

# God, The Incomparable One

## Background

### Israel in Exile

- When we read the bible, we can be **so detached from the events there**, understandably so. But today, I want you to picture yourself in that space and feel what it means to be in Exile.
- I want you to **sense the pain, the despair, the hopelessness that accompanies exile**. Exile means some have been molested, raped, assaulted. It means they are slaves, second class citizens in a foreign nation. Exile means the death of some loved ones, separation from loved ones with no real end in sight.
- For us, here and now, doesn't life sometimes feel like an exile from the good we all so long for? **Does life not sometimes feel like one continuous struggle to keep your head above water. It just seems like one issue right after another**. At times, it feels like there is no point and so we find ways to mask our issues and forget the pain we are dealing with. And truthfully, that never works out great
- I am sure that we are all wrestling with some level of pain, despair, and disappointments. It might be
  - **Financial bind**
  - Marital and family related issues - being able to conceive
  - Job pressures
  - **Health concerns** per our loved ones and/or ourselves

- **Disappointments and heartbreak**
  - **Loss of loved ones**
  - Infidelity
  - **Abuse**
  - Existential questions
  - Shame from past actions/activities
  - **Our own brokenness - Victims and Victimizers**
  - **Deep sense of being a failure**
  - **Addictions - both external and internal**
  - **Sin**
  - Unexpected and unexplained twists of life
- I know I am not yet scratching the surface of what we might have faced or what we are facing or what we will face in life
  - **Life can be hard and full of this tension** of unexpected and unexplained twists. There are times when things are going well and I am almost **looking over my shoulders**
  - It is into this situation that **chapter 40 brings relief.**
  - As we carry on in this text, I want you to **hold in one hand your afflictions and struggles** and in the other, the Word of God.
  - My Prayer is that God will speak **comforting and soothing words to your heart**, drawing you into His embrace and showing you **His faithfulness**

Text: Isa 40:25-31

**25** To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.

**26** Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing.

**27** Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"?

**28** Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

**29** He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.

**30** Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted;

**31** but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

# True Deity: To Whom will You Compare me?

- Going back to Israel in Exile, perhaps the first thing we want to ask is **where is God in the midst of all this suffering and pain?**
- In the **midst of pain and uncertainty, there is a temptation to fashion idols after the desires of our hearts.**
- The enemy sees this as a prime opportunity to shake our faith in God. **Before Satan can have his way with us, he must first make us question the character of God.**
- **As the enemy seeks to make us question God, he also seeks to make us question who God says we are.**
  - Ultimately Satan is not after your job or marriage or health, **he is after your relationship with God.** Everything else is simply a means to get to that end of separating you from God
- And one of **Satan's methods is to have a replacement for God in your heart, often many substitutes, which I will refer to as the idols of our hearts. These idols can be good worthy causes, even related to the church and ministry.** But an idol is still a counterfeit that can never sustain us
- **So when God asks the question "To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One,"** the goal is to remind us of **who the true God is!**
- The **comparison** here isn't necessarily to a person, rather it is to **everything else we use as a substitute to God.** These are the idols of our hearts.

- How do we deduce these idols of our hearts?
  - What does **your mind routinely fall back to** when there isn't any strong thought on your heart? What do you **obsessively daydream** about? And this can be something good.
    - For example when you try to sit still before God, is there a trend of things that often pop up that keep drawing you away
  - What are those things that **when you think of giving them up or losing them, there is a strong recoil or rejection within your heart?** Those might be idols
  - What things do you think **you can never live without?**
- The Word says there is actually "**saying,**" which shows the continuity of the temptation to fashion idols after the desires of our hearts. We cannot bear to wait so we fashion idols to deceive ourselves about being in control
- **The question though is who will we serve as God in the face of adversity?**
- **Verse 26 encourages us to serve God by saying "Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing."**
  - The context here is that Israel is surrounded by the **temptation to worship heavenly bodies** (cf Deut 4:19), and so God responds by speaking about these heavenly bodies, showing that he is more than any idol we nurture in our hearts
- As impressive as stars are, and we know more today about stars to understand how truly impressive they are, **they are just created beings.** I love what a commentary says here about God's sovereignty

- “Innumerable though starts may be to us, there is neither one more or less than God determines. God’s directive management is not only one of totality but of the individual - he calls them each by name”
- The phrases ”greatness of his might” and “strong in power” isn’t just about an abundance of power, it is a personal exercise of sovereignty. Essentially, controlling the galaxies is not a big deal for God
- What does this then **mean for our struggles**? This reminds us that **true deity is found in God, the Incomparable One**, and **never in idols we craft or subscribe to** - whether they be life goals or purpose statements or careers or goals we aspire to.
- The **argument is that if God is indeed the Creator and can do the greater works of creating galaxies and this universe, he can obviously deal with the issues we are facing, and he will deal with them with wisdom.** The argument is going from the greater to the lesser.
- The **wrong deduction we draw from God’s transcendence** is that **he is too great to care about my issues or problems.** The inference we should draw is that **God is too great to fail at anything**, no matter how small or insignificant it may be.

# Has God Forgotten Me?

- For me, the hardest part of facing an issue might be **my helplessness in the face of affliction**. I simply cannot make it go away. **And this necessitates that I wait...**and that is usually not a fun thing for me to do.
  - **With my helplessness comes a real sense of hopelessness. Hopelessness because I tend to bend inwards and rely on myself rather than bend outwards and rely on God**
  - This hopelessness is as a result of the **uncertainty that stares me in the face...and the truth that I am not in control of my life.**
  - **I do not want to wait and yet I am not in control** to change this situation, whatever it may be
- Verse 27 captures the **despondency which inevitably sets in**: *Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"?*
- In essence, **"God, how could you let this happen? Do you no longer care for me? Am I no longer your child? Are you not my Father?"**
- In fact the tenses of this verse suggest there is a continuity of "being disregarded or dismissed by God," which points to the tension we've been talking. Life just seems like one long struggle to keep one's head above water

- The position of verse 27 are both theological and experiential in nature. **It is theological because it suggests “God cannot see” and experiential because such a cry comes out of painful personal experiences.**
- God’s response, we see, is also along the same lines of theology and experience.
  - As much as I am putting a delineation between theology (belief systems) and experience, it is important for us to understand that in reality, everyone has a certain theology. And this view deeply influences how we live.
  - We all have a “Faith” we believe in and it governs our perspectives, values, and mindsets. There is really no true separation of belief systems and how you live. In other words, how you live speaks to what you really believe or do not believe. Behavior always follows belief (Prov 4:23)
  - To better see what you believe, **look at your actions and walk backwards to deduce your beliefs or lack thereof**
  - **Theology or Beliefs about God exists to influence our lives in alignment with the will of God**
- What **ails your heart today?** What makes you say either verbally or in your heart **“My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God”?**
  - Be it sickness, despair, bitterness, un-forgiveness, pain, affliction, a terminal illness, etc. Hold it before God and let him speak His words to you, today.
- ...

# The Eternal, Limitless, and Untiring God

- The solution God prescribes is that **he points to himself, the Sufficiency of All things!**
  - His character and nature is not only that of being **All powerful but never tiring and always Faithful!**
  - He is the **One who truly loves us, the One who satisfies and redeems, a million times over!** With Him there is steadfast, unfailing love and plentiful redemption.
  - He is the **One who loves us with an everlasting Love and because of that, continues to be faithful especially when we are unfaithful**
- God points us to Himself by saying “**Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.**”
- The phrasing “**Have you not known? Have you not heard?**” leads us to ask the question, how are they to know of these truths?
- Through this chapter, Isaiah has been using the **doctrine of God the Creator to assure the people of their security and of the certainty that the promises of God will be fulfilled.**
- **God’s past faithfulness which has been handed to them through the Torah and prophets guarantees God’s current and future faithfulness!** The stories they have learned about Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, etc., is not to be in awe of these characters, for it is never about them but to see the loving and sovereign hand of God

- Two quick deduction from this:
  - The **hero in all scripture is always God, never the character**. We do not seek to be like Daniel or Joseph, but rather to be like Christ
  - You've just learned how to read scriptures. **You must always read it forwards and or backwards, tying it to Christ, the revelation of the Son of God**
- Going back to the text, The term everlasting God literally means “**a God of eternity**” and that shows you the perspective of God, a God who doesn't change, a God who lives outside of time and so how he sees things isn't limited by the forward one-directional flow of time.
- As Creator, God's powers are limitless! As One who is never weary and One with limitless wisdom and understanding, it is impossible for his purposes and plan for you to fail.
- An author puts it like this:
  - In one moment, God is orchestrating all of human history (cf 17:26) with its multiple billions of complex individuals past, present and future - of which each of us is only one - and the multiple trillions of interweaving causes and effects - of which our individual experiences is a relative handful.
  - And he is doing all of this towards the goal of our transformation into Christ-likeness (cf Rom 8:29) or said another way towards the point where every knee will bow and all tongues will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (cf Phil 2:9-11)
- And we wonder why we struggle to understand what God is doing in our often difficult circumstances

- Are you seeing a **glimpse of this eternal, limitless and untiring God who literally has your back?** Are you beginning to **understand the Incomparable One, we call our God?**
- A theologian puts it this way
  - Our God is such that we never need doubt his capacity; he is also such that possessing unfathomable wisdom, we must never expect to understand all his ways
  - Because he works on an everlasting worldwide, and ceaseless pace/level, we cannot fathom his understanding i.e. search through his discernment (cf Rom 11:28-36)
- I hope you are also seeing that often **the uncertainties we face are mercies in disguise. They are there to deepen our dependence on God, to help us understand that it is okay that we are not enough due to our brokenness and pain but that God, the Incomparable One is more than enough**
- Due to the **level of his wisdom and the scale at which he works, you cannot expect to understand his ways...but you can trust in His love**
- How then can I become the **person who rests in the truth of God's faithfulness** in the midst of my afflictions and struggles?

# Those Who Wait on the Lord

- Verse 29-31 gives us a framework of how we approach and deal with our afflictions and the uncertainties and hopelessness that often comes with it.
- Verses 29-30 says “He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. 30 Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted”
- A clear inference we can draw, which is actually a theme throughout the Bible, is that **God gives his power or grace or help to the humble, those who know and acknowledge that they need help.**
- It is those who see themselves as **the wretched ones par excellence** who receive God’s power. It is **the faint and weary who come to admit their weaknesses** and turn to God that receive his grace.
- On the other hand the term “youth” and “young men” represents the **maximum threshold of our abilities and capacities**. And even that is not enough, **it has its limits and it will be overcome by circumstances**
- **We are simply not enough by ourselves!!! In the day of adversity our strength will fail, because we are weak**
- While our **natural resources are not enough, a different experience is possible...**the experience of those who wait on the Lord

- The experience of those who wait on the Lord is different as seen in verse 31, which says “ **but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.**”
- The word **wait is actually better translated as hope**, which has a dimension of certainty to it. We use the hope today to often indicate optimism, but that is not what this word means. The word hope has the following facets to it
  - A certainty that results in an expectation
  - A waiting which speaks of patience
  - Resting, which points to trust
- **What I am getting at is that those reject bending inwards but rather turn to God, who are humble enough to be abandoned into his hands, are the ones who are promised renewed strength.** They are the ones who keep putting on fresh strength that is not as unnatural as people growing wings.
- This is in contrast to those who rely on their natural capabilities or bend inwards (the youth or young men analogy). **The natural person is NOT like God and is destined to fall and be exhausted due to the brokenness of this world and ours.**
- The believer, **though he may face difficulties, as he relies and hopes in God, possesses the un-wearying, un-fainting strength of God. He takes up the wings of the eagles (divine strength), and so he is able to run and not be weary...she is able to walk and not faint**

- We live in an era of **“fast everything.”** We are trained to see **waiting as a major inconvenience.** Some of us are uncomfortable when we are not busy and swamped. The concept of doing nothing and enjoying a blissful silence is too hard for us to bear.
- We **tend to abhor waiting for it reveals we are not in control.** In a **bid not to wait upon God,** we will willingly chart a course and bless it as god ordained. In essence we fashion gods/idols after our own desires and illusions
- Very often **the idols of our heart tie back to our identity** and most of us have our identities formed around
  - **What I do** - which points to what makes me feel significant
  - **What I have** - what I have amassed that tends to speak to my value or worth
  - **What other people are saying about me** - which speaks to acceptance and recognition
- **Can you see though, how tiring these idols can be? Can you see the heavy yoke they place on you?**
- The alternative is to take on the **easy yoke of Christ**
- All I have been saying is captured in this saying of Christ **“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”**  
(Luke 5:31-32, Cf Mark 2:17, Matt 9:12)
- The foundation of our beliefs is always rooted in this and this alone - **Christ Jesus and Him Crucified.** It is through the **person and sacrifice of Christ that we have peace with God and we can grasp the truth of God.**

- **What God offers you, in lieu of your idols is an identity of being a beloved child of the Most High!**
- **Through acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, God says “You are a beloved Daughter or Son of the Most High God.”**
  - You have no need to perform to prove your worth. Why? **Because your value comes from being a part of the Family of God**
- **God made this made this possible through the sacrifice of Jesus, who was delivered up for our sins and raised up for our justification! And that means we are made right with God!**
- We must come to see ourselves as sinners that are in such a need for the mercies of God.

## **Conclusion**

- **The threefold description in verse 31 forms a climax - the flying, running and walking doesn't tire out the believer even in the face of afflictions.** What might this look like in our lives?
- Here are some themes God might develop in us, in the face of the unexpected twists and turns of life:
  - **Rather than a myopic view of events, we begin to develop an eternal perspective of what truly matters, and this becomes a soothing balm to the current aches of our hearts**

- Instead of an **overwhelming panic that drives us away from God and community, we learn to hunker down in his word, feasting on his faithfulness through the lives of characters in the bible as well as people in our communities**
- Rather than cry out “God has disregarded me,” we learn to hold the pain we feel in one hand, and in the other the faithfulness and undying love of God, trusting that He will make all things right
- May we have eyes to see come to see that **no matter what we say about God, he takes his own medicine and we see the affliction and waiting in the life of Christ perhaps captured best in the events from the wrestling in Gethsemane to the ultimate sacrifice on the Cross.** And may this stir up hope in our hearts
- May we come to see that **Jesus weeping at the tomb of Lazarus though he knew he would raise him up means that God feels our every pain.** He doesn’t draw back from us, rather he wants to draw us nearer
- **The transcendence of God doesn’t mean he is too big to care about our pain, rather it means He is too big to fail at soothing our aches and making all things right (cf Rev 21:1-7)**
- May we come to see that **God who did not spare his own begotten Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, with him, graciously give us all things?**
- One thing to touch on here that is uncomfortable is that **sometimes our pain and struggles stem from our disobedience to God, as is the case with Israel.**

- I am not saying **all the afflictions you face is as a result of our brokenness**. I am saying **we often underestimate the effect of sin in our lives and the consequences**
- Essentially, Israel, like us today, have, at a macro level committed **two grievous errors**.
  - One, we have rejected the fountain of living waters. Two, we have dug out cisterns/wells for ourselves that can hold no water (cf Jer 2:11-13)
  - In other words, we **reject the ways and counsel of God**, and come up with **alternatives for ourselves, counterfeit gods that can never satisfy us**. We exchange the glory of God, the **Creator for created things**.
- What we must not miss in all of this is that God's total commitment (if we will receive it) to make us "mount up with wings like eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not be faint," is as sure as giving up his Son for us sake.
- In other words, giving up Jesus to die for our sake is proof of his seriousness

## Next Steps

- While their revelation (talking of the Israelites) was of shadows, we have the express radiance of the glory of God. We have the exact imprint of God's nature in the person of Jesus Christ, revealed to us in scripture (cf Heb 1:1-3)
- And so **I come to an application point, there is no other sustainable way of knowing God apart from cutting your teeth on the pages of scripture**. There is no other way around this.

- Just as you are so familiar with your name and the repetition of your name makes it deeply ingrained in you, so also we must feast upon the truth of God, so that overtime, it becomes ingrained in us, second nature if you will

## **Homework**

- Pick a passage a scripture that speaks to you. Here are some examples: Psalm 23, James 4:1-10, Isa 40:25-31, etc.
- Do your best to memorize it. If not, read it often and keep working on memorizing it
- Study it, read commentaries on it and most of all meditate (churn it over in your mind) often. You could commit to reciting and slowly walking through it twice a day.
- Pray with it, journal on it, discuss what it brings to mind with trusted friends or spouse
- Do this for a month and see where God takes you with it
- Don't worry about not remembering to meditate upon it or not being able to memorize it, the key is immersing yourself in it, one way or the other



