

BEING COMFORTED AS WE ACTIVELY WAIT ON THE LORD (ISAIAH 40)

Isaiah 40, that we'll be looking into today, is a message given to Isaiah the prophet to comfort God's people after they had been taken into captivity to Babylon; taken from their homes, leaving behind their culture, customs and comforts because of their refusal to listen to God, through the pleading of His prophets, to turn back to God and to obey Him. If you think we live in a chaotic and godless society or nation today, just think of God's people then, of whom most of them lived out the remainder of their lives in Babylon with not only then having to deal with foreign customs and false gods and a different language, but also with all of "God's people", so to speak, who had continued to rebel against God, and most importantly, that they were being severely punished by God for their rebellion against Him. Yet, even then, God spoke words of comfort to His people, still looking for His remnant, for those who would turn back to Him. Just as He spoke through Jeremiah the prophet saying, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." (**Jeremiah 29:11-13**)

There was a sense of God pleading to His people in **Proverbs 4** that we read last week, to which we are told to diligently seek God for His guidance and wisdom. "My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil." (**Proverbs 4:20-27**) We have many more examples of God's pleading with His people in the Scriptures which are for us too, even today. Two examples we read last week. **1.** Paul saying to the church at Corinth, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God." (**2 Corinthians 5:20**) **2.** Paul said in **Romans 12:1-2**, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And **do not be conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." As a child of God, you are in the Lord's army now. We are then not to get ourselves entangled in the affairs of this world. "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare

entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier." (2 Timothy 2:3-4)

So today, for us, as children of God, that is, those who have believed on Christ Jesus and received Him, (John 1:12-13) we can be comforted as well, in knowing that if God is for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31), for the battle belongs to the Lord! We are more than conquerors through Christ who loves us (Romans 8:37). Just as king David said, "I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies." (Psalm 18:1-3) We can and will be comforted in our Lord, God, and Savior as we actively wait upon Him, for His help, in our present situations, and ultimately in Him taking us home to dwell in His glory. Proverbs 3:5-6 speaks to our putting our trust in Him for the present, as well as for our eternity, by saying, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." Whether you're in Babylon, going through the valley of the shadow of death, or whatever and wherever! We are indeed moving forward though, in the will and ways of God, putting our trust in Him that He will get us to that final resting place. Hebrews 3-4 speaks on that, exhorting us, by saying "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest [abiding in Christ-John 15], lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience [of the Israelites]. The Apostle Paul refers to that moving forward until our call home by saying, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14) Similarly, the Israelites were told to "cling to Him for He is your life" (Deuteronomy 30:20). For us, according to the New Covenant that is in Christ Jesus, the disciple Thomas said to Jesus, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" You ever feel that way? Saying, "Lord help me, I don't know what to do, show me the way!" That's me, every day! Jesus said to him, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:5-6)

That then begs the question, "who are you looking to to right the wrongs" in your life and in our society and world? Who are you going to turn to because of injustices and problems that seem impossible to be corrected? You know God's Word actually says this, "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord." (Jeremiah 17:5) Psalm 146:3 says, "Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help." King Jehoshaphat almost got himself killed by joining forces

with the wicked King Ahab (**1 Kings 22**) and later in history, God's people of Judah were told not to lean on Egypt for protection, as Israel had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians. Isaiah the prophet wrote, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the Lord!" (**Isaiah 31:1**) As it has been said, time and again, and believed upon, and experienced, God's Word is a beautifully woven together, picture of God's redemptive plan for mankind, comprised of a collection of God's dealings with mankind, mostly with His people, and also God's instruction and guidance in how He expects His people to live, interact with one another, and then of how we should respond to Him, as our Lord, God and Creator, and then also to those who are His, as our Heavenly Father and Savior. Now according to the New Covenant that is in Christ Jesus, we are living our lives, led by the Spirit of God, based on the doctrine of Christ that is summed up in Jesus saying the great commandment is to love God with all of one's heart, soul, strength and mind, and then also to love others as ourselves which requires His guidance and wisdom.

We are told, vicariously through the Apostle Paul's letter to Timothy, meaning it is to us as much as it was for Timothy, where Paul warned Timothy and spoke of the "last of days [when] perilous times will come" and then goes on to say, "But you have carefully followed my doctrine [that is, the doctrine of Christ Jesus], manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly **in Christ Jesus** will suffer persecution [Greek root, dioko-chase aggressively, like a hunter]. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have **learned and been assured of, knowing** from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have **known the Holy Scriptures**, which are able to make you **wise for salvation** through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (**2 Timothy 3:10-17**) That may once again remind you of how God through Christ Jesus is our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. (**1 Corinthians 1:30**) To go along with that, the Word of God, aka the Holy Scriptures is eternally bound to the Word of God who, in the inspired word given to the Apostle John, "became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (**John 1:14**)

When Jesus gave His disciples, the calling of the Great Commission, of which we are presently an active participant of (hopefully), Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you [therein is what is called the doctrine of Christ]; and lo [idou-behold], I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20) What that means then is that good or bad, perilous times or times of peace, times of afflictions or persecutions or times of comfort and rest, Jesus is with us ALWAYS! Another passage of Scripture that we as children of God rely upon with regards to the Word of God is **Hebrews 4:12** which says, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The verse just before that says, "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience." (**Hebrews 4:11**) Then **Hebrews 4:13**, after speaking about the "Word of God", it says, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

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Isaiah 40

God's People Are Comforted

"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" says your God. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins." The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." The voice said, "Cry out!" and he said, "What shall I cry?" "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, **but the word of our God stands forever.**"

O Zion, you who bring good tidings, get up into the high mountain [remind you of Jesus' sermon on the mount?]; O Jerusalem, you who bring good tidings, lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, **His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.** [**Ephesians 2:8-10**-"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For **we are His workmanship**, created in Christ

Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.] He will feed His flock like a shepherd [Psalm 23]; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young. Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured heaven with a span and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding?

Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales; look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless. [as they would not acknowledge Him as God Almighty] To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him? The workman molds an image, the goldsmith overspreads it with gold, and the silversmith casts silver chains. Whoever is too impoverished for such a contribution chooses a tree that will not rot; he seeks for himself a skillful workman to prepare a carved image that will not totter. Have you not known? Have you not heard? 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 out like a tent to dwell in. He brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth useless. Scarcely shall they be planted, scarcely shall they be sown, scarcely shall their stock take root in the earth, when He will also blow on them, and they will wither, and the whirlwind will take them away like stubble.

“To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?” says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; **He calls them all by name**, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; **Not one is missing**. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel: “My way is hidden from the Lord, and my just claim is passed over by my God”? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, **but those who wait on 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.**

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May you be comforted as WE wait actively in the Lord!