

God Renews
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Isaiah 40:18-31

Opening: Remember when the kids were small and you took them to an amusement park or the mall. Remember those amazing strollers we all had? I don't mean the little "umbrella" type strollers (though they were handy.) I mean those gigantic strollers that were almost like a small pick-up truck to carry, not only the kid, but also all the stuff! Sometimes there was no kid, just the stuff!

We were grateful for the strollers but sometimes we wound up in situations where we didn't bring the stroller and as those "little legs" wore out we would hear the familiar plea: *"Daddy, Mommy, carry me!"* And we would smile sweetly and say, *"Sweet baby I would LOVE to carry you."* No, that's what we like to remember. What we really said was, *"I can't carry you! You weigh forty pounds!"*

- How does this memory from raising kids relate to Isaiah chapter 40?
- Did you ever see a toddler "forget" that Mom or Dad was right beside them and available when their "tired little legs" gave out?
- You never saw a toddler trudge along like a dying man in the desert saying, *"It's fine; though my little legs are tired I can push through."*
- Toddlers understand the reality of that big, strong parent ready and willing to carry them when their little legs get tired. Toddlers don't forget that.
- Sadly, some of us "older" followers of Christ suffer spiritual amnesia forgetting that we have a strong Heavenly Father who will not only carry us when we're weary, but will literally renew our strength by His power.
- That's what Isaiah 40 is about. The last verse is a classic memory verse!
- The big idea of this lesson is very simple: If God's people trust Him, He will provide strength when we are weak. That's simple,

but I want to be sure you remember it well so here's how I've stated it:

Big Idea: God doesn't intend for his children to struggle through life with "tired little legs." When we're weary and worn He is ready to renew our strength.

- When preaching on this chapter a few years ago, Pastor Colin Smith titled the series, "Collective Weariness." That was long before the year 2020 but I think we would agree the term aptly describes this crazy year.
- Last weekend we certainly had another 2020 experience at our house, and what timing for me to be preparing a lesson on needing renewed strength after an emergency appendectomy last Sunday.
- 2020 has been a year of "collective weariness" for the world.
- We tend to ask, "*What in the world is happening?*" As Christ-followers we have no doubt Who is in control so our question is: "*Lord, what are You doing? What are You teaching us? How do You want us to respond?*"
- Collective weariness – We go from perturbed to perplexed to provoked or even panicked. We need perspective. The perspective that comes from placing our problems side-by-side with God's power and love.
- Our little legs are tired and we've forgotten about supernatural renewal.
- Chapters 1-39 of Isaiah have been focused on God's judgment on Israel, Judah, and the surrounding nations. Chapters 40-66, by contrast, focus on the return of God's captive people from 70 years of exile in Babylon. These chapters are full of hope and the promise of redemption.ⁱ
- Verses one and two of Isaiah 40 set the tone: ¹ "Comfort, comfort my people," says your God. ² "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Tell her that her sad days are gone and her sins are pardoned."ⁱⁱ
- FYI, this prophecy was written about 681 B.C. and the return of the exiles was about 538 B.C., the prophecy was 143 years before it all happened.

- Our study of this text begins in verse 18 and really focuses on verse 31, however I don't want you to miss some earlier verses:

⁶ A voice said, "Shout!" I asked, "What should I shout?" "Shout that people are like the grass. Their beauty fades as quickly as the flowers in a field.

⁸ The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever."

¹⁰ Yes, the Sovereign Lord is coming in power. He will rule with a powerful arm. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes. ¹¹ He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young.

- Then Isaiah begins in verse 12 with this theme: Have you forgotten just how big and powerful our God is?

¹² Who else has held the oceans in his hand? Who has measured off the heavens with his fingers? Who else knows the weight of the earth or has weighed the mountains and hills on a scale? ¹³ Who is able to advise the Spirit of the Lord? Who knows enough to give him advice or teach him? ¹⁴ Has the Lord ever needed anyone's advice? Does he need instruction about what is good? Did someone teach him what is right or show him the path of justice?

¹⁵ No, for all the nations of the world are but a drop in the bucket. They are nothing more than dust on the scales. He picks up the whole earth as though it were a grain of sand.

¹⁸ To whom can you compare God? What image can you find to resemble him? ¹⁹ Can he be compared to an idol formed in a mold, overlaid with gold, and decorated with silver chains?

- Worshiping idols they made with their hands was the blind spot for Israel and Judah. They would saw a log in half, carve a god (little g) from half and make a fire to cook dinner with the other. Ridiculous! (Isaiah 44:15)
- We laugh at that, but as we've said before idolatry is really an attempt to control the uncontrollable. Our idols may not be

wood, silver, or gold but we sometimes depend on created things in life we mistakenly think give us a sense of control? Our Heavenly Father is the only One in control.

²¹ Haven't you heard? Don't you understand? Are you deaf to the words of God—the words he gave before the world began? Are you so ignorant? ²² God sits above the circle of the earth. The people below seem like grasshoppers to him! He spreads out the heavens like a curtain and makes his tent from them. ²³ He judges the great people of the world and brings them all to nothing. ²⁴ They hardly get started, barely taking root, when he blows on them and they wither. The wind carries them off like chaff. ²⁵ "To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?" asks the Holy One. ²⁶ Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of his great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing.

- Here's the amazing thing about our Heavenly Father, He's POWERFUL yet He's also PERSONAL. He has all that POWER and we have all that ACCESS to Him any time!

²⁷ O Jacob, how can you say the Lord does not see your troubles? O Israel, how can you say God ignores your rights? ²⁸ Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding.

- If you are a fan of great literature you love the delicious sarcasm!
- Haven't you heard? Don't you understand? Have you forgotten?
- Picture that little toddler with the tired legs trudging along and crying. "Oh my legs are so tired but it's all on me. I have to push through." Big strong Mom or Dad is just shaking their head. "Have you forgotten I'm right here, I'm bigger and stronger than you are, and I LOVE to care for my kids?"

²⁹ He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. ³⁰ Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. ³¹ But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength.

They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

- Your translation may say, “...*those who wait on the Lord.*”
- This is not like waiting at the DMV or waiting for a medical test result.
- The Hebrew word is **qâvâh**, *kaw-vaw* which means, **hope for**, wait for, look for, i.e., look forward with confidence to that which is good and beneficial, often with a focus of anticipation in a future eventⁱⁱⁱ and when the object of hope is the Lord, there is an eager expectation of salvation or deliverance^{iv}
- It's like God is saying, “*Just wait, I'm at work here. Just relax; I've got this under control. I know you're little legs are tired but I'm going to renew your strength in a supernatural way, just wait.*”
- Just wait means just TRUST and ANTICIPATE that God has your back.
- You know how it feels to anticipate a comfy bed after a tiring day? It feels so good to anticipate how comfy and restful that bed is going to feel.
- Last Sunday the anesthesiologist in the O.R. described being under as like “seventeen-year-old” sleep. I got his meaning. You're so young, healthy, and carefree that you can just sleep, and sleep, and sleep.
- If we'll trust in God's power, we can anticipate His rest and renewal.
- To be clear, waiting on the Lord isn't the same as doing nothing.
- Look at the verse: [We] will find new strength [to do what?] soar high on wings like eagles [we won't sit, we will] run and not grow weary...walk and not faint. God is not giving us a “sick note” from life, He is giving us the supernatural strength to keep going when our strength is spent.
- Truth: Trusting and anticipating that God will renew our strength is the door to supernatural strength. Remembering how POWERFUL and PERSONAL He is is the KEY that unlocks that door to renewed strength.
- One more problem: We hate to wait. In our modern world we expect deliverance from trials like we expect a delivery from

Amazon. *“How many stops till my package arrives? What time will it get here? And I don’t expect to pay any shipping charges on my deliverance – I’m PRIME!”*

- Our Heavenly Father says, *“Just wait, and just trust, I’m at work here. And while you’re waiting, just crawl right up here in my lap and let’s enjoy each other’s company. Spend this waiting time being embraced and protected by the One who created all those stars and knows each on by name.”*
- God is BIG and POWERFUL and yet, He is CLOSE and PERSONAL.
- Stuart Hamblen, a singer/songwriter of the 1950s penned these words:
*“How big is God? How big and wide His vast domain
To try and tell, these lips can only start
He’s big enough to rule His mighty universe
Yet small enough to live within my heart”^v*

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- You’ll never see a toddler “forget” that Mom or Dad is right beside them when their “tired little legs” give out.
- You’ll never see a toddler trudge along like a dying man in the desert saying, *“It’s fine; though my little legs are tired I can push through.”*
- Toddlers embrace the reality of that big, strong parent ready and willing to carry them when their little legs get tired. Toddlers don’t forget that.
- Sadly, some of us “grown up” followers of Christ suffer spiritual amnesia forgetting that we have a strong Heavenly Father who will not only carry us when we’re weary, but will literally renew our strength by His power.
- How do we access that supernatural renewal? We TRUST and WAIT with confident anticipation, knowing that He is at work. And while we wait, we can cuddle in His “lap” of protection while He renews our strength.
- When the road gets weary this week, practice the “theology” of a toddler with tired legs. Just bow your head and say, “Daddy, please carry me.”

ⁱ Explore the Bible Leaders’ Guide – Lifeway 2020

ⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Is 40:1–2). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

ⁱⁱⁱ Swanson, J. (1997). [*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew \(Old Testament\)*](#) (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

^{iv} *ibid*

^v <https://www.letssingit.com/bill-and-gloria-gaither-and-their-homecoming-friends-lyrics-how-big-is-god-j7msl9f>