

Hope in God

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- [0 : 00] Isaiah 40, I'll begin reading at verse 21 to the end of the chapter. Do you not know? Have you not heard?
- Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded? He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers.
- He stretches out the heavens like a canopy and spreads them out like a tent to live in. He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.
- No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground. Then he blows on them, and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.
- To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal, says the Holy One? Lift your eyes and look to the heavens. Who created all these?
- [1 : 16] He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.
- Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel? My way is hidden from the Lord. My cause is disregarded by my God.
- Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.
- He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall.
- But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary.
- [2 : 24] They will walk and not be faint. May God bless his word. Thank you. Viktor Frankl was a leading psychiatrist in Europe, but because he was a Jew, he spent three years, from 1942 to 1945, as a prisoner in Auschwitz and three other Nazi concentration camps.
- And so he witnessed firsthand many men living and dying. He noted that the difference between the living and the surviving was not so much due to their physical strength and constitution, but was rather due to the presence or the absence of hope.
- Hope. Those who held on to the hope of a future beyond the barbed wire had incredible endurance to live, while those who lost all hope soon caved in to death.
- They simply gave up the will to live. And what Frankl observed in the concentration camps, the Apostle Paul observed in the Thessalonian church in a spiritual sense, as they went, underwent severe suffering and persecution.
- And so he wrote to them, and in his letter he says, we always thank God for all of you, remembering, among other things, your endurance inspired by hope.
- [4 : 12] Hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. So hope is a critical grace for believers. We simply don't live well without it.

Hope is an inspiring grace, a restoring grace, a reviving grace. And it enables you to soar on wings like eagles and to run and not grow weary and to walk and not be faint.

Now we're back in Isaiah 40, but just the chapter before, chapter 39, Isaiah announced God's judgment upon sinful Judah for forsaking God.

They must go into Babylonian captivity. And it actually happened a hundred years later. That's chapter 39. But chapter 40 is Isaiah now speaking to that future generation in Babylonian captivity.

Almost 170 years in the future from the time he's writing. And yet he knows their condition perfectly because no prophecy of Scripture came from the prophet's own mind, but rather they spoke as the Holy Spirit made it plain to them.

[5 : 30] And so he knows their condition. 170 years future. They're discouraged. They're growing weary. They're losing heart. As they've been in captivity for almost 70 years by then and there was no light at the end of the tunnel.

In other words, they were losing hope. And people can endure a lot as long as they have hope. That confident expectation of future good.

But Judah is losing hope. So in verse 1 of chapter 40, God tells his prophets, you go and comfort my people. Comfort, comfort my people. Speak tenderly to them.

Tell them that their hard service down in Babylon is completed. Tell them that I'm coming to deliver them. His comfort, his encouragement to them then comes in the form of that promise that I am coming to deliver you.

And I will do so with a worldwide display of my glory. And nothing can stop me. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

[6 : 41] Verse 5. People wither and perish like grass. But my words stand firm forever. So the promises of God are encouraging medicine for discouraged saints.

And I wonder how many of you are taking your hope-giving medicine of the promises of God to buoy you up and to fill you with hope in the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of your trials.

But you know, sometimes even the promises of God fall on deaf ears. Even in His people, the difficulties of our circumstances can seem so hard and so great that it would make the promises of God to seem impossible at least for me.

Maybe others experienced this but not me. And that seems to be the situation in Judah. They had plenty of problems.

Their homeland was desolate. Their Jerusalem capital city was destroyed. Their temple was burned to the ground and their people were scattered throughout the vast Babylonian empire.

[7 : 55] No deliverance was in sight nor even imaginable. Nothing to encourage and prop up their hopes on the horizon. These problems seemed like insurmountable mountains and hills.

And so even the encouraging promises of God fell flat on their ears. They had allowed their circumstances to dim their hope of God's promises of deliverance.

It's called unbelief. Unbelief. Unbelief. That distorted vision of reality and especially that distortion of God and who He is.

That unbelief that makes man look big and God look small. all. And the wonder in chapter 40 is that God mercifully stoops to our weakness and He comes with more comfort to strengthen and prop up our tottering hope.

So the encouragement shifts from the promises of God or the promise of God to deliver them to the God of the promise. Discouraged saints need to behold your God verse 9 the one who's made the promises.

[9 : 17] His greatness and glory His splendor and majesty His sovereign power and unsearchable wisdom and these attributes of God are paraded before us in the light of creation and of His ruling providence over creation.

We saw His sovereign rule over the mighty nations of the world which compared to Him were less than nothing. Their powerful armies that struck fear in the hearts of Judah were but grasshoppers and their pompous leaders He reduces to nothing just by blowing on them.

So discourage saints if nothing in all creation can compare or is equal to its sovereign creator then nothing can stop Him from fulfilling His promises to you personally.

He is more than able to do all that He has said. Mountains must move before the arm of the one who is stronger so believe Him and doubt no more.

So this morning we are going to see that Judah had another reason for discouragement and Isaiah now addresses that in his closing applications our text from 26 to 31.

[10 : 40] You see they not only doubted whether God was able to do what He had promised they also doubted whether He was willing to do what He had promised and sometimes that's our greater problem.

Oh yes God's omnipotent He can do whatever He wants to do we believe that but we have trouble believing that He wants to do that for me and that's what's being addressed especially this morning.

Listen for this doubt as we hear it in the complaint that Israel makes the complaint of God's discouraged saints in verse 27.

Why do you say O Jacob and complain O Israel my way is hidden from the Lord my cause is disregarded by my God in other words my way is hidden from the Lord He doesn't know about my problems my cause is disregarded by my God He doesn't care about my problems and me and such unworthy thoughts of God make His words of comfort them fall on deaf ears yes yes He's made these promises but somehow He's forgotten me somehow He doesn't know about me and doesn't care about me now if you doubt whether that's really Israel's posture we have it again in chapter 49 verses 13 through 14 God comes again with comforting words but they've got this hang up shout for joy O heavens rejoice O earth burst into song O mountains for the

Lord comforts His people and will have compassion on His afflicted words but Zion said the Lord has forsaken me doesn't care the Lord has forgotten me doesn't know they're doubting His heart they see Him as uncaring so what if He's able to deliver us if He's not willing to do so now Isaiah has already dealt with that in verses 10 and 11 of chapter 40 He deals with this distorted vision of God He says not only is the Lord a sovereign king whose powerful arm rules for Him He's able but He's also a caring gentle shepherd whose arm embraces His sheep in love He's willing as well as able now under long or severe trials we too can come to the point where we doubt the heart of our

[13 : 26] God to help us and we conclude He just doesn't know He just doesn't understand He just doesn't care maybe you've never said those words I don't know that I've ever said them but I have felt them and thought them many times don't you care that we perish His disciples said to Him in the boat so let's bring our doubts and feelings into the light of God's word once more this morning in a real sense it's these two complaints that Isaiah has been answering all along in chapter 40 showing that God does know and He does care showing that God is able and that He's willing well notice how He counters their complaints then here as He comes to the end and brings all of this to bear upon their complaint verse 26 lift your eyes and look to the heavens who created all these he who brings out the starry hosts one by one and calls them each by name because of

His great power and mighty strength not one of them is missing so often God's answer to His doubting discouraged saints is look up look up look around at creation and let creation lead you to its wonderful creator who is your God it's found throughout the scriptures I just cite a couple Psalm 121 1 and 2 I lift up my eyes to the hills where does my help come from my help comes from the Lord and it's not period my help comes from the Lord the maker of heaven and earth same thing found in Psalm 146 5 and 6 blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob whose hope is in the Lord his God the maker of heaven and earth the sea and everything in them the Lord who remains faithful forever discouraged saints get out and walk in God's creation and consider its creator see how he dresses the earth with flowers see how he decorates the trees with colors see how he feeds the birds without barns see how he opens his hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing that your eyes can see get out at night and look up get out of your cooped up little living quarters and see what a big universe that you live in and realize how great is our

God look to the heavens and when you do the lights of the night sky beg this question how'd they get there who created all these that's what the question should be who created all these creation is ever pointing to its creator the hand that made me is divine and that's our greatest need to behold our God so who created all these how many all these are there up there anyway how many stars are there in the universe that question is more easily asked than it is answered just spend a half an hour on the internet and you'll find that men can they guess and they estimate and they count and then they assume and but it's a lot a dime held at arm's length hides how many stars from your view

I'm told it hides a hundred thousand galaxies of stars and that there's a hundred billion stars in those galaxies a hundred thousand galaxies with a hundred billion stars just being hidden by that dime that's a lot of stars then let me move it over a half an inch and it's hiding another hundred thousand galaxies with a hundred billion stars that's a lot of stars and we now realize that what looks to our naked eye like maybe one star could actually be billions and billions of stars and so man keeps needing to recalculate to recalculate eleven years ago we discovered that there were three times more stars than we thought that's a big oops you do that in math you would you would not do well it seems we overlooked a lot of small dim cool stars there are hot and big and bright stars that we counted but we missed the small dim cool ones and that meant there were three times more stars than we thought six years ago the

Hubble space telescope peering into deep space told us there are two trillion galaxies in the universe and that was ten times more than we previously thought bringing the total estimate of stars to 300 sextillion three followed by 23 zeros that was six years ago and now many are saying those figures are grossly underestimated man just keeps finding more and more stars the better his equipment becomes but the one who created all these knows exactly how many there are he calls them each by name did you see that he calls them each by name one when you name something you you know something about it and so you you name it according to its essence and God knows everything about every single star and gives it a name now we've named a few stars but he's named them all he calls them each by name a full knowledge of each individual star and not only does he call them by name he also brings them out one by one and they answer when he calls them by name much like your pet answers and comes to you when you call it he brings them out one by one that's

[20 : 12] God's activity don't think the stars come out each night automatically or on their own strength it's his great power and mighty strength that orchestrates the star he hosts each night he's personally involved in his world and with each star so much so that not one of them is missing and he does it with such regularity and faithfulness that Kevin O'Keefe can tell you where those stars are going to be and when that's God his intense personal intimate knowledge of each individual star now with such extensive knowledge on God's part how can you say my way is hidden from the Lord you see where he's going with it oh yes he counts every single star but my way is hidden from him there's not one dim cool star in the universe hidden from God he knows all there is to know about everything in his universe he not only made it he upholds and governs it he knows every bird in the forest the scriptures say he knows each sparrow's fall he knows each star by name he knows every detail about you brother and sister he knows the number of the hairs on your head he knows the number of tears that you cry and he knows the reason why you cry those tears he knows what's going on in your life he knows all about your problems he knows your thoughts and your feelings and your fears and your discouragement do you think he's lost track of you that my way is hidden from the

Lord think again is what Isaiah is saying nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight that includes you so he does know about you your way is not hidden from the Lord the Lord knows the way of the righteous Psalm 1 and verse 6 so he deals next with their other complaint not only my way is hidden from the Lord but why do you say and complain oh Israel my cause is disregarded by my God the charge is now God doesn't care about me he doesn't bother with little old me and my problems that keep me up at night that discourage me he's not doing anything to help me he's not answering my prayers he just keeps dismissing my case setting it aside as if he's too busy to deal with me because if he loved me then this wouldn't be happening to me we wouldn't still be down here stuck in Babylon all these years now that's the wrong lesson to learn from God's greatness that this

God is so great that he doesn't care about little me no that's that's not the right lesson to draw from his greatness he's not too great to notice us he's too great to forget us is the word of the Lord he's too great to not care about us and if as A.W.

Pink says that the very essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of him I would say these thoughts qualify he doesn't know he doesn't care then we must confess our idolatry of thinking such things of God that's not the God that exists that's the imaginary God we have created in our own minds the true God says to his people cast all your cares upon me why because I do care for you I care for you a lot so God in mercy comes to correct our unworthy thoughts of him and he tells us to rethink our problem in light of who he is here's how he does it verse 28 do you not know have you not heard of course you know and of course you've heard but you're acting as if you didn't know and hadn't heard you know it is embarrassing to admit how many of my problems come down to just this very thing how many of my discouragements are a failure to simply apply what I know about

God to my situation my problem do you not know well what is it that we so easily yes we know but we don't know we don't know in a sense of letting it control the way we feel the way we act the way that we trust what is it well there's there's four things that he points out five things about God here that I want to point out that they were forgetting and that indeed we can forget in our discouragements you see the answer is back to basics it's just theology 101 there's nothing here that you don't know but maybe you haven't connected your problem to this God and that's what he's wanting us to do the first truth about God is there in verse 28 the Lord is the everlasting God the Lord there is his covenant name his personal name this God that's your God he is the everlasting God he's the

[25 : 56] God of eternity there's never been a time when he has not been he's not bound by time therefore he's not in a hurry therefore he's working out eternal purposes in his own time indeed the best time he's fulfilling his promises at his own pace now Israel would wait 70 years in Babylonian captivity before deliverance would come 70 years that's the better part of a lifetime and waiting is hard but their God is the everlasting God and he doesn't keep time the way we do Mary and Martha anxiously waited for Jesus to come in answer to their appeal to him to come and heal their brother Lazarus who is dying and getting worse and worse by the hour but Jesus was not in a hurry was he and he intentionally did not come he was four days late and yet he was right on time to fulfill his better purpose he had a better way of glorifying

God than just healing Lazarus it is to raise him from the dead when he's four days gone so we're creatures of time just a little sliver of time is where we live on the eternal spectrum and we might think that God has to fulfill his promise right now answer my prayer this week today and that's no small part of our frustration and discouragement in trials we forget that the Lord is the everlasting God the friend of Pastor Philip Brooks found him one day pacing back and forth in his study and said what's wrong and he says I'm in a hurry and God isn't he had an eternal God who keeps time on his own clock not on ours I'm in a hurry you're in a hurry but let me assure you God isn't so connect my problem to this everlasting

God I will remember the Lord is the everlasting God and I will not expect him to move according to my timetable but will rather wait on the Lord and humble myself under God's mighty hand that he may lift me up in due time 1 Peter 5 says his time the best time and so I go on my way rejoicing that my times are in his hands he's the everlasting God secondly don't you know that he is the creator of the ends of the earth verse 28 just as he's not limited by time neither is he limited by space maybe you feel like you're off in some forgotten forsaken corner of the earth like Israel exiled far from home scattered throughout the Babylonian empire but our

God is the creator of the ends of the earth he's not some localized deity that's just ruling and reigning over Palestine the promised land he reigns over all that he's made to the very ends of the earth there's no place that you can be that he is not not one square foot of the planet is out from under his authority as its creator and as its lord so yes even the ends of the earth even the far off ends of the Babylonian empire it's his he made it he rules there and so to connect my problem to this God who is the creator of the ends of the earth I will remind myself that wherever I am is where Jesus reigns he reigns and he reigns here in my family in my workplace in my school in my neighborhood in my church in this hospital room this sick bed this situation this problem in my life

God is here and he reigns here number three do you not know that he will not grow tired or weary now that's one of the ways that God is different from us we exert a little bit of energy and we need some down time to recover a nap or a good night's sleep we rake a few too many leaves on Saturday and we feel droggy on Sunday or we babysit the grandkids for two hours and we're ready for a two weeks vacation we grow tired and weary and it's not just us old folks verse 30 says even youths even you young guys you young people even youths grow tired and weary and young men stumble you said it's all of our disease we have this disease we grow tired and weary it's part of the curse on our bodies those bodies originally would have worked forever and never got tired and that's the kind of new body

[31 : 27] I'm going to get but for now it's part of our humanity to grow tired and weary and that's why we all spend about a third of our life in bed but he never grows tired or weary he never slumbers or sleeps he's never the weaker for having exerted great strength and power in bringing out the stars each night one by one he's forever fresh he's always able don't ever imagine that the reason God rested on the seventh day was because he grew tired and weary not at all he rested on the seventh day in order to enjoy looking over all of his creation and to set a pattern of rest for us who do need it that we might imitate him because we do need a full day of rest each week a day of rest and worship one of the reasons we give up on our projects that we set out to do is we get exhausted we just burn out don't we we quit you've done that you're out of the gate with a head of steam and then the difficulties of the task or the project come up and you soon tire of it but not God he's got a lot of purposes in mind a lot of plans there's all kinds of mountains and hills in the way and valleys it's not a problem to him doesn't need a nap doesn't need to say oh this this is going to cost more of my energies than I ever thought it would he never gives up on his plans like we do because he never gets tired so how do I connect my problem to this

God well I'll consider every promise in the book to be guaranteed by the inexhaustible power of God he never gets tired so he'll see them through fourth we see that God's inexhaustible power is matched by his unsearchable wisdom we've seen this in creation haven't we in Isaiah 40 but number four is his understanding no one can fathom verse 28 his understanding no one can fathom no mind can comprehend his mind just think about it he created you your body fearfully and wonderfully created think of the wisdom and understanding behind that one little creation of your body hundred trillion cells and every single one of them is programmed with information telling it what to be and do so you be part of her nose oh okay and you be part of the third toe on the left foot and don't get mixed up hundred trillion cells all working together in perfect harmony for my well-being and health

I can't fathom that and that's just one of the many millions of mysteries in the world of God's creation so I will believe that such a God of infinite wisdom if he's able to work all those one hundred trillion cells together for my good I will believe that he's working all things in my life together for good and for his glory my God is this uncreated eternal creator of the universe I was born yesterday so I will not judge the mind of God with my pea brain mind I will not expect to understand everything that he's doing in my life or in his world or in his churches rather I will expect to be perplexed I will expect to not understand a whole bunch of what he's doing and when

I cannot figure out what he's doing with me I will not complain that he doesn't know he doesn't care but I will trust the truths revealed in scripture that he knows better than I do what is best for me and most for his glory and that even his way of loving me is much wiser than my mind can fathom and I'll know that one day in heaven I will see that his way indeed was perfect in every way that he was always the most wise and most loving in all that he did you see a God of such power and wisdom will have no trouble in keeping his promise this is just applied theology applying what we know about God to our specific problems so the better we know him the more encouraged will be well here's the fifth attribute of

God to encourage us do you not know it has to do with God's rich generosity verse 29 he gives strength strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak he not only is strong he gives strength he not only possesses unending power but he shares it with the weak and the weary that's us weary worn out under life's trials and burdens weak no vitality or strength of our own and that's us not only physically and emotionally but it's us spiritually as well that he's speaking of here that we grow weak in faith we can hope we can love we grow weak in patience weak in courage weak in holiness we've exhausted our spiritual store of endurance our resolve is weakening what's the use we lack strength to keep saying no to temptation yet again no to ungodliness and worldly passions yes to

[38 : 09] Christ likeness we lack strength to deny ourselves to do the hard right instead of the easy wrong we lack strength to put sin to death to overcome evil with good to return others evil toward us with good and the sooner we realize that our resources are not sufficient the sooner we will look outside of ourselves to this God who never grows tired or weary but gives strength to those who do grow tired and weary this generous giving God is that your view of him that he's an overflowing fountain of grace left to ourselves we grow tired and weary we stumble and fall as verse 30 says but but 31 here's the summary here's the final application but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength they will soar on wings like eagles they will run and not grow weary they will walk and not be faint we're we're not doomed then to our own lack of strength our own weakness and weariness there's a power available to us that will not fail us in life's many and long trials and here's the promise of renewed strength to wait for the

Lord's deliverance whether it be from Babylonian captivity or your own struggles in this life have you seen an eagle soaring lately around here we might have to settle for a turkey vulture or a red tail hawk there's no wild beating of the wings is there they rather just seem to soar effortlessly as they catch the updrafts of hot air and just soar higher and higher circling around a picture of the believer the strength that's promised to us in our spiritual battles and discouragements in life some time ago on a Saturday afternoon I turned on the TV and found myself watching a man run and not grow weary it was an international track meet in Eugene

Oregon it was the mile run and they ran a crazy fast pace the lead changed several times and then on the last half of the last lap a runner in the pack just decided it was time to finish the race and he just pulled away and won easily with three minutes and 54 seconds it was the Kenyan Ashbel Kiprop one of those seven foot string beans that looked like they could run forever but what happened right after the race was as amazing to me as the race that he just ran because as the mic was stuck in his face what you saw was a man not sweating profusely stopping to catch his breath he was as calm as he had just had a walk through the park he was not weary he was not tired he could go out and run another four minute mile is the way it looked and that's the picture

Isaiah uses here your strength will be renewed so that you can go on running and not grow weary and quit but you'll find strength to go on another day just to take another step and it might not feel like like a an up thrust of wind that's catching you it might not feel like some adrenaline rush but it's there strength to go on yet another day serving your Lord you know there's something that happens even more amazing than that every week in this place brothers and sisters in Christ who are sorely afflicted worn down by life's trials returning to praise and worship this Lord of Isaiah 40 some of your trials have stretched on for many years many miles but you're still you're still running you're still running the race you can't make sense of God's ways with you but here you are praising him nonetheless trusting him hoping in him for future good there's a wind of heaven beneath your wings that is called the work of the Holy

Spirit the Spirit is the breath of the Lord giving life spiritual life to you to go on trusting go on following go on believing and you're you're a puzzle to yourself you don't know where how this is happening but but you're drawing from that fullness in Christ that fullness of grace upon grace and so you go on from strength to strength as he keeps the Spirit keeps bringing from that fullness of grace in Jesus to you and it enables you in all things at all times having all you need to go on abounding in every good work well that's the promise you see God is not only a God who doesn't grow weird but he gives strength to the weary he gives his strength and Isaiah is speaking here to ordinary people like you and me weak and weary discouraged doubting even questioning whether

[44 : 05] God cares I was just reading it in Psalm 41 this morning they were questioning whether God could see them whether he had forgotten them yes unworthy people like us that's that's who he's talking about and and it's meant to lift our eyes up to him and to see him for who he is does Jesus care the greatest answer comes from the cross where our Lord is himself dying has he forgotten you no he remembers you he knows you he knows what your greatest problem is it's sin and that's why he's here on the cross does he care for you can we even ask that question at Calvary is that not why he's here is that not why he left heaven is that not why he resisted every temptation and he didn't give up in his race but he endured even the whores of the cross because he cared for you he wanted to bring you to his heaven oh look at the cross and see again that this

Jesus does care he does know and there is strength in him maybe some of you have set your hope on the wrong things and so you're growing weary in life hope is to be found in Christ hope it's a trusting grace it's a it's a it's a grace that that looks up to to someone else other than ourselves looks away from ourselves and onto the Lord and that's your need that's my need whether we're in Christ or out of Christ we all need to look away from ourselves to this wonderful Lord he's great we're going to close this morning with how great thou art as our response to Isaiah 40 and the first verse is going to sing how great our God is as seen in creation the second verse we're going to speak about how great he is at Calvary on the cross because it's the same creator who is now on the cross of Calvary and the last verse is going to sing of the greatness of our

God when he comes back when the Lord Jesus comes back physically to gather his people to himself a new creation of a new heaven and a new earth and all things made new how great thou art let's stand and sing it to our great God in praise oh Lord forgive us for our small thoughts of you surely to think you don't care in the sight of Calvary in the sight of the promises that you've made to us in the sight of all your daily mercies that we swim in these are unworthy thoughts to say you don't know you don't care Lord it's we that don't know we don't know you as we ought it's we who forget you not you us so please by your spirit come and help us to know you better help us to pour over the scriptures to memorize these passages to recite them to ourselves to preach to ourselves to pray over them and most of all to trust you to believe that these things are true of you that our hope might be revived that you might be glorified to have a people yes who are in trouble but who are in trouble with a great

God a God who gives hope and now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him that you may overflow with hope to the glory and praise of God and by the Holy Spirit's power amen