

Do you remember February? It was pretty much like any other February. Two months into the year, everything seemed fairly normal. If you were like me, you were already looking to the months ahead and making some plans, dreaming some dreams, anticipating what was ahead. And then the March winds blew in and everything changed. Boy did they change. And the changes have put us in a place we've never been before. I don't about you, but the past few months have been difficult for me. From the Covid19 quarantine and the resulting isolation -- to the exposure of racial injustice and mounting tensions and riots -- to some personal losses and hardships, it has felt at times like everything was falling apart. In the middle of all of it, Psalm 11:3-4 have been a comfort for me. *When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?"*<sup>4</sup> *The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord is on his heavenly throne.*

What do the children of God do when it looks like everything is being destroyed? Surprisingly, there's no explicit instruction, only a reminder of an unchanging truth -- *The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord is on his heavenly throne.* The answer to the disaster is KNOW THIS -- God is in control. Honestly, the Bible is pretty consistent in delivering that message to us. LOOK UP. Fix your eye son Jesus. Set your mind on things above.

I don't find my way out of difficulty by staring at the disaster, I find my way through it by looking at Jesus. Today, I want us to take a look at a section of Isaiah 40 and consider this question: how do we remain faithful when we feel like everything is falling apart and it doesn't look like God is doing anything about it? And I promise, if you don't need this today, you'll need it soon. If you've got your Bible handy, grab it and turn to Isaiah 40. We're going to look at Isaiah 40:25-31.

### **Isaiah 40:25-31**

"To whom will you compare me?

Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

<sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:

Who created all these?

He who brings out the starry host one by one  
and calls forth each of them by name.

Because of his great power and mighty strength,  
not one of them is missing.

<sup>27</sup> Why do you complain, Jacob?

Why do you say, Israel,

"My way is hidden from the Lord;  
my cause is disregarded by my God"?

<sup>28</sup> Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.

<sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.

<sup>30</sup> Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;

<sup>31</sup> but those who hope in the Lord  
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

The complaint of the children of God here in Isaiah 40:27 may sound a lot like what you and I may feel in the midst of all that's going on around us, when everything seems to be coming apart at the seams.

You might be tempted to think or even say "My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God"? But you need to know that's not true, if you are follower of Jesus, it

couldn't be further from the truth. Because He promised to never leave us or forsake us, He promised to work all things together for our good, and He promised that He would faithfully finish the work that He started in us. But what do we do in difficult seasons, so that we don't lose heart and give up? There are 3 things I think this passage teaches us that are essential if we are going to remain faithful in dark and difficult times. Here they are: WORSHIP, WAIT, and WALK.

I know it sounds simple, maybe too simple. But let's unpack them and see how we can live like this in these tumultuous times

## #1 WE WORSHIP HIM

When I say "worship" I'm not talk about our corporate gatherings, I'm not talking about singing (or listening to the worship team) I'm talking about the basic meaning of worship – ascribing worth, recognizing value and responding. Treasuring, adoring, loving. That's what it means to worship.

God asks the question in verse 25 *"To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.* This is absolutely foundational – you must be sure of this: THERE IS NO ONE WHO COMPARES TO OUR GOD. In every possible way, He is incomparable. No one and nothing is equal to Him – not even a close second.

First, this verse reminds us that He's the Holy One. Holy – set apart, separate from all others. Pure, righteous, without defect. That alone sets Him above every other. But there's more.

Verse 26

<sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:

Who created all these?

He who brings out the starry host one by one

and calls forth each of them by name.  
Because of his great power and mighty strength,  
not one of them is missing.

This verse instructs us to look up, because the heavens have something to say about the One beyond them, above them. Psalm 19:1 says *"The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth forth His handiwork"* (can you tell I memorized that in the King James?) But in spite of the archaic language, here's what you know, something of the glory of God is made known to us in His creation. Romans 1:20 tells us that His invisible qualities can be clearly seen by all men just from looking at what He has made. But He didn't just make the heavens and the earth, he rules over them as Sovereign King. Look again at verse 26 "He brings out the starry host one by one." What might look to us like an automatic occurrence that we take for granted (it just happens) – the sun goes down and the stars come out - is actually subject to the will of the Sovereign King and Creator. Our God is intentionally engaged in the life of His creation. He calls them out one by one...by Name. They have a name, he knows their name. He is aware and attentive to them. How amazing is that?

And if He knows their name, surely he knows yours. Your Sovereign King, your Creator, is personally involved in the most mundane and routine occurrences of your life. What may feel like an automatic occurrence that just happens (every breathe, every heartbeat) is actually something to which He is intimately attentive.

And if by His great power and mighty strength He can insure that not one of the starry hosts goes missing, and if he watches over the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, then He is surely more aware of your circumstance and more than able to keep you. Hebrews 1:3 says that Jesus Himself sustains all things by his powerful word. There's no other god

who claims such power and authority. And the details and intricacy of creation should provoke us to worship and stand in awe of God. but there's more

Verse 27

<sup>27</sup> Why do you complain, Jacob?

Why do you say, Israel,

“My way is hidden from the Lord ;

my cause is disregarded by my God”?

In responding to their complaint, God Almighty calls his children by name. (Just like He calls the stars by name) Jacob. Israel. The very names by which God calls them are a reminder of their heritage and the faithful work of God in their past. As the people of God, they had a history. A history of God working in the worst of circumstances – God blessed Jacob in spite of his deceit and scheming. God kept him from his brother Esau's wrath. He blessed him with 12 sons. Remember his son, Joseph. If it ever looked like God had abandoned someone it was Joseph – sold into slavery by his brothers, lied about by Potiphar's wife and wrongly imprisoned, forgotten by those he befriended and helped – yet God purposed to bring good out of all of it. And he brought a great provision and deliverance through Joseph. But the legacy of deliverance doesn't stop there. After years of bondage and slavery in Egypt, God sent Moses to bring Israel, his people out. And what a wonderful and amazing work God did in delivering them.

You know the story...the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Amazing. And from that day until the time of Isaiah, the people of God had continually experienced the faithful work of God, in spite of their repeated unfaithfulness. Listen, no other god compares.

And Israel should have known that. And we should know that.

Look at verse 28

<sup>28</sup> Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.

It is as if Isaiah is in disbelief. How do you not already know this? Have you not been paying attention? Are you not listening? And I'm sure he'd say the same to us today. God's Word and His work in your life should fuel confidence and hope and faith and WORSHIP. If you and I don't look back and marvel at what God has done in us and for us, then we're not paying attention. My redemption, my salvation is reason enough to *stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, and wonder how he could love me a sinner, condemned, unclean.*

The back half of this verse (verse 28) Isaiah recaps what He's been saying about the character of God, hoping to provoke a response of worship.

*The Lord is the everlasting God,*

*the Creator of the ends of the earth.*

*He will not grow tired or weary,*

*and his understanding no one can fathom.*

Listen, He's eternal, everlasting, always was and always will be. He was here when there was nothing and He created everything without raising a finger. He spoke and it came to be. And this same everlasting God watches over your coming and going, both now and forevermore. Psalm 121. He doesn't slumber or sleep, he watches over you and will keep you. And it doesn't weary him to do that. It says so right here. He doesn't get tired of watching over your way. But he's not just tireless, he is infinitely wise. You and I cannot even fathom the depth of His understanding. He's not just all-powerful, He's

all-wise. His work in your life, His activity and attention to you, is not casual or impulsive. It is calculated and deliberate, guided by His wisdom and understanding, according to His divine purposes. And all of that should stir our hearts and fan into flame our affections and fill our minds with awe and compel us to WORSHIP.

You will never make it through the chaos and confusion of life unless you have an awe-filled, worship provoking view of the greatness of God. There is NO ONE LIKE OUR GOD. Make it your priority to worship Him instead of trying to understand your circumstances. Spend time in the Word of God and let Him awe you with the reality of who He is and WORSHIP.

The second thing this passage is going to tell us that we must do to remain faithful in difficulty is this:

## #2 WE WAIT FOR HIM

Let's pick it back up at Verse 29

<sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.

<sup>30</sup> Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;

<sup>31</sup> but those who (wait on) hope in the Lord  
will renew their strength.

We wait for Him, because He is not like us and we are not like Him. I love the contrast here. He is The Eternal, never tired, never weak, never weary One. And we are His tired and weak and weary children. Notice that it says *“even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall”* Here's why that is important – even at our peak, when we are our strongest and have the greatest amount of stamina – even then, we are limited and finite, prone to stumble and fall. But He doesn't deride us for being weak or chastise us for being weary. Listen, He is not expecting us to be something we are not, to do something we cannot do. No, He remembers that we are dust

and so he gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. But there's a catch – we **must wait**. This gift, this supply of strength and power is only available to those who wait. Isaiah 64:4 says God acts in behalf of those who wait for him. Lamentations 3:25 says the Lord is good to those who wait for Him.

But what, in fact, does it mean to wait on the Lord? To be sure it's not like my father-in-law waits for my mother-in-law while she shops in HomeGoods. Waiting on God is not passive or being perpetually inactive. It's not thumb twiddling, anxious pacing.

Let me give you 3 elements to waiting on God

**Waiting is obeying** – think of the waiter in a restaurant. I know we wouldn't necessarily use these words, but the essence of his job is to obey the customer. He is waiting for your decision about what to eat, waiting for your requests, responding to your desires. It is not about him and what he wants. He can only do a good job IF he is listening to you and doing what you ask. Waiting on God is much the same. It means surrendering to His will, serving His desires. Waiting is saying “not my will but yours be done.” It is not passive, it is active obedience to the revealed will of God.

**Waiting is trusting** – Waiting is itself an expression of trust. To be sure, waiting on God requires faith. Because it means that we are yielding to His timing and His purposes. Waiting is not anxious or fearful, it is counting on our God to arrange our circumstances and fulfill His promises. Waiting is not fretting, it is resting in full confidence in the One who is “working all things together for our good.”

**Waiting is expecting** – Listen, waiting is not resignation, but is filled with hope and eager expectation that, as Paul says in Philippians 1:6 “he who began a good work in you will be faithful to carry it on to completion.” Or better yet, it is the

confidence he expressed in Romans 8:18 *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* Throughout Scripture, every faithful servant of God waited because they because they had a vision of what God had promised.

Waiting is obeying, trusting, expecting.  
So what happens when we WORSHIP and we WAIT?

### **#3 WE WALK WITH HIM**

Look at verse 31 again

<sup>31</sup> but those who hope in the Lord  
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

I heard Tim Keller say that we actually think that the order here is reversed. We think it should say walk, run, soar. Because we thinking soaring is the goal.

Nothing like a 90s pop song to illustrate my point –

*I believe I can fly, I believe I can touch the sky  
I think about it every night and day  
Spread my wings and fly away  
I believe I can soar, I see me running through that open door  
I believe I can fly, I believe I can fly...*

We believe the ultimate goal is to soar above it all. But that's not true. You will soar sometimes, but you won't always soar. And sometimes you'll run, full of strength and vigor. But walking is the point, endurance is the goal. Faithfulness is what God wants from us – a long obedience in the same direction. He's not looking for spectacular shows, he's seeking faithful followers.

(Story about Peachtree Road Race)

Listen, the walk is not always easy. We may not know what's happening or why. Often it's hard. Occasionally it is disappointing. Sometimes costly. Frequently involves sacrifice. Always requires faith. After all, Jesus did say, if anyone wants to follow me (walk with me) he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. Is it worth it? Absolutely. It's the only way to the abundant life that Jesus came to give.

Church, I believe God's greatest desire for us in these days is that we would walk with Him. You and I can face the uncertainty and chaos and hardship, we can endure, we can be found faithful. But it will require us to focus on our God and not ourselves.

Worship HIM  
Wait for HIM  
Walk with HIM