

“STRONG IN THE LORD”

Text: Isaiah 40:1, 2, 27-31

Subject: How To Be Strong In Your Inner Man!

Introduction

- ◆ How many of you believe that God wants you to be strong in the Lord?
- ◆ How many of you believe that God does not want you to fail, backslide and be spiritually unstable?
- ◆ How many of you believe that God has made it possible (with His resources) for you to overcome in a world full of despair, darkness, disappointments and distractions?

(Hear the word of the Lord)

- Ephesians 6:10 *“Finally my brothers and sisters, be **strong** in the Lord and in the strength of His might.”*
- Ephesians 3:16 *“Be **strengthened** with might by His spirit in the inner man.”*
- Colossians 1:11 *“**Strengthened** with all might, according to His glorious power.”*
- II Timothy 1:7 *“For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of **power**, love and a sound mind.”*
- Psalm 29:11 *“The Lord will give **strength** unto His people.”*
- Ezra 6:22 *“The Lord made them joyful and **strengthened** their hands for the work.”*
- II Timothy 4:17 *“The Lord stood with me and **strengthened** me.”*
- II Chronicles 15:7 *“Be ye **strong** therefore and let not your hands be weak.”*
- Daniel 11:32 *“Those who know God shall be **strong** and do exploits.”*
- Joshua 1:9 *“Be **strong** and of a good courage.”*
- Psalm 18:32 *“It is God that girdeth me with **strength**.”*
- I Chronicles 16:11 *“Seek the Lord and His **strength**.”*
- Isaiah 41:10 *“Fear not for I am with you, for I am your God and **I will strengthen** you.”*

(The Book of Isaiah is known as the Gospel of the Old Testament)

1. Isaiah began his ministry about 740 B.C.
2. He would minister for 60 years and die a martyr.
3. His major thrust of preaching was the power of God.
 - ◆ How God delivers in temporal circumstances and,
 - ◆ How God delivers in spiritual circumstances.
4. Isaiah’s name means: “Jehovah is salvation.” **(Isaiah deals with four kinds of salvation)**
 - ◆ Judah’s salvation from the attacks of other nations.
 - ◆ Judah’s salvation from the Babylonian captivity of 70 years.
 - ◆ The future salvation of the Jews.

- ◆ The personal salvation of every sinner who receives Jesus.
- 5. Isaiah's message was preached at a critical time:
 - ◆ Moral conditions included drunkenness, idolatry and religious prostitution.
 - ◆ Social conditions included the rich taking land illegally and forcing home owners out through extortion and eviction.
 - ◆ Government conditions saw the judicial system corrupted (as bribes were taken under the table to favor the wealthy.)

(But most of all)

- ◆ Isaiah had an encouraging word for God's people who were taken captive into Babylon.
- ◆ His message would both guide and comfort the exiles during and after their 70 year captivity.

(In Chapters 1-39)

- ◆ Isaiah gives the condemnation for Israel's sins (39 chapters of rebuke and confrontation to convict us.)

(But in chapters 40-66)

- ◆ Isaiah gives the commendation (an encouraging word.)
- ◆ It's a 27 chapter love letter from Isaiah 40-66.
- ◆ The Jews are about to leave captivity in Babylon.
- ◆ They've thought much about their past failures and future uncertainty.
- ◆ They are about to leave Babylon and return to a ruined Jerusalem.
- ◆ They'll rebuild and make progress (but they need a word from the Lord.)

(And this message)

- ◆ Is a word as timely now as it was when Isaiah preached it.

(But I don't deserve a word from the Lord.)

Neither did Israel – but God said in v. 1 & 2

(v. 1) *"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."*

(v. 2) *"Speak comfortable to Jerusalem and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."*

(What a revelation of the Lord)

1. *"Comfort ye, comfort ye."* is a word from the pulsating heart of God. (Why?)
2. *"We have received double for all our sins"* is an awesome revelation of where believers stand with God.

(What's it mean?)

- ◆ When there was a mortgage on a house in Israel, a legal document was nailed on the doorpost for all the neighbors to see.

- ◆ A second copy was kept by the one who held the mortgage.
- ◆ When the debt was paid, the second copy, or the carbon copy, was nailed over the other doorpost so all could see the debt was paid.
- ◆ This is the meaning of (v. 2), “*She has received double for all her sins.*” (In other words)
- ◆ The sins of Jerusalem were seen as “**paid for**” by the One who would suffer on the cross.
- ◆ Our sins are now seen as “**paid for**” by the One who would suffer on the cross.
- ◆ It means the debt we incurred that alienated us from God has been satisfied.

(In other words)

1. God has done what was needed to be done!
2. We had a debt (a mortgage) that needed satisfying!
3. We couldn’t pay the debt we owed!
4. But God in His mercy nailed the carbon copy to the doorpost of the cross (and your heart).
5. Now every believer can say:

“My sin debt is paid in full.”

Question: How many of you know that your sin has been forgiven?

Question: How many of you know that your debt has been paid?

Question: How many of you thank God for His undeserved favor?

Question: How many of you can shout “thank you Jesus” because you’ve received God’s amazing grace?

Question: Why is Isaiah so encouraging in chapter 40?

Answer: Because the exiles in Babylon needed a forward looking word:

- ◆ Israel would return to the land of Jerusalem.
- ◆ Rebuilding the city seemed impossible.
- ◆ So Isaiah invites Israel to behold the greatness of God.

In verse 4, the crooked places will be made straight.

In verse 5, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.

In verse 8, the word of God shall stand forever.

In verse 11, God will feed, carry and lead His sheep.

In verse 14, God doesn’t need any counselors.

In verse 15, Babylon is merely a drop in the bucket.

In verse 22, God beholds the circle of the earth.

In verse 26, God knows the number of stars in the galaxy.

(But in verse 27 we have a problem.)

Question: What’s the problem?

Answer: The problem is Israel is being lied to by the enemy of their soul.

- ◆ And the lying fiery darts need to be overcome before the 700 mile walk home to Jerusalem.

Question: How does God deal with the fiery darts hurled at your mind?

Question: What does God have to say about your challenges of tomorrow?

Question: What’s the good news from God’s heart to your heart?

(Three liberating truths)

I. **God Has A Good Plan For You!**

Question: Why is Israel downcast?

Answer: Because Israel thinks God's plan is all messed up in verse 27.

"Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgement is passed over from my God." (or)

How can you say that the Lord doesn't see your difficulty or is unfair in His treatment of you?

(What's the dilemma in verse 27?)

- ◆ Isaiah sees the people of God in captivity.
- ◆ He sees their afflictions and temptations.
- ◆ He sees the Jews in captivity facing invasion after invasion by the Assyrian army.
- ◆ And he hears the people of God begin to utter discouraging words.
- ◆ Isaiah sees how the Hebrew exiles handle their dilemma (and it isn't good.)

Question: What does Israel say when tested and tried?

Answer: Two things in verse 27.

1. **"My way is hid from the Lord" (or)**

- ◆ "The Lord has forgotten me."
- ◆ "The Lord has deserted me."
- ◆ "The Lord has left me all alone."
- ◆ "The Lord has hid His face from me."
- ◆ "The Lord has rejected me because of past failures."

(Maybe you've been tempted to think these same words.)

- You may be going through some deep waters.
- You may be in a personal crisis.
- Maybe you're facing a physical challenge.
- Could be you've been betrayed by a close friend.
- Possibly you've been misunderstood, or wounded or disappointed.

(And feel like Israel in verse 27)

"My way is hid from the Lord."

2. **Israel said, "My judgment is passed over from my God." (or)**

- ◆ "God, you haven't been fair."
- ◆ "God, you let the Babylonians get away with this."
- ◆ "God, you've waited 70 years before intervening."
- ◆ "God, you've overlooked some things."
- ◆ "God, you didn't smite the Assyrians who deserved to be smitten."

Question: Why does Israel feel that God's plan for her is in jeopardy?

Answer: Because Israel is being deceived by two lies:

1. They thought that God **didn't know where they were** and,
2. They thought God had **missed some things** that were done to them unjustly.

Question: What led to these two temptations that Israel yielded to?

1. Israel became impatient in captivity, (have you?)
2. Israel had answers to prayer delayed, (have you?)
3. Israel was detoured from their plans, (have you?)
4. Israel remembered past failures, (do you?)
5. Israel couldn't see God in their dilemma, (do you?)
6. Israel felt a divine desertion, (do you?)
7. Israel felt there was an absence of divine retribution. (Ever felt this way, that somebody got away with something?)

Question: What do I remember when fiery darts come my way?

1. Your way isn't hid from the Lord (never was and never will be.) Job 23:10, "**He knows the way that I take.**"
2. Your judgment hasn't been passed over by God. (God keeps score, and no one pulls the wool over His eyes.) Hebrews 4; 13 "**All things are naked and open to the eyes of the Lord.**"
3. If you're impatient, chill out (because the Lord's schedule and timing is perfect towards you.) Psalms 31:15, "**Your times are in His hands.**"
4. If you've been detoured, delayed, disappointed or despondent it's normal to experience it (but it's not God's will to remain in it.) Psalms 30:5 "**Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.**"

Question: What's the good news when I don't understand all of God's plan?

(The good news is)

(Not only does God have a good plan for you);

II. God Has A Glorious Promise For You!

Question: What's the promise of truth that overcomes the lies of the enemy?

(It's found in verses 28 & 29)

1. God is never out to lunch

V. 28, "*Don't you know and haven't you heard that the everlasting God, the Creator of the earth fainteth not.*"

Question: What's it mean?

Answer: It means that God never faints and never has to take a sick day to recoup His strength.

- ◆ It means that God never ceases to be at work in your life.
- ◆ It means God is not moody and has no fainting spells.
- ◆ It means God is constant and makes no errors or mistakes.
- ◆ It means God is working even when you cannot see Him.

(#1 God is never out to lunch)

2. God is never overwhelmed or tired!

1. God never gets weary of running the universe.
2. God never gets weary of hearing your prayers.
3. God never gets weary of ordering your steps.
4. God never gets weary of comforting your heart.
5. God never gets weary of preserving your life.
6. God never gets weary of forgiving sin.
7. God never gets weary of healing bodies.
8. God never gets weary of restoring families.
9. God never gets weary of receiving praise.
10. God never gets weary of seeing you respond at an altar of invitation.

(He's never overwhelmed by what overcomes you.)

3. God is never lacking wisdom and never needs my advice.

(V. 28) "...there is no searching of His understanding."

- ◆ He never has the nervous jitters.
- ◆ He is never perplexed or without a plan.
- ◆ He is never without reasons for what He does.
- ◆ He never has a need for a plan "B".
- ◆ He always knows what's best for you.
- ◆ He always has an answer to the dilemma.
- ◆ He is worthy to be trusted because He knows much more than we do.

4. God is never unapproachable.

(v. 29) "*He gives power to the faint and to them that have no might He increases their strength.*"

Question: What is God saying here?

Answer: He is inviting His children to run to Him, reach out to Him, and to approach Him.

Question: Why is God inviting you to run to Him? **Because...**

#1. There's a Plan #2. There's a Promise.

III. God Has Great Power For You!

(v. 29) "*He gives power to the faint and strength to the weak.*"

Question: How does God do this?

Answer: (v. 31) "*They that wait upon the Lord.*"

- ◆ The word "wait" is an incredible word.
- ◆ It means:
 - To draw close to
 - To look away from yourself and look to God.
 - To expect

Question: What happens to those who draw close, look to God and expect?

Answer: The reward of this Biblical kind of praying is this:

*“They that wait upon the Lord **shall renew their strength.**”*

- ◆ The word renew means “**exchange**.” (In other words)
- ◆ You exchange your weakness for power from on high. (God’s strength)

Question: What’s your reward for staying close to God?

Question: What’s the payback for being hungry and thirsty?

1. **You mount up with wings as eagles** (or) **your perception changes.**
 - ◆ The eagle has incredible eyesight, so
 - ◆ Believers who draw close to God see better.
 - ◆ Your elevation increases spiritual perception.
 - ◆ You mount up higher than earthly affections.
 - ◆ The higher you go the purer the air and the better you are.
 - ◆ Why live like a turkey when you can fly like an eagle?
2. **You run and are not weary** (or) **your perseverance changes.**
 - ◆ You run, or march forward into battle with perseverance and endurance.
 - ◆ You find strength to overcome obstacles.
 - ◆ You despise the words “quit”, “drop out”, “stop” and “withdraw”.
 - ◆ Your heart is restored and renewed and recommissioned to persevere to the end.
3. **You walk and don’t faint** (or) **your patience changes.**
 - ◆ Walking here refers to fortitude and patience under affliction.
 - ◆ It’s the grace you receive from living close to Jesus that enables you to patiently endure without fainting in the day of battle.

Question: Is God’s power really that important?

Answer: Luke said so in Acts 1:4 *“Wait for the promise of the Father.”*

- ◆ Paul said so in Ephesians 6:10 *“Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”*
- ◆ Jesus said so in Luke 24:49, *“Tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”*

1. God has a **good plan** for you!
2. God has a **glorious promise** for you!
3. God has **great power** for you to live by!

(The question is)

- ◆ Will you believe Him and respond to Him?
- ◆ Will you “look away from yourself” and “run to God”?

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