

## Strength for the Day • Isaiah 40:31

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Wrong Number*

1. One day a woman was doing some things around her house when she thought of another woman in her church.
2. She had the strong impression to call her, so she went to the phone and dialed
3. She asked how she was doing and the woman said, "I feel terrible."
  - a. "I have a splitting headache and my back and legs are killing me."
  - b. "The house is a mess, and the kids are simply driving me crazy."
4. The caller sympathetically said, "Listen, go and lie down, I'll come over right away and cook lunch for you, clean up the house, and take care of the children while you get some rest. By the way, how's Sam?"
5. "Sam?" the complaining housewife said. "My husband's name is Phil!"
6. "My heavens," exclaimed the first woman, "I must have dialed the wrong number."
7. There was a long pause, then the second woman asked hopefully, "Will you still coming over?"
8. I'll bet a whole lot of you ladies can relate to that!

#### B. *Life!*

1. If we were to take a poll this morning, we would likely find a significant number of us feel stretched to the limit
2. Our schedules are so full and there are so many demands placed on us that we wonder whether we'll make it
3. I talked with a high school student this week who is working *and* going to school; felt stretched, in over his head.
4. Turns out a lot of students feel that way
  - a. what between school, sports, work, family, and church -
  - b. they need another 5 hours and way more strength to get done all that needs doing
5. Some of us this morning came with almost a sense of desperation
  - a. life has ganged up on them
  - b. and they came with the sincere hope that they would hear something that would give them courage -
  - c. something that would renew their strength and enable them to keep on keeping on
6. If you're not one of those who's in such a place of need this morning - listen anyway because you eventually will be.

### II. TEXT

#### A. *Vs. 29-31*

**29 He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases**

strength.

**30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall,**

**31 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.**

1. Chapter 40 is a message of comfort God spoke through the prophet Isaiah to the Jews who would return from their exile in Babylon.
2. In Chapter 39, Isaiah foretold the destruction of the nation and the city of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians
3. Not only would they destroy the city, but they would dismantle the temple and carry off the people into captivity
4. But after 70 years, once the people returned to Him in heartfelt and sincere repentance, He would return to them and restore them to their land and homes
5. Chapter 40 is a message of encouragement and comfort to the exiles who would make the return journey and rebuild the ruined cities of Israel.
6. And they are words they desperately needed to hear!
7. Think of how great the task before the returning exiles was
  - a. the Babylonians had ravaged the countryside
  - b. the city walls were all dismantled
  - c. the houses were broken down
  - d. the wells were stopped up with stones
  - e. the fields and vineyards had been burned
  - f. a good portion of the forests had been cut down to use for making siege equipment
8. The land, which had been cultivated and domesticated by previous generations of Jews had by this time reverted to a wilderness in which dangerous creatures roamed
9. They faced a task that was worse than starting from scratch -
10. They had to first remove the rubble and debris before they could begin rebuilding!
11. The undertaking was overwhelming
12. And it caused many of the Jews who had settled down in Babylon to opt out of the return
13. They were content to stay put rather than face the challenge of rebuilding

### **B. You?**

1. Have you ever faced a project so immense that you decided to just forget it?
  - a. cleaning the garage or that closet
  - b. replacing the fence
  - c. repainting the house
2. As you stood there and looked at it, you got tired and a sense of weariness settled on you?
  - a. a pile of clothes that needed to be ironed
  - b. the windows that need to be cleaned
  - c. the kitchen cabinets that need to be refinished
  - d. that back yard that is full of weeds

3. Multiply that by a hundred and you have something of the immensity of the task before the returning exiles.
4. They didn't have a garage, closet, or backyard to deal with - what faced them was an entire nation - whole cities!
5. To these returning exiles, faced with a task that was simply beyond them, God spoke words of comfort!
6. The comfort He gave through Isaiah was not some cute little ditty that would get in their heads and haunt them - "Don't worry. Be happy."
7. It was a comfort based on God's revelation of Himself to them.

### **C. God's Revelation**

1. Chapters 40-47 are some of the most important chapters in the Bible for what they tell us about God.
2. In fact, no other passage of scripture is more concentrated in terms of it's revelation of God
3. The application of this revelation is comfort for God's people
4. The comfort He gives is based on who and what He is!
5. When they are feeling overwhelmed by the challenge of rebuilding their homes, they are to cast themselves on Him and discover new strength, new inspiration, new vision and encouragement to press on and complete the work
6. The promise God makes here to the returning exiles is a promise that applies to God's people in every age - *whatever* the task or challenge they face.

### **D. Self Or God**

1. Left to ourselves, trouble will at times gang up on us
2. This world will wear us down
3. Trials will badger and harass us. We will weary and sometimes faint.
4. But as we learn to cease from our own self-sufficient labor and striving,
  - a. as we repent of self-reliance
  - b. and instead cast ourselves in complete dependence on God
  - c. we will discover new strength
  - d. and we will rise above our problems
  - e. we will overcome the trial and hurdle the obstacles

### **E. The Process & Lesson**

**29 He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength.**

1. Who does God give power to? The weak
2. Who does He give strength? Those with no might
3. Before we can know God's empowering, we have to first come to the end of our own strength
4. Before we draw on Him, we must first be emptied of self
5. These verses bring us face to face with one of the biggest paradoxes of the Christian faith:
  - a. that we find strength in weakness - or as Paul would say it, "When I am weak, then I am strong."

- b. in dying, we find life
  - c. the way up is down
  - d. and victory is obtained by surrender
6. I've seen the truth of this, not only in my own experience, but in the lives of so many others
  7. God will bring each of us to the place where there is no where to look but to Him.
  8. We exhaust ourselves trying to find an answer, a solution to whatever problem we face
    - a. we exhaust our resources, strength and intelligence
    - b. then when we are spent and there is no where else to turn, we cry out to God
    - c. and you know what - He always answers!
  9. He rescues us and gives us what we need to overcome.
  10. We rejoice and give thanks and bask in the glow of His majesty and love
  11. But then another day dawns, and as time passes it takes us farther away from that experience and place
  12. And soon, we are living once again out of our own strength, ingenuity, and self.
  13. So along comes another challenge, another trial, trouble, whatever!
  14. We strive, we struggle, until eventually our strength is spent and we falter
  15. And we experience v. 30

**30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall,**

16. No matter how young or strong - no matter how capable and independent you are,
17. God will bring you to the end of yourself so that you might know Him and His strength
18. But failure is not what God is after; failure is just the means of getting you to where you need to be so that He might bestow on you something better
19. And what's better is v. 31 . . .

**31 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.**

20. In Genesis we read how God told Jacob that it was time for him to leave his uncle Laban's house and return home
  - a. by this time, Jacob had grown quite wealthy and had a huge family
  - b. so he had a lot of stuff to go home with
21. Waiting for him at home was an estranged brother whom he had swindled out of the family birthright
  - a. the last thing he heard from his brother Esau was a vow to kill him
  - b. many years had passed, but Jacob had no guarantee that Esau had softened
22. Now, the night before he would cross the brook that marked the boundary of his ancestral home, Jacob was in great anxiety over what the next day would hold
  - a. would Esau come out with a force of men and kill him and his family?
  - b. or would Esau be glad to see him and let the past be forgotten?

23. Jacob couldn't sleep, and in the middle of the night, the Lord showed up in his tent and began to wrestle with him
  - a. the bout when on and on
  - b. God wanted Jacob to learn the lesson of surrender and trust
  - c. but Jacob was the consummate example of the guy who will not surrender
  - d. all his life he had lived by his own wits and cleverness
  - e. there wasn't man alive who could get the better of him
  - f. so they wrestled and wrestled until the dawning of the new day
  - g. Jacob was weak and wrung out, but still he would not surrender
  - h. all he could do was hang on
  - i. and when God told him to let Him go, Jacob wanted to bargain
  - j. "Not till you bless me," he said
  - k. God did bless him, but not in the manner Jacob anticipated
  - l. God caused his hip joint to dislocate and then changed his name from Jacob, which means "Conniver" to "Israel" which means "Prince with God"
24. Later that morning, when they crossed the brook, Jacob went with a limp
  - a. but it was a blessed memorial to how in finally surrendering to God,
  - b. he in fact gained victory over his fear of Esau
  - c. that day as he looked up and saw Esau coming toward him surrounded by men,
  - d. every painful step he took would be a reminder that the Lord had promised to go with him
  - e. and that God was at work in his life to change him from a conniving thief into a royal son
25. Jacob didn't so much wrestle with God that night as he wrestled with himself, to the end *of* self
26. It took the end of his own strength before he learned the lesson

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. *Wrestling*

1. Is God wrestling with you?
  2. Has he brought you to some place and now you are exhausted, spent?
  3. Let go, surrender, give up and admit your weakness
  4. Cast yourself completely on God and trust not at all in yourself
  5. Look at the promise . . .
- 31 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.**
6. Strength comes by waiting on God
  7. And we wait on God by fleeing from self and running to Him
  8. To wait on the Lord means to trust him, to rely on His strength and not our own.
  9. The one who is waiting on God is the one who has ceased from striving and trying to make it work by their own wits
    - a. they have come to God and confessed their utter dependence on Him

- b. they have stopped looking for some other way out and are focused on Him alone
10. Have you ever seen a dog who is looking at someone who's holding out a snack?
- a. that dog's attention is riveted on the snack
  - b. they cannot be distracted from just waiting on the one who is holding it out to them
  - c. that's a picture of what it means to wait on God

### **B. Mary & Martha**

1. Here's an even better picture: Mary & Martha
  - a. Jesus had come to their home for a visit
  - b. He was in the front room, sharing His heart with His friends about the kingdom of God
  - c. Mary was at His feet, hanging on every word,
  - d. Martha, her sister, was in the kitchen, busily preparing lunch
    - 1) the more she worked,
    - 2) the more flustered and angry she got that Mary wasn't helping her
    - 3) so she poked her head around the door and berated *Jesus* that He hadn't told Mary to get in the kitchen and help her sister
  - e. imagine that - Martha scolding the Lord of the universe!
2. Jesus' reply to Martha is very important - He told her that Mary had made a better choice than Martha - and that was to wait on Him
3. You see friends - Mary would eventually rise to make the meal
  - a. but only after her heart was filled with the Lord's love and majesty
  - b. then her service would be a thing of joy, not mere duty
  - c. and as a result, the food would taste better to all who ate - but especially to God
4. Martha confused mere motion with God-honoring service
5. The kind of service God desires from us is that which flows from a full heart - not a duty bound one
6. If you are performing some service or ministry and you get angry and frustrated because it doesn't seem anyone else is there to help
  - a. and you end up complaining to the Lord,
  - b. if you find yourself chiding God because others haven't stepped forward to assist,
  - c. then look at yourself in a mirror and say Hi to Martha
  - d. it's time to sit at the feet of Jesus and wait on Him
7. Then, once your heart is full, rise, and get to work!

### **31 But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength;**

8. Strength for what? For life, for service, for today!
9. Notice what it says

**They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.**

10. It all *begins* at Christ's feet, but it doesn't end there

11. The strength He gives is a strength for living, for serving, for whatever each day brings us

**C. *Mary Or Martha***

1. Just as some of us tend to be Marthas,
2. Others tend to be like one-side Marys
3. Some of us have sat at Jesus's feet, but then He moved on and we just sat there
4. We never rise like eagle, we never run or even walk.
5. God gives us strength so we can walk with Him and run the race of faith in this world
6. He wants us to learn to sail above the petty and vain things of this world
7. He wants us to live full, rich productive lives - not just in terms of physical possessions, but in service, in ministry

**D. *Season of Preparation for Revival***

1. God is stirring us - I believe that
2. But the work He wants to do will be a testimony not to any name but Jesus' name
3. No man or church will get the glory - Only God!
4. Where does it all begin - In waiting on God!
5. Where will it end? We'll see!
6. What are we to do now as we anticipate revival? Wait on God
7. Tonight - 6:30 PM