

“God’s Sovereign Care for You”

Isaiah 40:1-31

3.07.21

“After church, a Mom asked her young daughter what the Sunday School lesson was about. The daughter answered, 'Don't be scared, you'll get your quilt.' Excuse me honey, please say it again. 'Don't be scared, you'll get your quilt.' Needless to say, the Mom was perplexed. Later in the day the mom saw the pastor and asked him for clarification. She said, “Pastor, what the Sunday school lesson today? He responded ‘Don’t be afraid, your comforter is coming.’”

We all need comfort and hope. Did you know that God wants to provide you it? I don't mean being comfortable but comfort- when you are scared or discouraged or losing hope.

God does care about you. He does want your best. As we continue in our series on foundational truths, we are going to look at: God's sovereign care for you. For this truth, we turn to the book of Isaiah.

The first 39 chapters speak to Israel's impending judgment. The people of Judah had already seen their brothers from Samaria disciplined and exiled to Assyria. But they didn't learn from Samaria's example. They would suffer for their disobedience and idolatry.

Chapters 40-48 deal with events that will occur 150 years later. In 587 BC, Babylon conquered Judah and took them into exile.

The children of Israel's future looked fearful and hopeless. Can you relate to their situation? Does your future create fear or hopelessness?

In youth group last Sunday, we were discussing anxiety. We asked the youth to write down something that gave them anxiety without their names attached so they felt comfortable being honest about their fears. A majority of them had the same anxiety. They were concerned about their future.

Are you concerned about your future? Or maybe right now you are going through a difficult time and have a heavy or broken heart. Isaiah 40 is here to speak to you and your situation. It is here to provide hope and peace.

May you leave here certain that God sovereignly cares for you. The word sovereign- means highest, chief, or supreme. That God is sovereign means He is the ultimate, number one ruler over all of creation. To be sovereign God must be all knowing (omniscient) and all powerful (omnipotent).

Isaiah chapters 40-66 cry out to God's people that He is in control and will care for them even during their years of exile. Before God's people were to be disciplined, He made sure they received words of hope and comfort.

Please open your Bibles to Isaiah, chapter 40. Page 599 in the Bibles under the seats.

Isaiah chapter 40 speaks to the sovereignty and care of God. We are going to see several aspects of His greatness which should give you comfort and hope for dealing with the uncertainties of life today and in your future.

What did the Israelites need to hear about God? What do we need to hear about God?

We need to hear and believe that

God is restorative (vv. 1-2).

Isaiah 40:1-2 (ESV), "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."

At the writing of Isaiah 40, Jerusalem had been saved from the powerful Assyrian army that had threatened to overpower them. God crushed the Assyrians by His mighty hand and they were longer a threat.

But in the future, another power would rise. Babylon would succeed in conquering Judah and exiling their people. Before that future would arrive, God wanted to provide comfort to the children of Israel.

One Day Mr. Riley was teaching his Sunday school class about the children of Israel when little Joey asked a question, "there's something I can't figure out." "What's that Joey?" asked Mr. Riley.

"Well according to the Bible, the Children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, right?"

"Right."

"And the Children of Israel beat up the Philistines, right?"

"Er--right."

"And the Children of Israel built the Temple, right?"

"Again you're right."

"And the Children of Israel were always doing something important, right?"

"That is right, too," agreed Mr. Riley. "So what's your question?"

"What I wanna know is this: what were all the grown-ups doing?"

God told Isaiah to "Comfort, comfort my people...Speak tenderly to Jerusalem." Speak "tenderly" means to speak to someone's heart. God was speaking to the Israelites' hearts in order to move them from being paralyzed by their future to take heart and trust Him.

What was God's message to His people? Isaiah was to proclaim that their "hard service" has been completed. "Hard service" is translated from the Hebrew word for "warfare." Israel's exile was like the hardships of war.

Though Israel deserved what she was going to get, God was saying that it will come to an end. They would not always be under His wrath. He would restore them to the land of their fathers.

How many of you like to restore things like old cars, furniture, houses? You demonstrate the image of God. He loves to restore. He restores people to a new hope and future. He takes our broken, sinful lives and restores us into new creations.

You are never too broken or messed up or too far away for God to restore you. Just turn to Him wherever you are and give Him your life. God will restore you to something better than you could ever imagine.

We need to hear and believe that

God is coming (vv. 3-5).

Isaiah 40:3–5 (ESV), “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.”

In verses 3-5 a voice calls out to Israel that the glory of the LORD will be revealed and “all flesh”- everyone will see it. The picture is of a king coming. In preparation for a king’s arrival the people would level the ground by smoothing out the rugged areas and filling in the valleys thus preparing an easier road for the king to travel.

God is telling the Israelites that they would not be left in captivity forever. He would come for them.

They couldn’t literally prepare a road for God because they would be in exile. But they could prepare their hearts and minds by repenting of their wicked ways and preparing their hearts for Him.

Their king was going to come. Verse 5 guaranteed it. “For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” And that is just what happened. God brought the Israelites out of Babylonian exile.

There was an even greater rescue than the release from Babylonian captivity. It would take place many years later. John the Baptist quoted these verses as describing his ministry. He would prepare the highway for the coming Messiah by telling the people to turn back to God.

Jesus would come and free us from bondage by dying on the cross for our sins. He paid the debt we owed so that we could be made right with God and freed from the prison of sin and the power of Satan.

Jesus came and accomplished God’s plan for that time. But one day, Jesus will come again to get rid the world of all evil once and for all. He will make everything right. He has spoken.

We need to hear and believe that

Humanity is fragile; God is eternal (vv. 6-8).

Isaiah 40:6–8 (ESV), “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.”

God used the illustration of grass as man’s longevity and flowers to describe how quick man’s glory can disappear. Grass and flowers die quickly. So also do we.

God is reminding His children that their enemies are like grass. Their power and rule will soon disappear. Listen to Psalm 37:1-2, “Do not fret because of evil men or be

envious of those who do wrong; ² for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.”

We are like grass. Our enemies are like grass. But God is eternal. That means He has no beginning or end. As a result, verse 8 can be true, “the Word of our God stands forever.” God makes promises and because He is eternal, He is capable to keeping them. His Word stands forever. His promises come true.

A student was acting up again in class. The teacher called on him and asked, "Do you remember what you promised me?" The boy said, "Yes, that I wouldn't misbehave anymore." Then the teacher asked, "And do you remember what I promised you?" The boy responded, "Yes, that if I misbehaved again I'd be sent to the principals office, but since I broke my promise it's ok if you do too.”

Though we break promises God will not! He doesn't go back on them. He will keep and fulfill them. There are so many promises of God that bring peace and hope.

For example: God promises to never leave or forsake you. He will always be there for you. You may walk away but He never will. That is encouraging and hopeful.

We need to hear and believe that

God is sovereign over all rulers, nations, situations and your future.

All powers, all rulers, all situations are subject to God. He is in complete control.

Isaiah 40:9–10 (ESV), “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.”

Isaiah 40:15,17 (ESV),”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...

¹⁷ All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.”

Isaiah 40:21–25 (ESV), “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.”

What description does God use to describe all nations. Nations like Babylon who would become the most powerful country in the world in the future? How does God describe Russia? China? The United States?

Nations are like a drop of water or fine dust on a scale. This is a reference to commerce. Israelite businesses didn't take into account a drop of water in the measuring bucket or a little dust on the scales when meat or fruit was weighed. The drop of water or dust didn't add any weight to the scale so they were considered insignificant.

Nations and rulers are like that in God's eyes. Rulers are like grasshoppers to God. He has no true enemy. There are no threats to His sovereignty. He is in complete control.

The Assyrians were the most powerful country at the writing of Isaiah 40. God raised up a small nation called Babylon. He gave them power to overcome the mighty Assyrians. Then Babylon became the most powerful nation. But later God raised up the Persians to completely destroy Babylon.

70 years after their exile, God moved a Persian king named Cyrus to release the people after 70 years in captivity. Ezra 1:2–3 (ESV), “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. ³ Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem.”

King Cyrus recognized the sovereignty of God. The king was in power because God gave it to him. God can give and take away.

If the United States unleashed our nuclear arsenal, much of the world would be destroyed. That is a lot of power.

God created the universe with a word. A with a word, God could completely destroy all that He created. That is absolute power.

There is an enemy that is more powerful than nations and people that has been in power since Adam and Eve sinned. Death. Death had no enemies until Jesus showed up.

Isaiah 25:8 (NLT) prophesied a time when death would be defeated. “He will swallow up death forever! The Sovereign Lord will wipe away all tears. He will remove forever all insults and mockery against his land and people. The Lord has spoken!”

Jesus came and conquered death. 2 Timothy 1:10 (NIV84), “But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

Only Jesus Christ is victorious over death. The One who overcame death offers eternal life. It is through Jesus that you can receive eternal life. Thank you Jesus.

We need to hear and believe that

God is compassionate.

Isaiah 40:11 (ESV), “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.”

The Israelites were going to be separated from everything they knew- their land, their customs, their holy city and from some people they loved.

In those difficult times it is easy to believe the lie that you went too far and there is no turning back. It is easy to believe the lie that this bad situation will be your lot in life. It is easy to believe the lie that God has walked away.

In those times we need to hear that God is compassionate. We need to know that God is gentle. This powerful arm that can crush His enemies is also used to cuddle His children.

God is described as a shepherd. A shepherd would lead the sheep by walking in front of them. As he led them, he would talk to them bringing comfort by his loving voice.

God walks before us. He leads us where He wants us to go. He doesn't lead with disregard for our weaknesses.

Verse 11, “**He gently leads those that have young.**” God gently led the people with special sensitivity toward pregnant women and animals. God understood the walking pace to for a pregnant mother or animal. To push them too fast or hard could cause physical complications and the possibility of a miscarriage.

He leads gently because he cares for us. He picks us up and brings us close to His heart. The safest and most secure place we can be is in arms of our Heavenly Father.

If we lose sight of God's sovereign care for us, troubles can look like giants. The Israelites had lost sight. As a result they questioned His care and understanding of their situation. Isaiah 40:27 (ESV), "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"?"

The Israelites needed to hear and believe. And we need to hear and believe that **God is never fatigued**.

Isaiah 40:28–31 (ESV), "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. 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."

The Energizer Bunny will one day run out of juice; not God. He is everlasting. He never runs out of power.

God does not tire from leading His people- even when they are disobedient. God does not tire from keeping His promises. God does not tire from doing what is best for us. Philippians 1:6 (NLT), "And I am **certain** that God, who began the good work within you, will **continue** his work until it is **finally finished** on the day when Christ Jesus returns."

Isaiah describes how even youths will wear out. They will become fatigued. We all have our limits.

God offers His strength to those who want it. Verse 31, "But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength."

The word “wait” does not mean we sit around and do nothing. It means “to hope,” to look to God for all that we need. This involves focusing your mind on His character and His promises.

The word “renew” means “to exchange.” It is like taking off a set of old clothes and exchanging them for new ones. Our energy has run out. We are fatigued. But God offers His energy in exchange for ours.

God’s energy and power is available to all who surrender to Him; those who acknowledge their weakness and come to Him.

Warren Wiersbe writes, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. The greatest heroes of faith are not always those who seem to be soaring; often it is they who are patiently plodding. As we wait on the Lord, He enables us not only to fly higher and run faster, but also *to walk longer*. Blessed are the plodders, for they eventually arrive at their destination!”

This past year has taught us that life is constantly changing. Though life changes, **God is the one-enduring reality in a constantly changing world.**

Isaiah 26:3 (NLT), “You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!”

You may be in a difficult time right now. Or you may be facing difficult times ahead. Comfort yourself. Comfort others with the truth that nothing is out of God’s control. And God will always care for you. He sovereignly cares for you.

Let me close with a few lyrics from the song “You are For Me”

“I know that you are for me, I know that you are for me

I know that you will never forsake me in my weakness

And I know that you have come now even if to write upon my heart

To remind me who you are
So patient, so gracious, so merciful and true
So wonderful in all you do”

Does your mind know this truth? Does your heart know this truth? Believe it and face your future with confidence and peace as nothing is out of God’s control and care.

Let's pray

o.b.g.