

God's Eagles
Isaiah 40 (04/27/14)
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Let's go to Isaiah 40 this morning. You may be familiar with Annie Johnson Flint's song "He Giveth More Grace." Annie (1866-1932) lost her parents while a young child, her foster parents passed away in her youth, and then severe arthritis brought her into a wheelchair as a young adult. The second stanza of this song is based on Isaiah 40:29 and expresses her waiting on God through the trials of her life:

*When we have exhausted our store of endurance
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving has only begun.*

Isaiah 40:27-31

Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God"? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.

The book of Isaiah has 66 chapters; the Bible has 66 books. And even more amazing, Isaiah divides into two major sections, chapters 1-39 and 40-66, just like the Old Testament and the New Testament. Isaiah wrote during the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom in 722 BC. He is writing to the southern kingdom when these Assyrians had surrounded Jerusalem and it looked like it was curtains for God's people. But one night the angel of the Lord went out and whacked 185,000 Assyrians and the Bible says, "When they woke up the next morning, behold, they were all dead!" (Isaiah 37:36).

After God delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrians, Israel reverted right back to her wicked, idolatrous ways, and so about 150 years later, in 586 BC God brought the Babylonians to demolish Jerusalem and take Israel captive for 70 years. When you come to Isaiah 40-66 you come into the bright sunshine of hope and promises of future salvation. Isaiah wrote this second part looking into the future to give the Jews hope that God would keep His promise and bring them back through King Cyrus, which is exactly what He did. God also makes huge promises of His second coming in this section. But while the Jews were in captivity in Babylon, they thought God had forsaken them! They forgot all about who their God really was and His promises of salvation.

And so this morning we come to this promised-packed Isaiah 40. If you ever feel weary, if you ever feel like you're at Wits' End, if you ever find yourself complaining about your lot in life, read this majestic God-centered chapter over and over! This morning we're looking at verses 27-31.

Listen to your grievances against God – vs. 27.

Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God"?

The Jews thought God had completely abandoned them and were complaining against Him. And here we can see ourselves. "God doesn't see what's going on in my life. He doesn't care how I'm suffering or He'd do something about it!" We don't usually complain this way when things are going well, but let some tragedy come, let war break out, let some really hurtful thing happen and we're so quick to question God. Doesn't He see me? We've been mistreated and we ask God to

do something, and the heavens seem silent. Our unspoken thoughts go to, "It's not fair! I don't deserve this!"

This is probably the most common charge against God we hear. If there's a good God in heaven, why does He allow all this horror and tragedy and sunken ferries and lost airplanes and deadly landslides? Why does He allow these awful school shootings? Why doesn't He come down and do something about it?

I read the story of John and Betty Stam again the other day. A young missionary couple who met at Moody Bible Institute and with their infant they took the gospel to a remote area of China, only to be captured and beheaded by the communists in 1934. Where was God? Isn't God just? People become downright blasphemous. During WW 2, British novelist H. G. Wells wrote, "If I felt there was an omnipotent God who looked down on battles and deaths and all the waste and horror of this war — able to prevent these things — doing them to amuse himself, I would spit in his empty face." We certainly don't say it like that, but we often act like practical atheists, questioning God's goodness and presence and power and promises.

One thing we learn from Scripture is that when it says God delivers His people, it does not mean He delivers them from tragedies and horrors and human suffering. Read Lamentations and watch tears stream down Jeremiah's cheeks as he looks at the devastation Babylon left behind. Corpses lie everywhere in the streets, walls are smashed, the smoke of destruction is rising. But Lamentation 3 is much like Isaiah 40. As gruesome as it is, there's an answer. Lamentation 3:25-26, "The Lord is good to those who wait for Him!" Trust Him. As tired and weary and discouraged as you may be, there's an answer that you simply must embrace. "Behold your God!" We need to lift our eyes on high. Stop murmuring about your situation and get your eyes on God.

You've forgotten who your God is – v. 28

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.

Oh, how quickly we forget! This is the point of 2 Peter. You have forgotten! You think you know. You think you're pretty solid in your theology, but when trouble comes, when you get offended, when the bottom drops out, you leave your Bibles on the shelf at home.

What have you known? What have you heard? Most of you have known and heard plenty about God. Your Bible has revealed to you all you need to know about your God, Christ, and the cross. But you've forgotten. You've heard plenty of sermons, but you've forgotten most of what you've heard. I have. With all the preaching I've done, I should be a spiritual giant instead of a pygmy. We must feed on these truths about our God. Behold your God.

He is eternal. He isn't a stick of wood that you bow down to and it rots and must be replaced. He isn't a philosophy you buy into until something better comes along. From everlasting to everlasting He is God. There never was a time in the past when He didn't exist, there will never be a time in the future when He'll cease to exist. His eternity is in you. He made you in His image and likeness and so you too will live forever. I held an infant in my arms last week and the thought hit me, I'm holding eternity in my arms. Why? Because God is everlasting and that little one bears God's image.

He is self-existent. The Lord – Yahweh - means "I am Who I am." He never began. No one ever created Him. This is the great doctrine of the aseity of God. Know this! Grasp it. Marinate in it. God exists of Himself. He depends on nothing for His existence. Everything there is in this entire universe and beyond comes from Him! He is the source and fountain of everything! Apart from Him nothing is.

He is the Creator of everything. There isn't an atom or spirit being that doesn't come from Him. "The ends of the earth" means He's not like pagan gods which are local and limited, not to mention non-existent. Listen to Psalm 33:9, "He spoke and boom! It was done." What fools we are to think that something could come from nothing. If there was ever nothing, there would still be nothing because you don't get something out of nothing, no matter how many bazillion years you add to the equation. Know this truth. God was there. He personally created this universe and earth and all the life on it in six days with ease, and then took a day just to enjoy it! That included Adam and Eve, two literal people, a male and female. If they could have just as easily been two males or two females, as Matthew Vine asserts in his new book *God and the Gay Christian*, we wouldn't be here to discuss it – it's that "birds and bees" thing. I looked at our foster dog the other day and thought, there's an unending genealogy of old Rico all the way back to Genesis 1:25.

Why don't people like this? Why are people foolish enough to think it all came by time and chance? Because of one thing – they hate God. They hate God's holiness. They hate God's character. They hate God's laws. They suppress the truth about God and try to convince one another this glorious, eternal, creating God doesn't exist so they can do whatever they want! An atheist lawyer from LA named Edward Tabash said, "After a lifetime of spiritual search, I have concluded that the best evidence, to date, makes it much more likely than not that there are no supernatural beings involved in our universe and no God or gods." Well, he hasn't searched long enough, plus he hasn't died yet to prove his conclusion true or false. Stephen Colbert said more than he knew when he sarcastically challenged Bart Ehrman, apostate author of *How Jesus Became God*. Colbert finished his talk with Ehrman with this: "Why don't we both die and let God settle it." Well, God already settled it through a dead person. He raised Christ from the dead!

He is all-powerful. He never runs out of His resources. They are infinite and never change. He never gets tired or weary. If God got tired or weary, this universe would melt or explode into material and moral chaos. His power is never diminished! Christ got tired and hungry when He joined us under the canvas of this fallen world, but once He sliced His way out of that death shroud and ascended to the right hand of God, He has undiminished grace and strength! A trillion universes would not deplete His resources. He is our all-sufficient God, people.

He knows everything. We must believe the truth that God knows exactly what He's doing. He planned it all. He understands you and me better than we understand ourselves. We may wonder why He doesn't do something to relieve our burdens or pressures or change things. Why isn't He doing something? If He's good, why doesn't He stop the madness? Listen, the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Our understanding is so limited. We don't see God's big picture. His ways are not our ways. Plus we don't tell God what to do.

You need this God – v. 29

He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power.

Admit it. You really need God's strength and power. How long can you run? How much can you press? I know a guy who can press 500 pounds. Whoa. That's strong. But, can he give himself a new nature? Can he raise himself from the dead? Can he give himself a new body? Listen, God made you and me totally dependent on Him, just like a baby is completely dependent on parents. You didn't make yourself and you don't sustain yourself. The man or woman who thinks they can survive without God is a fool. Every unbeliever lives every day in moment by moment dependence on God's sustaining goodness. That's why with every day an unbeliever doesn't bow his knee to Christ as his Lord and Savior, he is building up more of God's wrath against himself (Romans 2:5).

Romans 5:8 assures us that while we were without strength, weak, and helpless, Christ died for the ungodly! This is our gracious God. He gives us what we don't have, can't produce, and what we need. He saves helpless sinners. He gives strength to weary souls and He increases power to

powerless souls. Sound familiar? This is God in His comforting, forgiving, regenerating gospel of His Son. Through Christ who died on that cross God puts His power in our hearts by His Spirit! He is the giving God!

God promises to give you what you need – v. 30-31

Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.

Do you ever grow weary and tired? Ever stumble badly? Who hasn't? Even young mothers grow weary with their children. I now know why God gives children to the young and grandchildren to the aged. But life can wear you down sometimes, right? Even the most vigorous among us, the youths and chosen young men can really stumble around. We try to feel powerful. Don't you just love those mega machines? Like a mega bulldozer than could wipe out this church with about three swipes. Or those mega coal diggers. People who run those things must feel unconquerable. We love power. Imagine a personal powerful being who can simply speak, and boom! Done! And the universe is in place in a split second. But that doesn't describe us. That isn't how we are. We are weak.

We are weak in fighting sin. We are weak in dealing with our pride and arrogance. We are weak in being the husbands and wives we ought to be. We are weak in being the friends we should be. We are quickly tired of reading our Bibles. We can't seem to get up to go to Sunday School. We are very weak. We have a weak grasp on the gospel. And we just grow weary and tired in all of our relationships and responsibilities.

So what's the answer? When you're at your Wits' End and you wonder what is next, what does God call you to do? Wait! God says to you, "Wait for me!" You cannot do this on your own. You'll never soar to heaven on your own. You need to wait for God. Don't rely on your own resources. Why? You don't have any! Wait on God. What does that mean? It doesn't mean sit and do nothing. It means look to God in faith and praying for Him to be glorified in your life. Trust God to take you through. Expect God to fulfill His promises because He will. And be patient. Proverbs 3:5 tells us to trust in our Lord and not depend on our own understanding.

Don't get all upset. Don't worry. Don't fret and be pushy and rash. Wait on God and He will come through for you, in His good time, in His own way. How impatient we are. I sit at a red light, and it's red, red, red. "Hey, I'm done with this, I'm going. Something's wrong with the light. I'm going." And then I see the green turn yellow the other way. Wait on God's green. Don't push and shove. And don't charge God with not knowing everything about your situation or not dealing justly with you. Don't say, "I'm tired of waiting on God for a godly young lady. I'm taking matters into my own hands. I've been waiting for three months!" We are an impatient society. And it isn't getting better. You can get a new book on your tablet in about minute. You can get that new gizmo in two days. All of this is just feeding our impatience. Just sit there and wait for a change. Talk to God. Trust God. Look to God like those little birds in the nest with their heads down, waiting on mama bird to come with food. And when she does, their beaks fly open like little funnels. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it, says the Lord (Psalm 81:10). Wait on the Lord.

What happens as you wait? God renews or replaces your strength for His. Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ who infuses His strength into my spiritual veins" (Philippians 4:13). Walk with God, wait on God, look expectantly to God and you will know his grace and strength. "My grace is sufficient for you because My strength is made perfect in your weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). As we confess our weakness, God has strength for us to live for His glory.

We will experience three things as we wait on our everlasting and powerful God.

1. We'll mount up with wings like eagles. God will enable us to soar with renewed strength and vigor from the depths of our darkness and discouragement.
2. We'll run with patience this race set before us, sometimes jumping over spiritual walls.

3. We'll walk day by day. Sometimes it's harder to walk faithfully every day than to have those occasional spiritual flights, or even those sprints.

Will you wait on God to renew your weary, tired soul with His fresh, overcoming power? Begin at the cross, which is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes. Go there now! Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Behold your awesome God