

Behold Your God

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Date: 30 March 2025

Preacher: Philip Copeland

[0 : 00] Well, now we're going to turn to our Bible reading for this evening. And it's a joy and an encouragement to have Phil Cooplin back preaching to us, having been away for a while due to his illness.

And he's going to be preaching from Isaiah chapter 40. So do grab a Bible. If you don't have one with you, we do have church visitors' Bibles, the red Bibles at the front, the side, the back. Do grab one and follow along as we read together. Isaiah chapter 40, page 599, if you're using a visitor's Bible.

And we're going to read the whole chapter then, beginning at verse 1. Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that her warfare has ended. That her iniquity is pardoned. That she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

[1 : 08] A voice cries. A voice says, 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.

Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him. 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 hand, and marked off the heavens with a span, and closed 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 shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand?

[3 : 06] 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. 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 it 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?

[4 : 10] 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.

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.

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 God? Have you not known? Have you not heard?

[5 : 19] 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 to be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted.

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. Amen. This is God's word. Well, good evening, and please do turn in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 40.

And have that open in front of you, that would be very helpful indeed. It's wonderful to be back with you. I've been off for some time, occupied with some other stuff. It's nice to be back, it's nice to be back.

[6 : 28] If you are a Christian here this evening, then you are an exile, says the Bible.

We are exiles because our true home is not this present world of darkness. Our home is what the Bible refers to as the new creation, which is this world made new by the Lord Jesus when he returns on the last day.

And so long as we live in this earth now, we are exiles. And as we live out this current life of exile, we must ask ourselves, how can we safeguard one another from sinking into despair?

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 as Christians. When we look at our nation, it seems as though the enemies of the gospel are calling the shots.

It seems like they're intimidating and evil ideologies are spreading, gaining more and more of a foothold in society every day. And when we look at the professing church in the West, I'm afraid we find even more things that fill us with despair.

[7 : 43] Unbelief and false teaching have been rife and are rife for many years. And as a result, Christ's name has been and is being currently dragged through the mud.

Now the real people of God, those who love Christ and take his word seriously, well, we are vastly outnumbered. And more often than not, we seem to be on the back foot.

I don't know if that's how you feel, but that's certainly how I feel a lot of the time as a Christian, especially when it comes to things like personal evangelism. I constantly feel on the back foot.

Now friends, those are just some of the things that might cause us to sink into despair. I could be here for hours listing more and more and more, but it wouldn't be a very enjoyable time this evening and none of us would be edified.

But where can we turn to for hope? How can we safeguard one another, strengthen each other so that we can persevere through this exile? Well, Isaiah 40 will help us all.

[8 : 42] This is really the beginning of the second half of Isaiah's book. And the words of the prophet here, they are bursting with glorious hope. But let me tell you, back then when Isaiah first spoke these words, the people of God were facing a distressing future, full of pain and sorrow.

Because back in chapter 39, Isaiah has just announced exile is coming. You see, back then, the vast majority of the people of Judah, God's Old Testament church, they had sadly rejected the Lord and sunk into unbelief.

They had spurned the Lord's grace and broken covenant with Him. Idolatry and lawlessness were rife all over the land. Evil had engulfed the promised land that was supposed to be a shining light to the nations of the Lord and His beauty.

And despite the Lord graciously calling His people to repent time and time again, sending prophet after prophet, they refused to turn to Him.

And so being faithful to His word, the Lord announced that He was going to bring upon them the ultimate covenant curse, exile. Brutal. Exile has become one of these words that we might hear in church, but I don't think we quite appreciate the horror of exile and what it meant.

[10 : 06] In the coming years, says Isaiah, the Babylonians will rise up and they will turn into a ferocious military power. The ferocious military war machine will sweep over Judah and destroy Jerusalem.

The Davidic king, the king in the line of David, will be carted off as prisoner. The temple, the source of worship, the special place where the Lord dwelt in that special way with His people, the place where sacrifice was made and prayer, will it be ransacked and reduced to rubble.

And on top of this, the people of Judah are going to face serious personal suffering. Some will die. Some will see loved ones being executed in front of their own eyes.

And the vast majority of them eventually, after a long fight, will also be taken off as prisoners, humiliated into Babylonian captivity. That is what the people of God were facing, friends.

That is what Isaiah has just announced. And you can always imagine the remnant of faith, that is the small group of faithful believers who had stayed faithful to the Lord in Judah, running up in desperation to Isaiah in response, saying, Isaiah, is there any hope?

[11:21] Please tell us. What will this exile mean for all of the amazing promises of God that you made earlier in your book? What about the promise of God to transform Jerusalem from a faithless city into a glorious, faithful city?

What about God's promise to establish the throne of David forever and to bless all nations through that throne? What about that great messianic banquet promised in chapter 25 where all people from all nations come and feast at the Lord's table in freedom and in happiness and the shroud of death that has covered every human being is taken by the Lord and scrunched up and thrown away?

Isaiah, has God decided to ditch those promises? Are they dead in the water? Are we facing utter annihilation?

Please, give us hope. And Isaiah says, oh yes, there's hope. I'll tell you about hope. Majestic hope in chapter 40.

Isaiah is given a glimpse by the Lord of the far, far distant future of a glorious time beyond exile. And I'd like us to look at this chapter in three points, three points this evening.

[12:39] Firstly, verses 1 to 11. The Lord is coming to save and shepherd His people. The Lord is coming to save and shepherd His people. 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 here is one of urgency.

He's saying, go immediately and minister comfort to my people. I don't want them to despair.

Comfort them. Comfort them. Now friends, let's not misunderstand what is meant by comfort here. I wonder what's the first image that pops into your head when you think of the word comfort. When I think of comfort, I think of a very, very large piece of Malteser cake. It might well have been made by Kenny Sewell, probably.

He makes a very good Malteser cake, does our Kenny. And a large flat white as well. I wonder what pops into your head. Maybe it's fabric softener.

[13:40] I don't know when we think of comfort. But anyway, when we think of comfort, we tend to think of coziness. Yes? But actually, that's not what the Bible means by comfort. Bible words, remember, always have Bible meanings.

Okay? And what the Bible means by comfort is really to strengthen. To strengthen. When I was a teenager, I was very privileged to go on a school trip to Normandy.

I always remember it because I nearly got sent home. But I didn't, so. And one of the things we did, one of the things I remember we did was we went to the Bayou Tapestry. And I don't remember it very well, but apparently there's a bit, a scene in the tapestry where it depicts a battle.

And if you look carefully at the scene, you'll see an image of a man, very proper looking man, dressed in black, I believe. And he's standing with a large pole behind his troops.

And what he's doing with the club that he's got in his hand is he's poking the troops in the back. Well, it's really poking them in the bottom so that they don't move back from the line, the fighting line, but that they stand firm and face the enemy.

[14:47] They don't retreat from the fight. And underneath in the tapestry, there's Latin words stitched into the tapestry. And the words say this, Bishop Odu, that's the man in black, comforts his troops.

And friend, that's what the Bible means by comfort. Comfort. To strengthen. To breathe life into my people. To strengthen. That's what the Lord has wanted Isaiah to do with his people.

Revive them. They've just heard the terrifying message of coming difficulty. So go and bring words that will lift them up and give them hope so that they will be able to endure Babylonian blasting.

Please look at verse 2. Here's the message that will lift them up. It says, Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that her warfare is ended.

So the Lord is saying that a time will come when their conflict with Babylon will be over. Your exile will be finished. Your hardship under that evil nation gone. Just like that.

[15 : 50] And remember what caused the warfare in the first place? Was the people's rebellion against the Lord. So the implication here, friends, is the Lord is saying a time is coming when you will be at peace with me again.

And that peace will be a gift of grace for it will only come about because the Lord has dealt with His people's sin. Look at the next bit of verse 2. He says, Tell her that her iniquity is pardoned.

Tell her that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. I'll just put my hands here and say for years I have misunderstood this detail.

This is not teaching that the Lord is going to place some sort of a double punishment upon His people. That's a bit of an absurd idea. If the Lord were to do that He would not be just. And that's impossible.

No, the Hebrew word for double that is used here is the word used most often to describe what happens when you fold something over perfectly in two. You double it over on top of itself and both sides match one another.

[16 : 53] One side is covered perfectly by the other. So the Lord is saying that a day will come when I will provide something that will perfectly cover over your sin and the punishment you deserve will be paid for.

Your iniquity pardoned fully. And what is the historical sign that this full pardon for sin has come about? Well, verse 3 to 5 tell us.

Let's read them. 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 for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

In other words, the time when the people's sin will be dealt with will coincide with the Lord Himself appearing. He is coming to His people.

[17 : 56] In verse 4 all this business about lifting up ground and lowering down hills and making a smooth flat surface it's really describing the production of a massive highway through the wilderness.

And it would have been very familiar imagery to Isaiah's first readers back then for it was common practice for emperors and kings whenever they were going to a place to conquer it and wage war against it and triumph over it they would make these highways through the wilderness.

They would also come back along their highways to parade their glory. And Isaiah says that this is exactly what the Lord is coming to do. When He appears He will appear as the ultimate unstoppable warrior king.

He is coming. Nothing will stand in His way nothing will stop Him. He will come to Babylon He will seek and save His people He will gather them up in His arms clutching them close to His heart He will then do a U-turn and go back up His highway and triumph home to Zion where He will shepherd His people in peace forever.

That's what these verses in verses 10 to 11 describe. We'll look more at them in just a second. But the whole earth is going to be shaken by this. The ripples of this salvation will go all over the world.

[19 : 16] Verse 5 All flesh all flesh not some flesh all flesh shall witness the glory of the Lord when He comes. The nations will be rocked by this.

In verses 6 to 8 the Lord also gives assurance that it really will take place. Look what He says 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 hear the Lord of Satan's people do not doubt for one second that this salvation will not happen.

It will happen because I have said it will happen. And my words are sure and certain. My words are not like human flesh which is like grass transient frail fleeting.

[20 : 16] No my word will stand forever. My promises are an eternal solid rock. Of course the implication is if you build your life upon these promises you too will stand forever.

And I think the Lord here is also assuring His people that He has power to face the enemy. We'll think more about this later in the chapter. But what He seems to say here is that Babylon will not stand a chance against the Lord when He appears.

all the Lord needs to do to them is this and they'll be gone forever. I just notice please there's a little new detail in verse 9.

So far in verse 3 and verse 6 Isaiah speaks of these two anonymous voices who are relaying this message of the Lord to the people. But in verse 9 notice the change?

the Lord now calls His faithful remnant to proclaim the news about what He is going to do to one another. Verse 9 Get you up to a high mountain O Zion herald of good news herald of the gospel lift up your voice with strength O Jerusalem herald of good news lift it up fear not say to who are they to speak to?

[21 : 33] The cities of Judah behold your God the Lord is calling on His people to minister this momentous truth to each other Zion Jerusalem to the cities of Judah they're to take what they hear from the Lord about His coming and power and salvation and they're to drum it into each other all the time to combat fear and in verse 10 they're to cry out to one another the Lord really is coming to rescue us and to rule with His mighty strong arm notice that there with His might and strong arm there are terms that were picked up earlier on in the Bible they were used to describe the Exodus where the Lord came to His people in their helplessness and He slayed the enemy with His strong arm on the one hand and with the same strong arm He gathered His people and guided them and as I've seen you're to tell this to one another everyone you're to say the Lord did it in the past

He's coming to do it again but on a much much bigger scale and verse 10 when the Lord comes with a mighty arm He will reward His people He will give them recompense it says in other words His people will be vindicated all those who've stayed faithful to the Lord even when their circumstances were utterly grim even when they faced darkness all around them those who put their faith even when the Babylonians ridiculed them for trusting in the Lord those who stand firm they will be vindicated they will be seen publicly to be in the right and on the winning side and what will the Lord do with His vindicated people well please 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 young the Lord is not only going to come as a warrior

He's also going to come in tenderness to His people to shepherd them it's such a tender beautiful image that He doesn't pick up His sheep and hold them at arm's length it's not how God feels about His people the Lord crupties them here next to His heart because He loves them every one of His flock will be individually cared for personally all their needs will be tended to not one of them forgotten not one of them neglected and just think of all those great realities that King David sung about all the centuries before in Psalm 23 about the great joy lasting satisfaction that can only come through living under the rule of the Lord only come from having Him as your shepherd well on that day that's coming the Lord's people will know those realities in all their perfection and they will never end they will never end friends these were great words of comfort for the people of God back then facing exile and they should be great words of comfort probably I would say even more words of comfort for us today how so well we can look back in history and see the way in which these words have been fulfilled already partially let's just do that now shall we

I know it's warm in here and you've been hit with a lot here but just shaky just have a little shake just wake up a little bit you can do this because I've been off sick come on there we go these words found partial fulfillment when the Lord moved his mighty arm in history against Babylon by raising up the Persians they came in and they crushed Babylon and then the Lord's mighty arm moved the heart of the Persian king to let a remnant of the people of Judah to return to the land and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple as we've been reading about recently in our studies in Ezra that was an amazing act of salvation but it's clear that it's only a partial fulfillment of this beautiful image in Isaiah 40 it's only when you come five centuries later to the events that are recorded in the gospels where we meet John the Baptist who in all the gospel accounts is described as a voice in the wilderness preparing the way for the

Lord and then the Lord comes in the flesh in humility the Lord Jesus and through his public ministry shows himself to be a mighty warrior against the powers of darkness and against all opposition 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 perfect forgiveness full pardon for our sins he came with his mighty arm and defeated all of the enemies that you and I cannot handle sin Satan and death he came and showed himself as well to be the tender hearted good shepherd who loves his sheep who gathered them in and cared for them and cares for them still from on high after he ascended and friends because we can today look back and see the way in which these words have

already been fulfilled by Christ in this way it should fill us with great strength as we carry on living through exile now because it assures us of the ways in which they will be completely perfectly fulfilled when Jesus returns on that day the Lord

[27:17] Jesus will do away with our enemies once and for all they will be completely taken away from our presence isn't that a thought sin Satan and death never again affecting your life never again affecting my life all those who've trusted in Isaiah's words will receive their reward and recompense we will be vindicated and we will live with him forever enjoying the love and the tender care of our shepherd and friends as we wait for that glorious future in the here and now we must be ready to help one another persevere and to make it to that day we need to do verse nine now please bear with me again let me just ask you to do another thing this evening I'm asking a lot of you just if you would I know we're British most of us anyway and we're a bit reserved just turn and have a look at the people around you in this church please have a look at your church family have a look have a good look around don't be shy some of you this will be the most painful thing in the world and actually I'm not going to apologize for that anyway it's great fun anyway well I'm sure you'll be looking around here and there might be some visitors but the vast majority of people you will be looking at there are your church family and we have a ministry from the

Lord to do verse 9 to share the gospel to each other to proclaim the good news of the Lord's coming to one another we are to remind ourselves of the gospel truth again and again and again so that we will combat fear within us so we will safeguard ourselves from sinking into despair and if you're visiting from another church it's great to have you with us this evening but that is what your duty is at your home church as well that's just one of the many reasons why I'm so thankful for the growth group that I used to be in I've obviously been out of action for a while but I've really missed it that midweek meeting where we got together and we would catch up with each other but we would open up God's word and remind each other of the reality of who God is what he's done for us and how we're to live in the power of his spirit and on Sundays too after the service over coffee one of the things that that's really helped myself and Emma to stand firm through our recent difficult days it's just talking with other members of the church not about our problems well that's not been terrible we haven't we have found that helpful to do but the most helpful thing we found in the midst of all of our difficulties is just talking about the word that the Lord

Jesus has just preached to us from the sermon chewing over God's word with one another thinking about how we're going to work it into our lives that is so encouraging when you're in the depths of despair full of uncertainty for the future because actually deep down we do not have uncertainty for our future because the Lord is coming what a great ministry we have to speak the gospel to one another and friends I think as a church we are pretty good at this actually I think we're pretty good at this but we could always be better so let's seek to do this more and more when anyone in the church is downhearted point them to the Lord and say behold your God he is coming right well the rest of our time this evening I want to look at two more points covering the rest of the chapter the next one is a medium length point and the last one is really short just to fill you with a bit of hope so it seems from verse 12 to 30

Isaiah anticipates that some of the members of the remnant some of God's people they're going to find it hard to believe what the Lord has just promised because exile will be so grim the two doubts that Isaiah seems to be addressing here are this doubt number one the Lord does he really have enough power to save us can he save us in other words and doubt number two does the Lord actually want to save us does he have a desire to save us and in verse 12 to 30 Isaiah is responding to these two doubts so with that in mind here's the second point in the sermon this evening is this the Lord really is mighty to save and shepherd his people 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 he's not just saying great things about God for the sake of it he's wanting to blow his readers minds about just how powerful the Lord our God is he uses incredible poetry that will grip our hearts so that we will be full of wonder at their measurable power and size of the Lord and so therefore have confidence in him and in verse 12

Isaiah goes back to the creation please look at verse 12 who has measured the waters and 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 and scales and the hills in a balance now please just understand this Isaiah is not saying that God is just a big man I've said this to you loads of times in the past I'll say it again many people today when they think about God what they do is they think

about a man in their heads maybe someone the size of Josh Johnston or maybe Big Alec and they go they make him even bigger bigger bigger bigger than that until they've got a really big man and they go aha that is what God is like he is a big man just like us but really big that is not right God is not a big man God is not a bigger version of you all right having said that though the Bible does use what we call anthropomorphisms which is talking about God in a human way so that we can understand something of

[33 : 19] God's being so whilst he's describing God here as a man here God is not a big man yes but that's what Isaiah does here he describes the creator God as being like a man who goes out to his work shed and at the beginning of time he went out into his work shed and created the world that is how powerful he is all of the waters on the face of the earth he measured it out with just the palm of his hand friends there's so much water on the earth that scientists have absolutely no idea how much water there is they can only hazard a guess and it changes all the time just look at this glass for a second I don't know how much of the world's water this is I think it's probably 250 milliliters of the world's water 240 millimeters of the Lord's water friends I can't even fit that into the palm of my hand I wonder how big your hand is I bet you can't hold that much water in the palm of your hand if I was to try and do it on the platform here I'd make a mess the Lord is so powerful all of the water all of the water is a tiny little bit in the Lord's palm of his hand there that's how powerful the Lord is and when the Lord made the universe how did he measure out the dimensions of the universe that's so beyond our comprehension he measured it like this with his hands like that he's so powerful and if you were to take all of the mountains all the mountains from all over the world and scrunch them up and put them before the Lord what would they look like they would look like a little mound of dirt a little mound of dust on his scales I was thinking about that verse actually on Friday when I emptied out my waist bit of my Hoover and I just saw this little pile of dust in the bin and I thought the mountains are like that before God he is so powerful and in verse 13 and 14 Isaiah asks 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 God knowledge no one God can't learn anything who did the Lord consult at the creation of all things answer no one for in and of himself he has all knowledge he is the omniscient creature creator not creature sorry creator in verse 15 no nation could ever compete with the Lord for again if you were to take all of the nations of the world and combine them into one mass how would they compare to him they'd just be like a drop of sand and a bucket he is so powerful in verse 16 Isaiah says that even if you were to take the whole country of Lebanon which back then was full of life and full of beauty take all of its living organisms and burn them as a burnt offering before the Lord as an act of costly worship it would still not bring the Lord the dignity and the worship he deserves he is so powerful and majestic verse 17 is truly humbling as I am saying compared to the Lord the nations they are nothing that is without the Lord they would be formless and void the only reason that the world is not formless and void is because the all-powerful creator has formed and filled the created and in verse 18 to 21 Isaiah compares the Lord with worthless and dead idols that people make for themselves and that's one thing as I do if you read on tonight which I recommend you do you'll see that he loves to mock idolatry remember idolatry is when we take a good thing from God's creation and turn it into a God thing when we start to worship it the Bible never ever limits idolatry simply to bowing down before a statue of a false God the Bible says that anything could become an idol to us for example Habakkuk chapter 1 tells us that the nation of Babylon's God was their own military power their own army had become an idol says Habakkuk 1 and so it is for us today 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 idols are powerless to save they can do nothing the Lord on the other hand he is mighty to save he is the only one who is powerful enough to save if his verse 22 is mind blowing again he says the entire universe which is immeasurably enormous to enormous to us it's actually just like a small one man tent for the Lord the heavens are like a canopy sheet literally the heavens are like a tabernacle which the Lord has spread out above him and his one man tent and what about us how do we compare to the Lord well imagine sitting in your one man tent I don't know if you've ever been camping I've been a few times I despise camping but that's for another time but imagine you're sitting in your one man tent and you look down on your ground sheet below you and you just see little insects scurrying about tiny little insects that's how we are before the Lord now Isaiah is not saying that we human beings have the same worth as creepy crawly bugs now the rest of the Bible

teaches that God has given us human beings the highest dignity of all because we alone are made in his image made in his likeness and God prizes us above all other creatures so Isaiah is not trying to belittle us here in one way but in another way he is trying to humble us by saying actually size wise we are nothing compared to God we are nothing we are just like little grasshoppers in front of him nothing compared to him what about the rulers of this world what about the rulers of the world the people with all the power and all the pomp surely they're a threat to the Lord and his power no chance says Isaiah verse 22 23 24 they tell us that the Lord can bring the rulers of this earth to nothing like that

Isaiah is really repeating what he stated in verses 6 to 8 the rulers of this world are like delicate little flowers and the Lord by comparison is a deadly tornado the Lord can blow away the greatest of human powers as easily as a child can blow the seeds off of a dandelion weed can God save and shepherd us is he powerful enough you bet he is he is the all-powerful creator his might is limitless nothing and no one can hinder him and again friends perhaps you're here tonight perhaps you're to do tonight and when I began the sermon and was talking about all the hopelessness round about us perhaps you were sitting there thinking yes that's right I do feel I've lost hope I do feel discouraged perhaps the horrors that go on in this world of darkness that you've seen and witnessed have got to you maybe seeing the enemies of the gospel have got to you and caused you to diminish your view of the Lord and his power well my friend you must let Isaiah's word bring therapy to your mind and your heart and correct you the Lord really is mighty to save and shepherd his people nothing will stand in his way when he comes well thirdly and very briefly Isaiah says lastly that the Lord really wants to save and shepherd his people and these final verses of the chapter Isaiah addresses a second doubt that the people held please look at verse 27 why do you say oh Jacob and speak oh Israel my way is hidden from the Lord and my right is disregarded by my God so the exiles were doubting not only that the Lord had the power to save them but they were also doubting that he had the desire to save them as well and Isaiah responds in verse 28 to 31 by saying no no the Lord really wants to save you the Lord really wants to shepherd you he is willing don't be fooled by your grim circumstances your current struggles in verse 28 Isaiah reminds the exiles of the truth that they should have already known from the scriptures that the Lord never grows weary he never tires the Lord never sleeps not even the awesome act of creation exhausted the Lord he is the God of all strength and might and what is amazing is that this all-powerful creator God is really willing to share his strength with his people verse 29 he gives power to the faint and to him who has no might he increases strength

I have two sons most of you know these two boys one is nine the other one is four he's currently sitting very quietly over there and I don't mention him by name in case that distracts him and he goes mental but there we go both my sons are explode I love them very much by the way I'm proud of them but both of them are explosive bodies of energy if you don't believe me just wait five minutes and after the service they will be running around like absolute maddies through this hall you'll have to dodge them as you have your tea and coffee sometimes I'm frightened by how much energy my kids have but there are even times when even they crash and lose strength and so it is with the life of a believer there will be times when we're full of strength full of vigor feel like everything's going well and then there will also be times when we will grow weary we will be tired tired spiritually we will feel down we need to know that we have a God who is ready and willing to be the source of strength that we desperately need and he's willing to do that all the time and just look at what will happen to those who receive strength from the Lord it's remarkable verse 31 they'll have strength to soar stamina to run and perseverance to keep walking the Lord wants to save his people and he will save his people and he also gives us all the strength that we need to persevere as we wait for his coming you know sometimes you meet Christians in the church and you get chatting to them and they say well I'm a Christian but I'm a struggling Christian and whenever I hear that I always want to say there's no other type of Christian yes if you don't think if you think there's any other type of Christian then actually you've got it wrong my friend for as long as we remain in exile we will struggle the Christian life is a struggle it's conflict it's war but please be assured by these words in Isaiah 40 the Lord cares for you he will give you what you need to keep trusting him until that great day when his son appears in glory and on that day those of us who've put our trust in him will soar like eagles you and I will be raised in power never again to suffer we will live with our saviour and our shepherd in his peace we will glorify and enjoy him and it will never end so Tron Church family don't despair don't lose heart if you ever feel that way you must turn to Isaiah 40 and behold your God and if you're here this evening and if you don't know this saviour here as your

saviour you can all the way through scripture there's invitation after invitation to come to him he is ready and willing to be your God if only you turn to him seek his forgiveness seek his peace through Jesus you will be his and you will have this future ahead of you let's bow our heads and let's pray our gracious God and heavenly Father we praise you that you are powerful to save us and that you want to save us

[46 : 21] Father so often when we look at our own hearts and the ongoing sin in our lives we feel is that right is that right does God want me I've failed you so much we praise you for passages like these in your word that tell us yes for you are a God of grace and as we wait for the great and glorious day of Christ's appearing we ask that you will strengthen us by your spirit so that we will help one another to keep trusting in you and loving you whatever comes our way help us to endure Babylonian blasting by beholding your beauty and remembering your promises and we pray this in Jesus name Amen Amen Amen