

FPFWC Christian Development



The Righteous Live By Faith

February 2024

Winter Quarter

February 3, 2024

Lesson #1 – Faith in the Power of God

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Isaiah 40:12-13, 25-31

ICE BREAKER –

1. How should we respond when people say that God doesn't care about them and their problems?
2. How do you seek strength from the Lord when you feel most weary?
3. What does it mean to wait on the Lord?

Key Verse – “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.—Isaiah 40:29

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today's lesson comes from the writings of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. His text is the first in a group of five referred to as the Major Prophets; those five are the books known as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

We may wonder what value the Old Testament books of the prophets still have in the New Testament era. After all, the days of those prophets are long gone, and we're under the new covenant, not the old (Colossians 2:14). The value of the prophets today is firmly established in how many times they are cited by Jesus and the authors of the New Testament. One clue to their value today is to be aware of how often these books are quoted in the New Testament. By one count, the tallies are Isaiah (67 times), Jeremiah (5 times), Lamentations (0 times), Ezekiel (2 times), and Daniel (5 times).

These figures reveal the continuing relevance of the book of Isaiah. It has been called “the fifth Gospel” because of its numerous prophecies declared as fulfilled in the messianic era of the New Testament (examples: Isaiah 6:9–10 in Matthew 13:14–15 and Mark 4:12; Isaiah 53:7–8 in Acts 8:32–33).

Isaiah prophesied during some very dismal times for God's people. His prophetic call came “in the year that king Uzziah died” (Isaiah 6:1; compare 2 Chronicles 26:22), which would have been 740 BC (see 2 Chronicles 26; Uzziah is also known as Azariah in 2 Kings 15:1–7). The final historical event recorded by the prophet is the death of Sennacherib, which occurred in 681 BC (Isaiah 37:38). That makes for a lengthy period of ministry!

The text under consideration in our lesson follows a prophecy that warns King Hezekiah of Judah regarding a time when Babylon would carry away Judah's wealth and people to Babylon (Isaiah 39:5–7); more than 100 years would pass before that happened, but it indeed *did* happen. This was a punishment from the Lord for the people's sins, followed by “comfort” in declaring that that punishment would eventually end (40:1–2). The predictions that immediately follow in Isaiah 40:3–5 shift forward more than five centuries for fulfillment, quoted in Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4–6; and John 1:23.

The passage of time from pronouncement to fulfillment of these prophecies makes for valuable study. But the study in today's lesson takes us beyond time-bound prophecies in considering the timeless nature of God himself.

LESSON COMMENTARY

40:12–17. The second half of the chapter presents the reason that Israel can trust God for the nation's comfort and hope, depicting the Lord as incomparably superior to all creation. God is first described as incomparable as Creator (vv. 12–17). Through a series of questions, God is shown to be the meticulous and powerful Creator (v. 12), to have a mind that no human can understand or advise (v. 13), and to determine the course of the world through the manifestation of His own wisdom (v. 14).

40:25–26. Fourth, God is incomparable as ruler of the heavens. As proof of His incomparable superiority, He calls the people to examine the heavens and think of the **One** who created them. God here is pictured as being a powerful military leader (note **the greatness of His might and the strength of His power**), the one to whom even the **stars** show their obedience, who has the capacity to preserve Israel. No idol can make the same claim, and certainly no leader who is a mere mortal.

40:27–31. Having comforted Israel (vv. 1–11) by describing God's incomparable superiority (vv. 12–26), the prophet seeks to apply this message of hope to the despondent state of Israel in captivity. They should know that God's strength offers comfort to His people. Their difficulty does not correspond to some weakness in God or to His neglect of their cause (v. 27). Instead, God is inexhaustible. The depth of His understanding is beyond comprehension (v. 28). God will provide for Israel. He is a limitless source of strength that transcends even the energy of young men (vv. 29–30). Verse 31 concludes the chapter with a declaration that it is not those who have wasted their energy on idols, on plotting, or on developing their own strength that will win the day. Instead, those who wait for the Lord to take action will find additional strength. The imagery of being carried on the wings of eagles also appears in Ex 19:4 within a context of deliverance. Deuteronomy 32:11 also uses the imagery of the eagle to denote protection. In Is 40:31, the reference to the eagle's wings appears to capture the effortless power of the eagle in flight in contrast to futile human efforts. The final two lines of v. 31 reinforce this understanding of the eagle's wings. Those who trust in the Lord will be sustained by Him.

This section underscores the power and wisdom of God, offering these characteristics as a source of comfort for Israel. God's unlimited control over His creation stands in contrast to the supposed sovereignty of earthly rulers or false idols. It is in this God that all of Israel's hope rests. Israel's plight cannot be solved through dependence on political or military power. Instead, Israel will be delivered by waiting for the Lord to act. They must trust that the all-powerful Lord of all things will ultimately bring salvation and vigor. God is the source of all things. He is the one in whom all men must trust. He is the Lord who brings rest and vitality to all those who faithfully endure as they wait for Him to save them.

LESSON NUGGET – **Vision** – Returning to the land and rebuilding the nation seemed impossible tasks to the exiles, so Isaiah invited them to behold the greatness of God. God is greater than every burden you bear and every challenge you face. Babylon was but a drop in the bucket to God! The world's false gods can do nothing to hinder the working

of your great God; so, trust Him to see you through.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Word for Today Bible, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary