

Isaiah 40:21-31(ESV) ²¹Do 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? ²²It 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; ²³who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. ²⁴Scarcely 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. ²⁵To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. ²⁶Lift 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. ²⁷Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God"? ²⁸Have 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. ²⁹He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. ³⁰Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; ³¹but 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.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

The intensity of this passage is red hot. The ink on the page would burn your fingers if it were possible. Isaiah is doing his best to encourage the people that God is so much bigger and powerful than anything and everything that they are facing. God is all powerful and all knowing. God brought the entire universe into being. God spoke it into existence. Look up and you will see the handiwork of God all around you. Do not lose sight of God. You think God is no longer paying any attention to you and your needs. You could not be more wrong. You think God has grown tired and is taking a nap. Your thinking could not be more off base. Look up and you will see the vastness of God. God sees the entire universe and He also sees you. Look up and you will see evidence of God's work in the heavens and know that God is involved in every detail of your life.

The entire universe points to God, at least to those who have eyes to see truth. The universe cries out, "created by God" at least to those who have ears to hear. In the Throne Room of God Isaiah was where time does not exist. God is eternal and the universe had a beginning. Of course, in the Throne Room of God Isaiah sees and speaks of God's great holiness. "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory"

(Isaiah 6:3). Hebrews 11:3, "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God, so that what was seen was not made out of the things that are visible."

Do you know that there was a time that God was alone? The Bible says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). But before He created He existed as God, and God alone (Dr Irwin Lutzer, "When God Was Alone" sermon of which I rely on in this sermon, July 2008). And when I say alone, I mean nothing else existed other than Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The universe was yet to be. Angels were yet to be. Before God created the universe, matter itself did not exist. Dr Lutzer writes, "But we do know of course that there was a period in which God existed, and nothing else existed beside Him because He is the creator, and before He created, there was only God" (Ibid. Dr Lutzer).

There are world renowned atheist scholars who agree that at one time there was nothing. Their equation goes something like this. Nothing x nobody = everything. We say the universe displays the glory of God, God's handiwork to those who can see. The universe had a definite beginning for only God is eternal. Isaiah was able to hear and see the vastness of God and, of course, what he saw and heard comes out in the entire book of Isaiah. God is as close to His people as one's breath and God's vastness fills up the universe and more.

Dr. Lutzer quotes from an article published in the Chicago Tribune several years ago. Astronomers have discovered more than a dozen evenly distributed clumps of galaxies. A galaxy has hundreds of millions of stars. This means the universe is more immense than many present theories of the size of the universe. Scientists were astonished to find clumps of galaxies so evenly spaced, each either 400 million or 800 million light years apart, depending on the assumption of how rapidly the universe is expanding. Friends, we are talking about hundreds of millions of lightyears and thousands of trillions of stars. God created them all. The universe cries out the existence of God to those who have ears to hear. The universe displays God's work to those who have eyes to see. Hearing and seeing comes by faith in Jesus Christ.

By faith we know God brought all things into existence and God did it out of nothing. Our equation is God + nothing = the universe. Praise Be to God.

In Isaiah 40 Isaiah is addressing the people of Judah and Jerusalem that had been taken by the Babylonians into Babylon. God had given to Isaiah a vision into the future of what would happen to God's people well over 120 years before it happened. In 586 B.C. the Babylonian army conquered Judah, the Southern part of Israel, and took a large number of the people to Babylon. Their conditions in Babylon were not deplorable like a concentration camp but still God's people were forced to live in a place that was not their own, prisoners in a foreign country. They never thought God would let this happen; after all, they were God's chosen people. They had the temple, the sacrifices, and many prophets. They thought God would never let them suffer in this way.

Friends, our God is very patient. He sees everything that we do. He knows all of our thoughts. There is nothing that we can hide from God. And when we sin against the Lord, God is patient, and he gives us time to repent. God sends the Holy Spirit to convict us of our sins. The Holy Spirit shows us where we have failed God. Then the Holy Spirit leads us to confess our sins to God for God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. When we confess our sins, the blood of Jesus shed on the cross is applied to our lives and our sins are completely forgiven and gone forever. God will no longer ever hold those sins against us. They are covered by the blood of the lamb shed on the cross. We do not have to carry the weight of our sins any longer. Jesus bore them for us on the cross. He also bore the guilt and shame of our sins. That too we no longer have to carry. And when we are forgiven it is as if we walk closer with God and commune with God on deeper levels. Luther says where there is forgiveness of sins there is new life. One's fellowship with God is restored. Forgiveness is so freeing. Please never hesitate to truly repent of your sins. To hesitate is to quench or grieve God's Spirit. To hesitate to repent is to open up your life to dangers of all

sorts. When a Christian continues in constant willful sin without repenting, God will step in and let you know that what you are doing offends God greatly. God hates sin. Sin is the biggest problem there is. Sin is what cost the life of Jesus on the cross. Jesus came to die for our sins. We must never make light of sin. To do so is to mock Jesus and the cross.

God had warned his people starting with Moses what would happen to them in the Promised Land if they failed to repent of their sins and obey God. The people failed to repent and obey, and God used the Babylonians to humble God's people so they would pray and seek God's ways and turn, repent of their wicked ways.

Friends, I do not like to be humbled by God. Today, God humbles us exactly where we need to be humbled. He does this for our good and so our lives will bring more glory to Him. God's humbling can hurt like crazy. The good news is God's healing power moves in according to God's perfect timetable and God picks you up. God cuts in order that he might heal. God humbles and then God restores.

In Babylon God's people felt betrayed by God. They felt abandoned by God and they questioned God's love for them. "God if you truly loved us we would not be here," you can almost hear them say in verse 27 of chapter 40. The New Living translation puts it this way, "O Israel, how can you say God refuses to hear your case." Yes, the people are thinking about God but their thoughts about God are quite negative. "Why should we pray to God since God is not listening?" "God is ignoring our troubles so why should I seek God."

Friends, God may have you in your troubles for this very reason. God wants you to turn back to Him. God wants you to come to Him. God is waiting for you to humble yourselves before Him so God then can provide for you exactly what you need, and what you need is for God to touch your soul and bring renewal and revival into your very being. God wants to do a great work in your life. God is using your circumstances to draw you closer to himself. Those of

you in Babylon God has not given up on you and don't you give up on God. It is often when you are struggling the most that God is doing his most intricate work in your life.

Friends I also know that there are times in our lives that God humbles us for purposes only known to God and it has nothing to do with one's sin. No, you did not sin in a mighty and horrible way and that is why you are being humbled. God does His humbling work for His glory and one day that will be very clear.

God's people in Babylon were faint, exhausted, weak, tired, discouraged, chronic complainers or as I put it in the pit; it is this type of people that God renews. It is this type of people who are so weak that receive God's power to live with their heads high and with a great confidence in God. It is this type of people that God fills with an undying hope. Better days are ahead because God is going to bring good out of everything that you are facing.

Verse 30,31 "Even youths shall faint and 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." Friends, our human strength will fail us, even when we are young. But thank the Lord for God's strength that never fails. All things are possible with God. The weak like us will soar like eagles and run without tiring and walk without quitting and complaining. When you are confident in who God is you can't quit because you live with an eager expectation of what God will do knowing God will always provide. That is what the word wait means. Waiting is looking forward to, eagerly and enthusiastically, what God has guaranteed. Waiting is living by faith before we see God's answer or provision. We live in this tension as to what God has revealed and one day will be fulfilled. It is waiting on tiptoes with an eager longing (ibid pg. 254). "Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, we press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13,14). We wait for God's timing and my friends, God is never in a hurry.

When we desire God more than anything, we need never go into the pit again. Your days in Babylon will be over. Wait on the Lord and He will pick you up. Amen and Amen