it takes power to be sanctified. It takes power because you'll just be sucked into the world unless you have that power to go upstream. I just had a picture of a boat, a power boat going upstream. If you have a powerful engine you could go upstream. Otherwise, if you don't have that power you're just going to float with the current.

So, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Redemption, that's taking something that's old and broken and making it new. Isn't that beautiful? I love when they have these shows where they restore old cars.

For some reason I like that. You took that piece of junk and you guys made this bright, shiny, powerful car. It wasn't even running and now you put this new engine in it, you fixed it all up and it's redeemed. That's a picture of us, right? And then who gets all the glory? As it says, he who glories, let him glory in the Lord.

So you can't say your successful Christian life is through my many years of study and my diligent prayer life and that I became a successful Christian. No, 'I'm just clinging to Jesus by faith', and he gives me his wisdom as a gift because I don't have a clue how to live my life.

He gives that to me and I just give him all the glory and he gives me power as I fall at his feet. Lord, fill me with your power. One other passage I want to read here as we continue in 1st Corinthians, chapter two of 1st Corinthians. Paul said, *"And I brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God."*

So Paul, even though he was a genius, they say, in the natural, he didn't come to them to show how smart he was. He said, I'm no, I'm not going to do that for, I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. You talk about beholding your God, waiting in silence before God, waiting upon the Lord.

Put yourself at the foot of the cross. I find myself spending a lot of time there in prayer, just like, oh my goodness, my Lord, hanging there on a cross. The Holy Son of God taking all of my sin upon him, suffering the wrath of God. And it's dark, the sun wasn't even shining because even nature was rebelling. Like, what are you doing?

I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. That's what Paul's message was. Look at Jesus. Look at him crucified. That's where you're going to find power and wisdom. Verse 3; *"I was with you in weakness, in fear, and much trembling."* I mean, Paul was not an impressive person.

You know, he just came with that mess. He said, don't look at me, don't look at my wisdom. Look at Jesus. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. You get this theme, power and wisdom.

It comes through the cross. This is the good news. This is the good news that God is telling them to shout. The good tidings back in chapter 40:9. Bring good tidings. Bring good news. Lift up your voice. Say Behold your God. This wisdom and this power is available to all of us, the weakest of us.

There's no excuse to say, well, I'm just not strong enough to be a Christian. I'm not. I don't know enough. No, you fall at the feet of Jesus in faith, you fall at the feet of the cross, and that's what qualifies you to receive the power of the spirit to overcome sin, to overcome this world, to walk through the trials that are in your life. He'll give you power. He'll give you wisdom. And then you cannot glory in anything but the Lord.

So let's pray. Lord,

We thank you for the cross of Christ. We thank you for this power that we read of in Isaiah. God, you hold the ocean in your hands. You measure the space with the span of your finger. You weigh the mountains, and yet you're a gentle

shepherd who holds that little lamb in your bosom, Lord. God, you are everything we need.

Forgive us when we say, where is God? Has he forgotten me? Lord, you see us. You love us and you've demonstrated that through the cross of Christ. You said I want that power that I have to be poured into you through the cross. That's the only way where we're humbled, humbled before him, where we see him taking our sin on himself.

He paid the price. It's his grace. It's his mercy. This perfect sacrifice, and we're now able to have access to this great power, this great wisdom to walk through the deepest valleys, Lord. Then you're going to bring us out to the place of glory. You are! Lord, I just pray for each one here that they can hang on through the trial, that they can have that inner strength, that they can see with wisdom why you're allowing this thing in their life, Lord.

And they won't be bitter. They won't be angry. They won't be questioning you, God. They'll be worshiping you and just walking through it with power. So help each of us, Lord, to walk in this wisdom, walk in this power, because we just look at Jesus, we behold our God on a cross. We behold our God resurrected and now living in us. And we thank you.

Lord, as we go into this week, let us walk in these truths. And Lord, as we have lunch together and then an afterglow, Lord, may you continue to speak by your spirit as we listen in Jesus' name.

Amen.