

Behold Your God!

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[0 : 00] So we're now going to turn to our Bible reading. Phil is going to be opening up some of Isaiah for us next week and this week.

So today we're going to read Isaiah chapter 40. Isaiah chapter 40. And you'll find that if you're using one of the church visitors Bibles on page 599.

Isaiah chapter 40. Let's read.

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 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.

A voice cries. In the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up and every mountain and hill be made low.

[1 : 12] The uneven ground shall become level and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed. And all flesh shall see it together.

For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. 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.

The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on it. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Get you 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. Behold, the Lord God comes with might and his arm rules for him.

[2 : 16] Behold, his reward is with him and his recompense before him. 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.

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hands and marked off the heavens with a span? Includes the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance.

Who has measured the spirit of the Lord or what man can show his counsel? 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?

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.

Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering. All the nations are as nothing before him. They are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.

[3 : 29] To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness compare with him? An idol? A craftsman casts it and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for its silver chains.

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. 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? 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. Who brings princes to nothing and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.

Scarcely are they planted, scarcely soon. 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.

[4 : 32] To whom then will you compare me that I should be like him? Says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see who created these things.

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. 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. 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. He gives power to the faint. And to him who has no might, he increases strength.

Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted. But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength.

[5 : 35] They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.

Amen. This is God's word. Well, good morning, and please do have your Bibles open at Isaiah 40. A majestic chapter.

If you are a Christian here this morning, you are an exile, says the Bible. We are exiles because our true home is not this current, present world of darkness.

Our true home is what the Bible refers to as the new creation. This world made new by Christ on the last day when he comes in glory. That is your home if you're a Christian.

And so as long as we live on this earth now, we are exiles. And as we seek to live out this current life of exile, how can we safeguard each other from sinking into despair?

[6 : 40] And that's such an important question to ask because there are so many things in this world that could cause us to sink into despair. And you'll know that if you've been a Christian for any longer than a matter of minutes.

When we look at the world around us, when we look at our nation, it seems as though the enemies of the gospel are currently calling the shots. It seems as well like they're intimidating and evil ideologies are spreading and gaining more and more of a foothold every day.

And as we look at the professing church in this country, we see more things that cause us to despair. Unbelief and false teaching are rife, and they have been rife for many years.

And as a result, Christ's name has been dragged and is being dragged through the mud. And the real people of God, those who love Christ and take His word seriously, well, they are vastly outnumbered.

And more often than not, we seem to be on the back foot. I don't know about you, but that's how I feel most of the time. And especially when it comes to things like personal evangelism, I feel constantly on the back foot.

[7 : 53] That's just some of the things that can cause us to despair. There are many more. I could be here all morning just listing them, but it won't be a very edifying time for you all. But where can we turn to for hope?

How can we strengthen each other and safeguard one another from sinking into despair? Well, Isaiah 40 will help us. This is really the beginning of the second half of Isaiah's book.

And the words of the prophet here are bursting with great hope. Great hope. Let me just say, back then, when Isaiah spoke these words, the people of God were facing a distressing future, full of doom.

Because back at the end of chapter 39, Isaiah has just announced that exile is coming. You remember back then in those days, the majority of the people of Judah, God's Old Testament church, had rejected the Lord and sunk into unbelief.

They'd spurned God's grace and broken covenant with him. Idolatry and lawlessness was rife everywhere over the whole land. And despite the Lord graciously sending messenger after messenger to call back his people to repent, they refused to do so.

[9 : 04] And so being faithful to his covenant word, the Lord announced that he was going to bring the ultimate covenant curse. Exile. Brutal. In the coming year, says Isaiah, the Babylonians will rise up and their ferocious war machine will come and destroy Jerusalem.

The Davidic king, the king in the line of David, will be captured and carried off away from the land of promise. The temple, the center of worship, will be ransacked and reduced to rubble.

Many of the people in Judah will die. You will see loved ones die in front of you. And many more will be taken off as prisoners into Babylon. That's what the people of God were facing.

And that's what Isaiah has just announced. And you can imagine the remnant of faith, the real group of real believers in the land, running up to Isaiah in response and saying, Isaiah, is there any hope?

What does this mean? Please tell us. What will the exile mean for all of the amazing promises that God made to us earlier on in your book? What about God's promise to transform Jerusalem from being a faithless city into a faithful city?

[10:13] Is that dead in the water? What about God's promise to establish the throne of David forever? What about that great messianic banquet that was promised in chapter 25? Where all people from all nations will come to eat at the Lord's table in freedom.

And the shroud of death that has covered the earth will be taken away. Isaiah, has God decided to ditch those promises? Are they dead in the water?

Are we facing annihilation? Please, Isaiah, tell us. Is there any hope? And in chapter 40, Isaiah says, yes, there is hope.

Majestic and outstanding hope. The Lord gives Isaiah a glimpse of the far, far future beyond the time of exile to a glorious future. And I'd like us to look at these verses in three points, three sections.

Firstly, in verses 1 to 11, Isaiah says this, The Lord is coming to save and shepherd his people. The Lord is coming to save and shepherd his people.

[11:18] Let's go through these verses. Please look at verse 1. Comfort. Comfort my people, says your God. So the Lord calls Isaiah to go and comfort his people.

He says it twice for emphasis. And the tone that he speaks in is urgent. Go immediately and comfort my people. He doesn't want them to despair. Comfort them. Comfort them.

Now friends, let's not misunderstand what he means by comfort here. I don't know what comes into your heads whenever I say the word comfort. Perhaps it's fabric softener or something like that or some nice cushions.

Yeah, that's probably what some of my family would say to me. For me, as you can tell, it's probably a massive slice of cake and a huge coffee. That's comfort for me. But that's not what the Bible means by comfort.

Remember, Bible words have Bible meanings. And what the Bible means by comfort here is really to strengthen. When I was at secondary school, I went to Normandy in France.

[12:17] And we went on a trip to see the Bayou Tapestry. And I remember our history teacher taking us to one scene in this tapestry of a battlefield. And if you look carefully, you'll see at the edge, the very end of one of the ends of the battlefield, behind his troops, there is a man standing with a huge club.

And in front of him, he's using the club to poke his soldiers in the back so that they will not retreat from the front line, but will run into the battle.

And underneath in Latin, there's etched words so that you can understand the scene that's being depicted. And it says these words, Bishop Odu comforts his troops.

That's what Isaiah means by comfort here. That's what biblical comfort is. It can also be translated as breathe life into my people. Strengthen them.

Revive them. They've just heard a terrifying message of coming difficulty in judgment. So now go to them and speak words that will lift them and give them hope.

[13:20] Please look at verse 2. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that her warfare, her hardship has ended and that her iniquity is pardoned.

The Lord is saying that a time will come when your warfare with Babylon will be over. Your exile will be finished. All that hardship under the evil nation will be gone like that. And remember what caused this warfare in the first place?

Answer, the people's rebellion against the Lord. And so the implication here is the Lord is saying a time is coming when you will be at peace with me. We will be at peace again.

Peace with their covenant God. That's what they will have. And how's that come about? Well, the Lord will provide a way for his people's sin to be paid for. Verse 2. Tell her that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

Let me put my hands up here and say that for years I have misunderstood these words and misread them. This is not teaching that the Lord will place a double punishment. A punishment that's twice as bad as the sins that they've committed upon his people.

[14 : 26] That's an absurd idea. That would say that God is unjust and he would of course cease to be God. No, the idea that's happening in the Hebrew here. Well, the word double that's used here is a specific word used most often to describe what happens when you double over a piece of paper like that.

And you fold it perfectly so that one side doubles up perfectly and matches the other side. And the Lord is saying a day will come when I will provide something that will perfectly match and cover over your sin and take the punishment you deserve.

And you will be fully pardoned. You will have peace with me. And what is the historical sign that this pardon for sin has come about?

Well, verse 3 to 5 tell us. Let's read these. A voice cries in the wilderness. Prepare the way for the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up and every mountain and hill made low.

The uneven ground shall become level. And the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed. And all flesh shall see it together.

[15 : 35] For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. So what is this anonymous voice proclaiming? Well, he's saying that the time when the people's sin will be fully pardoned will coincide with the Lord himself coming personally to seek and to save his people.

The imagery that's used here. This business of a victorious highway. That's what that language is all about. About things being lifted up and flattened out through the wilderness. It's a massive, triumphant, victorious highway.

Which the Lord will have in front of him as he comes. It's reminiscent of language used of the Exodus when the Lord came to save his people. And as I say, it's going to happen again.

But on a much bigger scale. This victorious highway will be rolled out. It's very akin to when we say, let's roll out the red carpet for royalty today to walk on as they arrive.

That's the image that's being used here. And the Lord will walk down his victorious highway. And he will go into Babylon and he will gather his people. And he will do a U-turn and come back down to Zion.

[16 : 38] And he will reign there forever with them in glorious triumph. And the whole earth will be shaken by this. This is momentous for the nations. All flesh shall witness the glory of the Lord being revealed.

And in verse 6 to 8, the Lord gives his people great assurance that this glorious act of salvation, it really will take place. Let's read them.

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. The grass withers.

The flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on it. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers. The flower fades. But the word of our God will stand forever.

So here the Lord has said to his people, don't doubt for one second that this coming salvation will not happen. It will happen. Because I have said it will happen.

[17 : 35] And my word, what is my word like? It is sure and certain. My word is not like human flesh, which is transient and fragile and fleeting. It's gone in a second.

No, my word will stand forever. My promises are an eternally solid rock. And if you build your life upon these promises, if you trust in my promise of salvation, then you too will stand forever.

I think the Lord is also assuring his people here that he has the power to deal with the enemy.

Babylon will not stand a chance against the Lord. Indeed, any nation or any people that presumes to stand against the Lord will never stand a chance against him.

Because all the Lord will have to do to his enemies is this. And they will be gone. They will be blown away like dead grass. And notice a new detail in verse 9.

So far in verse 3 and verse 6, Isaiah speaks of two anonymous voices who are relaying this message from the Lord to the people. But in verse 9, the Lord now calls his faithful remnant Zion to proclaim what they hear from him to each other.

[18 : 48] Look at verse 9. Get you 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. So the Lord is now calling his people to minister these momentous truths to each other.

They are to take what they hear from the Lord about his coming salvation. And they are to drum it into each other. Proclaim it to each other all the time. And the gospel to proclaim the momentous news is that the Lord is coming to reign and to rule with a mighty arm.

Verse 10. The strong arm. The mighty arm of the Lord. Again, that's a phrase that was used again and again to describe the Exodus. Where the Lord came with a mighty hand and he slayed the enemy.

But also gathered in his people. Guided them. Ruled them. The Lord did it in the past. He's coming to do it again. And Moses, verse 10.

[19 : 54] When the Lord's mighty arm comes, he will give his people reward and recompense. In other words, when the Lord appears, his people will be vindicated. They will be seen to have been so right for putting their trust in the Lord.

And they will be on the winning side. And what will the Lord do with his vindicated people forever and ever and ever and ever? We'll look at verse 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. The Lord is coming to save, but also to shepherd his people.

It's such a tender image, isn't it? The Lord is going to personally care for each of his sheep. He's going to meet them. And he's going to meet their individual needs. Everyone. No one will be neglected in the flock of God.

Just think of all those great realities that King David had sung about centuries before this in Psalm 23. About the deep joy and lasting satisfaction that comes from living under the rule of the Lord.

[20 : 55] Having him as your shepherd. Well, this day that's coming. On this day, the people of God will live under that loving rule forever and ever. And they'll experience all of those joys forever and ever.

Friends, these are great words of comfort. They were great words of comfort for the people of God back then facing exile. But I actually think, in fact, that these words should bring us even more comfort today as the people of God living in exile now.

Why so? Well, because we can look back through the centuries and see how these words have already been fulfilled partially. Let's just do that now. They were fulfilled partially when the Lord moved his mighty arm against Babylon with the Persians.

And the Persian King Cyrus, the Lord, moved his mighty arm to work Cyrus' heart. And the people of God were allowed to return to the land to start rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple.

What an amazing act of salvation that was. But it's clear that that was just a partial fulfillment of Isaiah 40. It's only when you come five centuries later to the events that are described in the Gospels.

[22 : 07] And we meet John the Baptist. Who, in all of the Gospel accounts, is described as a voice in the wilderness. Preparing the way for the Lord.

And then the Lord comes. In Christ Jesus. He is the one in whom all of these glorious promises find their yes and their amen. His death on the cross at Calvary was the thing that brought us forgiveness and full pardon for our sins.

And he came with his mighty arm and defeated all of the enemies that you and I cannot handle. Sin, Satan and death. He is the good shepherd who leads and guides his people.

And tends to our every need. And friends, because we today can look back and see these words have been already fulfilled in that way in Christ. It should fill us with strength and keep us as we carry on through exile now.

Because it assures us that the Lord Jesus will come again. And at his second coming, these words of Isaiah 40 will find their real fulfillment. Forever.

[23 : 09] Their full fulfillment. On that day, sin, Satan and death will be utterly destroyed. All those who have trusted in Isaiah's words will receive their reward and recompense.

We will be vindicated. We will live forever enjoying the personal care and the provision of our shepherd. And so as we wait for that glorious future now, we must be ready to take action if we ever feel ourselves sinking into despair.

I know it's a Sunday morning. And a lot of us aren't very good on Sunday mornings. But let's just have a look at one another. Just turn and look at each other. Please do that now. Have a look at

each other. Yes. Say hello if you want.

A wee hello. That the people you've looked at, if you're a member of the church, you have a responsibility to minister these truths to the people that you've just looked at.

To one another. If you belong to another congregation and you're visiting here this morning, as I imagine quite a number of you will be, you have a responsibility to minister these truths to the members of your home congregation.

[24 : 14] We need to remind ourselves of these truths again and again and again to safeguard each other from sinking into despair. That's one of the many reasons that I'm so thankful for my small group that I'm involved in at the church here.

We meet every two weeks, every second Wednesday. And what we do is we sit and open the Bible together, pray for each other and remind ourselves of these truths. So that we don't fall away.

And we keep trusting in the Lord. And we don't lose hope. Are you plugged into a support group like that in the church? Perhaps you should be if you're not.

So the Lord is coming to save and to shepherd his exiled people. That's the first half of this chapter. And with the rest of our time this morning, I want us to look at two more points.

And we'll be briefer here, covering the rest of the chapter. And it's clear from verse 12 to 31, Isaiah actually anticipates that some of the members of the remnant will find it very difficult to believe what the Lord has just promised in the first 11 verses.

[25 : 21] Isaiah seems to be addressing in this second half of the chapter two doubts that will have arisen in the people. Here's doubt number one. Does the Lord really have the power to save us and shepherd us?

Can he do it? And the second doubt is this. Does the Lord really want to save and shepherd us? Does he care? And with the remainder of our time, we're going to see how Isaiah answers these two doubts.

So our second point this morning is this. The Lord really is mighty to save and shepherd his people. That is what Isaiah is proclaiming again and again and again from verse 12 to 26.

And the poetry that Isaiah uses to describe the power of God is meant to blow our minds, blow our socks off, and to grip our hearts so that we will see the immeasurable power of God and not lose heart.

So verse 12, Isaiah goes back to the creation. Please look at verse 12. Let me just say before we look at the details here that Isaiah is not teaching us that God is a big man.

[26 : 42] Those of you who come here regularly will probably have heard me say this before, but I'll say it again. Many people today, when they think about God, what they do is they think of a man in their heads. They make him bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger until they end up with a huge man.

And they think, aha, that's what God is like. Even bigger than Josh Johnston. A really big man. God is just like us, but just a lot bigger. That is so wrong.

God is not a big man. God is not a bigger version of you or me. He is not a big man. He is the creator. He's not a creature.

He's the creator. But having said that, the Bible does use anthropomorphisms. That is, it describes God in human terms so that you and I, with our tiny minds, we can grasp something of his greatness and what he is like.

And that's what Isaiah uses here. And the imagery in this little section, verse 12, is of, at the beginning of time, the Lord creating everything and he's just like a man going into his shed to create a little craft in his tool shed.

[27 : 49] That's how easy it was for God to create the cosmos and the universe. Let's just think about some of the details. Think about all of the water on the face of the earth. There's so much water on the face of the earth that scientists can only guess how much water there is.

Here in this glass is probably about 500 milliliters of the world's water. If I tried to pour the 500 milliliters of the world's water into the palm of my hand, I'd create a mess on the stage because I can't hold it.

I can't even hold 500 milliliters of the world's water. However, the Lord can hold all of the world's water right here in the palm of his hand.

It's a tiny little puddle. That is how powerful he is, how colossal he is. And the depths of space, the edges of the universe that again scientists can only speculate about.

They're always changing their minds about it. They've never come to any reliable information about it. Well, the Lord, he's so powerful that he knows the dimensions of the universe because he measured them out with his hands.

[28 : 56] That's how he measured them. And if you were to take all of the dust of the earth and ground it all into a mound, what would it look like to God? Answer, a tiny little pile of sand on his scales, on his workbench.

He is so powerful and bigger than you and I could possibly imagine in our heads. And in verse 13 to 14, Isaiah asks all these rhetorical questions designed to silence any doubt in God's omnipotence and wisdom.

Who has ever directed the Lord? Answer, no one. Who has ever taught him knowledge? Answer, no one. Who did the Lord consult at the creation of all things? Answer, no one. For he is the omniscient creator.

God relies on no one exterged from himself. In himself, God is complete. He has everything. He is all wise. He is all powerful. He is all knowledge.

He relies on no one external to himself. Verse 15, no nation can ever think they can compete with the Lord because if you were to take all of the nations in the world and again combine them into one mass, what would they look like?

[30 : 03] Answer, they would look like a little drop of dirt falling out of a child's sandcastle bucket. Tiny in comparison. Verse 16, Isaiah says that if you were to take the whole country of Lebanon, which back then was beautiful and full of life, if you were to take that and set it all on fire and offer it up to the Lord as a burnt offering, it still wouldn't give him the dignity and the worship he deserves.

Verse 17 is truly humbling, maybe even offensive to some people who are proud in themselves because Isaiah says, without the Lord, the nations would be formless and empty.

Compared to the Lord, there are nothing. The words formless and empty there that's used are nothing and emptiness are the same words used in Genesis 1 verse 2 where before the Lord started to form and fill his creation, the earth was formless and empty with nothing.

And that's what Isaiah is picking up here. None of this would be here if it wasn't for the Lord. It's only because of the Lord's forming and filling work at creation that all of this exists.

He is so powerful. And in verse 18 to 21, Isaiah then compares the Lord to the worthless and dead idols that people make for themselves.

[31 : 21] And Isaiah is really a master at ridiculing idolatry. He really exposes just how stupid idolatry is. Idolatry, for those of you who don't know, is when you take a good thing and turn it into a God thing.

We take something good from God's creation and we start to worship it as our God, the thing that we look to for security and well-being. In those days, the most common type of idolatry was statues of wood covered in fine materials.

But in our culture today, it can become anything. Anything could be an idol. Money, possessions, even people. The moment we place these things above God in our hearts, we are in trouble.

Do you not know? Have you not heard? Says Isaiah. If you do that, trust in idols. It's so stupid. They are powerless to save.

Only the Lord can save you. And verse 22, again, is mind-blowing. As Isaiah says, he goes out to the universe and he says, the universe, with all its size and its scale, what is it to the Lord?

[32 : 25] Answer, it is a single one-man tent. I don't know if you've ever been in a single one-man tent. It's not a very pleasant experience. I'm sorry if you love camping. I hate camping. Absolutely atrocious.

I would never be seen dead in a tent, but there we go. Because probably my experience of being in a one-man tent. But that's what the universe is like in comparison to God. The heavens are like a canopy sheet that he puts over him.

And he sits in his one-man tent, which is the universe. And he looks down on his ground sheet in front of him. He sees lots of little creepy bugs crawling around in front of him, little grasshoppers.

And Isaiah says, that's us. That's what we look like. He's not saying for a second that we have the same value as insects in God's mind.

No. Human beings enjoy the great dignity of being made in God's image. So God prizes us above all other livestock. So that's not what Isaiah is saying here. Rather, he's just using poetic language to describe how minuscule you and I are compared to the Almighty.

[33 : 28] We are like grasshoppers. Grasshoppers. And what about the rulers of the world? What about our leaders with all their power and their pomp? Surely they can offer up some sort of a threat against God?

No. No chance, says Isaiah. Verse 23 and 24, they tell us that the Lord can bring the rulers of the earth to nothing like that. Isaiah is really repeating what he said in verse 6 to 8.

The rulers of this world are like delicate little flowers. And the Lord, by comparison, is a deadly cyclone storm. And the Lord can blow the greatest of human powers away as easy as a child can blow the seeds off of a dandelion weed.

Can God save us? Does he have the ability? You bet he does, says Isaiah. The Lord is the all-powerful creator. His might is limitless. Nothing can compare to him.

And the Lord has promised to save us and shepherd us. And he can deliver. He's powerful enough. More than powerful enough. And friends, perhaps you're here this morning and you are riddled with doubts.

[34 : 40] Perhaps you are really struggling to believe that God will make good in his promises. Perhaps this world of darkness and the enemies of the gospel have rocked you and intimidated you.

So much so that your view of God has shrunken down and you just think about him as though he's a big man. Well, if that is you, then you must let the words of Isaiah lift you up and give you a fresh vision of the power and the strength of our God.

Correct how you see God. Well, with the remainder of our time, we'll very briefly look at Isaiah's third point.

Very briefly. Isaiah says in this last section in verse 27 onwards that the Lord really wants to save and shepherd his people.

He's powerful enough to do it but he also really wants to. He really wants to save and shepherd his people. In these final verses of the chapter, Isaiah is addressing the second doubt that people had.

[35 : 42] Please look at verse 27. He says, Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, my way is hidden from the Lord and my right is disregarded by God?

See what they were saying? They were doubting that God had the desire to save them. God's abandoned us. He doesn't care. Their current grim circumstances had caused them to question the Lord's care and their plight.

And Isaiah responds by saying, The Lord really does want to save you despite how things appear in your current circumstances. He is willing. In verse 28, Isaiah reminds the exiles of the truth that they should have already known from the law and from the scriptures.

That the Lord never grows weary. He never tires. Not even the awesome act of creation exhausted the Lord. He has unlimited reserves of strength. And verse 29 says amazingly that the Lord is ready and eager to share His strength with His people.

Look at verse 29. He gives power to the faint and to him who has no might He increases strength. Those of you who know me and my family, you will know my little boy Ben probably.

[36 : 59] And you will know that he is a total headbanger. He's tiny. He's only three. But he's an explosive ball of energy. In fact, I sometimes am full of fear by just how much energy he has.

It's unbelievable. But let me say, there are even times when he, even he, grows tired and weary and he crashes. And so it is with the spiritual life of a believer.

So it is with me and you when it comes to following the Lord. There will be times when we feel that we're full of strength to follow the Lord. But there will also be times when we grow weary and weak. But things will be so hard. We need to know that the Lord, our God, is ready and willing to be the source of strength that we could ever need. All the time.

Not just some of the time. All the time. And just look at what will happen to all those who receive strength from the Lord. It's remarkable. Verse 31. They, that's all those who've trusted in the Lord, will have strength to soar, stamina to run, and perseverance to keep walking.

[38 : 02] No matter how hard life gets now, no matter how difficult things are, the Lord really wants to do that for you and for me. If you're not a Christian here this morning, it's great that you are here.

But you need to know that this is what our God is like. This is why we're here this morning. This is why we come to him and love him. Because this is what he's like. He's so generous and kind.

And he will keep all of his people going as they live through exile. In life now, if you're a Christian, then you might well really struggle. In fact, you probably will.

You probably will really struggle. often, sometimes hear people say, well, I'm a Christian, but I'm a struggling Christian. Actually, friends, there's no other type of Christian. All Christians are strugglers, yes?

But please be assured by these words in Isaiah 40, the Lord cares for you. He will give you what you need to endure to the day when Christ appears to save and shepherd us once and for all in glory.

[39 : 03] And on that day, all of us who trust in him, we will soar like eagles. We will be resurrected in Christ's power. Never again to grow weary.

Never again to be touched by suffering, sin, death, Satan. All be gone. Only to live under his glorious rule and to enjoy him forever. So if you're struggling this morning, and if you know of someone who's struggling this morning, then go and encourage them with these words.

Point them to these words. Pray about them. Talk about them. Remind yourselves about them all the time. And let them lift you up and lift your eyes upon your great God.

Behold, your God. This is where he is to be seen. Well, amen. And let's bow our heads together and I'll pray for us.

Almighty and all-powerful God, Heavenly Father, we praise you. For you alone are powerful to save us.

[40 : 15] And we praise you that your word assures us that you want to save us. Despite all the ways in which we failed you, despite all the ways in which we've doubted your promises, thank you that there's forgiveness with you.

If we turn to you, you will lift us up. You will give us the strength that we need. We praise you for the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ, your suffering servant, who was pierced in our place so that we might be cleansed from our sin once and for all.

Thank you, too, that you raised up your servant in power and that one day soon you will raise also us up in power. And as we wait for that great day to appear, Father, please strengthen us.

We are so weak. Our faith is fickle. So please help us by your Spirit so that we will keep trusting you and loving you and help us to minister these words of hope to each other so that even in our darkest hour we can be comforted and strengthened and sustained.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.