

Renewal: The Lord Renews Us!

(12/29/24)

Please turn to *Isaiah 40*.

Have you ever felt emotionally drained and mentally spent? I just spoke to a sister in Christ who has a very public and outgoing job. She said to me: *“I work all day putting smiles on people’s faces then go home to recover from all the peopling I’ve done.”* My son Jesse worked as a cashier at Wal-Mart last year where he smiles, is polite, and socially outgoing to customers 40 hours a week. I know that when his shift is over he needs to go home and be alone.

Sometimes our own families can wear us out! You moms who have kids and stay home with them all day: I’ll wager that you aren’t just spent at the end of the day, but the account is overdrawn.

Do feel a lack of energy in general? You know you have things to do, but you’d rather just stay in bed and binge watch something or browse Instagram?

What happens when a Christian is empty? IDK about you but when I’m feeling this way, my conscience quotes a famous verse of the Bible:

[Gal 6:9-10 ESV] 9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. 10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

My pattern is that I’ve grown weary of DOING...good or otherwise.

Then someone reaches out to me with an opportunity to do good in some way and I get triggered. Just being honest with you here. I’ll get a message, text, phone call, or someone approaching me in person asking me for help and my reaction is...well...not pastoral. At the very least if it’s a message or call, I can “decline” the interaction until I’m in a better place in my heart.

What’s going on and why am I acting this way? I’m empty, spent, I got nothin’.

I’m here to say to myself and you that there’s good news: really good news: **God IS willing to renew us.**

He actually WANTS to. He's not a human parent. When you were a kid, did you ever approach your parents for something? You had no money for _____ and asked them for some, and they said "*we can't afford that.*" Maybe you were feeling down and needed some love, and they just went through the motions because they were drained too and needing some love themselves?

God isn't like that...at all. He never has a bad day, His energy and reserves are endless. His love and time are eternal and can never be drained. His patience doesn't run out.

What's more is that He WANTS to renew us.

Imagine you just won a hundred million in the Lottery. The Holy Spirit speaks and fills you full of the energy, drive, and generosity to share this with those in need. You're willing to pay others' debts, medical expenses, help with rent, buy food, what have you. You publish your offer on social media, you distribute a written pamphlet, and advertise it in the *Addison Post*.

A few people take you up on this offer, but you were expecting more of a response because you've seen the need for years. Instead of coming to you to resolve their debts, *they keep taking high interest loans at banks and using credit cards.*

You WISH more people would respond to your offer and **you're eager, ready, and waiting!**

This is God.

You and I are Christians and not Deists. Thomas Jefferson was a Deist and they believe that God created us, put us on earth, then backed off completely to let us figure it out. When I say completely, I mean completely: they believed He doesn't intervene, doesn't respond to prayer, doesn't bless, doesn't give anything. *Their version of God is an indifferent deity who just sits in Heaven and watches us, nothing more.*

That is NOT my Jesus!

- My Jesus emptied Himself and came down here to walk among us for 33 years!
- My Jesus loved me so much He submitted Himself to His own creations, dying on the Cross and shedding His blood so that I could be forgiven!
- My Jesus descended into Hell, preaching to the spirits in that prison and revealing Himself as their long-awaited Messiah!
- My Jesus rose from the dead on the 3rd day showing His power over death, Hell, and the grave!

- My Jesus ascended to heaven and interceded for me with His Father, asking Him to forgive and accept me as His son!
- My Jesus has promised to return, raise me from the dead, kick the devil's backside, and bring His Kingdom here to earth as it is in Heaven!
- And when He comes the second time both He and the Paradise He brings is here to stay forever and ever, AMEN!

Christ is an INVOLVED God, not an indifferent One.

Let's begin our reading in Isaiah 40 to prove this out and we'll end up reading the entire chapter:

[Isa 40:1-2 ESV] 1 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

Isiah starts out as a tough read because God's people have turned away from Him and He's not happy. He gives plenty of warning on what will happen if they continue down their wicked way. By the time get to this section of Isaiah, however, the Lord is now ***sharing His mercy that will happen through His Son***, Whom we know as Christ Jesus. Jesus is the One Who led the sinless life and took the wrathful justice that we had coming upon Himself, then gave us the righteousness and status as sons and daughters of God.

[Isa 40:3-5 ESV] 3 A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Verse 3 should sound familiar: ***John the Baptist*** called himself the voice crying out in the wilderness and his calling was to introduce everyone to Jesus the Lord!

Look more closely: **God is not only building a road but a STRAIGHT one.** When you and I are feeling spent and drained, we might not see a road to renewal OR we might see it as a difficult and crooked path we must navigate. No: ***the Lord makes a way when we see no way!***

Verse 4 shows us this road **isn't a climb up Mt. Everest** that only requires energy from us that we don't have. It's not falling down into a deep valley and getting trapped there. ***His road to renewal is both straight and level!***

Funny story: I once visited a friend in **Iowa back in the 90's** and he was born, raised, and had never left there. He was driving me around one day and having been raised in NY and driving the tree farm roads a lot, I was amazed that every road was flat and straight. When I tried to explain what it was like driving in NY with mountains, valleys, sharp curves, etc. his eyes got huge.

The road to renewal is more like Iowa and less like NY.

[Isa 40:6-8 ESV] 6 A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

We are still in our first coming, which is weak human flesh. We run out of energy quickly, we become emotionally drained easily. Our bodies, minds, and hearts are still mortal: only our spirit is immortal. Thus we wither and fade.

[Isa 40:9-11 ESV] 9 Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" 10 Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. 11 He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

God is saying He's got some good news that He wants US to share. What is it? **The coming of Christ and what He brings with Him:** might and just rule for starters.

Look at verse 11: **sustenance for His flock, gathering the weak lambs in His arms** to carry them, and a sense of purpose for the young.

Isaiah is talking about Jesus, our Good Shepherd. **What happens when we feel like weak lambs?** It doesn't matter how old you are: do you ever feel like a little lamb who can't do much for yourself? And you'd like someone much stronger than you to pick you and carry you?

What kind of Shepherd do you see Jesus as? Important question! As you're lying in bed feeling too weak to do anything whether in the mind or body, do you think Jesus standing there yelling "get up!" like some military drill sergeant?

He's willing to carry us when we're weak.

Maybe we're spending too much time **looking at other weak humans to carry us** when we need to start with Jesus, Who is mighty and strong all the time?

[Isa 40:12-14 ESV] 12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? 13 Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? 14 Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?

These 3 verses show us **that God has everything.** He's smart enough to have designed all of creation just so and He's powerful enough to make it all happen. He didn't need to rely or consult with anyone.

IDK about you, **but that's the God I need!** I need a God Who is always strong, because I feel weak a lot.

- I need God way smarter and wiser than me, because I can't see around corners and sometimes make bad decisions.
- I need a God Who's willing to offer me His might and His counsel.

I don't need a God at my level or just a little above me. Let's not make the mistake of trying to bring Christ down to our level. He came here as one of us, yes, so that He could go to the Cross, rise from the dead, and then intercede for us playing both the Lamb of God and High Priest at the same time.

That being said the Apostle Paul makes it clear that **He's been given a promotion** to sitting on a throne at the right hand of Father God, ruling and reigning over angels, humans, and all of creation. Everything and everyone bends the knee and calls Him Lord, including Satan himself.

Jesus is way above us, Jesus is God, Jesus is perfection and we need Him to be all those things because He's willing to be involved in our personal lives! He's **not** standing at the side of our beds shouting "*get up!*" He's extending His hand to help us!

[Isa 40:15-17 ESV] 15 Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust. 16 Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering. 17 All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.

He's the King and Lord over all. All the wealth, power, and resources of the nations are nothing to Him! He won't run out of whatever we need from Him!

[Isa 40:18-20 ESV] 18 To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? 19 An idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains. 20 He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood that will not rot; he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move.

In modern terms, these verses could *speak to the material things we rely on* to keep us going. Just as ancient pagans formed idols of their gods and prayed to them for blessings, sometimes we do the same with money or material possessions.

[Isa 40:21-26 ESV] 21 Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? 22 It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; 23 who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. 24 Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble. 25 To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. 26 Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.

The Lord is all powerful and almighty! Other human beings are limited in what they can do for us, but **our needs are easy for Him!**

[Isa 40:27-28 ESV] 27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? 28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

Verse 27 speaks of people who believe that God doesn't SEE us...but He does. We might feel like we're hidden from other human beings who are clueless as to what we're going through, but the Lord sees everything.

- He sees our emotional distress, our mental imbalance, and our needs.
- He knows how weak, depressed, or drained we are.

Now we come to my 3 favorite verses in this chapter:

[Isa 40:29-31 ESV] 29 He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. 30 Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; 31 but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

- If you're feeling faint, he will give you power.
- If you have no might, He will give you strength.
- Your age doesn't matter! Even the young run out.
- The LORD renews our strength!

“Mounting up with wings like eagles” speaks to ***being carried by one of the most powerful birds*** in the world and IT is doing the work yet you're still be carried to a destination.

The Lord is WITH us, He cares, and wants to be more involved in our lives. He wants to GIVE.